

Walker

England Coast Path openings

More sections of the England Coast Path in the south east have opened.

In Sussex, the 33 mile (53 km) stretch from Shoreham-by-Sea to Eastbourne was officially opened on 19 May. The route includes the seaside promenades in Hove, Brighton and Seaford, cliff top paths at Peacehaven - where the route crosses the Greenwich Meridian - and through the Seven Sisters Country Park to pass Birling Gap and Beachy Head before arriving in Eastbourne. Coincidentally, a revamped visitor centre in the Seven Sisters Country Park was opened in June by the South Downs National Park (which took over the park from East Sussex County Council in 2021).

Then, on 13 July, 85 miles (137 km) of the Essex coast from Tilbury to Southend and on to Wallasea Island was officially opened. This new stretch links with the Kent coast (and the already opened Grain to Woolwich section) via the ferry across the Thames at Tilbury. The path joins varied landscapes offering views of saltmarsh, vast grasslands and seaside towns. It passes the historic Tilbury Fort, encircles Canvey Island and passes the Two Tree Island



On the clifftops between Peacehaven and Newhaven, Sussex.

nature reserve before reaching Wallasea Island, where spoil from the Crossrail tunnelling works in London was taken.

There will also be new public rights of access (secured in law) to areas of coastal land such as beaches, cliffs and foreshore - in many places for the first time. The England Coast Path will also allow the route to 'roll back' if the



The England Coast Path at Chalkwell, near Southend-on-Sea.

Photo: Darren Braine, copyright Natural England.

coastline erodes, shifts or slips, solving the long-standing difficulties of maintaining a continuous route along the coast.

When completed the England Coast Path National Trail will be the longest continuous coastal walking route in the world at over 2,700 miles (4,345 km). open and readily accessible to all.

Asylum seekers offered walks and hope



A first visit to the Surrey countryside.

Photo: Louise Stilwell-Stage.

There has been a lot in the news about asylum seekers arriving in the UK and the pressures placed on the various services whilst their applications for refugee status are processed.

Various initiatives designed to alleviate some of the tensions within the overloaded system have been piloted and, following an approach by Surrey Police, we in Mole Valley Ramblers considered what we might be able to do to help. Two hundred or so male asylum seekers reside

near us in a repurposed hotel and we decided to offer them a bespoke walks programme.

As Ramblers, we are inclined to take the easily accessible countryside, along with its many associated mental and physical benefits for granted. As a result, an opportunity to introduce a small group of asylum seekers to the delights of the surrounding rural scenery was a great chance to share our good fortune.

A simple route of five miles was devised starting from the hotel. All easy, level walking,

but quite tricky to navigate through the wood! A team of volunteer leaders was recruited with the plan of offering the same walk twice a month as a pilot during June and July for small groups of residents. Our police liaison officer arranged a sign-up sheet at the hotel and 30 people signed up for the initial walk!

Our first walk was held on 10 June. The start was a slightly haphazard affair, the first challenge being to gather together about 10 residents wearing vaguely the right type of gear. A register was taken and retaken several times (as people often disappeared and reappeared). Finally, they were presented with bottled water and a snack which was intended for the journey but which most instantly devoured! As many people spoke little or no English and did not really know what to expect, it was helpful to have the assistance of the local police officer and a staff member who joined us for the walk along with a visiting minister.

We ended up with a group of 22, made up of 14 residents from 11 different countries: Albania, Algeria, Chad, Ethiopia, India, Iran, Ivory Coast, Mali, Somalia, Sudan and Ukraine. After an apprehensive start we were relieved when the mood magically lifted and the group as a whole relaxed. Many were just chatting and laughing amongst themselves, others quietly appreciating the scenery and enjoying being outside in the countryside. The majority were very receptive, keen and interested to know more about everything.

One memorable moment was when an articulate resident from West Africa could not stop smiling as we walked through a meadow laden with buttercups. He said

that it was the first time he had been out and seen the countryside in seven months. He explained that he had spent most of his time in his room. Our volunteers moved up and down the group, chatting to residents, some of whom were very keen to talk. The universal language of football and sport in general was very helpful in this respect!

We stopped off at various times, showed points of interest, waymark signs and even attempted to teach the names of animals and trees. A smallholding with pigs and goats caused particular amusement. Of course we had the 'compulsory' mid-way refreshment break, as it is a Ramblers tradition! Home-made flapjacks were offered around and happily consumed.

We heard the life stories of some of the residents. Much of it was quite distressing and hard to listen to, but hopefully, it was therapeutic for them to share. We all found it a very worthwhile and uplifting experience. We are glad our group has been able to offer some small outlet for those in such difficult circumstances and with so little to do. Further walks are planned.

We would encourage other Ramblers groups to see if they have hotels in their vicinity where there are refugees who might be glad of similar walking opportunities. Please get in touch with Fiona at Fiona.s@molevalleyramblers.org.uk if you would like to learn more about our experiences. To read more about the asylum process and migrant support in the UK go to <https://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/> and <https://www.migranthehelpuk.org/>

Louise Stilwell-Stage and Fiona Spencer
Mole Valley Ramblers



Group AGMs

The AGM season is approaching: generally October to December for groups. Constitutionally groups are required to give notice to all members, but difficulties associated with the General Data Protection Regulation may make this difficult to achieve.

Please accept this as notice that AGMs may be taking place during the above period. All details given below should be regarded as provisional: please contact group secretaries for further information about meetings and any associated walks if you do not hear from them directly; to avoid disappointment do not turn up without checking.

Group AGMs of which details were available by the copy date for this issue are as follows.

Amersham & District:

Wednesday 23 November, 8pm, Coleshill Village Hall, Barracks Hill, Coleshill, Amersham, HP7 0LN.

Aylesbury and District:

Friday 2 December, 7.30pm, St Anne's Hall, Aylesbury Road, Wendover, HP22 6JG.

Chilterns Weekend Walkers:

Sunday 9 October, 2pm, Great Missenden Memorial Centre, Link Road, Great Missenden, HP16 9AE.

Hillingdon and District:

Saturday 22 October, 2pm, St Martins Church Hall, Eastcote Road, Ruislip, HA4 8DG.

Wycombe District Group:

Saturday 26 November, 2pm, Lane End Village Hall, Lane End, HP14 3JE.

John Esslemont, Acting Area Secretary

North Bucks volunteers work on Waddesdon Estate

Working in partnership with Waddesdon Estates LLP and Buckinghamshire Council, six RIPPLers in two teams of three installed a pair of kissing gates either side of a paddock at Waddesdon Stud in early July. It is hoped the new gates will be the start of a plan to upgrade stiles across the estate's footpath network. The partnership wants to encourage walkers to use and stick to the public rights of way at all times and the estate works hard to ensure its paths are open, safe and easy to use. We look forward to continuing our work with Waddesdon Estates LLP and Buckinghamshire Council over the next year or so.

Bill Piers

North Bucks rRIPPLE Group



The dual logo plaque fitted to the new gates.

Photos: Bill Piers.



BEDFORDSHIRE bulletin

Bedfordshire Walking Festival 2022 (10 - 18 September)

This year's festival will offer 300 miles of walking over nine days with 43 walks. Half of these are morning or afternoon walks and many do not require booking. For those who like to stride out there will be nine full-day walks ranging from 11 to 18 miles. Additionally, the Greensand Ridge Challenge walk (40 miles over two days) will be back over the second weekend of the festival.

The festival has always been known for offering something a little different and this year will be no exception with a full day combining a walk with a cruise on the River Great Ouse on Thursday 15 September. It will be suitable for most abilities and bookable via www.johnbunyanboat.org or 01946 847848. Recognising that many walkers want to find out more about where they are visiting, there are several informative walks such as The three Ls of Henlow's Heritage: Ladies, Leisure and Lakes on Monday 12 September and A model village in the heart of the Vale on Sunday 18 September. Programmes are available and details of all the walks are on the festival website www.bedswalkfest.co.uk.

Barry Ingram



The festival programme's cover photo.

Training courses

Our last area training course this year will be on Sunday 11 September at Harlington village hall where the subject will be Apps, Maps and Compass. This will be for those who want to learn how to combine old and new technology and get the most out of planning and navigating a walk. The cost will be £10 per person and the course will be open to both Ramblers members and non-members. Bookings and advance payment can be made at www.bedswalkfest.co.uk.

