



talking walking

Oxfordshire Ramblers Issue 60, April 2024



Start place

“When the weather is fine ...

... then you know it's a sign for messing about on the river.” That's the opening line of the song written by Tony Hatch, recorded by Josh McCrae. Well, since late November, I reckon, it's not been a great time for walking alongside rivers in Oxfordshire.

If you've driven past the May Bush pub, on the Thames at Newbridge, you may have admired their swimming pool. It's also known as the car park. Vale Group's path maintenance team, the Vale Path Volunteers, were due to cut back a seriously overgrown path nearby in February. A recce just before task day revealed it to be underwater. So, no go.

The VPV was due to cut back a hedge along a popular path in Wootton parish only to call it off twice. Although it was on a slope it had become a quagmire and, because of the slope, it was too slippery to work on safely.

February was deemed to be the fourth wettest on record since 1871 for England. Not surprisingly a sizeable number of Oxfordshire Ramblers walks have been called-off or re-routed this winter and early spring because of flooding or water logging.

It's my impression that the British weather evens itself out over the course of a year. So, I predict that we'll have an abnormally dry spell before the year is out. You read it here first.



Cover: A rare sight. No, not the water – blue sky..
Photo Dave Cavanagh



The dark thorny tunnel wherein lies the path leading from the Thames at Newbridge towards the Windrush



Photo Petra Neve



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Unless otherwise stated, items were written by the editor.
Back issues www.ramblers-oxon.org.uk/magazine.html

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My time in Ramblers

Tony Clark

I joined the Ramblers' East Berks Area in 1997 as I needed something to do after I had retired and soon found myself on the committee in charge of the procurement and distribution of a series of local walking guide books written by members of the group. I also volunteered to become a path warden and was allocated two parishes in the Windsor area by the Area Footpath Secretary – the formidable footpath campaigner Margaret Bowdery. I was given parish footpath maps and had to walk all the footpaths twice a year, report problems and install missing waymark discs – it all sounds very familiar now. I also at this time started leading walks for the group.

Then in 2002, when we moved to Thame, I transferred to the Thame & Wheatley (T&W) area and soon found myself on that committee to fill the missing Footpath Secretary role. In that role I quickly tried to establish a series of path wardens to cover the 34 parishes in the area but this was only partially successful at the time. This was all to take off and get established by others a bit later. As part of my Footpath Secretary role I was also able to take up and resolve a number of major and long-outstanding footpath problems in conjunction with the footpath authorities at OCC, and get several descriptions of these successes publicised in the Rambler *South East Walker* journal.



Tony Clark. Photo Ruth Cornish

I continued to lead walks and had led a total of 95 walks for Ramblers in total by the time I stopped doing this. I had also introduced the idea of a newsletter to publicise the group's activities– an idea taken up enthusiastically and very successfully by our Publicity Secretary, Ruth Cornish. My other contribution was to set up the original T&W Footpath Maintenance Group, initially just carrying out basic path clearance, but which has now blossomed into a very active and efficient unit under more expert leadership.



Tony leading a Get Walking Day (introductory) walk for T&W, something he did for about 11 years. Photo Ruth Cornish.

After 10 years in the role of Footpath Secretary and approaching the age of 80, however, I decided it was time to retire from this role. I continued to carry out the role of Parish Path Warden for Thame

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and that of PPW Coordinator for 21 of the T&W parishes until the last few years when I managed to gradually reduce this to just eight. I continue to walk with the group but now only the newly introduced Super Short walks as I approach my 90th birthday, but it has been a privilege to be a part of the Ramblers community for so long and to have met and made friends with so many lovely people along the way.

Tony with Jackie Smith, OCC Countryside Access Officer, on the Oxfordshire Golf Course in 2019. Together with Ruth Cornish and Jackie, Tony erected waymark posts and added the waymarks on new public rights of way. These were created because some of the old paths had been blocked or flooded by a lake when the course was created in the 1990s. Photo Ruth Cornish.



The look and feel of many paths this winter and early spring. Photo Ian Macpherson



**Not all walks have
to be in the
countryside, of
course.**



Here are photos taken by
Cath Ewart on a Henley and
Goring Group walk in Reading.



Oxfordshire Area Picnic at 12:30

Saturday 22 June 2024

at Holton Orchard (adjacent to Holton Village Hall)

SP603064, OX33 1PR, What3Words: otter.useful.reclining

Come along and enjoy the annual Oxfordshire Area Picnic. This year it is hosted by Thame & Wheatley Group who will be leading **all** the walks to the picnic. Cakes, hot and cold drinks provided, **but bring your own picnic**. The Village Hall will be open for toilets, and shelter if the weather is wet.

