

Walker

Walks festival celebrates Lonely Planet rating

The 2022 White Cliffs Walking Festival took place over six days at the end of August. This year we were delighted that Lonely Planet guides had identified our heritage coast as fourth on their list of the world's best regions to visit in 2022! Our walks took in the whole area from Thanet to Hythe as well as Canterbury, the Stour marshes and the Elham Valley.

We offered 33 walks including guided history tours, clifftop walks, long walks, shorter walks, family fun walks with an ice cream or with a smugglers theme, an early morning breakfast walk, an evening fish and chip supper walk after seeing the sun set over Dover, a wheelchair accessible walk for carers and those they look after and Long Distance Walkers Association challenge walks of 21 or 50 miles over 24 hours. There really was something for everybody!

As always, our aim was to showcase walking as a healthy, accessible activity and the

delights of our beautiful area. The festival attracted over 600 attendees (some individuals took part in several different walks) with participants from all parts of Kent and from many other regions of the UK and also a number from other countries including Belgium, France, Spain and Switzerland. The majority of walkers were not Ramblers members, though we know that some have since joined us, and - to go by past experience - it's likely that some may join later too.

We had great pleasure in welcoming Ramblers new CEO, Ross Maloney, and Richard Sharp, Area Engagement Officer, along with Colin Sefton, Kent Area Chair who joined us on our opening day as well as the Mayor of Ramsgate, Councillor Raushan Ara, who took part in a walk to Pegwell Bay. Colin also helped as backmarker on a 17-mile circular walk around Folkestone and the North Downs.

The entire festival was planned and organised by a

team of volunteers from White Cliffs Ramblers who worked throughout the year, along with some 35 other members who led or assisted with walks during the six days. We are extremely grateful to them all. Sadly, we were shocked when we learned of the sudden death in June of Kevin Joyce, a key member of our team who had masterminded the layout of our publicity leaflets and posters and was finalising our festival website and booking arrangements. At the last minute, the rest of the team rallied round and set up an alternative booking system to enable the festival to go ahead, but we felt that the professional quality of our publications was a tribute to Kevin's contribution to our event.

We believe that we met our aims and received very positive feedback from many participants - it was a lot of hard work, but very rewarding and we hope we may be able to hold a similar festival in the future.

Andrew Swarbrick
White Cliffs Ramblers



Walkers on one of the coastal walks from Dover to Folkestone.

Photo: Lee Pickup



Ross Maloney (Left), the Ramblers new CEO, with Andrew Swarbrick.

Photo: Tony Bristow

Essex coast path delays feared

The Essex section of the England Coast Path was supposed to have been fully opened by 2022. With its inlets and estuaries, the Essex section may prove to be the country's longest; one estimate is that the final length will be around 350 miles, so it may be no surprise that there have been delays, caused at least in part by lack of resources of Essex Highways.

Currently only four of the nine stages are fully open to the public: Tilbury to Southend-on-Sea; Southend-on-Sea to Wallasea Island; Burnham-on-Crouch to Maldon; and Maldon to Salford. And so far as the Burnham to Maldon stretch is concerned, it is understood that Essex County Council has not yet been able to do the trimming back and waymarking. Given that the process of applying for the

grant funding takes some time, that is not likely to happen very soon. So, although this stretch is open, it isn't very easy to walk.

As for the remaining stretches, it is likely that the next to open will be Salford to Jaywick and Jaywick to Harwich, with probably Wallasea to Burnham and Harwich to Shotley Gate after that and perhaps Mersea Island last, as it is furthest back in the determination process - although the proposals at Mersea Island are fairly uncontroversial so that might make it quicker. It may be years rather than months before the Essex section is fully open, but when the date is known we will be holding some kind of celebration.

As we report elsewhere in this issue, Essex Ramblers now work with Essex Highways in parts of the county to clear and waymark footpaths. It may be that some of our six groups along the coast will



This section of the England Coast Path on Two Tree Island, Leigh-on-Sea, opened earlier this year. Photo: Darren Braine, copyright Natural England

be able to help with maintenance and signage and at the time of writing they are being asked if they can provide volunteers.

Mike Cannell
Essex Area Media Officer

New London Greenways: a brief update

Just over two years ago the London mayor agreed to the creation of six new London Greenways. Good progress has been made on all six routes, mostly on the devising and development parts of the project. One route - the Forgotten Rivers walk - is now closer to delivery and ready for some stress testing.

I have a GPX file available on the route from Borehamwood to Blackfriars for those who'd like to walk the route - please email me at ramblerdes@gmail.com and I'll make it available to you. I'm interested in any comments you have on the route but particularly whether it's easy to follow, where it would be very helpful

to waymark and especially any walks to parks and green spaces that are available on the route.

Meanwhile we will begin to develop some PDFs, like those available for the Capital Ring and London Loop, liaise with the relevant authorities about signing the route, investigate whether certain sections lend themselves for adding to Ramblers Routes and seek outside funding from wherever appropriate.

Of course, we will continue to explore new ways to publicise our work and I've already spoken at a packed Sustrans Street Talks evening in November about the routes.

Des Garrahan



Footpath matters

County council

During October, normal service resumed with the meetings (annually for Oxford City and six-monthly for the remaining districts) between the county council, landowners and users.

Diversions, claims etc

Since the last issue no fewer than 18 cases have been resolved; 11 diversion orders confirmed, one diversion rejected by the county council and one modification order quashed by the Planning Inspectorate. The confirmed diversions include the Shenington and Didcot cases mentioned in the last issue; also Great Tew FP6 will no longer

be a cul-de-sac ending in the hideous eyesore which is Soho Farms, which is a failed attempt at plonking a Zulu village into the English countryside (I suppose the cost of insuring thatched roofs would have been prohibitive).

The section of Charlton-on-Otmoor BR3 which floods has been provided with hardcore; it remains to be seen how effective

this is, as the rest of the bridleway can be ankle-deep in 49% watery mud and 49% muddy water; a field nearby is called Splash!

The stiles on Lewknor FP1 have been repaired, but a fence has now appeared blocking one of the gates between them. Confirmation of the diversion order is being put on ice pending resolution of problems with the landowner concerned.

Other matters

The lake at Blenheim Palace is being dredged with the paths diverted much closer to the palace than would normally be the case. My photo shows a view from one of the temporarily diverted footpaths that would not normally be possible without paying.

David Godfrey
Area Footpath Secretary



Maintaining our paths

Path maintenance teams from three of our groups - Bicester & Kidlington, Thame & Wheatley and Vale - were active during the summer.

Bicester & Kidlington had no fewer than 12 volunteers clearing a path that runs from the bottom of Water Eaton Lane, Kidlington, heading towards the main Oxford to Kidlington road. Thame & Wheatley worked on a 200-metre stretch of footpath behind Groves factory on the Thames bypass, as reported in the previous issue.

Vale group cleared Hardwell Lane (an ancient way on the boundary between Woolstone and Compton Beauchamp parishes); a much-used metalled footpath that links Dry Sandford with Wootton; the path above the east bank of the



Vale Path Volunteers team in Wootton. Photo: Jim Parke

Ginge Brook in West Hendred parish; and a long footpath linking Wootton and Cumnor parishes. I sent photos of all our achievements to the respective parish clerks who

expressed their appreciation of what we had done and shared the photos with their councillors, occasionally putting them on their social media.

Dave Cavanagh

New life for unloved path

Our group has worked hard to resurrect a virtually defunct footpath south of Reading. The path, which is just to the south of Junction 11 of the M4, had fallen into disuse and was completely overgrown for much of its length. The drive to get it reinstated stemmed from new housing development in the area. This created a demand for local walking routes, and what might have previously been seen as a rather unattractive path near the motorway became a potentially important part of circular routes around Shinfield, Three Mile Cross and Ryeish Green. A Shinfield parish councillor came up with the idea of making the path a short ecology walk and Loddon Valley Ramblers bought into this vision.

Attempts to secure action from the local authority were complicated because the east and west ends of the path were in Wokingham borough whilst the central section was in Reading. Whilst the former continued to cut their sections of the path (and had recently repaired steps down from the A33), the latter showed no interest in maintaining its section.

In these difficult circumstances we worked with Shinfield Parish Council and a local volunteer group to clear and improve the surfaces of the eastern and western sections, including removing tree stumps and improving drainage, and to get the central section of the path cleared by the landowner. The developer of the new housing was persuaded to provide soil so that a raised path could be created to overcome flooding problems in the central section and road chippings were used to surface this. Four stiles on the western section were removed, and two were replaced with gates funded by the parish council.

This was a substantial project, undertaken between February and August 2022, with major input from our group's volunteers. There is now a safe stile-free route which links to a large network of signposted paths in the local area, and the proximity of the motorway does not detract from its value.

Project leader Ray Sharp commented that the project showed the importance of determination and hard work by Ramblers volunteers. "There were a couple of points where we almost despaired of ever completing the work. But in the end, partnership working with the parish council, the local volunteer group, backed up by a sterling group of Ramblers volunteers, produced a very satisfying result, to the benefit of walkers and local residents".

Steve Vale
Loddon Valley Ramblers



The resurrected path takes shape.



Improving the path's drainage was important.

Another section of the England Coast Path opened in Kent

The fourth section of the England Coast Path in Kent was opened by Natural England on 26 October. It runs for 29 miles along the north Kent coast from Whitstable westwards to Iwade (near the Sheppey bridge). The route through Seasalter, Faversham, Oare, Conyer and

Sittingbourne, features mudflats, saltmarshes, sea forts and towns and brings the length of the England Coast Path now open in the county to 173 miles. The section from the Isle of Grain to Otterham Creek is due to open in April 2023, followed by that from Ramsgate to Whitstable.

Semaphore line walked

Our group supported Guildford Walkfest in September, a month-long celebration of walking supported by Guildford Borough Council, by leading a series of walks for all the community.

This year also marks the 200th anniversary of the construction of a chain of semaphore towers which ran from the Admiralty in London to Portsmouth Dockyard, so a number of our festival walks incorporated the sites of these towers.

Started in 1822, there were originally 15 towers in the chain which could send a message from London to Portsmouth in

about 15 minutes. The towers operated until about 1847 when they were succeeded by the electric telegraph.

The only remaining and complete four-storey tower, now owned and restored by the Landmark Trust, is at Chatley Heath, close to Junction 10 of the M25 in Surrey. In Guildford it is still possible to see the remains of a tower incorporated in a house on Pewley Hill. Our semaphore tower walks varied in length from four to nine miles and covered the area from Ockham to Guildford, Witley and Haslemere.

*Richard Peters
Guildford Ramblers*



Chatley Heath tower.

Photo: Richard Peters

Thames Vision 2050



The Vision document.

In early September I attended, as the representative for the Ramblers, the Port of London Authority's (PLA) launch of their new vision, Thames 2050, in City Hall down at the Royal Victoria Dock. The Ramblers has long been a partner and supporter of the PLA's endeavours. The Thames Vision 2050 is a shared vision of how the Thames can be a greater resource for local communities and better serve the nation as a global maritime centre. Partners collaborating in delivering the Vision include the government, Greater London Authority, port and river businesses, local authorities, Thames Estuary Growth Board, customers, river users, local community groups, voluntary sector organisations

and fellow regulators.

Thames Vision 2050 is presented under three broad subsections: Trading Thames, Destination Thames and Natural Thames. We have a specific interest in the last two and particularly Destination Thames. The PLA describes this section as: a place to live, visit, play and enjoy... accessible to all, a national and international icon for the city and the country... more visitors drawn to the river as the best way to enjoy London and the Thames Estuary, and its many cultural attractions... more people from diverse backgrounds enjoying sport and leisure opportunities on the Thames. Indeed, I visited the Thames Barrier with a film crew from the PLA and you can see me voice a couple of my thoughts if you visit the Vision website (www.thamesvision.pla.co.uk) and click on Destination Thames.