Box Hill:

The National Trust with support from Surrey County Council has replaced the 270 wooden steps on the North

Downs Way between the stepping stones over the River Mole and the summit. The well-worn wooden steps have been replaced with longer-lasting recycled plastic ones

SOUTH EAST walker

Distributed quarterly to members of the Ramblers in Bedfordshire, Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, Milton Keynes and West Middlesex, Essex, Inner London, Kent, Oxfordshire and Surrey Areas.

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RIPPLE (Restoring and Improving public paths for leisure and enjoyment)

Our volunteers continue to be very active and effective, assisting both Bedford Borough and Central Bedfordshire councils to improve the path network across the county.

At Potton we widened 600 yards of overgrown bridleway with assistance from members of the British Horse Society. At Barton-le-Clay they went even further by improving just over a mile of bridleway. On Whipsnade golf course a small group of our volunteers replaced six marker posts, a task much appreciated by golf club members.

Within Bedford Borough, path improvement work has taken place at Bolnhurst, Clapham, Duloe, Great Barford, Keysoe, Odell, Sharnbrook and Wootton and new marker posts have been installed near Staploe. Time was also found to paint another 50 marker posts. It is remarkable that our volunteers are able to rise to whatever challenges come their way and get the job done in the allotted time.

Barry Ingram



RIPPLE volunteers at Great Barford in July. Photo: Barry Ingram.

New future for the Vanguard Way

On 28 May, in the hallowed surroundings of St Matthew's church in Croydon, the Vanguard Way Association was formally inaugurated. It will take over management of the 66-mile trail from East Croydon to Newhaven. For over 40 years, the trail has been looked after informally by the Vanguards Rambling Club since its launch in 1981. Though still keen to see the trail continue and prosper, they are all now of pensionable age, and felt the time was right to start the process of handing over the reins to younger people. It was agreed at the meeting that the Vanguard Way Association should be formally established, and a committee has been set up to bring this about, with me as Chair.

The opportunity was also taken to launch the Vanguard Way Photoguide, a free app developed by John Jenkins, now the association's Vice-Chair and Publicity Coordinator. With this on their phones, walkers can follow the trail with photos, on which a



The meeting was preceded by a walk from Coombe Lane tram stop. Photo: David Lewis.

yellow arrow points the next step, together with relevant extracts from the official route description and items of interest to look out for. To download the app, go to Google Play Store or Apple App Store and search Vanguard Way (the icon shows 'VGWguide' inside a yellow arrow).

Membership of the association is open to anyone who wishes to support the trail, for £7 a year. The committee has plans for improved signage, replacement of stiles with

gates, provision of more benches and clearance of obstructive vegetation. A priority is to update the trail's website vanguardway.org.uk. A team of volunteer rangers is being set up, a newsletter will keep members informed of developments, and it's hoped that there will be opportunities for members to meet socially on walks. For further information, email membership@vanguardway.org.uk.

Colin Saunders

Celebrating 50 years of the Essex Way

The Essex Way is 50 years old this year. To celebrate its anniversary, Chelmer & Blackwater group took the lead in organising a walk over four days from Epping to Great Tey in early April and, with Lea Valley Friends, some shorter walks. Peter Jepson, Chair of Chelmer & Blackwater Ramblers says that in all 70 members took part. Essex Ramblers' President, Len Banister gave an engaging presentation at the celebration tea party at Great Tey. The metaphorical baton was then passed to Colchester, Tendring and Hike Essex groups for the concluding stages later in April; one heroine linked up with every group to walk the entire 81 miles.

The Essex Way route was commissioned by a competition to involve young people in Essex by the local branch of the Council for the Protection of Rural England to mark European Conservation Year, 1971. Chelmsford Technical High School won with a route from the Central Line at Epping to Dedham, but it was not until the 1980s that the path was extended to Harwich.

The Ramblers played a large part in developing the route and Essex Area Vice-President Ann McLaren, who was involved as a young walker, recalls the important role played by fondly remembered stalwarts Fred Matthews and Derek Keeble. Ann says, "We complained about the lack of signage, evidence of paths underfoot, and the absence of bridges to cross the frequent streams and deep ditches along our proposed route. The further west you went in Essex, the worse the conditions became. Poor footpaths were always near the top of most day's discussions".

The nine-stage route has improved since and is now mostly well waymarked. However, Peter Jepson says that although this year's spring was relatively dry, the first two hours from Epping were very muddy

and parts of other sections were overgrown; these comments have been reported to Essex Highways.

The walk was followed on BBC Radio Essex's 'Steve and Ian' show. Presenters Steve Scruton and Ian Wyatt had both been closely involved in the joint project with Essex Ramblers to walk the route in 2008 when walkers were followed by a radio car; with changing technology, the interviews this year were conducted by mobile phones. They told Stuart Tanner of Hike Essex, one of the interviewees, that some years ago they had walked the entire Essex Way themselves, staying overnight in towns along the route. They said it gave them a real sense of how it joined communities across the county. Stuart concurs, saying "one of the nice things about this was the way it brought Ramblers groups together in a common endeavour. I really enjoyed meeting people from other groups".

Chelmer & Blackwater Group will be concluding its celebration by walking the final stages from Great Tey to Harwich in October and members of other groups who wish to join in should go to their website for details.

*Mike Cannell
Essex Area Media Officer*

Suggested reading

- Essex County Council has a 32-page booklet, available to download as a pdf from www.essexway.org.uk/documents/EssexWaybooklet.pdf

- Walking in Essex by Peter Aylmer, published by Cicerone ISBN 9781786310224, which contains an Across Essex walk which incorporates the Essex Way.

- The Essex Way by Joe Jackson ISBN 9798457363090, available from www.walkingthewild.co.uk,

- The Essex Way in Circular Walks by Paul Bentley and Jacqui Farrants, ISBN 9781527266247, available from Amazon and ebay.



Essex Way walkers cross Nunn's Bridge near Coggeshall. Photo: C&B Ramblers.

Exploring the Elizabeth Line

The Elizabeth Line, formerly known as Crossrail, was opened by the Queen in May. It is London's newest railway and provides shorter journey times across many parts of the south east. If you live in the east it is now much easier to go for walks and excursions to the west of London and vice versa for those who live to the west. And if you possess a Freedom Pass issued by a London borough you can do every journey on the Elizabeth Line free of charge even as far as the furthest points at Shenfield and Reading.

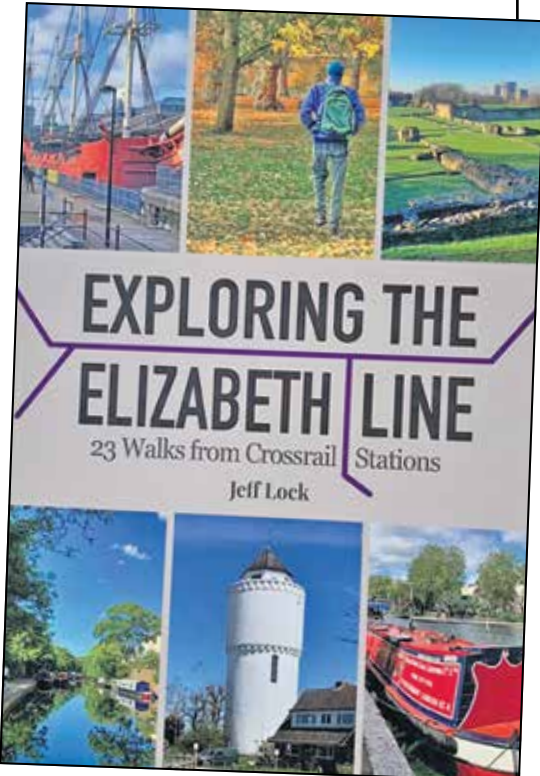
The potential for walkers is enormous and I have written a 96-page walking guide entitled Exploring the Elizabeth Line: 23 walks from Crossrail stations, which was published by Countryside Books in July (ISBN 978 1 84674 414 3). Highlights include hidden alleyways and squares in Central London, historic ruins and woodlands at Abbey Wood, architectural splendours at Canary Wharf, waterside walks at Harold Wood, Slough, Manor Park, Taplow, Reading, Iver and Twyford and

quiet countryside near Shenfield, Brentwood and Romford.