Thame & Wheatley Group will be leading seven walks, all aiming to arrive at the picnic location at 1230. The walks range from 4 miles Leisurely to 10 miles Moderate so there should be a walk suitable for everyone. Details of the walks can be seen now on the Oxfordshire Ramblers website under the 'Walking' tab ['Monthly Reports'](#) . They are also below, but do check online on the day.

The Picnic Walks

09:30 SP563062 OX3 8TA Moderate 10 miles Circular

Shotover Country Park car park. Mostly downhill 6.5 mile morning walk using Oxford Greenbelt Way via Sandhills, Forest Hill, skirting Stanton Great Wood and Waterperry Wood to Holton Orchard. Gentle uphill return (3.5 miles) via Wheatley and Shotover Park. Registered Assistance Dogs only. T&W Leader MP 07811 883552

10:00 SP591066 OX33 1EP Moderate 6 miles Circular

Holton, lay-by junction A40 and B4027 to Forest Hill. Circular walk with one short ascent via Forest Hill and Stanton Great Wood to Holton Orchard. 1 mile easy walk back to the start. Access to the lay-by for parking is from the London-bound carriageway only. Please note that dogs are not allowed in Holton Orchard. T&W Leader RC 07788 190170 / 01844 213608

10:00 SP561044 OX4 2RR Moderate 9 miles Circular

Horspath Sports Ground, Horspath Road. This undulating walk is 5 miles in the morning via Brasenose Wood and Shotover Country Park to arrive at Holton Orchard. The scenic return route (4 miles) passes through Wheatley, Littleworth Nature Reserve and Horspath. Registered Assistance Dogs only. T&W Leader DW 07860 334873

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10:00 SP628064 OX33 1JZ Moderate 7.5 miles Circular

Waterperry Gardens. Please park in overflow car parks. 5.5 mile level morning walk across fields to Worminghall and Thomley Hall Farm, then turning south to Holton Orchard. Return (2 miles) to start via Holton Mill. Registered Assistance Dogs only. T&W Leader JB 07881 930303

10:00 SP603064 OX33 1PR Moderate 8 miles Circular

Holton village hall. 4.5 mile morning walk with good views via Wheatley, Castle Hill Farm, Castle Hill and Holton Mill to Holton Orchard. Followed by scenic circular walk (3.5 miles) via Forest Hill. This is a figure-of-eight walk, so there is an option to do the morning walk only (or afternoon!). Registered Assistance Dogs only. T&W Leader KK 01865 890829 / 07767 158074



Photo Fiona Hitchcock

10:30 SP578093 OX33 1HD Moderate 7 miles Circular

Stanton St John, village hall car park. 4 mile morning walk via woods and fields using the Oxfordshire Way to Holton Orchard for the Area picnic. Return route (3 miles) with one short ascent via Forest Hill. Registered Assistance Dogs only. T&W Leader WM 07749 750067 / 01844 215364

10:30 SP603064 OX33 1PR Leisurely 4 miles Circular

Holton village hall. Scenic walk (with some stiles) over fields and through Holton Wood to Forest Hill before turning back to finish at Holton Orchard. Please note that dogs are not allowed in Holton Orchard. T&W Leader APa 01865 423555 / 07919 046330



Photo Pam Wheeler

Peter Skuse drew my attention to this [article](#) by Rick Pearson on msn.com “How long does it take to walk a mile?” There’s no one answer, of course.

Photo Inge Mikkelsen



Award for David Godfrey

Richard Birch

David Godfrey has been a Footpath Secretary in Oxfordshire for over 45 years, initially for Bicester & Kidlington Group and for the past few decades as Area Footpath Secretary.

The role of Footpath Secretary is to consider and comment on proposed footpath diversions or closures and David must have dealt with thousands of them during this time, often walking tens of miles in a day to

view the proposed routes. In recognition of his outstanding commitment I (on the left) presented David with a bottle of wine plus a certificate signed by Ramblers Chief Executive Ross Maloney.



Fact and fiction

If you want to know the origin of place-names in England, our erstwhile Area Footpath Secretary David Godfrey is your man. That said, the answer may not be a simple one, given the transmogrification that may have taken place over some 2,000 years. In recent correspondence with David I suggested that with a little knowledge one could understand where -ham, -ton, -tun, -by come from i.e. the last part of place-names. David replied that I had “fallen into one of the numerous elephant traps [regarding place name endings].”