Between now and 2030 the PLA, working with partners, will start work on a specific set of tasks. The Ramblers role in all this is to showcase both the Thames Path National Trail and the England Coast Path (the PLA is responsible for the tidal Thames) by doing one of the things we do best - devising, developing and delivering group walks for everybody along and around these routes.

Des Garrahan

On foot to Walsingham

Before 1538, when pilgrimages were outlawed by Henry VIII, the route from London to Walsingham in Norfolk is said to have been the most popular pilgrimage in England, more so than that to Canterbury. The original route from London is likely to have been along Ermine Street to Waltham Abbey and Ware and then eastwards via Newmarket and Mildenhall, a route which may not suit the present day walker because of the growth of London, the presence of major roads and the lack of suitable paths in places.

In London to Walsingham Camino - The Pilgrimage Guide published in September, author Andy Bull has reinvented the London to Walsingham pilgrimage with a new route which leaves the capital via the Thames and Lea Valley and often makes use of existing named routes like the Hertfordshire Way, Saffron Trail,

Harcamlow Way and Peddars Way. His 178-mile route takes in the towns of Saffron Walden, Bury St Edmunds, Thetford and Fakenham along the way.

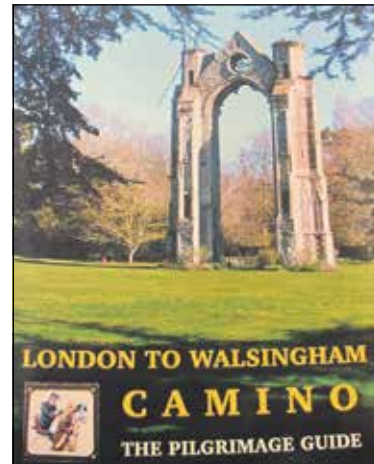
The book is designed to provide inspiration to walk the route and provides an overview of each of 13 stages together with plenty of practical advice on transport and facilities. Walk instructions come separately by going to a web page and choosing a pdf file for printing, a igpx file for smartphone or GPS use or a .kml file for use with GoogleEarth.

The route can be considered as a recreational route for leisure walking or a serious pilgrimage having been given official recognition by the Confraternity of St James, organisers of the Camino de Santiago in Spain.

London to Walsingham Camino - The Pilgrimage Guide by Andy Bull, published by Trailblazer Publications, ISBN 978-1-912716-31-9, £17.99.



The Walsingham camino begins at Sir Christopher Wren's St Magnus the Martyr church close to the north end of London Bridge.



Book cover.

**SOUTH EAST
walker**

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Area AGM

The Bedfordshire Area Annual General Meeting is being held on Sunday 27 November at Streatley village hall. There will be a short morning walk starting at 10.00am, followed by lunch. After lunch the afternoon session starting at 1.30pm will include an update on the Ramblers work and campaigns followed by

the formal business of the AGM.

The vacant positions of Secretary and Publicity Officer need to be filled. Our Chair, Nick Markham, and Treasurer, Kevin Barratt, have indicated their willingness to continue and a replacement Footpath Secretary has been nominated.

The Area hasn't had an official Secretary for a number of years and really needs to find one and with over 900 members in Bedfordshire there surely must be someone who would

be willing to offer their services. The job is not as onerous as that of a group Secretary. The Publicity Officer role is vacant as I am stepping down after some 20 or so years to make way for someone more social media savvy and with fresh ideas. It is probably the most interesting and challenging officer role and equally the most rewarding. If either role appeals to you then please contact Area Chair, Nick Markham by email at bedswalkfest@gmail.com/.

Thanks Bob

Bob Tarron, Chair and Secretary of the Area Footpath Committee is stepping down after many years service. Bob came into the role at a time of upheaval with older, long-service members retiring or moving away. Major consultations on gravel extraction, quarrying, housing developments and roads had been completed, the county council was being wound up and new authorities in Bedford and Central Bedfordshire were being

formed. Bob, with calm efficiency and thoroughness, took it all in his stride.

After a year or two he realised there was little point in having meetings to discuss temporary closures and planning applications when these could easily and effectively be dealt with by the local Path officer or Path Guardian. Projects such as East-West Rail and the Black Cat roundabout could be dealt with by a sub committee whilst he dealt with developments around Luton. Bob produced and circulated a monthly path report which included temporary



The Vision document. Photo: Barry Ingram

closures, planning applications, consultations and public inquiries and attended these where appropriate.

Bob has done a great job over the years and deserves a big thank you. (continues on page 4).

BEDFORDSHIRE

bulletin continued

Training

A very successful year for our Area training courses organised and run by Nick Markham concluded with a fully booked Apps, Maps and Compass course at Harlington in September during the Bedfordshire Walking Festival.

Following a morning indoor session participants went into the Sundon Hills to try out their new skills. All the participants expressed their appreciation and said they had enjoyed the day and learnt a lot. Nick is already planning courses for 2023 and details will be announced soon.



Participants prepare for the afternoon session.

Photo: Barry Ingram

Walking festival reaches America

People from all over the county and beyond came to participate in the Bedfordshire Walking Festival in September. Putting all the people and walking distances together suggests we covered more than enough miles to set foot in America. Yes, over 5,000 miles were walked during the nine-day event making it a very successful festival.

One person achieved a personal goal of walking 100 miles. For others it was an opportunity to explore

the county with a leader, whilst for others it was the chance to walk with a group of like-minded people. For some the highlight is the 40-mile Greensand Ridge Path Challenge over two days. The challenge can be more difficult than it might appear and out of 35 people who started on the Saturday, just 10 completed the second day and received their certificates. Several who were unable to complete the challenge because of tired legs or blisters have already indicated their intention to try again next year. Altogether,

there were 45 walks on the festival programme ranging in distance and time required. The average number of people on each walk was 24.

The festival's success is down to many people including walk leaders and other walking groups and organisations for putting on walks, making financial contributions, distributing programmes, putting up posters and keeping the website up to date. Without their support the festival would not happen. A big thank you to all involved!



Greensand Ridge Path Challenge finishers.

Photo: Barry Ingram

Bedfordshire Walking Festival 2023

The Bedfordshire Walking Festival is organised by volunteers and is only achievable by having people involved, whether it's putting on interesting walks, helping collate the programmes, or putting up posters. Without their help it wouldn't happen. We need your help for the next festival so please ask yourself what you are willing to do to help ensure the 2023 festival takes place. Contact Nick Markham at email bedswalkfest@gmail.com if you would like to get involved.

Barry Ingram

Where would Bedfordshire Ramblers be without Barry? His enthusiasm and passion for the outdoors has helped promote and publicise walking in our 'surprising little county' to a new level.

Barry joined the Ramblers and Ivel Valley Walkers over 30 years ago. His drive for walking was obvious. It started with leading walks and grew to organising coach trips and holidays for the group. In 1996 he became Chair of Ivel Valley Walkers. His ideas and initiatives kept coming with more group walks during the week as numbers increased. In 2005 he became Chair of Bedfordshire Area and things kept growing from there.

One of his ideas was to start a Bedfordshire Walking Festival and in September 2009 this was realised.

Nine days of walking with at its height over 50 walks with everything from short interest walks to our 40-mile Greensand Challenge. Despite a short gap for Covid the festival is still going strong and 2023 will be its 13th year. The RIPPLEs, our footpath clearance volunteers, came next and were soon welcomed by the local authorities. All of this ran despite his passion for photography and role as Area Publicity Officer.

Barry handed the role of Area Chair to me in 2018 and will be passing the organisation of the walking festival and Area publicity over this year. He'll still have the RIPPLEs (Barry with a chainsaw is a sight to behold!) and his photos will keep coming.

Thank you Barry for all you've done for Bedfordshire's Ramblers and see you soon.

Nick Markham
Chair, Bedfordshire Ramblers



Barry on the Coast to Coast Walk.

Photo: Tony Sheward

RIPPLE

Our RIPPLE (Restoring and Improving Public Paths for Leisure and Enjoyment) volunteers engaged in many path improvement works in July and August with larger tasks at Chalrave, Chicksands and Broom.

At Chalgrave, a path once well-used by villagers had become blocked and generally unusable. On a hot morning our volunteers set about restoring the path using a mix of power tools and hand tools plus assistance from Central Bedfordshire's rights of way officer, Lindsay. They soon transformed the path back to being a very attractive route. The group was rewarded that day with refreshments and thanks from a couple who live in a house adjoining the path.

At Chicksands our volunteers returned to a path on Ministry of Defence land which they last cleared in 2018. It was another hot day but despite the heat around 1,400 yards of path were cleared.

At Broom a new public path along the River Ivel had been opened earlier in the year. Marker posts had been put in and the surface cut but an old stile had not been removed and encroaching vegetation needed removal. Enter our volunteers and within a few hours the stile was gone and almost a mile of vegetation cleared back. The path now provides a circular walk to Langford.

Volunteers have also worked on smaller tasks in Chellington, Harrold, Melchbourne, Northill, Odell, Pavenham and Pertenhall. At Northill a small group cleared a blocked path through a copse which had been reported by one of our members. We were originally asked to look at a blocked path



Removing a stile at Broom. Paul and John.

Photo: Barry Ingram



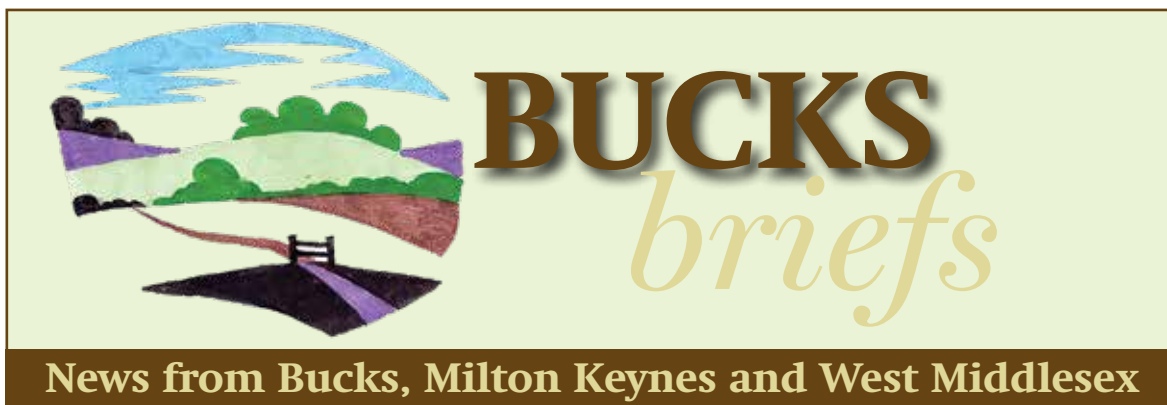
Our work team (Eric, Paul, John and Steve) at Northill.

Photo: Barry Ingram

at the parish of Pertenhall in the north of the county bordering Cambridgeshire but found the path had been cleared though some marker posts needed replacing. As the parish council was concerned about its paths we decided to survey all the paths there. Over two sessions we checked all the paths and sent reports to both the parish council and Bedford Borough highlighting some problems we found. A few weeks later I had a lovely email

from the parish council's footpath representative thanking us and saying that some people in the parish, including farmers, had taken action on some of the points we had raised.

Things don't always work out like that but it is good when they do and shows what a valuable contribution our volunteers can make. If you would be interested in joining us, contact me by text to 07860 348347 or email to barry.ingram74@btinternet.com.