Some of you may already have a copy of my earlier guidebook, Beyond the End of the Line: 26 walks from the terminus stations of the London Underground which was featured in South East Walker in September 2019.

You can buy *Exploring the Elizabeth Line* online at www.countrysidebooks.co.uk with a 20% discount by entering SEWALKER20 in the discount code at checkout. Copies can also be bought at the London Transport Museum in Covent Garden. Or you could ask your local bookshop to order it.

Jeff Lock



Book cover.

Diverse London

An avid walker, artist, regular contributor to The Londonist website and Spurs fan, these days David Fathers is the creator of numerous inventive, beautifully illustrated walking guidebooks to London. His latest is Diverse London - 20 walks exploring London's wonderfully varied communities.

The book contains 20 walks ranging in distance from 1 km (0.6 miles) to 8.3 km (5.2 miles). It includes references to the Romans who established Londinium, ranges through the Jewish communities invited in by William the Conqueror, the Huguenots, Chinese London, Black London, Irish London and South Asian London.

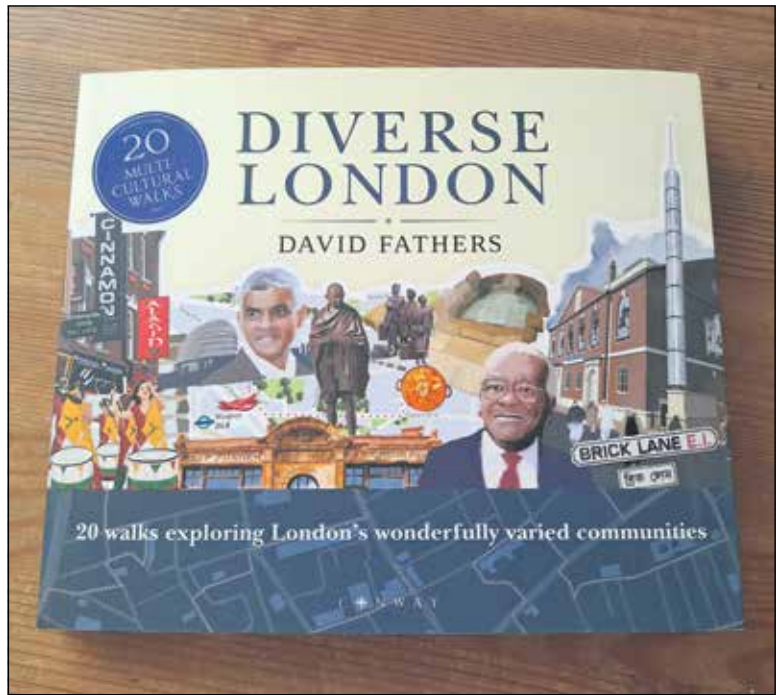
I discovered David's books when researching my regular London's Hidden Rivers walks and soon after David and I struck up a

friendship based around London, beer, football but especially walking and he started to come to some of my walks. His books are living breathing things that encourage the reader to explore London themselves and almost insist that you go 'off-piste' when following his routes.

Whereas previously his titles have had to elbow their way into a crowded market (check how many books there are covering London's Hidden Rivers) his new book charts virgin territory. His suggestions are suitable for those walking alone or with a couple of mates or even for those looking for ideas to lead Ramblers group walks.

Available online and in bookshops - if you have a curious disposition you will love Diverse London (ISBN 9781844865567, £10.99).

Des Garrahan



Area Secretary's diary

Deadlines for South East Walker seem to come around with disconcerting frequency. As usual the past quarter has been more notable for effort than achievement.

*In common with probably all Areas, our biggest problem remains a shortage of volunteers and things are not improving. A couple of weeks ago our Public Rights of Way Manager resigned after around nine months in the post having realised that her other commitments left her with almost no time at all to devote to this role. We are always happy to try to tailor a role to reduce the necessary time commitment to the hours a volunteer can spare but we can't quite get down to zero. This is the key role for public rights of way work in Kent Ramblers. Many Areas have an Area Footpath

Secretary but Kent has too large a network (around 4,500 miles) for one person. We therefore divide the work amongst four Sector Coordinators with the Public Rights of Way Manager to support and guide them when necessary. For many years only three of the Sector Coordinator posts have been filled with one volunteer, Roger King, covering two sectors. Sadly Roger has announced his well-earned retirement. Initial casework is handled by our Local Footpath Officers who each look after a number of parishes. Of our 387 parishes, 26 are not currently covered and 58 are covered temporarily by someone on an emergency basis. We therefore need 84 Local Footpath Officers as well as two Sector Coordinators and a Public Rights of Way Manager. If all posts were filled, no one would

Inland Border Facility plan scrapped



Gates across the North Downs Way at Guston while works take place.

Photo: Lee Pickup.

In June, HM Revenue & Customs and Department for Transport announced that plans for an 'Inland Border Facility' at Guston, near Dover, adjacent to the North Downs Way National Trail, were to be scrapped. This was because the need for the facility (for dealing with the extra paperwork needed for travel to and from

Europe) is now thought to be less than forecast. The land will be transferred back to the Department for Transport and its future reviewed.

However, construction of the Dover Fastrack bus road, part of the original plan for the Inland Border Facility and which passes over the North Downs Way, is still going ahead. Presently there is heavy

construction work taking place.

John Pye, Chair of the local White Cliffs Ramblers, said: "At least the North Downs Way is accessible during the works and the contractor is working to protect members of the public from their heavy equipment which is very important when children are using the route."

Lee Pickup
White Cliffs Ramblers

Battle of Lewes Trail

A walking trail around the site of one of the most important battles in English history was launched in May in the South Downs National Park with the Mayor of Lewes, Cllr Shirley-Ann Sains cutting the ribbon. The audio visual trail allows visitors to step back 750 years to find out more about the Battle of Lewes - an event that laid the foundations for parliamentary democracy.

The trail navigates Landport Bottom, where the battle was fought on 14 May 1264 when two armies clashed on the hills to the north west of Lewes. At stake was Henry III's right to rule without taking advice from his subjects. The rebel army, led by Simon de Montfort, fought and won the battle and he effectively took control of the country's government. In 1265 he summoned a council - or parliament - where, for the first time in English history,

elected representatives from towns sat alongside knights and churchmen, to discuss affairs of state.

As they stroll around the site, walkers can watch six short films on their phones, accessed via QR codes or NFC tags. Each film tells the story of the battle from a different perspective. The films are accessed via small plaques and information lecterns around the Landport Bottom site.

For more information go to southdowns.gov.uk/get-active/on-foot/battle-of-lewes-walking-trail



Start of the trail at Landport Bottom.

guidance based on our experience to all our Lost Ways caseworkers.

*We are still waiting for the Secretary of State to determine the disputed sections of the England Coast Path in Kent which the appointed inspector visited last November so progress on new guides is still on hold. Meanwhile I have pressed on with the Wealdway, having only one section from Wilmington (famous for its Long Man) to Eastbourne to complete before being able to put together a new guide.

*Planning is well under way for the High Weald Walking Festival, organised by Sussex Ramblers and the AONB team. Kent Ramblers is hoping to take a stall to the opening ceremony at the Ashdown Forest Centre on 10 September and several Kent groups will be contributing walks to the festival. For more information visit www.highwealdwalks.org.

*Prior to the pandemic we used to hold full-day meetings for our public rights of way volunteers every 12 to 18 months, the last one in May 2019. Since then we have filled the gap with online single-topic meetings every two to four months which have been very well received by those attending. Members of staff from Kent County Council's public rights of way team have participated and topics covered have included public path orders, definitive map modification orders, railway crossings, temporary path

closures and rules relating to the width of public rights of way. We are now planning to resume our face-to-face meetings with the next scheduled to be held in the community centre at Lenham on 10 October. We will be inviting all our public rights of way volunteers but we welcome any member with an interest in public rights of way so if you would like to attend please drop us a line on prow@kentramblers.org.uk.

*The issue of solar farms has reared its head again recently. It's a tricky one and we don't automatically object to solar farms. A few years ago we did object, unsuccessfully, to the Cleve Hill Solar Park beside the Saxon Shore Way and England Coast Path between Faversham and Seasalter because of the huge scale of the project affecting around three miles of the mentioned walks. After permission was given for that project to go ahead, little seemed to happen - apparently the project has been sold and the new owners are likely to start work very soon. Meanwhile there is much talk of solar farm projects around Aldington and Ramblers' volunteers are trying to establish some clear facts about the proposals - not an easy task - so that we can consider what needs to be done to protect the reasonable interests of walkers.

