

Walker

New Wealdway guide published by Kent and Sussex Ramblers

The Wealdway is an exceptional long-walk, stretching around 82 miles (132 km) from Gravesend on the Thames estuary to Eastbourne on the English Channel. It owes its existence primarily to the efforts of Kent and Sussex Ramblers who worked over many years to plan the route and gain the recognition needed for a waymarked trail shown on Ordnance Survey maps. It is unusual for a long-distance walk in that it does not follow a single landscape feature such as the North Downs or the River Thames but cuts across a wide range of such features including the North Downs, Greensand Ridge, Medway Valley, Low and High Weald, Cuckmere Valley and South Downs.

This makes for a very varied experience and allows the walker to appreciate how the underlying geology influences

the different landscapes in terms of scenery, ecology, agriculture and economy. It is hard to think of any other walking route that offers such a clear insight into these relationships and their development over such a long human and pre-human history. The High Weald in particular has the best preserved medieval landscape in northern Europe with its mixture of woodland, pasture and small arable fields, separated by ancient hedgerows or slightly wider shaws. The network of ancient routeways makes this wonderful walking countryside.

There have been many guides to the Wealdway but the most recent was published a quarter of a century ago and has long been unavailable. We celebrated the 40th anniversary of the Wealdway in 2021 and this year is the 40th anniversary of the designation of the High Weald as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. This therefore seemed a good

time to publish a new guide to the walk and in July Kent and Sussex Ramblers did just that.

The new guide is available directly from Kent Ramblers and purchasers quoting code SEW23 before 31 October can buy a copy at the special price of £6.50 including postage, compared with a cover price of £8.00. It is also available from local and online bookshops. For payment arrangements please visit www.kentramblers.org.uk/books.

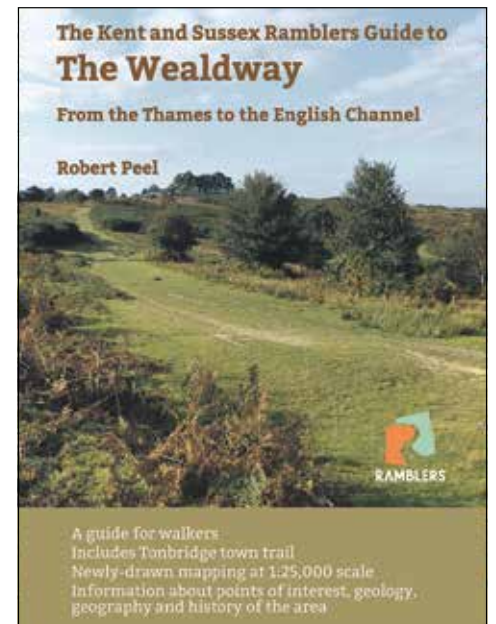
Like the three other walk guides published by Kent Ramblers in recent years, the new guide has a full route description, background information about geology, landscape and history, descriptions of points of interest along the way and full colour 1:25,000 scale maps that are more up to date than current Explorer maps. There is also comprehensive advice on using public transport to reach the route.

Apart from Gravesend and Eastbourne at the ends of the walk and Tonbridge in the middle, the route shuns urban areas but wends its way from one delightful village to another. The route passes classic English countryside and much of it feels remarkably remote despite its accessibility from London. There are woods and downs, riverbanks, locks, orchards and oast houses. There are old water mills and ponds that once powered the Wealden iron industry; country estates and medieval timber-framed houses; churches dating back to Saxon times, a human figure carved into the chalk and a Neolithic long barrow.

The Wealdway has something for everyone and deserves to be far better known. We hope that our new guide will go some way towards achieving that. Why not give it a go?

Robert Peel

Secretary, Kent Ramblers



Book cover.



Wealdway map.



Berkshire Walkers gather outside the new station.

Photo: Jason Owen

First walkers at new station

A new railway station called Reading Green Park opened on 27 May to serve a growing business and residential development to the south of the town. Located at grid ref SU 696703, it is served by trains on the Reading to Basingstoke line.

Jason Owen of the Berkshire Walkers (20s and 30s) Group writes: "This is the first new station in Reading since Reading West opened in 1906 so, of course, we just had to organise a walk starting from the new station as soon as we could after the opening and on Saturday 11 June I led a eight mile circular out over the M4 to Shinfield before looping back. We had a few walkers who don't drive and some first-timers too."