Participate in our AGM and exercise your democratic rights!

The Buckinghamshire, Milton Keynes and West Middlesex Area AGM will be held at 2.00pm on Saturday 4 February 2023, in the Cherry Baker Room of the Wades Centre, Stratton Road, Princes Risborough, Buckinghamshire, HP27 9AX (grid reference SP 804035). It is the intention to hold a choice of walks during the morning, and the formal business of the meeting will be followed by a quiz. Further details will be published on the Area website, <http://www.bucks-wmiddx-ramblers.org.uk>, before the meeting. There is an adjacent car park, but be aware that it is pay-and-display.

Copies of the Annual Report will be available during January, on request from me, either as a PDF file (requests, with 'Annual Report' as the subject, to johnandjean@thamesinternet.com) or in print (requests, accompanied by a stamped addressed envelope of suitable size for an A5 booklet, to 4 Park Farm Way, Lane End, High Wycombe, Buckinghamshire, HP14 3EG). An abbreviated version of the report, excluding personal details, will be published on the Area website.

Notices of any formal motions to be proposed at the AGM should reach me no later than one week before the meeting, i.e. by Saturday 28 January 2023.

Note, also, that it is the business

of the Area AGM to elect two members of the General Council, who become company members of the Ramblers for legal purposes and are entitled to speak and vote at the General Council meeting, to be held at NEC Birmingham on 1 April 2023; expenses are paid by Central Office. Areas are encouraged to seek candidates from all parts of the membership, in line with our values of being inclusive to all and welcoming people from diverse backgrounds. If you wish to put your name forward, or to find out more about what is involved, please contact me,

John Esslemont
Acting Area Secretary

Could you help the Area?

We have a number of vacancies for volunteers to keep the Area working for walkers and supporting local groups. All officer roles are up for reelection at the AGM; the Area Chair and the Acting Secretary, having been in office for more than a decade, do not wish to continue. The Acting Secretary is also the Area Treasurer and would prefer to relinquish both roles. Vacancies exist for other roles including Vice-Chair, Countryside Secretary (to take the lead on planning issues affecting the Area in partnership with our groups) and Publicity Officer.

We also have a vacancy for an independent examiner of the Area accounts. Brian Baldwin, who first

took on the role for the 2011-12 accounts, has decided that this will be his last year. Many thanks to Brian. This is not an onerous job; numeracy is required, but not necessarily accounting qualifications. Half a day's work each October should be sufficient.

Please help to save our Area. Volunteers registered on Assemble can find job descriptions in the documenthub. Failure to fill the three principal officer roles would mean the Board of Trustees would need to make arrangements to support the Area's groups. Any offers of help, or enquiries about what is involved, are welcome; please contact me at johnandjean@thamesinternet.com.

John Esslemont
Acting Area Secretary

North Bucks rRIPPLE installs 300th gate

In Dorton on 21 September we installed our 300th gate. Well over half the gates have been installed through our Donate a Gate scheme (see <http://www.bucks-wmiddx-ramblers.org.uk/donate-a-gate.html>) which allows us to pass on thousands of pounds to Buckinghamshire

Council to buy more gates which we then install.

When we started out in 2015 with a couple of wheelbarrows we were in awe of those Ramblers groups that had installed 200 gates to replace stiles. Now with our Land Rover and trailer, the support of Buckinghamshire Council,

the Ramblers, landowners and a fantastic team of retirees doing the hard graft we are set for a few more. There's certainly no shortage of stile-to-gate opportunities - and it gets us out of the house and out of mischief!

Bill Piers
NB rRIPPLE Coordinator



The team at Dorton. James Spratley of Buckinghamshire Council's right of way department is second from right. Photos: Bill Piers



The plaque on the 300th gate.

Swans in Winter

My inspiration came whilst walking the path alongside the Royal Military Canal in Kent. In the days when we walked often in this area, we found the Napoleonic wars often intruded unexpectedly in our thoughts,,, even when enjoying the local birdlife!

*Along the cinder track beside dark water
young cob swans stop preening perfect feathers,
startle us with hissing,
to lower orange beaks in threat.
But another swan comes surging
in great wing-beats
against the marsh-wind's rush -
whistling the cobs away to quieter reeds
below the Saxon church.*

*Taking their indignation with them,
all swans are gone.
We crunch forward under crisp air
over frosted stubble at a field-edge:
flint-strewn and threaded with small burrows
of water-voles and rabbits -
all the way along the towpath
of this centuries-old canal
built to keep Napoleon and his men at bay.*

*The swans are fierce
as soldiers with bayonets and muskets.
We would not pick a quarrel with them!*

Words and image © Lizzie Ballagher





Footpath work parties fill the gap



Uttlesford Ramblers work party in action.

With local authority cutbacks, Essex Highways is unable to do as much as it might wish to maintain our public rights of way, so in some parts of the county the Ramblers has stepped in to fill the gap. In line with our charitable objectives, several groups in Essex have set up working parties to clear blocked footpaths, repair and replace gates, stiles and bridges, and replace waymarks. These work parties meet regularly on set days of the month and usually number about 10 volunteers. Their groups have invested in equipment such as brush cutters and chainsaws, and training is given to members to use them safely. We estimate that their work adds up to at least 3,500 hours a year.

Author to speak at AGM

Essex Area's Annual General Meeting will be held at Essex County Cricket Club's ground in Chelmsford on Saturday 11 February 2023, commencing at 10.00am. The guest speaker will be

This work is carried out in association with Essex Highways and, as our Chair David Radford pointed out in the March 2022 issue of South East Walker, Essex Highways has halved the number of front-line staff dealing with public rights of way. At that time there was naturally apprehension about how the new arrangements would work but work party organisers report that the relationship with rights of way inspectors is working very well, and arguably better than the previous set-up, despite the reduced numbers.

On a personal note, as the individual responsible for publicity for the Ramblers at county level, I'd like to see us take more credit for our footpath maintenance work. While the work is in progress, some groups put up notices stating that the work is being carried out by the Ramblers. Members of the public see these and understand what we are about. And in cases of major clearances or bridge replacements, a letter to the local paper or a press release (with photos) is always worthwhile. Credit where credit is due - more publicity might even help to recruit new members!

Contacts for the work parties are set out below, and new volunteers are always welcome. If you want to know more about a particular work party in your part of the county, click on 'Footpath group work party information' at the top right corner of the Essex Area website.

Meanwhile, even if you don't want to commit to joining a work party or live in an area of the county not covered by work parties, you can still play a part. There is no reason why members should not remove sufficient vegetation to enable them to walk a path. Adding a pair of secateurs to a backpack and tidying up as you go on a walk means small problems do not become larger ones. Regular maintenance pays, and every little helps. And if you spot a bigger problem, report it to Essex Highways via their website.

Contacts for work parties
Maldon: Andy Hudson - aahudson22@yahoo.co.uk
Tendring: John Barton - John.a.barton@btinternet.com

Uttlesford: Alan Goffee - alan@turnbury.plus.com
West Essex: Brian Smith - briansmith24922@btinternet.com

Stephen Neale, author of (among other titles) 'The England Coast Path: 1,000 mini adventures around the world's longest coast path'.

Mike Cannell
Media Officer, Essex Ramblers

London Loop, Capital Ring and Green Chain Walk

Our hardworking and dedicated volunteers have continued to make waymarking improvements to various sections of both the Capital Ring and London Loop over recent months. We are now seeing a noticeable difference to the overall waymarking since our project started in 2019.

As one of the early project actions, Andrew Hunt added the London Loop to the Go Jauntly app and he is now updating the photos

and guidance. He says "Most recently I have walked sections one to three (Erith Riverside to West Wickham Common) and been greatly heartened and impressed by all the new waymarks installed by Keith and his team. It makes such a difference."

We're cheered too by the emails and comments on social media we now receive thanking us for our work and pointing out the difference we're making. Recent messages include: "Without your

maps and directions we would certainly have become lost several times, so thank you again for your very helpful assistance" and "We did the first three sections with the old guide, and sections four to eight with your new ones. They are very good indeed, so thank you to the team that wrote them, it's clear that it was a lot of work."

In November we held a meeting for project volunteers, hosted at Transport for London's offices by



Area AGM

Innor London Area's AGM will be held, in person, on Saturday 4 February 2023 from 2.00pm - 4.00pm at Waterloo Action Centre, Mezzanine Hall, 14 Baylis Road, London, SE1 7AA. The venue is a couple of minutes walk from

Waterloo station and we hope as many Ramblers members of Inner London and our groups as possible will join us.

Please check our website (www.innerlondonramblers.org.uk) and Facebook page for further news on guest speakers and information on group led-walks to the venue.

Area Secretary

Vibrant, active, friendly Ramblers Area is looking for a new Area Secretary. Likes volunteering, walking, nature, environmental issues, meeting at least five times a year and campaigning. Seeks similar. Training and support given. Welcomes new ideas and approach. GSOH essential. If interested or curious please contact me at chair@

innerlondonramblers.org.uk for more information.

After two productive years including, amongst other tasks, helping guide Inner London Area Ramblers through Covid, we bid farewell to Angela Dawe, our current Area Secretary. Her calm demeanor and initiative will be missed and we wish her every success in the future.

Des Garrahan
Chair, Inner London Area

Will Norman, London's Walking and Cycling Commissioner. We were delighted to be joined by guest speaker Alexandra Rook, former Project Manager for Walk London, who ran the original project to establish the Loop and Ring. This was our first in-person meeting since our Central Office hosted the project kick-off meetings three years ago, and meant volunteers could meet and share knowledge and challenges. We circulated our first annual report on the overall status of the two routes, updating everyone on progress and thinking about next steps.

We've recently bought another batch of waymark stickers, meaning we once again have a good supply of discs and stickers for both the Ring and the Loop. The November meeting also provided a good opportunity for volunteers to collect supplies for the next stages of waymarking improvements.

We're also replacing vinyl arrows on signposts where they have been bleached out by the sun. We have vinyl stickers for some sections of the Capital Ring in south London, which will be installed soon, and we will

order a supply for the London Loop.

We will soon be in a position to publish updated maps and guidance for the Green Chain Walk to add to that already published for the Loop and Ring. We have agreed a publication schedule for Loop and Ring updates with Transport for London, who have to check all the guidance meets accessibility guidelines before we can publish.

Please contact me at vicechair@innerlondonramblers.org.uk if you would like to get involved in the project.

Clare Wadd
Vice-Chair, Inner London Area



Waymark discs are back in stock!
Photo: Clare Wadd

Mission complete as final peak climbed

Being brought up near Glasgow I had, from an early age, enjoyed being taken on walks by my parents, something I continued to enjoy as an adult. When a Ramblers group, called Clyde Valley Ramblers was formed, I was an early member.

Meeting other ramblers encouraged me to widen my horizons by introducing me to longer walks and climbing mountains. Very soon I joined a small group of Clyde Valley Ramblers who were trying to climb all the Munros (Scottish mountains over 3,000 feet). As a novice at that time, it was great to learn from more experienced ramblers.

Before long we had climbed all the easier Munros in the southern highlands and were organising trips further north. By December 1999 I had climbed all 284 Munros in 10 years and was listed by the Scottish Mountaineering Club as the 2,282nd person to have 'completed' them since records began in 1891 when Sir Hugh Munro published his list.

After two or three aimless years I found myself back on the mountains, this time climbing Corbetts (2,500 - 3,000 feet) although this became more difficult after I moved to the south of England. The first thing I did after making the move was to join Godalming and Haslemere Ramblers.