Robert Peel
Secretary, Kent Area



How can we fill our volunteer posts?

During the past year it has become apparent that many Essex groups have had difficulties filling posts, from walk leaders to committee members. So a meeting of group Chairs was held in July to exchange ideas.

Several reported that it was increasingly difficult to find people to lead walks, especially longer walks, and if groups couldn't offer walks, they would inevitably lose members. They said that some potential leaders found the current requirements overly bureaucratic and unrealistic, while it was also argued that others were reluctant to lead because they lacked map-reading skills; locally-run map reading courses combining video, face-to-face tuition and fieldwork might be one way to tackle this.

Turning to the vexed question of filling committee posts, it was agreed

that the formal role descriptions for committees inherited over the years by the Ramblers nationally were no longer thought helpful. Several groups reported that ordinary members found them overly formal and hesitated to volunteer for what seemed quite dull and bureaucratic roles. Some functions enshrined in the traditional committee model could be performed at Area or even national level, releasing volunteer capacity for truly local effort. The Membership Secretary role was singled out as seeming bogged down in unduly complex communication protocols and might be a candidate for simplification.

More generally, we needed to enthuse and motivate members and better inform non-members about what we do to protect the footpath network, which would help recruitment and retention. Telling the local press about path clearances

and liaising with parish council members responsible for footpaths would be positive moves, as would equipping work parties with hi-vis vests with the Ramblers logo.

The meeting was attended by Richard Sharp, Ramblers' Regional Manager, who accepted much of what had been said. Area Chair, David Radford, suggested that Essex Ramblers would like to work with Central Office on a pilot to develop new and more flexible structures, breaking away from the traditional model. This offer was accepted and we are optimistic that something will emerge from the pilot which has benefit not only for us but the rest of the Ramblers; we know that Essex is not alone in having the sort of problems I have described.

Mike Cannell

Essex Area Media Officer

Our less visible volunteers

Kent has over 4,500 miles of public rights of way which are walked, inspected and protected by our volunteer Parish Footpath Observers (PFOs) and Local Footpath Officers (LFOs). A PFO's role is to try to walk all the footpaths within the parish or parishes that they have volunteered for once a year, and if there are any obstructions or faults, they report them to Kent County Council's Rights of Way team, as well as our in-house footpath clearance team. LFOs receive information, essentially from Kent County Council, on proposed extinguishments and changes of status of paths and investigate their potential impact. They check for planning applications which may negatively impact on public rights of way and liaise with the PFOs for their parishes and their host Ramblers group.

Earlier this year, White Cliffs Ramblers brought together these amazing volunteers in a meeting organised by Margaret Misted-Williamson, the group's PFO Coordinator. The meeting was the first of its kind



Robert Stearn, Parish Footpaths Observer with White Cliffs Ramblers.

for our group and the aim was to confirm who did what, identify vacancies and let people see how to report problems to Kent County Council via their website.

Roger King, the LFO Coordinator for East Kent thought Margaret's meeting was "a success and went some way to revitalising the PFO network where some valuable volunteers had almost given up due to various frustrations but after the meeting are now back and getting things moving."

Most PFOs cover the parish where they live, others cover multiple parishes. I contacted two outstanding PFOs to ask them about their role. Robert Stearn, who covers five parishes, is an avid walker and says his duties are a part of his daily routine. Robert said "I walk most days and total about 2,500 'boots-on' miles per year. I've printed maps of each of these parishes from the county council's website and highlight the paths as I walk them; four and a half parishes completely walked in the last three to four months." A fabulous achievement.

Maura Pell covers about 18 parishes saying "as a PFO I spend many hours plodding the paths and reporting problems on the county council's website. I'm currently involved in a big problem with the St Augustine Camino which passed through my own village of Minster and can't be cleared because of giant hogweed." I asked Maura why so much of her life was spent protecting our paths and her answer was "I love the paths, they are essential for many folk's mental and physical health. I owe them a massive debt as they helped heal me after one of life's awful patches and on the back of that I'm sort of self-sworn to do anything I can to help them. I feel my function is to bear witness and note what goes on, and to kick up major fusses with whoever I think can help put things right." An inspiration to us all.

Of course, not all of us have the time to undertake such massive tasks. Walking one parish is valuable. Protecting your local public rights of way, ensuring they are safe and well-maintained is a service that should be appreciated by everyone and recognised. Our meeting revealed the fact that we have vacancies in some of our parishes and I'm sure other Ramblers groups are in the same situation.

Lee Pickup

White Cliffs Ramblers

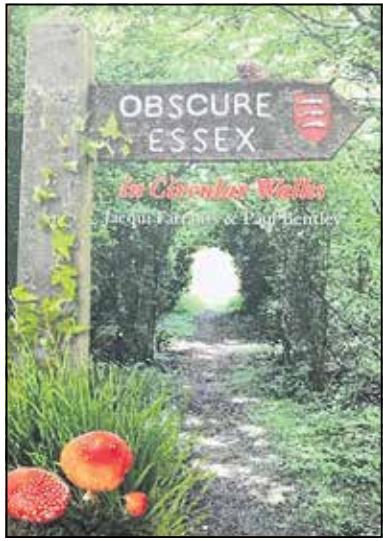
Obscure Essex

The authors of *Puddingstone Walks in Essex* and *The Essex Way in Circular Walks*, previously reviewed in these pages, have been at their keyboards again. This time the book is *Obscure Essex in Circular Walks*. Like its predecessors the publication is well-designed, with good photographs to attract potential walkers. It is also good for architectural interest and wildlife.

The authors say that Essex contains a number of relatively unknown remarkable landmarks and quirky oddities, such as the dead forest at Mundon or the smallest house in the county at Clavering. They have made these the focus of 22 walks which range from about three to seven miles. However, the only way to check their accuracy is to road test them, so two of us set out from Little Walden to take in the walk's curiosity, the turf maze in Saffron Walden.

The directions were, on the whole, very detailed and accurate and the walk, a good one. We only had one problem when early on the book tells users to 'turn left emerging from trees'. We paused here while my companion urged us to turn left, I argued that we should continue as his proposed route would take us back where we had come from, but, tolerant human being that I am, let him have his way. Two hundred yards further on it became apparent, thanks to the OSM app on my phone, that we were indeed returning to Little Walden. We retraced our steps and 20 yards up the path re-entered shady woodland. I tried not to appear smug. I draw several conclusions from this.

First, however accurate instructions appear, double-check them. Arguably the authors should have mentioned the short clearing, but they can be forgiven for not doing so. Second, even the most experienced walkers can make mistakes and convince themselves that they are right; Finally, the best investment you can make is £26.99 a year on the OS app, which tells you



Book cover.

exactly where you are and in which direction you are heading. Use it early and often if in the least doubt.

We agreed that there is also a point which applies to virtually all guidebooks, including this. Please give estimates of time or distance. Instead of saying 'continue on the path for some time' as this book does, write 'continue on the path for about ten minutes', and in the case of shorter distances which can be estimated by eye, say 'in about 100 yards...'

Two words of warning. First, the walks are concentrated in two areas - around Saffron Walden, and in the east, more or less in a line from Belchamp Water in the north to Leigh-on-Sea. Secondly, the authors rightly mention pubs along the routes. Things change however, and in my part of the world at least two of the pubs mentioned have closed or changed. With more and more rural pubs closing, those looking for refreshment should check whether pubs are still open (and their opening times) before setting off.

With thanks to Murray Lowe.

Mike Cannell

Essex Area Media Officer

Obscure Essex in Circular Walks by Jacqui Farrants and Paul Bentley, Halfway Publishing, ISBN 978-1-3999-2159-6, costs £12.95 plus £3.00 post and packing from whiskerywoodcraft.com or can be ordered via Amazon and eBay.

Paper:

Problems with the paper supply chain have made it necessary for this issue to be printed

on a heavier (and more expensive) paper which in turn has forced us to reduce the number of pages from 16 to 12. Apologies to those contributors whose

words of wisdom have not made it this time. We hope to return to 16 page issues on lighter paper as soon as circumstances permit.