He continued “Names ending -ham can come from Old English ham, with a long ‘a’, which is home in

modern English, or hamm, with a short ‘a’, which has numerous meanings but is originally a flat expanse in the bend of a river, like Witten-hamm (a classic example of this). Also Old English -dun (hill with or suitable for a settlement on top) usually becomes -don, but can end up as -ton (tun, settlement or farm) or -den (denu, long valley usually with a stream) - the classic example is Bletchington which has -ton and -don spellings as early as Domesday and is a classic dun. And so on and so forth (and some of the men that places are named after turn out to be women, as (probably) Abingdon.)”

In early February David Godfrey was on a walk with Banbury and North Oxfordshire Group. On it David met another, to use his phrase, “place-name nerd” who told him that some American had tried to get the meanings of British place-names by using Artificial Intelligence (AI). Apparently the source of this information gave no examples, but goodness alone knows what it may have turned up. At this point David let his imagination run riot as to what AI might make of these place-names:

Farthinghoe (meaning: a ridge with knob on the end, covered in ferns): cheap garden implement.

Welwyn (place at willow trees): Old Welsh advert for washing powder - Welsh gwell better gwyn white.

Wendover (Welsh: white water): to wander slowly to a destination.

Stonor (stony ridge): Old Testament judge in case of prostitution.

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Airedale (valley of River Aire):beer containing too much gas.

Aviemore (Gaelic: big hill face): question asked by Glaswegian beggar.

Bakewell (spring of a man called Badeca): to just avoid what Alfred did with the cakes.

Bannockburn (stream running from horned hill): what Alfred did with the cakes.

Ladbroke (stream used for divination): young man who has spent too much time in betting shops.

Marsworth (enclosure of a man called Maessa): the price of a journey to outer space; an astronomical sum.

Littleworth (small enclosure): the actual value of what you paid a marsworth for.

Kaber (jackdaw hill): that which ignorant Sassenachs believe is worn under the kilt.

Killingworth (enclosure of a man called Cylla): assassin's fee.

Selworthy (enclosure by willow trees): not yet past its sell-by date.

Sexhow (ridge with knob on the end, inhabited by Saxons): English version of Kama Sutra.

And goodness knows what it may (or may not) have made of Middlesex



Photo David Godfrey



On Twitter/X

When my sister in-law was a waitress in Canada, she was taking drink orders from a group of Americans. They each ordered a glass of red wine. She suggested they choose a LITRE instead. They spoke among themselves and one man put up his hand and said - "I'll be the leader."

A man owns a parrot that can't stop swearing. So he says to him, "If you don't stop swearing, I'll put you in the fridge."

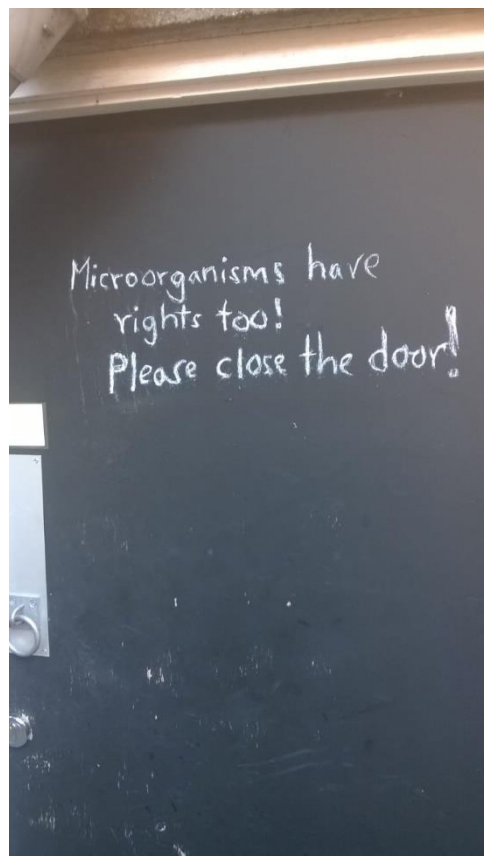
The parrot keeps on swearing. So he puts it in the fridge.

Five minutes later, he takes the parrot out of the fridge, and says to it, "Are you going to stop swearing?"

"Yes," says the parrot. "But what did that chicken do?"