Another new station in the south east - Thanet Parkway - opened on 31 July. It is midway between Minster and Ramsgate in Kent. A new road links the station with the A299 Hengist Way whilst a new pedestrian/cyclist route provides access from Clive Road in Sandsend.

Temple Footbridge closed

Structural faults found on the Temple Footbridge near Marlow have led to this Thames Path bridge being closed until further notice and a lengthy diversion put in place.

Temple footbridge is a pedestrian-only bridge near Hurley that crosses the Thames just above Temple Lock and connects the Buckinghamshire and Berkshire banks. Built in 1989 specifically for walkers on the Thames Path National Trail because previously they had been required to take a detour away from the riverbank along a road through Bisham and Marlow. The bridge was opened in May 1989, following a campaign by Ramblers member Margaret Bowdery, a local advocate of access to open spaces and improvements to footpaths. As part of the campaign for the construction of the bridge she ran a 'Golden Boot' appeal and raised funds towards its construction.

It is a haunched girder bridge with a wooden deck. At 150 feet (46m), it is the longest hardwood bridge in Britain. The centre of the bridge gives a height of over 21 feet (6.5m) above the water, allowing the passage of a range of vessels. Until 1953 there was a ferry at this point which took the towpath across the river when it was used for towing barges. The name 'Temple' comes from the nearby Temple Mill Island which was owned by the Knights Templar and the site of a mill which was used to create copper sheets used



The Temple Footbridge (grid ref SU 835843).

in the construction of naval ships.

During a routine inspection by the Environment Agency in February 2019, observations were made that needed to be investigated and as a result public access to the bridge was closed for safety reasons. This was done in partnership with the original bridge designers who looked at the condition of the bridge against its 1989 design. Those investigations were swiftly concluded, the safety concerns were addressed and the bridge was reopened in June 2019.

On 15 May this year the bridge was once again closed due to safety concerns and will remain closed whilst the Environment Agency assess different options, including full replacement. Replacing the deck could affect the integrity of the structure, so further assessment is required. The closure is likely to remain in place for the rest of 2023 and possibly beyond.

In a statement the Environment Agency said: "Although we carry out regular structural surveys of all our bridges and other structures, the

condition of the bridge's deck boards appears to have deteriorated more quickly than anticipated. We now need to assess what work is required to return the bridge to safe condition. We cannot say at the moment what the timescale for that might be, but we are well aware of the inconvenience the bridge closure will cause to the local community and will look to resolve the issue as soon as we can. We are working with the relevant agencies to put an emergency diversion in place, and will communicate the route as soon as it is agreed."

The diversion, as things stand, is a reversion back to the road walking that existed before the Ramblers and Margaret Bowdery got involved back in the 1980s and basically to walk along the road from Marlow to Bisham.

Further details can be found on the Thames Path National Trail website at https://www.nationaltrail.co.uk/en_GB/short-routes/temple-bridge-closed-thames-path-on-diversion-may-2023-onwards/.