South Downs Way is 50:

The National Trail is marking its 50th anniversary this year with commemorative plaques which will be put up in each of the 66 parishes the route passes

through. From September, a special beer made by the Long Man brewery in Litlington, East Sussex, will be available.

Walking author:

Writer and London Strollers group member Caroline Studdert has recently written a new edition of *Hellcat of the Hague* about pioneering Dutch woman

journalist Nel Sils, the first Associated Press correspondent in The Hague after World War II. It follows *Against the Odds*: Elizabeth Studdert, a life in carving which explores the life of her sculptor sister.



INNER LONDON

insights

Capital Ring, London Loop and Green Chain Walk

As well as continuing to make waymarking improvements to both the London Loop and Capital Ring over the last quarter, the route coordinators and section volunteers have been focussed on drawing up a summary of where we are with the project overall.

Volunteers on the 15 sections of the Capital Ring and 24 sections of the London Loop have provided an overview to coordinators of the

- number of waymarks replaced since we started the project
- number of waymarks still to be replaced
- other work required such as new fingerposts or signs and any progress with getting landowners/councils to do the work.

This will enable us to make sure we have sufficient stock of waymark discs and stickers and to focus our resources on those sections still needing the most work. We also plan to use the information gathered to draw up and publish an annual status report for both routes,

which we will share with Transport for London and the Walking & Cycling Commissioner and use as a basis for calling for more investment where it's most needed.

Visits to the PDF pages have reached 100,000 for the Capital Ring (published first) and 50,000 for the London Loop. We now regularly receive thank yous and positive comments from members of the public about the project, through email and social media. The route hashtags are becoming well-used on Twitter and Instagram by people sharing photos of their walks.

If you would like to get involved in this project, please contact vicechair@innerlondonramblers.org.uk.

We are currently looking for rangers for the Green Chain Walk, and for additional volunteers to help with waymarking on sections 4 (Crystal Palace to Streatham Common) and 5 (Streatham Common to Wimbledon Park) of the Capital Ring.

Clare Wadd
Vice-Chair, Inner London Area

Save Gorne Wood

Green walking routes encourage people to get outside and active. Whether it's a park or local street filled with trees, walking in high quality places improves our health and happiness. As well as improving existing routes like the Capital Ring, London Loop and Green Chain Walk the Ramblers in London look to create new routes wherever possible.

The Brockley Three Peaks Walk in south east London is a case in point. Brockley was voted the Ramblers' Best Walking Neighbourhood in England in 2019. One of the best ways to explore what it has to offer is to follow the Brockley Three Peaks Walk which is a five-mile circular route, mainly through parkland. And one of the important aspects of a good route, like this one, is you can add to it.

Included on the route is One Tree Hill, which actually has far more than one tree to see. This borders with Camberwell New Cemetery, which in turn has the Overground rail tracks as a border. Tucked just on the other side of these tracks is Gorne Wood, once part of the Great North Wood and designated as ancient woodland.

Our friends at CPRE London have chosen the Dandy Fifth Park, part of the Gorne Wood site, as one of their 10 new parks for London. The site was used from 1914 to 2004 by scouts and guides for nature-based pursuits until it was sold for development. This section, now under threat, was opened in 1922 by the Lewisham and Deptford mayors as the 'Dandy Fifth Park', after the scout group who used it at the time. A scout hut still stands in the clearing but is becoming increasingly derelict since the landowner fenced the space off. Local campaigners want to reinstate the Dandy Fifth Park for the scouts and for the many schools and nurseries and communities either side of the railway track. They also want to bring some wildlife management to the neglected woodland.

Local walkers would love this area to be reinstated as well so it could be visited in its own right or as an alternative route to reach One Tree Hill. To mark the centenary of the park's opening in 1922, local campaigners hope to bring this green space back to its former glory.

Des Garrahan
Chair, Inner London Area

More information at www.cprelondon.org.uk/news/lets-create-ten-major-new-parks-for-london-now/ and <https://www.fourthreserve.org.uk/>



The deteriorating scout hut. Photo: Des Garrahan.

Autumn Surprises

*Drizzle drives in. Glum,
we stand at the church hall window till
someone says, 'C'mon, let's go anyway!'
and suddenly the clouds are shot
with watery light.*

*A wind springs up,
sweeps rain away,
bearing last swifts southward.*

*Now air blows sweet:
pine sap & wood bark,
acorns crushed in the copse,
a whiff of cider from the orchard.*

*Under pallid light that glitters
through thinning leaves,
and flung like a cloak
over the shoulder of the hill,
copper fires of bracken smoulder.*

*Then Warehorne Woods are dim
and hushed. Gilt-edged,
beech leaves hang slack,
while, below their trunks,
opalescent mushrooms glow:
night-lights all along the path.*

*Out in the lane, at last,
autumn surprises us yet again
with fiercest colour;
blackberries' & rosehips'
crimson & scarlet; the flash
of dragonflies beside a dwindled stream*

*and, near the church, as we return,
a tattered peacock butterfly basking
on a red-brick wall.*

Words and image
© Lizzie Ballagher



Lizzie's words were partly inspired by the sight of this peacock butterfly.

Disabled? Keep walking!

I have enjoyed walking with my local Ramblers group for 20 years or more, but over time a series of ailments has led to me being unable to stand without support. Finding that walking with a pair of crutches was no fun, I made an internet search and discovered an off-road rollator - the Trionic Veloped. Unlike an everyday about-town rollator, this has big wheels with pneumatic tyres, powerful brakes, space for a rucksack and a pull-out seat for whenever I need a rest.

My Veloped has given me four more years of countryside walking. I can negotiate most kissing gates, but to avoid stiles or steps I choose bridleways, farm tracks or quiet lanes. When I need a break, or just want to enjoy the view and listen to the birdsong, I can just pull out the seat and enjoy a few moments of peace. Though I do a shorter walk

than my rambler friends, I can still join them for a pub lunch afterwards. So I win three ways: a country walk, a pub lunch and the continued companionship of long-standing friends.

Bruce Collins
South East Berks Ramblers



Bruce with his veloped. Photo: Sheila Dwyer.

Windrush remembered

I inner London Area Ramblers walks usually begin and end at public transport points so many members find themselves hurrying through Waterloo station looking for their train to go on a walk. I hope that they will allow some time to stop and consider the Windrush memorial sculpture, by Basil Watson, which was unveiled here on Windrush Day, 22 June.

It honours the arrival, contribution and achievements of the generation which came to the UK from the Caribbean between 1948 and 1971. It was very moving to see elders share their personal stories of being from the families of those who came to meet the post-war labour shortage at the invitation of the British government.

I spoke to Coral Gordon, whose father disembarked from HMT Empire Windrush at Tilbury on 22 June 1948. Her mother joined him a few years later, whilst she and her sibling stayed in Jamaica to be looked after by grandparents for many more years. Coral remembered hearing about the continual hardships and racist discrimination encountered by her father as he looked for work and accommodation. It was only when her parents could afford to buy a house that the family was reunited.

Coral worked for the NHS as a district nurse and she recounted one particularly vivid memory of changing the leg dressing of an elderly man. He expressed his deep gratitude for her care and genuine remorse that he had believed the stories in the media that black people were a menacing threat and only here to take away jobs. Coral was immensely proud of the achievements of four generations of her family living here including attaining doctorates and contributing to the wellbeing of local communities.

Lest we forget though - racism and social injustice continues. The lives and livelihoods of many thousands have been hugely affected and even ruined by the 'hostile environment' legislation. Many victims of the Windrush scandal, who have lived and worked here for decades, have yet to receive compensation after four years. Inner London Ramblers has no direct influence on these things but we can offer a 'desirable environment' by continuing to welcome all people that choose to come along to our walks.

*Ruby Noorani
Capital Walkers*



The national Windrush Memorial on Waterloo station in London.

Photo: Ruby Noorani



Henley & Goring's organising team await the walkers arrival.

Photo: Jim Parke.

Area picnic

In glorious sunshine tempered by a breeze, nearly 100 Oxfordshire members converged from different points to Henley Marsh, bordering on the River Thames, for this year's annual picnic on 26 June. This was our first picnic since the Covid pandemic.

The event was hosted by Henley

& Goring Group. Alie Hagedoorn, Chair of the group, and her team erected a gazebo under which were tables laden with home-made cakes and drinks. I welcomed the picnickers and thanked the group team for acting as our excellent hosts. The high turnout showed that the event has become a firm favourite in the Area's summer walks programme.