Here again I found friendly and supportive people and soon found myself leading walks in my new surroundings, with many of my walks involving routes up and down the North and South Downs, being the most mountainous ascents I could find!

Needless to say, holidays were spent back in Scotland climbing Corbetts and in the summer of this year I set off to Scotland to complete the task of climbing every Corbett. After having climbed a few remaining Corbetts in May, we went to Braemar to climb my final easy Corbett called Morrone. Several Ramblers friends arranged to join me during the week to celebrate my achievement.

The intended date for climbing Morrone was to be Thursday 28 May but as the weather forecast for that day was not good, we decided to make the climb a day earlier. However that evening when several other friends arrived to celebrate with me, they were so disappointed at not joining me on my last Corbett that they insisted we should all climb the mountain again on the next day as planned. Therefore I climbed my last mountain twice accompanied by others including Keith Bulley and Carol Bateman from Godalming and Haslemere Ramblers.

The strength of the wind steadily increased as we approached the summit but fortunately there was a small brick building beside a



Adrian at the summit of Morrone.

mast on the summit which we were able to shelter behind to have a small celebration.

At a celebration dinner that evening, Carol read a poem, the first verse of which sums it all up:

The weather is awful, my fingers have froze

And icicles hang from the end of my nose,
The rain batters down and
the wind howls and blows
And where has he gone? He's gone
climbing Corbetts and Munros.

Adrian Dueling

Walking the Greensand Way

A small but determined group of Maidstone Ramblers set off on 11 September to conquer the Greensand Way. We had decided on eight days to achieve this feat, with day three being a half day and the first three days to be included on the group programme. Three of the group had the confidence gained from completing the Wealdway last year.

All the guides told us that the distance was 108 miles, but as each day went by it was clear that each section was about a mile longer than anticipated! Much has been written about 'map miles' versus actual miles but our measurement on several GPX devices was 121 miles. But

whether it is 15 miles or 18 miles a day is not so important when the views are brilliant and the body is not too sore.

We had chosen what turned out to be a week of ideal walking weather. The only rain came on our fourth day but it seemed we were so busy celebrating one of the first periods of proper rain after the long dry and hot summer that we didn't care.

All six who completed the walk had taken their preparation seriously. Various stretching exercises were touted by some and possibly scoffed at by the yoga crew. But the consensus view was that you don't need to walk 120 miles in eight days to prepare for walking 120 miles in eight days! We were all

regular walkers with our local group and doing a 10-12 mile walk at least once a week. Yes, we had to be a bit stoic as some old aches and pains reappeared and even some new ones. But like vintage cars we battled on regardless and the regime of better fitting boots, two pairs of boots worn in rotation and liner socks, was a real success.

As with any trek, the success of the whole team is dependent on working together. But this time we were joined by Tony, whose logistics help in ferrying us to and from the start and finish points was invaluable.

Les Holmans

Les's group followed the Greensand Way from east to west, from Hamstreet in Kent to Haslemere in Surrey.



Enjoying a rest stop along the Greensand Way.

Photo: Les Holmans

Into print

Liz Webb, an active member of our group for over 20 years, has recently had a book of her poetry published by Amazon. Entitled 'Sixty Plus', in which

Liz shares her views on the nation's pastimes, it makes a very amusing read. Her friend Ted Andrews, who provided the cartoon below, is a retired national newspaper illustrator, keen dog walker and nature lover.

Linda Hartley

Leighton Buzzard Ramblers

*Rambling On
It's Sunday morning,
nearly half past eight,
I'd better get a move on,
I don't want to be late
I'm going to join the ramblers,
see the countryside,
But where are my walking boots,
did they have to hide?*

*So what's the weather forecast,
is it wet or dry?
Will I need my waterproofs
or sun cream factor high,
Be prepared, the scouts' motto applies
to ramblers too
So forget your waterproofs and you
could get wet through.*

*You meet your fellow walkers,
all keen to get away,
Who's going to ride with me,
I hear somebody say,
Car sharing is important,
we do try to be green,
Then off we go in convoy,
to get there we are keen.*

*At the destination we
put on our walking gear,
Bobble hats or sun hats,*

*depends on time of year,
There is a walking leader
and a backstop too,
To check that no-one's left behind
after stopping for the loo.*

*Is it time for coffee yet,
we're gasping for a drink,
We've been walking for two hours
now, time to stop we think,
Rucksacks are emptied, snacks
consumed with ease,
Thermos flasks are packed away, time
to move on please.*

*We're on the final stretch now,
not too far to go,
The rain has stayed away,
the wind forgot to blow,
The sun made an appearance,
a brief but welcome sight.
So no-one will have trouble
sleeping tonight.*

*A local pub has been chosen to finish
off the day. Two pints and a packet of
crisps I hear someone say,
Then it's all over till next Sunday.
when we go to pastures new, So
why not come and join us, we look
forward to seeing you*

© Liz Webb



Ted Andrews - Illustrator

A visit to the 'Ghosts' house



Members of Mole Valley Ramblers outside West Horsley Place.

Photo: Fiona Spencer

West Horsley Place, a Grade 1 listed mediaeval manor house and 380-acre estate in Surrey, dates from 1425 but has been on Historic England's Heritage at Risk register for some time. A trust, set up by the late Bamber Gascoigne, aims to bring it back into good repair. Details of open days and special events can be found on the trust's website at <https://www.westhorsleyplace.org/>. Members of Mole Valley Ramblers paid a visit there recently.

On a sunny September morning a group of us met at West Horsley Place in Surrey for a tour of the house. It is a lovely rural area, where we often walk.

Fans of BBC television's 'Ghosts' may be familiar with the exterior of the house as it is the haunted mansion of the series. Some of the interior is also used for filming. The front of the house is an impressive red-brick facade.

Our tour guide, a well-informed man, showed us around the house or at least most of it. Some rooms were unsafe as

the house is in a state of disrepair and the restoration is going slowly. There was noticeable mould and dampness. Most of the ground floor was taken up by the Great Hall, which was huge. Above that on the first floor is a drawing room, which is the same size. Of course, the house has a library, but there were shelves of books in most of the rooms, there must have been thousands of books, many of them poetry books.

Outside there is a formal garden with box hedges and an orchard with trees laden with apples, pears and damsons. The orchard leads through to a walled garden with a huge lawn. One side of the wall curves in and out and is known as the 'crinkle-crinkle'. This garden was used for parties, picnics and outdoor entertaining in the summer and still is: I recently saw a production of 'Julius Caesar' here.

We were lucky to enjoy glorious sunshine that morning and a few of us went for a short walk after our tour.

*Wendy Freeman
Mole Valley Ramblers*

Ephemera (and some other bits of history)

Yet another file of papers which should be committed to the recycling bin but won't be just yet because there is some history to be explored. The Ramblers has a fascinating web of associated groups and links with other organisations and here are a few anecdotes which reflect the interweaving of walking groups in London. And it wouldn't be surprising to find that this is probably the situation across the rest of the country.

Looking through a list of affiliates back in 2006, we find 17 London-based clubs but at the same time we must remember that London walking groups range far and wide beyond the boundaries of the metropolis. Out of the 17 clubs only nine seem to still be in existence with five uncertainties and four no longer functioning. Several of the clubs predated the creation of the Ramblers' Association, with two formed in the 1880s and one in the 1920s. Brief research on this topic is largely done online and trying to establish whether some clubs are still functioning without a website or email address requires further analysis.

An example is the Connoisseur Rambling Club, founded in 1926. In 2006 they produced a brief and amusing history of the club on the

occasion of the 80th anniversary of their foundation. A member asked why the name 'Connoisseurs' and was informed that they were 'Connoisseurs of Footpaths' and it was always their aim to discover and maintain their footpaths, the rights of way and heritage. With a record of having a walk every Sunday, their rambles were always south of the Thames until improvements of the London Underground services gave them better access to the north side of the Thames.

Over the years the club expanded into midweek walks, slide shows in members' homes, weekends away and an annual dinner. In their history they talk about rising to the challenges of war, the foot and mouth epidemic and 'engineering works on the line'. In 2004 the Connoisseurs Rambling Club was one of the groups representing affiliated organisations on the executive committee of Inner London Area Ramblers.

Their Secretary's telephone is no longer functioning and it would be interesting to know if the club has completely disappeared and, if they have, it would be hoped that their story features in the overall history of the Ramblers.

*John Pestle
johnpestle@btinternet.com*

Inspiring visitors

After an enforced absence of three years because of the pandemic, Croydon Ramblers were delighted to welcome the London Blind Group once again on Sunday 21 August, when our visitors came to Coulsdon. We escorted them over Farthing Downs to the medieval church at Chaldon with its mural depicting the seven deadly sins, then on to the Fox pub on Coulsdon Common for a lunch stop. Our return through the aptly named Happy Valley brought us to the home

of our leader, Jan Campion, who served delicious home-made cakes to go with a much-needed cup of tea. Thank you Jan!

As always, walking and talking with our visitors proved a humbling experience. Playing cricket, running, ballet classes at Covent Garden and even sky-diving (yes, really) were some of the challenges they had taken on and mastered. Next time your group hosts the London Blind for a joint walk, do go along and learn what the blind and partially-sighted can achieve with enough determination. The one who gains most from the experience will be you.

*Peter Southgate
Croydon Ramblers*



Enjoying tea and cake in Jan's garden.

Photo: Andrew Coleman

In case of emergency

One of Berkshire Area's groups recently had a serious issue on one of its walks when a member was taken critically ill, and the group members struggled to find her In Case of Emergency (ICE) contact details. They finally did and help was summoned but it was a timely reminder of how important it is to make sure everyone carries the necessary information with them on walks and that it is accessible.

We know that ICE contact cards are available from Central Office but they are all too easily forgotten at times. My group felt a back-up system made sense and has addressed this by buying

emergency contact key fobs which we provide at no charge to our members. They cost about £1.50 each, depending on the quantity ordered, and can be easily attached to a rucksack. I'm sure other groups will be able to find suppliers should they wish: try a Google search for G1 keyrings, but you may need to buy the inserts separately.

The fob contains a slip to be completed by the individual, showing their address, ICE contact and any relevant health information. None of the data other than name is visible until the fob is opened with a coin or similar. Fortunately, we have not yet had to make use of the fobs but it's reassuring to all our group members to know that should an emergency occur we can make the necessary contact quickly.

*Steve Gillions
Chair, East Berks Group*

Those we have lost

David Leedham

David joined the Ramblers in 1984 soon after leaving university. He did this simply to support the charity, a quiet gesture of generosity which was typical of the person he was. At first he didn't walk with groups as he felt there were still so many mountains he wanted to climb, but eventually he joined SAWW (Surrey Area Weekend Walkers) in 2004 and became webmaster in 2005, a post he held for seven years. Shortly after joining SABRE (Surrey and Beyond Ramblers) in 2013 he became their webmaster, and then took on the same role with Surrey Area. In 2021, despite a serious illness, David stepped in to take on the role of Surrey Area Secretary.

Never seeking the limelight, his contribution to the Ramblers has been immense.

David led countless walks for SAWW and SABRE and organised holidays to the Lake District, Brecon Beacons and Arran. It was on a SAWW walk that David met Jackie and they were married in 2009, with many walking friends in attendance.

After retiring from the telecommunications industry David turned his computing expertise to helping others, volunteering for various charities. He and Jackie continued to be enthusiastic walkers, cyclists and travellers. Amongst his many skills, David was an accomplished keyboard and guitar player. He loved folk music and enjoyed composing his own



David Leedham.

Photo: Jackie Leedham

pieces to accompany holiday videos he created.

