

OXFORD UNIVERSITY **WALKING** CLUB



ALUMNI NEWSLETTER SUMMER 2010

Hello all OUWC, OUHRC and OURC alumni!

My name is Carina Brehony, the current OUWC Alumni secretary. I hope this bulletin finds you well! We at OUWC bring you this alumni newsletter for Summer 2010 to fill you in on the



happenings of the past and coming year! There have been many great local walks, mini-bus trips and weekend trips not to mention social events over the last twelve months and we hope for more in the upcoming academic year. I am delighted that one of our alumni from the days of its incarnation as the OU Rambling Club has shared with us some memories from that time. It makes for very interesting reading for current members and I am sure will rekindle some fond memories for those that were part of the club at that time. I have been a member of the club for almost 6 years (I think!) and it is one of the best things I have done since I came to Oxford.

The role of the alumni secretary was introduced in Hilary Term 2006 to enable the club to keep in touch with all its old members and for you to keep in touch with each other through the alumni webpage. As you may know, members of the alumni scheme are invited to one social event per term, so please get in touch if you would like to come along. The social calendar has many highlights including the annual Céilídh in Michaelmas and Punt Party in Trinity! We also hope to send you all a yearly newsletter to keep you up to date with what's happening in the club. To join our email list and online register or update your details there, see www.ouwc.org/alumni or email me at alumni@ouwc.org.

We would be delighted to hear from you! – Carina



The intrepid OUWC wild camping in the Lake District, May 2010. Photo courtesy of Imogen Wade

A word from our Presidents



Jamie Banks MT09 & HT10



Imogen Wade TT10



Rob Siddaway MT10

2009-10 has been another busy and successful year for our club. In total, we had 14 weekend trips this year and 4 minibus day trips. In Michaelmas term 2009, we had 4 weekend trips (including one BIG trip (26 people) to Snowdonia to accommodate Freshers' demand), 2 minibus day trips, and 8 local walks around Oxford. We organised many socials, including the hugely successful annual Céilídh in 6th week! Hilary term 2010 saw 4 weekend trips, all to different areas of the country from normal (Peak District, Dartmoor, Yorkshire Dales, and Galloway Hills), 1 minibus day trip (to the Marlborough Downs), 8 local walks, and a range of socials. In Trinity term, we had 5 weekend trips including 3 special trips – wild camping in the Lake District, a week in Scotland and navigation training in the Brecon Beacons. One minibus day trip to the New Forest took place as well as 8 local walks every weekend in full term. We also organized 6 well-attended socials (including a Punt Party & 3-course formal dinner at Magdalen college).



Left: The Storr, Isle of Skye. Right "Massage train"! LONG Scotland trip, June 2010. Photos courtesy of Imogen Wade

Starting in Trinity term, we decided not to print termcards at the beginning of term, preferring instead to tell members about events via email and our website. This seems to have gotten quite positive feedback so we won't do printed termcards in Michaelmas 2010 either. However, the committee will re-evaluate the situation again at end of MT10. If anyone has any comments on termcards, please do get in touch (president@ouwc.org).

Continued from overleaf...

Leader training:

Just over a year ago we decided to give greater subsidies to leaders for weekend and minibus day trips, as training costs had risen and we were starting to run out of leaders. This was quite an investment but has worked really well and we now have many more leaders, although several will be leaving soon. We aim to make £2 per person on weekend trips and £1 per person on day trips to go towards training costs. Over 12 trips, we expected to make £371 and actually made £401 for leader training. This year we organised a first aid course in Hilary term that 7 members attended. We filled it with 5 non-members from other outdoors clubs. We did a special trip to the Brecon Beacons: 10 people were trained and 3 gave training, in map and compass work. Future training plans – we'll have a winter skills course at either the beginning or end of Hilary term to learn how to use ice axes and crampons. We were awarded a £300 grant from the British Mountaineering Council (BMC) towards this. We'll try to run a first aid course at some point next academic year, either Hilary term or Trinity term. We are delighted to receive any financial help towards training and always welcome and recognise the importance of external support for our club. This help has kept and we hope will keep this long-running and much-loved club going for many more years to come!