*Jim Parke
Area Chair*

On leading a first walk

One of the key elements of a successful group is to have a good number of walk leaders. There are numerous resources available on the Ramblers website to help groups recruit new leaders and many groups have also developed their own training. Our group runs a course for potential new leaders and has had real success by offering a 'Walk Buddy' to help a newcomer.

One of our newest leaders, Tania, said: "Earlier this year I decided to be brave and join the ranks of our group's team of walk leaders. But, testament to their skills, there is much more to planning and executing a walk than meets the eye. The good news is that we all have at least one walk in us and that's a great place to start. Our programme coordinators are always on hand to advise on the suitability of a walk and how it will fit into the programme. Of course, the best way to learn is from an expert, so that's where a Walk

Buddy comes in. My Walk Buddy was experienced leader Paul who helped me to find and hone my route, explained the admin procedures, recce'd the walk with me and supported me on the day. I'm sure I would have muddled through but Paul made it so much easier. I've led more walks since and have a few at the planning stage and, thanks to such a positive first experience, I'm really enjoying myself."

Mark Lavenstein

West Kent Walking Group

And Pip Thomas of Berkshire Walkers writes: On Sunday 1 May I stepped out of my comfort zone and led my first walk from Reading to Sonning. It was an easy six-mile circular but I was very nervous as I'd never led a walk before and was anxious about leading a group and making sure everyone enjoyed themselves. Despite the weather, it was really fun and I had a great time. It was also my birthday!



Area AGM

The AGM of Oxfordshire Ramblers will be at 2.45pm

on Saturday 21 January 2023 in Wootton & Dry Sandford Community Centre, OX13 6DA. This will be preceded at 2pm by a talk and Q&A with a Ramblers trustee. Tea and cakes will follow at 3.50pm. There will also be a morning walk, details to be provided later.

Footpath matters

County council

The Definitive Map Modification Order waiting list is now 63 cases. Of these 20 are under investigation, four are awaiting orders, two are under appeal, and 16 orders have been made (eight objected to, six of which are with

the Planning Inspectorate). There are 36 diversions on the list, three of which have been confirmed; four are with the Planning Inspectorate and one other has objections.

A new bridge has been provided by East-West Rail on Launton FP11 to replace three level crossings: a new housing development east of this connects with FP1 and BR2. The diversion of FP12 is under discussion.

Diversions, claims etc

Diversions at Kingston Lisle (to resolve a route which was shown on four different lines on the four versions of the Definitive Map), Wroxton Mill and Baulking have been confirmed.

We have received a new consultation on Noke BR10 which has an extra link inside the roadside hedge to BR8. This is fine as a footpath, but I fear that the British Horse Society will have the same objections, as the new stretch has

the same problems. I am told that riders prefer to stay on the road as they can see and be seen by the traffic, and the horse is less likely to be spooked by noises from a source which it can't see or by blinding reflections from a car bonnet.

We have also received new proposals for North Leigh FP19, which keep the woodland section. The order, if made, is likely to combine this with the original proposals for FPs 20 and 38.

The order has been made to divert

Didcot FPs 1 and 14 from the girls' school to avoid climbing fences and building on the definitive line. The proposed routes already exist: nobody bothered to apply to divert the paths when the school was built.

We have also received a complicated proposal to resolve the gap in the network at Shenington Mill where somebody forgot to claim the link from Shenington BR2 to Epwell BR8. This involves also diverting to a farm track at the Shutford parish boundary instead of crossing an unbridged ditch.

David Godfrey

Area Footpath Secretary

Thame & Wheatley at work

When our footpath maintenance team leader Chris Melbourne had to step down, Bob Merry quickly took up the baton. Having devised a programme of path clearance projects for the summer, Bob launched it with work on a 200-metre stretch of footpath behind Groves factory on the Thame by-pass. This path was cleared only a year ago but

had become impenetrable again. Bob's team of Martin Gibson, Tony Clark, Sandra Booth and Alan Bonham reopened the path and were rewarded with refreshments in the factory and given a tour! The factory owner has pledged to keep the path maintained in the future.

Ruth Cornish

Thame & Wheatley Ramblers



Thame footpath 13 after clearing. Photo: Bob Merry.

Those we have lost

Bob Morrisson

Members of Blackheath Ramblers enjoyed a warm, good-humoured, day on Saturday 18 June, commemorating Bob Morrisson, a group member and walk leader in the 1990s and noughties, who died in December 2021. Bob's daughter, Rosemarie, had invited us to his memorial get-together at the Railway Inn in Sole Street, Kent.

We felt the day couldn't pass without a morning ramble in Bob's honour, something which we are sure he would have wanted. And so, on a sunny morning we set off on a five mile walk which turned into a seven-mile walk to arrive at the pub for the memorial lunch. There 'Bookie Dave' greeted us, clutching a selection of our walks programmes from Bob's glory days. On the bar were pictures of a smiling, elderly Bob plus a surprisingly striking one of Bob posing as Clyde (as in Bonnie and Clyde), one of his photographic society's themed shots. His young solemn gaze in that photo confounded our memories of the gregarious, fun-loving man we



knew, with the highly-polished boots and wheezing voice, one reduced by a throat operation but never suppressed. As the afternoon progressed, we ate, drank, mingled and remembered Bob for his zest for life and his contribution to our group.

Ayshen Bekir
Blackheath Ramblers

Robert (Bob) Alcock

Bob joined the Ramblers in 1979 and became a member of Mole Valley soon after it was set up in 1980 and has been a stalwart of the group ever since, serving on the committee and leading numerous walks. From 2010 to 2020 he was also the Local Footpath Secretary. Although in his 80s, he continued to lead walks and undertook his duties as a Local

Footpath Secretary conscientiously.

We had hoped to present Bob with a framed certificate at the top of Leith Hill in April 2020 but the pandemic made this impossible and the presentation had to wait until October 2020 in Brockham. Bob died suddenly but peacefully in his beloved garden on 2 July. We send our condolences to his wife, Ruth, their family and his many friends.



Bob Alcock.
Photo: Fiona Spencer.

Joan Young
Past Chair of Mole Valley Ramblers

Tony Russell 1930 - 2022



Tony Russell.

Tony was an active member of our group. He produced the group's walks programme from 1996 to 2006 when it was printed at three-monthly intervals. Tony was also involved with the setting up of our first website in 2002. Then, when the committee was short of members and needed help in 2010, Tony stepped in to help with the walks programme and as coordinator of our short weekend walks. One of our members, who was Chairman at the time, recalls that Tony "seemed to have a knack of spotting drawbacks to suggestions and that he was invariably right". Ramblers' groups exist because of people like Tony who give their time and expertise for the benefit of others, RIP Tony.

Brian Poulton
South East Berkshire Ramblers

Wish you were here?

Scarborough, North Yorkshire

Maidstone Ramblers finally made the trip to Scarborough planned for 2020. We had a wonderful week in April in the countryside of North Yorkshire. A variety of walks took us along river valleys, into and out of the Hole of Horcum and along coastal paths. The walks included visiting Whitby, Robin Hood's Bay, Filey and Pickering. The weather was surprisingly kind,

with beautiful sunshine on the last day when we had lunch on a cliff top and were lucky enough to see a bottlenose dolphin and seals. The evenings saw most of our group dancing away to the hotel entertainment - great fun.

Barbara Mead
Maidstone Ramblers



Maidstone Ramblers on the Cleveland Way between Ravenscar and Scarborough. Photo: Graham Roach.

Plas Tan y Bwlch, Gwynedd

Six of us set off on 16 May to stay at Plas Tan y Bwlch near Portmeirion in North Wales. The centre provided breakfast, packed lunch and evening meal and was very welcoming. I would urge any group to contact them if they were looking for a base in the area. Our first day's walk was on the Berwyn mountain range, starting from Pistyll Rhaeadr, with amazing clear skies. Next day was spent visiting Harlech Castle, Cymer Abbey, the Precipice Walk and the Torrent Walk. Our third day started with a relaxed morning followed by an afternoon on the Llyn peninsula. Then, after an early dinner, we went to hear Cor y Brythoniaid male voice choir, who have a weekly rehearsal in the local school hall. After such wonderful walks the power of a male voice choir seemed to resonate very deeply within us all. On our last day we spent a few hours at Portmeirion village before returning home.