Barry Cryer

rest stop



In a pub. Photo Dave Cavanagh

How about becoming a parish path warden?

We have vacancies for parish path wardens (PPW) in some of our parishes, as shown below.

Would you be able to keep an eye on the paths in one of these parishes? It involves something that you love doing: walking. You could do it alone or with one or more friends.

When you come across a path problem e.g. vegetation overgrowth, difficult stile, locked gate, collapsing footbridge, path not made good after ploughing, you report it.

We have an Oxfordshire Ramblers PPW Network, though PPWs don't have to be members of Ramblers. Our chief coordinator, David Tole, has written helpful guidance notes and is always there to give additional help if required. You can find his guidance notes on the Oxfordshire Ramblers [website](#). Simply click on the Parish Path Wardens link on the drop-down menu, as illustrated.



On the next page you'll see the parishes for which we need PPWs.

We are particularly short of PPWs in West Oxfordshire.

My friend got locked in a coffee place overnight. Now he only ever goes into Starbucks, not the rivals. He's Costa-phobic - Roger Swift

Parishes with PPW vacancies

If you think that you might want to be a PPW for one of these parishes, contact [David Tole](#), without obligation.

Banbury and N.Oxon:

Bloxham; Claydon with Clattercote, Duns Tew

Bicester & Kidlington:

Ardley with Fewcott; Arncott; Bucknell; Caversfield; Hampton Gay & Poyle; Horton-cum-Studley; Piddington; Somerton; Yarnton

Didcot & Wallingford

Culham; Didcot; Newington; Nuneham Courtenay

Thame & Wheatley:

Chalgrove; Cuddesdon with Denton; Forest Hill with Shotover; Tetsworth; Tiddington-with-Albury

Vale of White Horse:

Blewbury; Buscot; Coleshill; Great Faringdon; Harwell; Kennington; Letcombe Regis; Pusey; Watchfield

West Oxfordshire:

Bladon; Cassington; Clanfield; Curbridge & Lew; Ducklington; Grafton & Radcot; Hardwick-with-Yelford; Holwell; Kelmscott; Kencot; Langford; Little Faringdon; Sandford St. Martin; Shilton; Standlake; Swerford; Westcote Barton; Westwell

David has arranged a workshop for PPWs – both new and experienced ones – details on the next page.

Note that parishes in both the Cotswold and Chilterns National Landscape Areas (formerly AONBs) have separate PPW schemes.



I entered the 'How not to surrender' competition and I won hands down - Bennett Arron

Workshop for Parish Path Wardens

Friday 26 April 2024
09:00 – 16:00
Fringford Village Hall
The Green, Fringford,
Bicester OX27 8DY

DIRECTIONS The village of Fringford is situated half a mile off A4421 north-east of Bicester. The Village Hall is in the centre of the village adjacent to the Primary School. There is car parking on site and nearby.

The programme will start with refreshments from 0900.

From 0930 the morning session will include several Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) officers, Helen Bates who's the national Volunteering Officer (paths) from Ramblers central office, as well as representatives of Oxfordshire Ramblers and the Oxford Fieldpaths Society.

This will provide you with lots of information about the role of a Parish Path Warden (PPW), what is expected of you, what support there is and where to go for additional help.

After a break for coffee we will have a time looking at helping you navigate the OCC CAMSWeb system so please bring a laptop/tablet/smartphone (fully charged!). If you are already a PPW, please also bring a copy of your large-scale Parish Map showing the Public Rights of Way and the latest list of unresolved path problems in your parish.

We will break for lunch at around 1245 – please bring your own food, drinks will be provided. Note there is no shop in the village.

The afternoon session will start at 1315 and will consist mainly of a walk (of no more than 2 miles) on paths in local fields, looking at real issues and how to address them. Please bring a pair of secateurs, a pen and notebook, whatever technology (compass, GPS, smartphone etc) you normally use when walking plus appropriate footwear, waterproofs etc.

We will be finished by 1600.