In a book of memories, organised by Jackie to celebrate his 70th birthday, friends and family described him as 'the kindest, nicest person I have ever met' ... 'a lovely man, a gentle soul' ... 'the perfect walking companion, a true gentleman' ... 'Someone who never had a bad or cross word to say about anyone'.

In Jackie's own words: 'We'll meet many interesting people in our lifetime and if we're fortunate will get to know some quite well. Occasionally fate, or a higher power, will allow us to take that relationship further. David is one of those interesting people who can transform your life simply by being himself.'

David passed away on Thursday 1 September with Jackie at his side and will be greatly missed by his friends and colleagues in both SABRE and Surrey Area.

*Susan Tyzack
SABRE*



SURREY snippets

Area AGM

Coronavirus restrictions have forced the Surrey Area AGM to be held online for the past two years. And so it is with eager anticipation that members from across Surrey's 16 groups are looking forward to meeting up in person for the 2023 AGM. This will be held at East Horsley village hall on Saturday 4 February starting

at 2.00pm. It will be lovely to see each other face to face once more.

Meanwhile, there are two officer posts currently vacant - Area Secretary and Area Vice Chair - and volunteers are encouraged to put themselves forward at the AGM to fill these important roles. To paraphrase John F Kennedy, 'Ask not what the Ramblers can do for you - ask what you can do for the Ramblers'.

*Richard Lovell
Area Treasurer*

Fairmile footpath

Esher footpath 56, which connects Fairmile Common and Oxshott Heath, has been improved using Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) money. The footpath provides a direct route to Oxshott station after a day's exploration of the local heaths and commons. It is also much used by school pupils and commuters.

A largely enclosed section of the path became a torrent in heavy rain, with consequent erosion. Eighty per cent of the work was funded by the Elmbridge CIL fund, with 10% being provided by Reeds School and 10% by Cobham Conservation and Heritage Trust.

*David Cooper
Area Publicity Officer*



Jack Cornish, the Ramblers Head of Paths, addresses the rights of way meeting in Lenham. Photos: Robert Peel



The Sheppey coastline viewed from the mainland.

Photos: Robert Peel



KENT calling

Area Secretary's diary



Maura Pell.

Photo: Robert Peel

This quarter there is good news to report. One of our Local Footpath Officers (LFOs), Maura Pell, has stepped forward to fill the two vacant East Kent Sector Coordinator posts that I mentioned last time. Maura is now responsible for guiding all the LFOs in East Kent who examine proposals to close and divert paths to ensure that walkers' interests are protected.

I am also pleased to report that as a result of a response to my appeal in the last South East Walker, a member stepped forward to take on the LFO role for four of Maura's parishes. We really want to build on the momentum that we have achieved, so please consider whether you could possibly find just a little time to contribute to the cause by taking on one or more of the remaining vacant roles.

At the beginning of October our Medway Group organised two first aid courses for walk leaders, delivered by the local Air Training Corps in return for a modest donation. Although I don't generally lead group walks, there was a spare place so I went along to brush up my skills - you never know when you might need them. We were all pleased with what we were taught, if rather daunted by the prospect of ever having to put it into practice. Medway Group hopes to offer training to more of our leaders next year.

In early October we held a meeting in Lenham for all our footpath volunteers, meeting face to face for the first time in three and a half

years. We had speakers from the Paths Team at Central Office, from Kent Ramblers and from Kent County Council's rights of way team covering a wide range of topics and answering many questions. The turnout of 35 or so was respectable compared with previous years but nevertheless a little disappointing considering that we have over 200 people holding relevant roles. Perhaps when word gets around as to how successful it was more will be prompted to attend next year!

Another piece of good news was that the planning inspector responsible for considering objections to the route of the England Coast Path on Sheppey at last gave his decision to confirm the originally proposed route along the southern shore of the island. Why he did not also give a decision on an objection relating to the route on the northern side of the island, which he visited on the same day in November 2021, remains a mystery. However, resolving the route on the southern shore has brought into focus an issue that I knew would have to be addressed eventually, namely that the stretch of path from Leysdown-on-Sea in the east to Sheppey Bridge in the west is 16 miles long without any access to public transport or reasonably convenient access by car. This will be too far for many of those wishing to complete the coast path in Kent so we are actively looking for a solution. One possibility is to seek a permissive path from the bus stop at the island's prisons to the southern shore. A less attractive option since it involves more walking is to find evidence that a path heading north from the shore and shown on the definitive map as coming to a dead end, really extends the rest of the way to the main road at Eastchurch. We are actively working on both.

In September we took our stall to the opening event of the High Weald Walking Festival at the Ashdown Forest visitor centre. A fine programme of

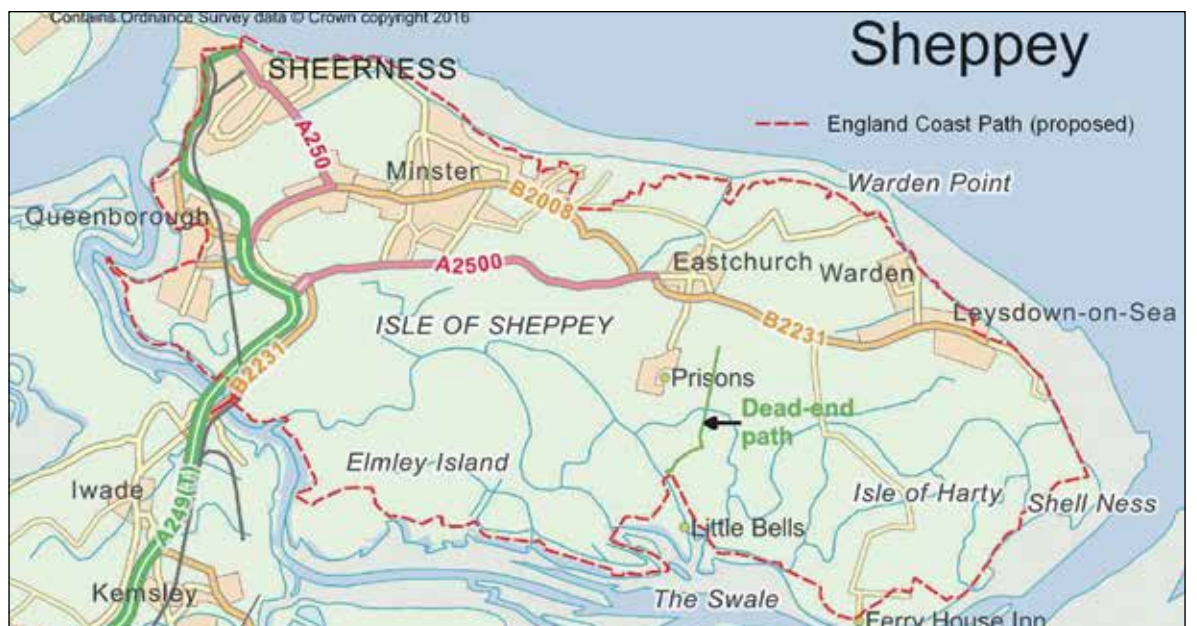
walks was offered, but attendance was disappointing, perhaps because the whole festival fell within the period between the late Queen's death and her funeral. I consider that there is no finer walking to be found in south east England than in the High Weald so do make a point of joining us next year!

We have received a request to participate in a podcast being produced for South East Trains to celebrate the range of walking opportunities in Kent, especially those accessible by train one presumes, and the range of activities undertaken by Kent Ramblers. At the time of writing we have not finalised the arrangements but we understand it will involve some of our members joining comedian Ed Byrne on a walk near Margate. (We had better avoid discussing level crossing closures on public rights of way!)

Of course there have been frustrations as well as successes. One source of frustration is Assemble, a centrally held database of volunteers in Areas and groups. I have yet to be persuaded of the benefits of this application to the Ramblers, but have nevertheless been dutifully trying to bring the records relating to Kent up to date. This is proving depressingly difficult and time consuming. I find it hard to believe that the business case for adopting this tool properly factored in the opportunity costs of taking volunteers away from productive activity.

We are looking forward to our first face-to-face AGM since 2020. The 2023 AGM will be held at Headcorn village hall on Saturday 4 February and will be followed by lunch and a walk. As well as the usual formalities and updates on Kent Ramblers projects we will have a quiz to test your knowledge of Kent's coastal landscape and history. Of course plans can change so be sure to check our website (kentramblers.org.uk) for the latest details.

*Robert Peel
Secretary, Kent Ramblers*



Sheppey.

Buxton, Derbyshire



Crossing the river in Dovedale.

Photo: Liz Sutton

A group of 24 members travelled to Buxton in September for three days of walking in the Peak District, staying at the Best Western Lee Wood Hotel where the staff provided fantastic food to keep us going. Walks through Dovedale, across the high peaks surrounding Edale and around Ladybower lake and reservoir provided some

challenging ascents, fantastic views and beautiful memories. The weather was on our side with blue skies and far-reaching views. A great deal of hard work and organisation had gone into making the trip a success. Many thanks to Tricia and Ian Stuart.

Liz Sutton

Aylesbury & District Ramblers

County Kerry, Ireland

During the last week of April, 15 Croydon Ramblers went to Ireland - again! This has become something of an annual pilgrimage come holiday routine which I, for one, look forward to and always enjoy. This would not take place without our fellow Rambler, AnnToomey, who has the ability to organise flights, ground transport, accommodation, restaurants, sightseeing, walks, and even the weather!

This year we went to County Kerry and stayed in a lovely guest house in Kenmare, a very pleasant town with plenty of restaurants for our evening meals and lots of pubs for our evening entertainment and where the locals always seem to be in a good mood and chatting to strangers comes easily. We spent five days walking various parts of the Kerry Way which is 133 miles long and not to be confused with the Ring of Kerry.

There were too many highlights of the trip to mention but to see the Torc waterfall and then walk into the Irish landscape, see a couple of deer and hear a cuckoo calling whilst enjoying the warmth of the sun on my face is hard to beat. Thank you Ann for all your work and thank you fellow ramblers for the pleasure of your company.

John Tickner
Croydon Ramblers

Admiring the McGillicuddy Reeks.

Photo: John Tickner

Sussex Landscape: Chalk, Wood and Water

An exhibition celebrating Sussex as a place of inspiration for artists runs at Pallant House Gallery in Chichester until 23 April 2023. Print,

sculpture, photography and digital works are included. For details go to pallant.org.uk or call 01243 774557.

Wish you were here?

Thorpe, Derbyshire

Forty-eight of our members enjoyed yet another exceptional walking holiday in mid-September, this time based at the HF House, Peveril of the Peak, organised by our members, Jean and Paul Townson. Most opted to do guided walking led by three HF leaders whilst a few opted to self-guide their walks.

Our first day included a visit to part of the Dark Peak (moorland on millstone grit), with all walks starting from the Cat and Fiddle pub and descending by different routes to Buxton. The next day we walked from the house to routes in the White Peak (on limestone) with the highlight being the stepping stones across the River Dove. Two

later coach journeys dropped us off for walks from Crich to Cromford. The final walk included the choice of Chrome Hill which tested some of the medium and harder walkers, before all walks reached Hartington.

Evenings were super busy, with after-dinner activities provided by our HF leaders, but also included a great quiz put together by our members Celia and Clive, a Call My Bluff evening and skittles. Highlight of the week was when we donned dance shoes for a good old-fashioned barn dance.

Along the way we consumed way too much lovely food with superb breakfasts, lunches and dinners, not to mention the ice creams, cakes, teas, beers and other indulgences. Finally, we raised over £100 with



Over the Dragon's Back.

Photo: Nick Baxter

a competition. This money went to the HF Pathways fund which provides holidays for disadvantaged families and helps repair rights of way we used during the week.