Jamie Banks, President MT09 & HT10

Imogen Wade, President TT10

Rob Siddaway, President MT10



Left: A snowy Yorkshire Three Peaks.

Below: Limestone pavements near Malham Cove, Spring 2010.

Photos: Carina Brehony

Below: Scotland LONG trip. Photos courtesy of Imogen Wade



"Ok, so where are we again?" I think it's the Pembrokeshire coast BIG trip, Summer 2009!



The Famous OUWC go mad in Pembrokeshire! Photos: Carina Brehony

The OUWC social calendar!

The OUWC year is always filled with great social events alongside our walking trips and this year has been no exception. To start with, we've had pub-meets, film-nights (Monty Python!), a curry night as well as a rare opportunity to climb up to the top of Magdalen College Great Tower - the tallest building in Oxford. The highlights of the year as always were the Céilídh with our regular house band, the wonderfully-named Mouse and Trousers, the sunny punt party (see pic below) and the annual dinner, which this year was a formal hall at Magdalen. If you want to see some photos from this year's Céilídh check out the OUWC website's photo archive at <http://www.ouwc.org/photos/socials/>. Remember that you can join us on one of these events per term. So get in touch!



The annual punt party in full swing! Photo courtesy of Jaya John John

A former OUWC (OURC) President remembers...

We had a great correspondence from one of our alumni Katrina Lidbetter, a former president of, as it was in the 70s, the OU Rambling club (OURC). She recalls...

As you will probably know, OURC grew up from a walking club set up by Lady Margaret Hall back in the earliest days when women were admitted to Oxford and was in order to offer genteel walks in the countryside. By the time I joined in 1976, it had expanded to cover the whole University and whilst the bulk of its activities still consisted of weekend walks around Oxfordshire, it also offered expeditions to mountains in Britain and Europe. Usually we went to Wales or Scotland in the Christmas and Easter vacations and to the Pyrenees or the Alps in the summer. Our walking extended to snow and ice climbing in North Wales and *via ferrata* in Italy so it was hardly genteel rambling.

We did not of course have a website and our information was distributed to colleges through the termly booklet which advertised the walks. I remember as secretary, distributing these on my early morning run although I expect they were mostly posted through the inter-college mailing system. We had the largest number of members of any club in the University I suspect because we took the Woolworth's principle - we were very cheap! The annual subscription was 60p in 1976 (or termly 30p) which paid for the booklet and any equipment bought by the club. This later rose to 80p in 1978 - perhaps that was when Iain (McClean; club senior member) insisted we bought some axes. I see that some of our walks involved addition costs for bus fares (fare 25p). In keeping with the spirit of the club, walks were usually described in an entertaining fashion, for example a couple of entries from 1976 Michaelmas Term:

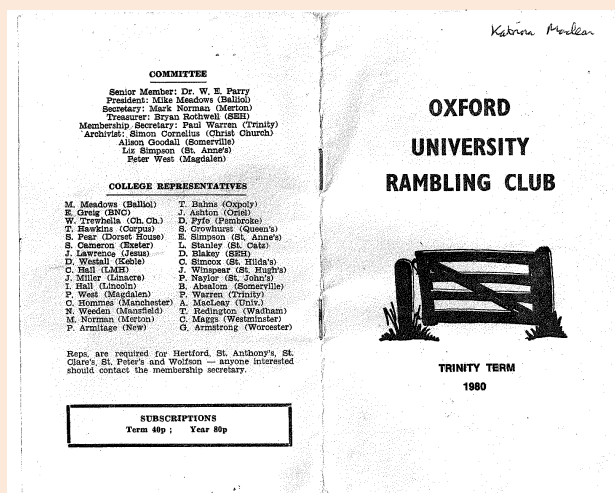
DUCK-BILLED PLATYPUS

are not usually found in South Wootton but there is no harm in looking for them. 13 km. Christ Church Lodge. Fare - free. Leader Bill Pulford (Oriol).

FOR PETE'S SAKE

turn up for the last ramble of term or the leader will be lonely as he wanders south from Horspath. 12 km. Nuffield, 1400 hours. Fare - 40p. Leader Pete Luscombe (Exeter).