MUSLIM HIKERS

CHAMPIONING DIVERSITY OUTDOORS

UPCOMING EVENTS

FINALIST

Charity Initiative of the
Year

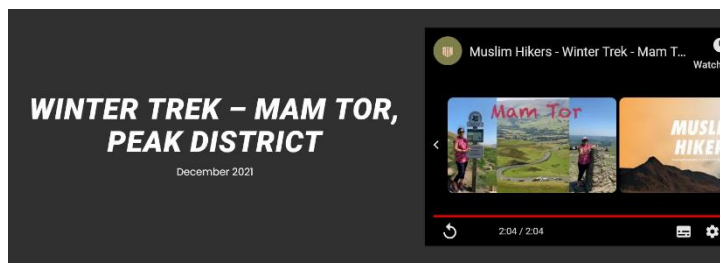
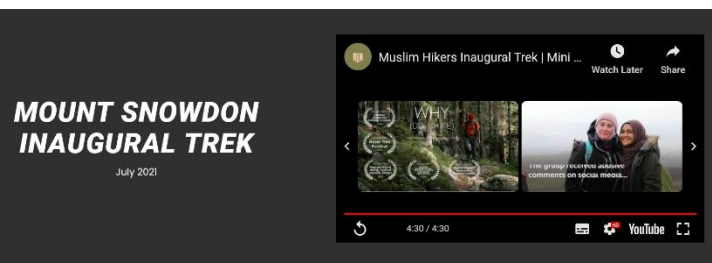


Vote for the Ramblers as the Charity Initiative of the Year

We were thrilled to learn that the Ramblers is a finalist in the **National Outdoor Expo Awards** in the **Charity Initiative of the Year** category. This is fantastic news for everyone who supports the Ramblers and helps open the way for

Watch their [videos](#) to see the sheer joy of people coming together and then walking together up some of our iconic ascents.

Beautifully filmed, these short films might take you back to when you hiked to these and similar places, with the sense of achievement that you would have experienced.



In a Ramblers Volunteers email earlier this year we were invited to vote for Ramblers in the *Charity Initiative of the Year* category in this year's National Outdoor Expo Awards. I did that and then scanned the other candidates in various categories. My eye was taken by Muslim Hikers, so I went to their [website](#) to have a look. I was reminded that I had seen them on BBC Countryfile a few years ago. What had stuck with me was the camaraderie and big smiles all round, which permeates their videos. It was a reminder, too, that group walks liberate people, encouraging them to go where they probably otherwise wouldn't have ventured.



I was last on Snowdon (Yr Wyddfa) when I went there for a couple of days after attending Ramblers General Council in Bangor in April 2018. It was a glorious day, though my sense of achievement was dented somewhat at seeing eight year-olds who had got there before me.



I walked up Snowdon from Snowdon Rangers Youth Hostel. As you can see the weather was fortuitously glorious. Above is one of the magnificent views that I had each time I stopped to look over my shoulder on the way up.

Near the top, with snow. Everyone who went up there that day had done it under their own steam: snow on the line had prevented the train from Llanberis going up.





Breath-taking views from the top of Yr Wyddfa.



Highlights from Oxfordshire Ramblers AGM

Richard Birch, Chair Oxfordshire Ramblers

Our AGM (20 January) was hosted in Charlbury by West Oxfordshire (WO) Group, preceded by a walk led by WO Chair Judith Wardle.

We were joined by Lucy Armitage, one of the Ramblers Trustees, who gave us a very informative update on recent Ramblers initiatives including the Walk Leaders' Handbook, the refreshed Ramblers strategy, and Walks Manager.

Walk Leaders in the audience were delighted to hear that the draft 37-page Walk Leaders' Handbook had been radically revised, following feedback from Walk Leaders, and would now be only 8 pages long. The Handbook, along with other tools, will be rolled out in the Spring.

I gave a presentation of the work of Oxfordshire Area over the past year. This included:

- Two First Aid courses, organised by Steve Walde, provided by St John Ambulance
- One Parish Path Wardens workshop, organised by David Tole
- Safety training for brushcutter operatives
- Purchase of tools for the path maintenance teams
- 1305 led walks covering 9310 miles – this compares with 790 walks 10 years ago
- A steady membership of 2304

The full Annual Report, including reports from each of the Groups, can be found on [our website](#)

The main task of the AGM is to appoint a new Committee. Thanks were given to the two Committee Members who were standing down at the AGM – Wendy Mannix, Area Membership Secretary, and David Godfrey, Area Footpath Secretary. The remaining members of the Committee were re-elected in addition to Pat Lonergan as Area Membership Secretary, and Terry Pollard as the Area Footpath Secretary (North). The Area Footpath Secretary (South) post remains vacant (you can still volunteer!).

Smile. Things may get worse more slowly.

Photo Pam Wheeler



Photo Pam Wheeler,
taken on 1st February.
Little did we know that
the rest of February
would have water
everywhere.