It was a great week, thank you Jean and Paul!

Sue Harvey
Farnham & District Ramblers

Bourton-on-the-Water, Gloucestershire

Nearly 40 of our members enjoyed an excellent group walking holiday in the Cotswolds in September, based at Bourton-on the -Water. Members had a choice of 12 walks over the five days, varying in length from four to 12 miles, and all were led by our own experienced leaders. Lynne Davies, our Chair, commented: "After the heat of the summer which

some found a bit hot for walking it was good to get away and have the opportunity to walk in different countryside to what we are familiar with around Guildford. We were blessed with fine weather and a cooling breeze and had only one shower during our stay.

Richard Peters
Guildford Ramblers

One of Guildford's walking groups at Hyde Mill, near Stow-on-the-Wold.

Photo: Richard Peters

Penzolo, Trentino, Italy

One word describes our holiday to the Dolomites: breathtaking ... the scenery, views, walks. When the cable car deposited us high in the mountains to begin our walks it was almost an emotional experience, beautiful, peaceful and ethereal.

The walks, a choice of two each day, were led by our own group members. We used local buses and cable cars to reach the start of our walks high above the tree

line. The longer walks were like mini-expeditions. We all had our doubt at points in the walks but we persevered and were exhilarated at their completion. The ascents and descents, up to 2,000 feet, made the walks seem as if they were about 15 miles so we were always surprised to find that they were a lot shorter than they felt! The descents were probably the worst for several people as paths were mostly rocky and could be slippery and hard on

the knees and toes. The moderate walks involved less ascent and descent but followed similar stony tracks and were equally challenging for people who are not comfortable on rough steep descents.

A wonderful holiday with great company, nice hotel with friendly staff and good food. A big thank you to all the organisers.

*Jill Cole and Margie Barrass
Henley & Goring Ramblers*

For a longer version of this report go to ramblers-oxon.org.uk/henley-goringtrips.html



A wonderful location for a rest stop in the Dolomites.

Photo: Joan Clark

Ilkley, West Yorkshire Church Stretton, Shropshire

After two cancellations because of Covid, we were finally able to get away for a long weekend in Wharfedale on 23 September. Anushka Howell took over the organisation after the original instigators, Karen Durie and Graham Smith, stepped down following all the frustrations caused by the earlier cancellations.

This was the first weekend away that Anushka had arranged and, with over 40 members heading north to the Craiglands Hotel, she was greatly helped by the local Lower Wharfedale Ramblers agreeing to lead all the walks. Their Chair, Lesley Hill, oversaw the organisation whilst their past Chair, Keith Wilman, did all the detailed work in providing seven

leaders who planned and reced the routes. There was a 'taster' walk just after our arrival, then short, medium and long walks on both Saturday and Sunday, allowing us to experience the pleasures of walking in Wharfedale and visiting many of its iconic places like Bolton Abbey, Grassington and Kilnsey Crag.

On the Sunday evening our Chair, Christine Harvey, hosted Lesley, Keith and other Lower Wharfedale Ramblers leaders and their partners to a meal at the hotel. Christine offered to reciprocate the arrangement should Lower Wharfedale Ramblers wish to enjoy the gentler Chiltern hills or follow the banks of the Thames in the future.

*Richard Hatton
Loddon Valley Ramblers*



Enjoying the views.

Photo: Rob Tomlinson

Our members decided to put their boots on further afield this year and went to HF's Longmynd House at Church Stretton for a seven-day walking holiday in August. Twenty holiday makers arrived, some even managing to do a six-mile walk before booking in.

We had at least two walks each day, sometimes three, of varying lengths, thanks mainly to having seven experienced leaders in our group.

Church Stretton is set in an amazing place, between two lines of hills, known locally as Little Switzerland; it certainly lives up to its name. Many of our walks started from Longmynd House. Once we were up higher, we were afforded spectacular views of the surrounding hills and valleys. We were so lucky that the weather was mostly fine. With walks ranging from four to 14 miles,

everyone was catered for, including those who wanted an early finish so they could browse the local shops.

We had a free day on Monday when some decided to go to Shrewsbury, others to Ludlow, both interesting towns with lots of history. In the evenings after dinner we took part in a quiz night and two skittles evenings, which although we didn't win, we were represented in the last few contestants. We also celebrated the 70th birthday of one of our group.

We are now looking forward to a walking holiday in the Brecon Beacons next year, having had such a great time in Shropshire with excellent walking and wonderful company.

*Rob Tomlinson
Mole Valley Ramblers*



Enjoying Wharfedale: Anushka Howell is second from left, Christine Harvey is fifth from left. Paul Graham, leader from Lower Wharfedale Ramblers is on the far right. Photo: Richard Hatton



At Camber Castle.

Photo: Graham Evans

Rye, East Sussex

Following the success of our first short break in the Cotswolds, our group organised a three-day break in Rye in early September. On arrival in Rye, there was a choice of a short walk around a nature reserve or a longer walk via the ruins of Camber Castle before both walks met up for a visit to the Mermaid Inn where we were

given a tour of this historic building.

Next day our short walk took in Winchelsea and the churchyard where Spike Milligan is buried and saw his gravestone which is famously engraved 'I told you I was ill' in Gaelic, before continuing to Pett Level and a bus to Hastings. Those who took the longer walk followed the Royal Military Canal to Pett Level and on to

Hastings where both groups met up for a fish and chip supper. Our last day took us to Battle where some of us enjoyed an informative and witty tour of the town museum led by one of its volunteers.

Short breaks are proving popular with members who appreciate the chance to walk in an unfamiliar area and enjoy the social side of trips away.

*Graham Evans
Surrey Heath
Ramblers*

Wish you were here?



On the coast path to Lynmouth. Photo: Angela Vasylenko

Selworthy, Somerset

Members of our group had an enjoyable long weekend away earlier this year at HF Holnicote House at Selworthy, Exmoor. On Friday afternoon we had a short walk from Kilve on the way to Selworthy, organised by one of our leaders, then two days with an excellent choice of walks with HF leaders.

*Angela Vasylenko
Wycombe District
Ramblers*

Brecon, Powys

Forty members and friends enjoyed five sunny days at the HF Nythfa House in Brecon in September. Three levels of walk were arranged for each day, so having explored the town on our arrival day, we walked further from

it the next day before returning by boat along the canal. The following day we visited the 'Waterfall Country' which for some included the necessary walk behind Sgwd yr Eira. On the final walking day some of the more adventurous members ascended Pen y Fan, while others tried the Penwyllt Geotrail, or more leisurely routes from the Brecon

Beacons visitor centre. Special thanks are due to Ken King for creating the routes and supporting the leaders, to Wendy Mannix for managing the bookings and to Bob Ward and Mike Smith for arranging the evening entertainment - the beetle drive, quiz and skittles were much enjoyed.

*Ruth Cornish
Thame & Wheatley Ramblers*



Some of the group in the Brecon Beacons. Photo: Mike Smith

500 miles of smiles

We celebrated our 16th anniversary on 17 September with a mini walking festival at Penn Street, near Amersham. There were five walks ranging from a leisurely five-miler to a challenging 16-mile double loop. The walks were arranged to bring everyone together for a huge picnic on the village green at lunchtime, where walkers enjoyed a slice of anniversary cake and raised a glass of prosecco to salute the new king.

Seventy members and guests took part in the walks, covering a combined total of 521 miles.

The day ended with drinks and a meal at the Squirrel pub. Among the walkers was Kate Ashbrook, a group member and a vice-president of the Ramblers. She described the day as a "fitting celebration for an excellent group". Our Chair, Andrew Zelin, said "It was a great success with a good turnout. It was easy and inexpensive to organise with just six weeks between inception and event. We focused on what we do best: walks with food, drink and merriment in the pub afterwards. Not to mention the celebratory picnic!"

*Mark Percy
Chiltern Weekend Walkers*

Around the groups



The picnic gathering. Photo: Mark Percy



Waiting for their tea. Photo: John Tickner

Strawberries galore

About 70 members of our group were treated to a delicious cream tea with scones, jam, cream (and butter if desired) on Wednesday 31 August. After these disappeared, out came masses of strawberries with more cream, closely followed by assorted cakes!

Our Chair, Roy Endersby, and his committee, put on a spread like this for long-standing members of the group, where they can get together over a ton of strawberries and have a good natter with old friends.

I was invited either because I now qualify as a long-standing member (I think you have to have been a member for 15 years but the criteria is rather hazy) or because I possess a camera that takes half-decent pictures of ramblers about to tuck in! Roy said a few words and thanked the members who did the catering before Jan and Ingrid twisted arms to extort money for the raffle. It was a lovely way to spend a summer afternoon!

*John Tickner
Croydon Ramblers*

30th anniversary

This year our group celebrated 30 years of fabulous walking in Kent and beyond, social activities and holidays. Founded in 1992 by Bill and Doris Ripper, we organised several celebratory events including two picnics, walks on the South Downs and a quiz. The highlight however, was the re-

creation of the group's first walk from Penshurst led by Bill Ripper himself who had travelled back with Doris from retirement in Devon. Here's to the next 30 years!

*Beverley Johnston
Dartford & Gravesham
Ramblers*



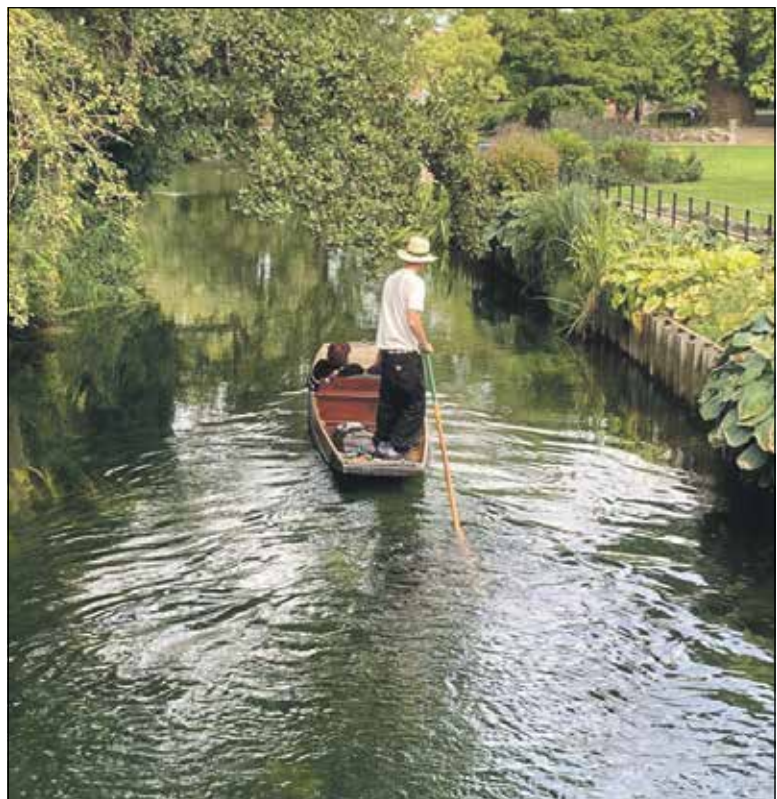
At Penshurst before the start of the anniversary walks. Photo: Sharon Smart

Day trip to Canterbury

We had a successful coach trip to Canterbury on Thursday 22 September with 40 members joining for either a long walk, short walk or simply a day of sightseeing in the city. The weather was kind to us, warm and dry. Tony led 14 on the longer walk which started from East Stour Farm near Godmersham (great amusement at the unfortunate coach driver's complicated manoeuvre to extract the coach from the farmyard with a picnic lunch in the churchyard at Chartham.