Des Garrahan

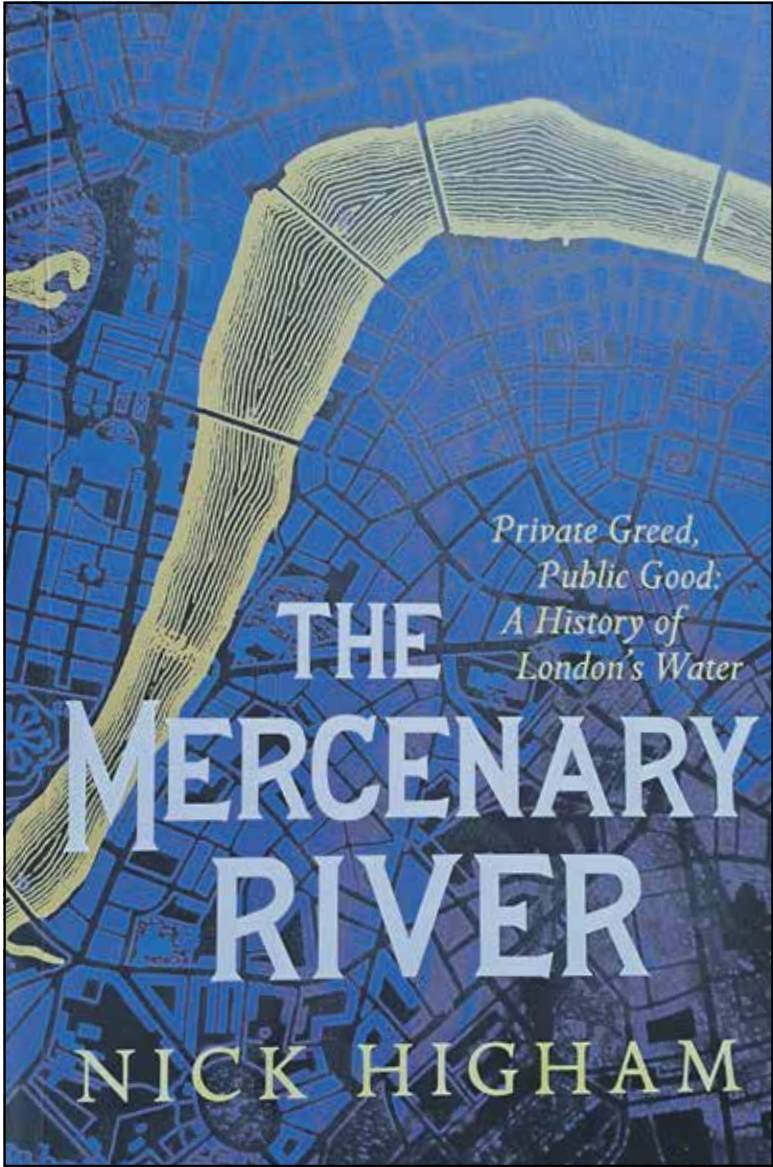
New path parallels A27

As part of a £75 million scheme to improve the A27 road to the east of Lewes in East Sussex, this new broad shared-use path has been built parallel to the busy road for the use of walkers, cyclists and horse riders. The route of about nine miles from near Fittlehampton to Polegate, includes a new crossing of the River Cuckmere (at grid ref TQ 532050) which has been named Rampion Bridge after the 'county flower'. National Highways has also planted around 3,000 trees and new hedgerows as part of the project.



The new shared-use path links with existing footpaths.

The Mercenary River



Book cover.

In the summer issue of walk magazine, Feargal Sharkey, former frontman of The Undertones, now environmental campaigner, was interviewed by Rebecca Swirsky for the regular feature, Walk and Talk. He answered the question: Why should rivers matter to ramblers? like this - "Our waterways are a litmus test for what we do to the rest of the planet. They reflect how nature is being preserved - or not. No rivers, no nature, no rambling. Simple as that."

The water business isn't supposed to be exciting. If you ask me, it should be a right not a business. But anyway, scandals over sewage spills and leaky pipes are casting a harsh light on Britain's management of this crucial public resource and raising deeper questions about the business model established when it was privatised three decades ago. The situation appeared to be coming to a head in late June when the industry's biggest player, Thames Water, entered talks with the government over a potential nationalisation after racking up more than £14 billion of debt. The reasons why this has happened include copious use of words and phrases like 'leverage', 'capital gearing', 'inflation linked borrowing' and 'debt servicing'. And two major themes emerge - greed and mismanagement. Sticking with the River Thames

and considering London's water supply through the ages, Nick Higham's book, The Mercenary River, is a tour de force. a book for the general reader, not the specialised historian. Subtitled 'Private greed, public good: A history of London's water', Higham charts the story beginning in 1582 with the founding of the world's first networked utility sending water through pipes to paying customers, the London Bridge Waterworks, through 1858's Great Stink and the creation of Bazalgette's system of sewers to the modern day and the re-privatisation of the British water industry with all its subsequent consequences.

Something to ponder for us walkers when we're next strolling down the Thames Path National Trail or alongside any of our many waterways. I'll finish with this nugget of information from the book. In 1613 the New River is completed bringing fresh water to London from Hertfordshire. It becomes one of the world's most profitable businesses. It is built by Sir Hugh Myddleton, goldsmith and entrepreneur, who forms a pioneering joint stock company to raise the money. The canal still supplies 10% of London's drinking water today.

Des Garrahan

(The Mercenary River, ISBN 9781472283849, Headline Publishing, £12.99).

Chesham pub walks:

A series of walks linking country pubs in the River Chess catchment to the north west of Chesham, Bucks, are described in six leaflets which can be downloaded from

www.chartridgescientific.com/smchess/pubwalkcct.html. Put together, the series provides a 10-mile circuit linking Chartridge, The Lee, Swan Bottom, St Leonards, Cholesbury and Asheridge.