Image on right courtesy of Katrina Lidbetter



I was always elected group linguist. On the strength of my degree subject (Arabic and medieval Spanish) I was expected to cope, whatever the situation. On our 1976 Pyrenees trip, we found ourselves faced with the Spanish Guardia Civil, pointing guns at us. "Oh go on, Katrina, you can speak Spanish, sort it out." A term's reading of El Cid did not make me feel equipped to argue with armed men but I understood something about "vacas" (cows) and it was pretty obvious they wanted us to take our tents down. So we did. Quickly. I think it was that same trip where the effect of going up rough mountain tracks proved too much for the minibus on our return journey and we broke down in Thionville in France. I duly found for them "un garage Ford" and we brewed up tea on our stove in the forecourt, to the amusement of the French mechanics. When asked by my friends to explain to the garage that the fuel injection tube was leaking, I simply pointed to the mess of blu-tak, string, sellotape and god-knows-what else with which we had attempted to mend the problem and said "ca!" Improvised repairs were very much the spirit of our expeditions. I remember DH, one of our members, insisting on bringing his ice-axe to the Pyrenees and delightfully getting it out when we finally found a patch of snow. Unfortunately, he hadn't taken the bung off and the bung got lost in the snow. Despite crawling over the snow and putting our fingers down every hole he made, we couldn't find it. Nevertheless it made for some good pictures (taken of course at a steep angle to imply it was scary). As DH had a very sloping sort of pack, his axe was a danger to anyone behind him so we spent the rest of the trip experimenting with things to stick on the end. We found half-chewed opal fruits worked best.

Of course in those days, there were four men to every woman at Oxford and our mountain expeditions in particular tended to consist mostly of men.

Photo courtesy of Katrina Lidbetter



In the Pyrenees I remember four of us (me and three of the men) deciding to do an overnight high level trek and meet the others who would bring the minibus round to the next valley. The one flaw in our arrangements was that the three of them assumed that I'd sort out the food, being the only woman. Unfortunately they did not tell me. We only discovered this late that night, long after the minibus had driven off and we had climbed over a pass or two and pitched camp for the night and had no food. Luckily the ever-resourceful DH found some emergency rations in his rucksack (a stock cube and some rice) so we didn't starve but I was not popular.

Of the many people I met at Oxford, I have stayed in touch mostly with those whom I met through OURC, united by our common love of walking and the countryside. I am very pleased that the club has gone from strength to strength. It is good to see that you are investing in safety and proper training - we were alas, pretty careless about these things in the past! I loved reading your website. With modern technology you have moved a long way from our little green booklets. But some things never change. I am sure your walks are similar and greatly enjoyed by all. I am also sure that many of your current members will make lasting friendships and carry on meeting up, thanks to OUWC.

And in the finest tradition of rambling, it is time I stopped.

Best wishes,

Katrina Lidbetter (née Mclean, OURC president - 1978-9 I think, around then anyway...)



OURC trip to the Pyrenees, 1976. Photo courtesy of Katrina Lidbetter

Why we need your help!

Like many clubs in the Sports Federation, we run on a tight budget and we are very careful that every penny goes to help fund our fantastic trips, buy and replace equipment and subsidise training for members. At the moment there are a few things that we really need your help with. Firstly, replacement of maps and equipment is always important. We also urgently need new leaders and drivers. Although we've been successful recently in gaining new leaders, many will be graduating soon, so we'll need to encourage and recruit more shortly. To lead trips in mountainous areas, leaders are required to have attended Mountain Leader training or an agreed equivalent. The costs of training have risen quickly in the last few years, well above inflation. The least expensive ML training courses are now £300 per person, while most centres charge £350 and up. In recognition of this, the club subsidises members attending ML courses to a greater extent than before. Your kind donations would be very gratefully received and would help to ensure the health of the club! To make a regular or one-off donation to the club you can go to www.giving.ox.ac.uk/sport/walking_club.html



*Thank you,
on behalf of all OUWC members!*

Left: Cheers! OUWC President Rob Siddaway enjoying the first cup of tea of the day in a club mug! Lake District wild camping trip, May 2010. Right: Route planning on the BIG Snowdonia trip, November 2009. Photos courtesy of Jaya John John and Imogen Wade respectively. Title picture first page, Lakes wild camping trip 2010. Photo courtesy of Jaya John John.