Gwyn Jones
Richmond Ramblers



On Pistyll Rhaeadr.

Photo: Gwyn Jones.

Marlborough, Wiltshire

Variety, excellent planning, good accommodation, a choice of distances and like-minded company are the ingredients for an enjoyable walking break. We hit the jackpot when Barbara Macdonald organised our recent holiday in Marlborough offering 56 miles of walking over four days with the choice of adapting some walks for those who prefer shorter distances. Everyone organised their own accommodation with

the local Premier Inn getting full marks. Dining arrangements were left to individuals but two family-run Italian restaurants, local pubs and a Rick Stein restaurant catered for varied choices. Our interesting variety of walks took us to Barbury Castle, Avebury, the Marlborough White Horse and the village of Aldbourne amongst other places.

Elise Wright
Hillingdon Ramblers



Grey Wethers on the Marlborough Downs near Rockley.

Photo: Simon Thornhill.

Sedbergh, Cumbria

Our twice-delayed trip to Sedbergh in the Howgills finally took place in April. This is a wonderful area of dome-shaped grass-topped hills, steep in places. Well done Susan Maguire, Janice Spearing and Trish Jacobs for the original idea back in 2019. Susan also organised the accommodation at Howgills Barn and arranged

evening meals, including trips to Al Forno Italian Kitchen in Sedbergh and the Cross Keys temperance pub near Cautley Spout. Thanks also to Richard and Alison Donnelly for their research and reconnaissance visits and for leading the walks.

David Hancock
Henley & Goring Ramblers

Weymouth, Dorset

Our weekend in May based in Weymouth started on the Friday afternoon with 23 ramblers taking a leisurely stroll around the RSPB's nature reserve at Radipole Lake. On Saturday we took a bus to Portland for a pleasant seven-mile walk around The Heights though this was later made more challenging by two rock falls on our route. We took the train on Sunday to Upwey and a stile-heavy

route to Chickerell for lunch. Walking along the coast there were good views of Chesil Beach and Portland. However, it was disappointing to see the poor condition of some stiles and lack of kissing gates. Apart from that, it was an excellent weekend.

Brenda Horwill
Kingston Ramblers



'The only way is up' to Cautley Spout.

Photo: Sandra Newton.



By the Olympic Rings on Portland, which commemorate the 2012 sailing events held nearby.

Photo: Brenda Horwill.

Clitheroe, Lancashire

A group of 30 walkers, mostly from our group, enjoyed five days in May in Ribblesdale and the Forest of Bowland. Based at Waddow Hall, near Clitheroe, they set off daily for one of five Ribble Valley villages where they could choose their walk. Susan Maguire reconnoitred the walks in 2021 and did most of the organisation while several members acted as walk leaders. Waddow Hall is operated as a hotel and conference centre. Our group found it very comfortable and welcoming and, as the walks in the area are so good, we are likely to return.

Lin Taylor and Joan Clark
Henley & Goring Ramblers

A full report on this trip can be found at ramblers-oxon.org.uk/benley-goring/trips.htm.



In the Bowland Fells.

Photo: Inge Mikkelsen.



Summer in Surrey celebration

Surrey Area held its first Summer in Surrey celebration on Saturday 9 July in Oxshott. The sun was shining and there wasn't a cloud in the sky. It was the day I had been hoping for. There were five walks provided by three groups - Kingston, Mole Valley and Surrey Young Walkers - and all went through or ended at the Village Centre. We had decided in February that because of the pandemic our Area AGM should be on Zoom.

We also decided that this being the second year we hadn't met in person for a social gathering, an event was needed for the summer when longer and warmer days would enable us to gather outside. So, plans were made and on 9 July, walkers turned up for tea or coffee and cakes. It was a hot afternoon so all the doors and windows were open and members were able to talk and share experiences. It was lovely to see so many members joining together and enjoying the good weather.

Thank you to all who led a walk on this perfect summer's day. Special thanks too to David Horwill who joined me in the kitchen and did all the drying up and to Brian and Caroline for clearing up and cleaning down. This was something of a pioneering event and one I hope we will continue in future years. Unlike 2022, we'll try not to clash with the Wimbledon finals weekend!

*Holly Matthews
Chair, Surrey Area*

Around the groups

Celebrating 50 years

The very first meeting to form Amersham Ramblers was on 18 May 1972 and the minutes record that this was the culmination of two year's work and some local advertising. The minutes also state that this should be a healthy group and indeed it is. We have built on

those humble beginnings and now offer walks every day of the week except Mondays. I am sure our predecessors would be proud of what they started and has since been achieved. To celebrate, we enjoyed a lovely group lunch on Saturday 9 July at the Cock Inn, Sarratt, in a teepee

which proved the perfect venue and protected us from the 28 degree heat outside. The food and service were wonderful. There was much reminiscing and debate as to who was our longest-standing member and this proved to be David Barnard. David was unable to join us on the day but is recorded as the group's very first Secretary in the original minutes.

*Kate Lambourne
Chair, Amersham Ramblers*



Anniversary lunch.

Photo:Mike Lambourne.

M25/A3 junction

Major works on the M25/A3 junction at Wisley will start in September, with some preparatory work before then. This junction is the busiest on the M25 and also has the highest accident rate. This £300 million scheme will accommodate more traffic and should reduce the accident rate.

But it will take more land from the commons around it and add to the noise. On the good side, the Highways Agency (now National Highways) worked with the Ramblers, cyclists and horse riders to provide some better crossings and routes near to the junction for non-motorised users. I regularly walk in this area and use the existing crossings. But I remember, before the M25 was built, walking in the area was much quieter. In 1977, I represented the Ramblers at the public inquiry on building the M25 across the Wisley and Ockham commons. I said then we shouldn't be spending all that money on roads, but if we did, the M25 should be routed north of the commons. Forty years on, I again represented the Ramblers in consultations on extending the

junction and I thought what a pity that we lost all those years ago. But the atmosphere had changed and the Highways Agency was genuinely interested in routes for non-motorised users. The existing crossing of the A3 slip roads by pedestrian crossings, which is intimidating and unattractive, will be replaced by a new bridge for non-motorised users over the M25, south east of the junction, which will avoid the diversion down to the Hatchford crossing. There will be new paths alongside the A3 north to the A245 with a crossing to get to Cobham. There will be paths south on both sides of the A3 and a wide multi-user bridge on the new road to Wisley gardens. The extra traffic from the new Wisley gardens route and the intended housing development on Wisley airfield make this essential. We are promised minimum disruption to walkers during the construction process and that old bridges won't be removed until new ones are ready.

*Keith Chesterton
Surrey Area representative
on the consultation*

For more on the planned works, visit <https://www.m25j10pie.highwaysengland.co.uk>

Jubilee walks



Four walks came together for the picnic. Photo: Joan Clark.

Our members enjoyed jubilee walks and a picnic on the common at Maidensgrove on 1 June, with a choice of four circular walks ranging from three and a half miles to 13 miles, About 60 walkers joined the walks. Timing was excellent as we all arrived back at the common at 3.30pm for the picnic. Last time we had a picnic here was during Covid restrictions but this time we could meet friends and socialise without having to keep two metres apart!

*Joan Clark
Henley & Goring Ramblers*

Bromley ale trails:

Bromley's branch of the Campaign for Real Ale has expanded its series of online guides to walking routes which link pubs and clubs in the rural parts of the south east London borough. The walks range from one to five miles, link with public transport, and are free to download from <https://bromley.camra.org/pub-walks/>

And then there were three...

Determination and tenacity were at the root of our completing the Pilgrims' Way from Southwark to Canterbury in May. Nine of us started in April 2018 but, for a variety of reasons, completion was delayed. One person finished the

walk earlier on her own and stood as a beacon of achievement for the rest of us. Well done Liz Lloyd! Three people eventually finished the final 35 miles in glorious weather walking through bluebell-strewn woods with patches of white flowered

wild garlic, wood anemones, campions, daffodils and cowslips in abundance. Spring is a rewarding time to undertake this walk.

*Elise Wright
Hillingdon Ramblers*



Not far to go.

Photo: Smruti Patel.