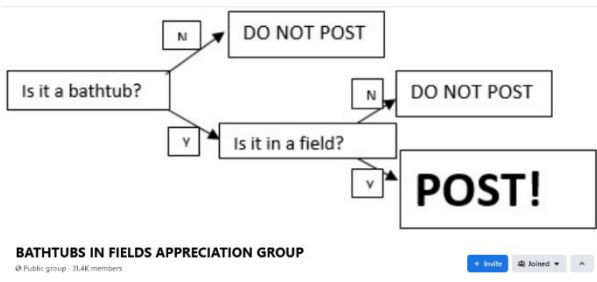






Photos Ian Macpherson

Bathtubs in Fields
Appreciation Group is just
one of the off the wall
Facebook pages that I
follow. It can get a bit silly ...



Kedge Brook
15 December 2023

Update on Tubitha and Tubsy.
Am still passing these two tubs frequently on my way to work so monitor their behaviour. Tubitha is now 'nesting' using a collection of pallets (so many things you can do with pallets including tub nests) whilst Tubsy, as per typical for a bloke, was lazing in the sun whilst she did all the work.
Looks like next time I stop there could be the pitter patter of tiny tublets!



You and 543 others · 68 comments · 5 shares

Like · Comment · Share

- View more comments
- Karen Harrison** Top contributor

Ooh yes, looks like tubitha is nesting! Tubsy is still around for protection but essentially his job is done. They look to be common whites so maybe some tublets in a few months (they don't produce sinks or belfasts) Happy to be corrected by members more familiar with this species. What a fantastic observation of this beautiful pair. Thank you and keep up the posts 🍷🍷🍷

5w · Like · Reply · Share · View all 2 replies
- Julie Ashfield** Top contributor

I am curious to know more. When Tubitha comes to full term, will she have support? Like in the form of a trained tubwife? Or do these tame, shy little creatures go through the whole hatching process alone? What happens in the event of an emergency?

5w · Like · Reply · Share · View all 18 replies

Dave Nunn
Top contributor · 15 December 2023

Shocking photos have emerged of 'top contributors' in this group, including footage of baths being taken out for walks and being posed for photos. Rumours are circulating of a breakaway group called Bathtubs Pouting In Front of Famous Views



You and 1.3K others · 110 comments · 15 shares

Like · Comment · Share

- View more comments
- Chris Carter** Top contributor

I think this is a huge kindness. How many times have we sympathised with lonely tubs languishing in overgrown bramble patches, sunk up to the plug hole in mud or trapped by merciless stone walls? Bless this man I say, taking that poor friendless tub for an hour out of it's miserable existence. He'd better put it back, mind.

5w · Like · Reply · Share · 54
- Mags Mills**

The shame of it! Tame house tubs being taken to pose in outdoor locations, filmed, photographed and passed off as wild. Are these poor tame tubs retrieved and returned to their cozy bathrooms? Or are these abandoned and left to fend for themselves in a...

5w · Like · Reply · Share · Edited · View all 5 replies · 70

feet up



In The Woodman pub, Fernham, where four of us did put our feet up after a midweek VOWH Ramblers walk. The publican kindly let all on the walk park in the pub car park, whether going into the pub afterwards or not.

A woman goes into a pet shop to buy a parrot for only £5.

“Well, I must confess, it was brought up in a brothel,” says the shopkeeper. “And, to put it politely, it has quite an extensive vocabulary.”

“Never mind,” says the woman. “At that price, I’ll take it.”

So she takes the parrot home, puts its cage in the living room and takes the cover off.

“New place – very nice,” says the parrot.

Then the woman’s two daughters walk in.

“New place, new girls – very nice,” says the parrot.

Then the woman’s husband walks in, and the parrot says, “Oh hello, Keith!”

Barry Cryer

Don’t kill your wife with
WORK!

Let electricity do it

This is wrong on so many levels. From a 1936 poster of the Willesdon Electricity Department

There are two wind turbines near each other. One asks “What’s your favourite type of music?”

The other replies “I’m a big metal fan.”

A man walks into a pub with a giraffe.
After drinking too much, the giraffe keels over and dies.
As the man starts to walk out the barman calls out “You can’t leave that lyin’ there!”
To which the man replies “That’s not a lion, it’s a giraffe.

Sign on the door of a music shop:

Gone chopin
Bach in a minuet

René Descartes walks into a bar. The barman asks “Would you like a beer?”

Descartes replies “I think not” and promptly disappears.