SOUTH EAST walker

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

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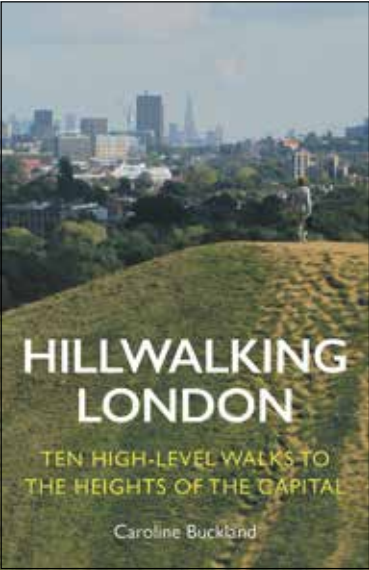
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Scaling the capital's peaks



Book cover.

'Hillwalking London - ten high-level walks to the heights of the capital' is the title of a guidebook published in May, Author Caroline Buckland, who lives in south east London, had the idea for the book whilst taking a local walk during the Covid lockdowns. Standing at the observation point near the Royal Observatory in Greenwich Park with the spectacular panorama before her, the possibility of linking hills around Greater London

and walking to their summits occurred to her. When restrictions were lifted she started to explore and this book is the result. The ten walks described, and accompanied by route maps, range in length from four to eight miles (6.5 - 13 km) with ascents from 302 feet (92m) to 951 feet (290m). Walk them all and you will ascend more than the height of Ben Nevis. The least demanding is from Brockley to Greenwich and the most demanding - 'The Seven Hills of Croydon' - from East Croydon to New Addington. As well as the more obvious peaks to conquer, Caroline leads us to some lesser-known spots and oddities such as Northala Fields at Northolt, partly created using rubble from the old Wembley Stadium. All walks are easily reached by public transport. *Hillwalking London*, ISBN 978-1-8384051-7-5, Safe Haven Books, £14.99. **Reader offer: South East Walker readers can buy *Hillwalking London* at a discount of 10% off the retail price by ordering before 30 September from www.safehavenbooks.co.uk and quoting discount code SEW10.**



Caroline Buckland, author of *Hillwalking London*.



The view from Shooters Hill in south east London, the capital's 11th highest hill at 132m.

The return of Dirty Lane

A stroll near London Bridge station led to a new thoroughfare with an old name.



Road sign.



The new Dirty Lane.

There was a time when London's street names were a lot more earthy, literal and visceral but as sensibilities evolved many were subtly or substantially changed. I blame the Victorians and estate agents. However, some were so graphic I am unable to repeat them here without a 'if you are easily offended look away now' warning. Others like the renaming of Petticoat Lane to Middlesex Street in the 1840s seem faintly ridiculous today. Street names were often derived from the professions and trades that went on there. Just wander around Bermondsey today and you are constantly reminded of the leather trade in names like Tanner Street or Leathermarket Street.

Today there is a new alley, Dirty Lane, that runs underneath a railway through a long line of brick arches that have been polished up to become a row of posh shops. The alley is

part of Borough Yards, an upmarket development that has been turning a few yards and the railway arches into a cluster of shops and cafes. The area of the development pretty much fills the site that was once occupied by Winchester Palace and its gardens. By the 1740s, the area was fully developed with a large timber yard in the middle and loads of narrow alleys and streets with wonderful names, such as Dead Man's Place, Dye House, Potts House, Dirty Lane, and Naked Boy Yard. These days you may better know Dead Man's Place as the much more genteel but less memorable Park Street. The arrival of the railways and all the consequent arches, built by the South Eastern Railway, gave the area its current appearance. This transformed the area from lots of smaller buildings into one dominated by the railway and its arches, which were rented out for warehouses, and later the railway was widened with the addition of new arches on either side. The area remained dominated

by warehouses until fairly recently, when the Southbank became better known for its culture and cafes, and a large section of the arches was taken over by the wine venue Vinopolis. Following the closure of Vinopolis the arches, which were built with doorways, have been repurposed as shops. Dirty Lane forms a new north-south link in the area that has only recently opened to the public, and most of the shops inside are still empty, or showing signs of opening soon. At the moment, there's some illuminated art inside the empty shops, so right now is a good time to visit, before the bustle of commerce and shoppers is added to the space. Although the new Dirty Lane doesn't follow the same route as the old one, Borough Yards liked the name so they incorporated it into their development. I don't suppose there's much hope of persuading them to resurrect Naked Boy Yard is there?