Epic walk

On a beautiful sunny day at the beginning of July, nine happy ramblers left Lewes station and headed out of town up to the golf course. Wonderful views opened up over the town as we made our way to Glynde for our morning coffee stop. Then we were off

again, across the A27, through Firle and then up we went. We followed the South Downs Way with the turquoise sea on our right, a lovely breeze behind us and the sun shining brightly, all the way to Alfriston where we had lunch. Ten miles completed.

We walked into Litlington and again took the South Downs Way towards Exceat then beyond, contouring up above the valley, looking down over

the Cuckmere and at last onto the first of the Seven Sisters.

Seven ups and downs later we stopped for tea and cakes or ice cream at Birling Gap. For the last push we strode up to Beachy Head. Looking back we could see how far we had come and how far we still had to go, down into Eastbourne to finish at the station. Tired but happy to have made it: 23 miles!

*Anne Golbourn
Croydon Ramblers*



Not far to go.

Photo: Smruti Patel.

Walking the solar system

We recently walked the solar system! Actually, one of the largest scale models of it in the world, in and around Otford in Kent. The model not only shows the distances of the planets to the sun and their sizes but also the correct relative positions of the planets at the start of the year 2000.

The model was established as a millennium project to show just how big space is. If you walk as far as Pluto and look back towards the Otford recreation ground you get a sense of the vastness of space. The centre of the solar system is at the north-east corner of the high street recreation ground. The sun is represented by a 303 mm diameter dome and each planet by a scale engraving on a flat disc waymarker. To find the route which will allow you to walk the solar system visit www.explorekent.org/activities/otford-walk/.

*Beverley Johnston
Dartford & Gravesham Ramblers*



Explorers.

Photo: Christine Raynsford.

Fab bus

What a fabulous day we had for our first bus walk since lockdown. Marcus, our leader, took us from

Shortstown via the vast Cardington hangars where the R101 airship was built, and Shocott Wood. We were lucky with the weather and it was so nice to get back to normal.

*Tom Collier
Ivel Valley Walkers*



Bus walkers.

Photo: Tom Collier.

Kingston AGM

Kingston members are invited to the group AGM on Saturday 5 November at Claygate Village Hall. There will be a morning walk to Claygate for lunch with the formal

business starting at 2pm, followed by tea and homemade cakes

*Brenda Horwill
Kingston Ramblers*

Thanks Dennis

Our group is celebrating its 20th year and taking the opportunity to thank our most prolific walk leader, Dennis Galvin (or 'The Galvinator' as our Chairperson calls him). Walking has been a love of his for many years and he has led more than 300 walks for us and neighbouring groups. His first was

in 2002 and his name appears in our programme weekly. A dedicated walk leader and all-round nice guy, his knowledge of the East End is unrivalled. We are so fortunate to have Dennis among our members.

*Pauline Macfarlane
Publicity Officer, Lea Valley Friends*



Dennis with his wife Eileen.

Ramble with a difference

Around the groups

Only 1.5 miles, one hour's walking, no mud, stiles or nettles! We just hope you've all been to SpecSavers". That was how we introduced our treasure hunt walk on Sunday 1 May. Twelve teams totalling 50 people set off from the park. Many regular Ramblers took part plus our affiliated Wellbeing Walkers and seven children. They all had to look for the answers to

40 clues throughout the town centre of Leighton Buzzard, some of the questions being in cryptic crossword format. The winning team of regular Ramblers Cliff & Debbie and Mick & Penny scored 41 out of 42 having missed only the sculpture of an owl looking down from high!

All those who took part seemed to have thoroughly enjoyed themselves despite the inclement weather.

Many were long term Leighton Buzzard residents who admitted they hadn't noticed many of the aspects of local history this event had opened their eyes to. The questions and answers are held on file so if any other Ramblers group who would like to hold the event please feel free to contact us.

*Paul Byatt
Leighton Buzzard Ramblers*



Walkers missed this owl which looks down on Leighton Buzzard high street.

Photo: Paul Byatt.



North Beds members on the Unlock walk.

Photo: S G Kelsey.

Unlock

On St George's Day, 22 members converged on the capital for the annual 'Unlock' walk (the first since before the pandemic) and it was lovely to be joined by our past walk programme secretary who first introduced us to this event.

'Unlock' is a non-denominational Christian charity which supports urban churches. Each year they organise a route to raise awareness and money for their work and give people an 'unusual and enlightening day' in London.

This year the walk took place in the borough of Tower Hamlets where John le Warne expertly led us on a seven and a half mile circuit,

visiting six churches and other sights. The weather was kind, the route interesting and the churches welcoming. If you are interested in following this route you can find it at <http://unlock-urban.org.uk/documents/WalkLeaflet39map.pdf>. We look forward to next year's Unlock walk on 22 April 2023.

*Anne Griffiths
North Beds Ramblers*

Keeping it local

We are walking London's Capital Ring on one Saturday a month and expect to continue into 2023. More of our walks though are local, partly because of the cost of fuel and we are encouraging car sharing. We are also fortunate to have some wonderful walks nearby.

Our social events programme included a skittles evening in June and we plan a repeat in October. In August we had a tea party which we find is an excellent way for our non-walking members to catch up with old friends.

*Brian Poulton
South East Berkshire Ramblers*



A recent South East Berks walk in Windsor Great Park.

Photo: Andrew Johnson.

Coaches return

After an enforced break of two and a half years, we were delighted to restart our popular Sunday coach walks in April. Our first trip was to Arundel in West Sussex on 24 April when 47 members and friends took part in walks of four, eight and 11 miles. The weather was perfect and the

day voted a great success. Our second trip was on 22 May to the New Forest which attracted 37 walkers and friends and again we were fortunate to have perfect weather.

Since then we have enjoyed coach walks based on Moreton-in-Marsh in June, Bourton-on-the-Water in July and Lymington in August. One more, to Richmond upon Thames is planned for September.

*Richard Trimmer
West Berks Ramblers*

West London AGM and Social

West London Group members are invited to the group's Annual General Meeting and Social on Tuesday 6 December from 7pm at Northfields Community Centre,

71a Northcroft Road, London W13 9SS (close to Northfields station and buses). Please bring some food and drink to share for the finger buffet. So bring something you enjoy, but

not too much. If you would like to know more then please contact us at westlondongroup@yahoo.co.uk.

*Martin Harris
Secretary, West London Group*

Woking AGM

Members of Woking Group are invited to attend this year's AGM which will take place at 1pm on Sunday 20 November at Chobham Cricket Club. Sandwiches will be provided. We hope to have a morning walk too - check <http://www.wokingramblers.org> nearer the date for details. Members who wish to submit motions for discussion should send them to info@wokingramblers.org by 1 November.

*Malcolm Brickwood
Secretary, Woking Ramblers*

Pure gold

Before lockdown, a group of our walkers completed Shakespeare's Way from Stratford-upon-Avon to the Globe Theatre in London. With restrictions eased again, this time to enjoy fabulous Greek food, the presentation of ceramic coasters



Ready to party.

Photo: Jon Hilton.

made by one of our number and bearing the Bard's head, a few drinks and a pre-meal walk and you have the makings of a memorable weekend. Add in Richard III

at the RSC (with Arthur Hughes in the lead role) and it's pure gold.

*Jon Hilton
Chilterns
Weekend Walkers*

Joint walk

We met up with the London Blind Walkers in early April at Richmond for a pleasant seven-mile walk. As with previous joint walks our members paired up with our

visitors and described the scenery as we walked in Richmond Park and back along the Thames. It was a highly enjoyable and informative day for all and one which we look forward to repeating in future years.

*Graham Evans
Surrey Heath Ramblers*



The joint party on Richmond Hill.

Photo: Graham Evans.

Selborne visit

We had a trip on 23 April to Selborne in Hampshire with the opportunity to visit the house of eighteenth century naturalist Gilbert White. We were blessed with

beautiful weather and had a full coach of 53 folk from our group.

*Jan Recknell-Turner
Sutton & Wandle
Valley Ramblers*

Barn dance

This year our annual social was a barn dance held in a local village hall with excellent calling by Adrian Broadway. Nearly 40 people danced circles, stars, baskets, do-si-dos and more. Dinner came half

way through the evening with the main course cooked by the group's Mike Smith and Linda King, and dessert provided by other members. A great evening. Many thanks to all who contributed to the fun.

*Ruth Cornish
Thame & Wheatley Group*



Dancing the night away.

Photo: Maureen Baker.