I led the shorter walk with 19 of us, which was a simple, flat stroll along the River Stour, arriving in Canterbury at the Western Gate. Plenty of time for a leisurely lunch and a trip to the cathedral or shops. We set up a lovely photo opportunity of the walkers posed on a bridge over the river but unfortunately the official photographer (my husband) only managed to get a photo of his foot and a duck!

*Helen McDonnell
East Surrey Walkers*



Punting at Canterbury. Photo: Bob McDonnell

Celebrating 25 years

Almost 100 past and present members of our group came together at Harpsden village hall on 29 August to celebrate 25 years of activity. We started with a choice of four walks ranging from two and a half to eight miles before returning to Harpsden for welcome speeches from Ramblers Vice President Kate Ashbrook and Jim Parke, Chair of Oxfordshire Ramblers, and a glass of fizz to toast the group.

The usual wonderful spread of food was provided by our events

team and members, and we were serenaded as we ate by music from member Colin's jazz band. The evening ended with a photo presentation looking back at the 25 years of the group's existence. Photos and newsletters from the past were also on display around the hall. The photos brought back many happy memories and a few sad ones too as we remembered those who are no longer with us. Now for the next 25 years!

*Joan Clark
Henley & Goring Ramblers*



Group Chair Alie Hagedoorn, Kate Ashbrook and Jim Parke prepare to cut the anniversary cake. Photo: Joan Clark

Right royal ramble

We set out for London on 9 July for a walk with royal connections. At Farringdon we took the impressive new (Queen) Elizabeth Line to Woolwich where we visited the rejuvenated Royal Arsenal site, an area roughly three miles by one mile where guns and munitions were produced. In its heyday there were 80,000 workers employed here. There was also a football team which I believe moved to Highbury!

We walked to the Thames and soon came to the Antony Gormley metal figure sculptures, before following the river to the Thames Barrier - opened by the Queen in 1984 - and on past the former Millennium Dome (now o2) to Greenwich and the Old Royal Naval College. We then crossed below the Thames through the Greenwich foot tunnel to the Isle of Dogs where my captive audience was regaled with tales from my childhood of my aunt's prefab and playing amongst the bombed buildings of wartime. We took the Elizabeth Line back from Canary Wharf to Farringdon before our Thameslink train home to Bedfordshire.

*Roger Mcleod
Ivel Valley Walkers*



Passing through Greenwich.

Photo: Tom Collier

Festival time

We attended two contrasting events in September. First there was NatureFest in New Malden which dealt mainly with the countryside and was geared to families with children. There was a playground next to our stall, a bird of prey display and many reptiles in the nearby hall!

The second event was our regular slot at the Surbiton Festival, which we have enjoyed attending since 2010. There was a steady stream of people interested in our group handouts as well as the many leaflets for walks (particularly the self-guided ones) on display.

One person who regularly visits the festival and our stall is Sir Ed Davey, MP for Kingston and Surbiton and leader of the Liberal Democrats. He and his wife have two children, one of whom is disabled, so Sir Ed is keen for footpaths to be accessible for his son's wheelchair. To quote Sir Ed in 2014: "I live in Surbiton with my wife Emily and my young son John who has cerebral palsy. Going for a country walk together is one of my favourite ways of relaxing."

*Brenda Horwill
Kingston Ramblers*



Sir Ed Davey MP visits the Kingston Ramblers stand at the Surbiton Festival, watched by member Caroline Cunliffe. Photo: Diane Reeve

A cool spot for lunch

On a hot and sunny summer's day we held a social walk with a sharing lunch. I led the six-mile morning walk to the village of Sherrington where we had booked the village hall just in case the weather was bad at lunchtime. When we arrived we found to our surprise that the hall was air conditioned and this was much appreciated on such a hot day! The event was a great success thanks to the efforts of Jan who also organised a quiz.

We also took the opportunity to have a stand at an Over 55s fair put on by our local MPs. Our stand did attract visitors but it remains to be seen if more members result. Thanks to Alan, Judi, Phil and Jenny who spent time on the stand talking to potential members.

*Ian Dunford
Milton Keynes Ramblers*



At the summer social lunch.

Photo: Ian Dunford

Around the groups

One enchanted evening

Two of our group walks converged at the Donkey Green on the top of Box Hill on Saturday 17 September to enjoy an annual arts event called 'Harvest 2022. The theme this year was 'connections' between us and nature.

We arrived in good time to enjoy an atmospheric twilight picnic as the choirs assembled and people drifted in. The event was very well attended and in addition to local people there were quite a few visitors who had travelled some distance including about a hundred from a recently formed Muslim Hiking group.

As the light faded we were entertained with poetry readings, singing from community choirs and

a Ukrainian group who played some delightful ethereal music. The whole event was set around a stunning art installation called 'Sands of Hope' by Diana Burch. This sustainable artwork made from sticks and recycled yarn was intended to demonstrate a renewal of optimism by connecting us with each other and the natural world. There was a tranquil and almost otherworldly quality to the whole experience.

Later, when the evening got chilly, we sauntered down the hill in the gathering gloom, enjoying a spectacular sunset which just amplified the enchanting nature of the outing.

*Louise Stilwell-Stage
Mole Valley Ramblers*



A night to remember.

Photo: Fiona Spencer

Bunyan Trail

Our group will be walking one of our county's most famous routes, the John Bunyan Trail, in 2023. The route was devised by the late Gordon Edwards of Bedfordshire Ramblers and finished in time for the Ramblers 60th anniversary. Bedfordshire Area now has responsibility for signage on the route (as well as the North Bedfordshire Heritage Trail). The 86-mile trail takes in many sites of historic interest associated with Bunyan, from the cottage where he lived to the churches where he worshipped and the gaol where he spent 12 years and wrote his most famous work, 'The Pilgrim's Progress'.

Come and join us on sections of the walk. The first 12-mile section is scheduled for Saturday 28 January 2023 from Elstow Moot Hall to Shillington. Please see our programme for more information.

*Sandra Kelsey
North Beds Ramblers*

A route description for the John Bunyan Trail is on the Leighton Buzzard group's website at <https://www.lb-ramblers.org.uk>



The John Bunyan statue on St Peter's Green in Bedford. It faces the site of the county gaol which stood on the corner of High Street and Silver Street.

Photo: Anne Griffiths

Short of leaders

Although we are averaging around four walks a week, we are still desperately short of leaders. We hope that the situation will improve next year. We are aware that our walks programme is at the heart of what we do but we are also conscious that, especially in winter, the social events side is also important. This applies even more to our non-walking members, many of whom live alone.

On Sunday 4 September, 23 members and friends visited Fawley Hill railway and museum near Henley-on-Thames. This unique attraction, created by the late Sir William McAlpine, could be regarded as the biggest train set in the UK. Attendance is by invitation only to charities.

We participated in National Get Outside Day on Sunday 25 September and offered long and short walks with tea and biscuits at the end. Over 20 people attended and although the walks were advertised on social media and various other places, we did not attract any newcomers. The tea and biscuits though proved popular with our regular walkers!

Walking in the countryside is becoming widely recognised as an activity which can help reduce various



On this July walk near Maidenhead it looked like an ark might soon be needed.
Photo: Brian Poulton

illnesses and our local community medics refer some patients to our Saturday morning short and easy taster walks and these have led to us gaining some new members.

*Brian Poulton
South East Berks Ramblers*

Walk on the wild side



On the Wildmoor Heath walk.

Photo: Graham Evans

For the second year running we used one of our Sunday walks on 25 September to support Surrey Heath Age Concern's fund-raising five-mile ramble around Wildmoor Heath. We had a good turnout with 22 walkers and between us we raised over £150 for this local charity. One of the organisers of the event, who is also a member of our group, allowed us to have a promotional stand where two of our committee members handed out newly-produced publicity leaflets to those who enquired about us.

*Graham Evans
Surrey Heath Ramblers*

Spreading the word

We had a stall at two local fairs during the summer: the Green Fayre on Sutton Green in June and the Carshalton Eco-Fair in Carshalton Park on August bank holiday Monday. For each event we had a team of enthusiastic members who helped set up and run our stall.

We had two aims: to advertise and promote the Ramblers both national organisation and our local group and to promote the benefits and enjoyment of walking for

pleasure. We had three prongs to whet visitors' appetites: labelled photos, a flier and walk leaflets. At the front of the stall we had a display of eye-catching photos taken from our rambles, coach trips, group holidays and social visits to places of interest. As visitors stopped to look, we were able to ask them about their own interest in walking.

We offered our own A5 flier which introduced our group and gave contact details and listed some rambles they might like to try. We also had the main national Ramblers

leaflet available. We also had a display of free leaflets describing self-guided walks within reach of our area, produced by local authorities, Wandle Trust, RSPB, etc. We have learnt that the National Trust's leaflets for Box Hill will be available online only so if other organisations follow suit we may have to rethink what we can offer at future fairs.

We do not yet know how many new members these fairs will bring, but we do know we are promoting both the Ramblers and walking for pleasure and health.

*Alison Dines
Sutton & Wandle Valley
Ramblers*



Labelled photos proved a magnet.

Photo: Peter Struik

Oxfordshire Way completed Summer coaches

Over seven sessions on alternate Thursdays, I led members of our group along the 68-mile Oxfordshire Way. Starting in Bourton-on-the-Water for the first session and ending in Henley-on-Thames with tea and cakes. Only two people completed the whole route whilst others dipped in and out. The walk was varied and interesting, starting in the Cotswolds, followed by farmland and finishing along the River Thames with a day in the Chiltern hills. Taxis and car-sharing were organised to keep the environmental impact low. It was a great opportunity to explore our local area and chat to other walkers.

Natasha Challoner
Thame & Wheatley Ramblers



Journey's end at Henley-on-Thames.

How to do-si-do with the best of them

Continuing our 50th anniversary celebrations we decided, for our autumn event, to organise a barn dance with fish and chip supper on a Saturday evening in October. We were dipping our toes in the water to test the response as we had never attempted this before. Organising such an event could have been fraught with pitfalls but factor in two separate organisations joining together for an evening of fun and social exchange, determined to make it work.

One of our members teaches Scottish country dancing for the local U3A and asked if she could bring her group along to join us. The more the merrier we thought when their 13 members were added to

our 25 we had a full complement of dancers. It gave us the opportunity to meet another local group who may enjoy walking with us in the future and likewise, we may find ourselves dancing Scottish style.

One tip we would pass on to anyone thinking of organising a similar event is to supply the fish and chip restaurant with a list of sticky labels detailing individual names and meals booked. These can be attached to each box of food making it easy to identify. The restaurant we used achieved top marks for getting each order right and delivering the food piping hot and exactly on time.

Elise Wright
Hillingdon Ramblers



Dance success.

Photo: Elise Wright

Epping Forest Big Walk

Epping Forest Heritage Trust has published a leaflet on the 14-mile/23 km route from Manor Park to Epping, originally known as the Epping Forest Centenary Walk which was established in 1978 to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the Epping Forest Act of 1878. First devised by Fred Matthews of West Essex Ramblers and Harry Bitten from the Friends of Epping Forest, the leaflet suggests how the Big Walk can be done in five easy stages using public transport at each end. Copies are available at the Epping Forest visitor centres or can be obtained by emailing admin@efht.org.uk.

Crossing the Thames in London:

River boat operator 'Uber Boat by Thames Clippers' has introduced a £3.80 cross-river fare that allows passengers to use their services to cross the Thames. Crossings are from Barking Riverside Pier to

Woolwich (Royal Arsenal) Pier and from Canary Wharf Pier to both Greenland (Surrey Quays) Pier and Doubletrees Docklands Pier. Details at <https://tinyurl.com/2p8jrbhc>

River Thames Scheme:

Plans to provide two new river channels in Surrey to reduce the risk of flooding are available for public consultation until 20 December. One channel at Runnymede would run

between Egham Hythe and Chertsey whilst the second, in Spelthorne, would run from Littleton North Lake to Desborough Cut. The proposals also refer to 'improved access to quality open space'. More at www.riverthamesscheme.org.uk.

In addition to our normal programme of walks on Tuesdays, Thursdays, Saturdays and Sundays, we had six Sunday walks between April and September further afield with a coach leaving Newbury at 8.30am and returning at 5.30pm. On each trip we offered three walks ranging from five to 11 miles. They proved popular and enabled our members to walk in such diverse areas as Moreton-in-the-Marsh, Lynton and Richmond-upon-Thames.

Our working party has been clearing many footpaths which have become overgrown and the group is actively recruiting more members to assist in these tasks. Replacement gates have also been installed in the area.

Our AGM on 2 November included a talk on the history of Donnington Castle by Dr David Peacock. We hope to offer our usual series of Christmas walks between 19 and 31 December.

Richard Trimmer
West Berks Ramblers



No, we're not really lost!

Photo: Kevin Sheldrake

Three Castles Path

This 60-mile route from Windsor to Winchester, via the now ruined castle at Odiham built by King John, was inspired by the king's journeys. We started in April, intending to walk the route in six ten-mile stages over the summer. Apart from August, when we decided it was just too hot to walk on the designated day, we did just that, finishing in Winchester on 1 October.

We left Windsor to the sound of the Coldstream Guards who were

parading through the streets as if to cheer us on our way! On some stages we picnicked in lovely rural surroundings, on others we enjoyed a pub lunch in one of the delightful villages on the route. We left Windsor in sunshine and arrived in Winchester in equally good weather. An enjoyable walk with lots to see and enjoy along the way.

Joan Clark
Henley & Goring Ramblers
The Three Castles Path was devised in 1992 by David Bounds and Dave Ramm of East Berks Ramblers.



At the walk's end in Winchester.

Photo: Joan Clark

Dadima's footsteps

Kate Ashbrook writes of her latest walking experience.

Geeta Ludhra, a British-born woman of South Asian heritage, and a member of the Chilterns Conservation Board, has established a monthly programme of educational nature walks with a difference.

Dadima's Walks ('dadima' being the Hindu noun for grandmother) celebrate ancestral nature wisdom, community kindness and intergenerational learning. Geeta and her husband Subash encourage people from diverse backgrounds and all generations to explore the countryside and its beauty. They see the monthly walks as a celebration of communities connecting through walking, talking, learning and sharing food.

A lecturer in education at Brunel University, Geeta is working in partnership with others on an Open University geology project, where topics have included 'Reading the natural landscape' and 'Diverse stories of the landscape'. Geeta is striving to change the dominant narrative of how people of colour, and

those from underserved communities, are perceived and presented in the media - often as not appreciating the natural landscape or wanting to walk there. Dadima's programme of events offers new and multiple ways of connecting with nature beyond traditional media discourses, such as her 'Sustainable Diwali' art walk.

Origins

Geeta explains the origins of her walks on the Museum of English Rural Life website:

My family and I set up Dadima's walking group in 2018, as a simple way of encouraging local communities and interested people to connect with nature for physical, mental and spiritual wellbeing. The group started in Slough and Windsor with mainly South Asian communities on a Sunday morning. It quickly became a safe place to talk and share stories, learn from each other, and offer encouragement (and accountability) for regular outdoor movement. In 2020, we moved to the Chilterns and decided to restart the group, this time with greater apprehension. I didn't see myself represented or reflected in the Chilterns countryside, so I

created the space that I wanted to see when I first moved here.

The walks are a delight, not at all strenuous or pressured, with plenty of opportunities to stop, notice and discuss the surroundings. Guests are encouraged to share their lived and ancestral experiences of nature, so that knowledge is exchanged in a way that everyone's voice and opinions are treated as equally important.

In May, on the Chiltern escarpment above Lewknor in Oxfordshire, we heard from Professor Clare Warren, a metamorphic geology expert at the Open University, and Dr Anjana Khatwa, engagement lead for the Wessex museums, about the fascinating geological history of the Chilterns landscape.

Culture

In July, Dadima's celebrated both South Asian Heritage Month and the 70th anniversary of National Nature Reserves at Aston Rowant NNR, a unique event. After a Ridgeway walk, we gathered on the hillside in the reserve and heard stories from a host of South Asian friends, about their culture, faith, achievements, and ways of belonging and connecting with nature - including Sri-Lankan

dance, amplifying South Asian women's voices and gender equality through adapted ways of celebrating cultural festivals and traditions, and a forthcoming climb of Mount Kilimanjaro by the Asian Women Mean Business team.

Then in September, Dadima's group walked across the National trust's property at Ashridge in Hertfordshire to Ivinghoe Beacon in Bucks, learning about the landscape and its flora, and enjoying a picnic with traditional Indian snacks and masala chai.

The countryside should be for everyone to enjoy, but the reality is different. Dadima's challenges this by turning the dominant narrative of the countryside on its head. community experts plan and deliver nature activities with cultural knowledge of their communities, drawing on landscape experts to work with them.

As the Ramblers strive to achieve greater diversity among our members and campaigners, we have much to learn from Geeta in her Dadima's work, and from her colleagues.

More on Dadima's Walks at <https://www.chilternsaonb.org/news/dadimas-countryside-walks-and-talks-2022-programme>



South Asian women, some wearing the traditional Punjab salwar-kameez. Geeta is in bright green, third from left.



A discussion on wild flowers at Ashridge.

Lewisham Footways

A couple of years ago Inner London Ramblers collaborated with Living Streets London on the Central London Footways project. If all goes to plans, we hope, in 2023, to begin work on a Lewisham Footways

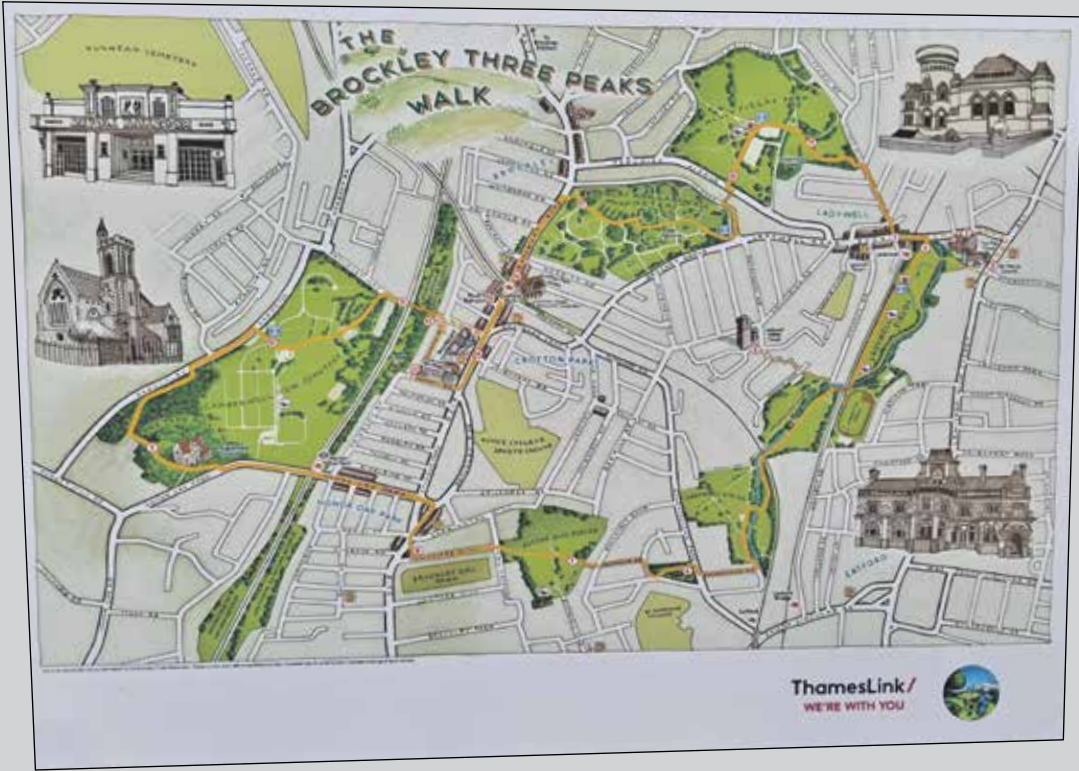
version.

As well as suggested alternative routes to parks, stations, shops, pubs, bus stops and the like. It will also display walks that include the Green Chain Walk, Capital Ring and Thames Path. Additionally, we hope to add

the Brockley Three Peaks Walk and walks like a stroll from One Tree Hill to the redwood tree growing by the side of New Cross Gate station and then on to the Thames via Sayes Court.

Watch this space for updated information and calls for help on this project.

Des Garrahan



The route of the Brockley Three Peaks Walk is well displayed here.

Photo: Des Garrahan

Royal Park traffic bans to be made permanent

Trial road closure schemes introduced in Richmond Park, Greenwich Park and Bushy Park in August 2020 are to be made permanent after winning public support. The ban on through traffic between Broomfield Hill car park and Robin Hood car park in Richmond Park will be

retained, as will the closure of the vehicle link between Sheen Gate and Sheen Cross. However, drivers will continue to be able to go from Kingston Gate to Richmond Gate daily. In Bushy Park, Chestnut Avenue will remain closed to vehicles between Teddington and Hampton Court gates.

The Way of Saint Martin

Travel photographer and writer, Liz Garnett, has developed and published a 21-mile route from the ruins of St Martin-le-Grand in Dover to St Martin's church in Canterbury, which takes in the North Downs Way but adds in detours to places that have inspired artists and writers. It follows in the

footsteps of medieval pilgrims who travelled from the continent to visit the shrines of saints Thomas Becket, Edmund of Abingdon and Richard of Chichester. Published in September, The Way of Saint Martin - A Slow Pilgrimage from Dover to Canterbury is available online and from booksellers (ISBN 978-1-7399484-2-9, £7.99).

Need a break?

Ramblers Worldwide Holidays brochures for 2023 are now available (ramblersholidays.

co.uk or call 01707 817202). If you are looking for a Christmas or New Year break they may still have places in the Canaries, Algarve,

Amalfi coast, Madeira and Andalucia, in addition to the Derbyshire Dales, Cotswolds, Norfolk and Mendips.

Everest through the lens

A free exhibition at the Royal Geographical Society, London SW7 2AR, marks the centenary of the Everest expeditions in the 1920s and until 20 January

2023 (excluding 24 December - 2 January) Details from rgs.org, 020 7591 3000.

explores how Captain John Noel's films shaped the popular image of the mountain.

Towpath works

Work to improve the surface of the towpath of the arm of the Grand Union Canal in the parish of Wendover will take

place between January and March 2023, thanks to a partnership, led by the Canal & River Trust and the Wendover Canal Trust with funding from five organisations. The project will build on previous small-scale towpath improvements carried out

by the two trusts and aims to provide a towpath resistant to flooding and which can be enjoyed by all throughout the year.

At Leighton Buzzard, an upgraded length of the Grand Union Canal towpath was officially opened on 10 October

by the High Sheriff of Bedfordshire, Lady Jane Clifford, and South West Bedfordshire MP, Andrew Selous. The ceremony followed works to improve and widen the surface of the towpath which were carried out between June and August.