Des Garrahan

Manor restored for 400th anniversary

Boston Manor House in west London reopened in July after a five year restoration, thanks to funding from the National Lottery Heritage Fund, the Mayor of London's Good Growth Fund and Historic England. The Grade 1 listed Jacobean mansion - built for Lady Mary Reade in 1623 - had been on Historic England's Heritage At Risk Register. As well as the house, the 34-acre Boston Manor Park has been restored and has a new cafe. Repairs to the long-closed footbridge linking the park to the Grand Union Canal towpath and Capital Ring were due to be completed in August. The house (off Boston Manor Road, Brentford TW8 9JX and not far from Boston Manor station on the Piccadilly Line) is open to the public, free of charge, every day except Mondays.



Boston Manor House.



BEDFORDSHIRE

bulletin

Festival

Bedfordshire Ramblers are delighted to announce the first Bedfordshire Festival of Autumn Walks will run over nine days from 9 - 17 September, offering over 30 walks.

There is a plethora of walks on offer to suit all - long walks, short walks, wellbeing walks and interest walks. Walks are scheduled in the mornings and afternoons in addition to all-day walks. Most walks do not require booking. Walks will take place

over the length and breadth of Bedfordshire. Join us for one (or more) walk and explore our beautiful little county on foot.

The festival is being run with the cooperation of the four groups which make up the Bedfordshire Area, namely Ivel Valley Walkers, Lea & Icknield (Luton), Leighton Buzzard and North Beds.

Check out the full programme on www.lbramblers.org.uk/bfaw or join our dedicated Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/groups/1624342594751555>.

Steph Collins (Leighton Buzzard) and Sandra Kelsey (North Beds)



Festival flyer.

A RIPPLE a day keeps vegetation at bay

Between April and the middle of July our RIPPLE volunteers put in almost 200 hours of work on clearing and improving paths. This is equivalent to almost a complete month's work by one person and a saving to the councils of around £2,000 based on the national minimum wage of £10.42 per hour.

Working in 23 locations (19 in Bedford Borough and four in Central Bedfordshire), our volunteers have carried out tasks ranging from marker post painting and installation, applying directional discs, clearing trees which had fallen on paths, clearing side and overhanging vegetation, to cutting and improving surfaces. Both big and small tasks have been tackled. We don't mind which as we understand that although councils have a legal duty to maintain paths they don't have the money to do so and rights of way are sometimes considered a low priority by councillors despite the fact that a good usable network of paths is beneficial to health and wellbeing.

Notable tasks in Central Bedfordshire have been in Biggleswade, Potton and Ickwell. At Biggleswade a well-used section of the Biggleswade Green Wheel had become overgrown and needed



Enjoying a break at Ickwell.

Photo: Barry Ingram

a lot of attention. In Potton we reopened a footpath which had been closed for two years while a new housing estate was built and were instantly thanked by one of the local residents. A permissive path creating an off-road route between Ickwell and Old Warden needed surface improvements and the trimming back of vegetation and we were delighted to be joined on the day by recently elected councillor, Paul Daniels.

The wet spring followed by hot weather and rain have led to vegetation thriving. Within Bedford Borough we carried out significant improvements in Wilden on Footpath 14 and in Podington on Footpath 23. Both paths are

now usable again thanks to our volunteers. Cople Footpath 7 and Wootton Footpath 35 have been cleared and widened and we have received thanks from local people and dog walkers. We also cleared Bridleway 22 at Roxton which was blocked by a fallen willow tree.

Please report path problems to your group's Footpath Officer and/or the relevant council. Better still, come and join our RIPPLE work group. To find out more, contact me by text to 07860 348347 or email barry.ingram74@btinternet.com.

Barry Ingram

RIPPLE (Restoring and Improving Public Paths for Local Enjoyment)



Job done at Podington.

Photo: Barry Ingram



Removing a fallen tree at Roxton.

Photo: Barry Ingram



BUCKS

briefs

News from Bucks, Milton Keynes and West Middlesex

Group AGMs

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

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

- Amersham and District:**
Wednesday 22 November, 8pm, Coleshill Village Hall, Barracks Hill.
Coleshill, Amersham HP7 0LN.
- Aylesbury and District:**
Friday 8 December, 7.30pm, St Anne's Hall, Aylesbury Road,
Wendover HP22 6JG.
- Chilterns Weekend Walkers:**
Sunday 15 October, 2pm, Great Missenden Memorial Centre,
Link Road, Great Missenden HP16 9AE.
- Hillingdon and District:**
Saturday 21 October, 2pm, St Martins Church Hall.
Eastcote Road, Ruislip HA4 8DG.
- Milton Keynes and District:**
Sunday 5 November, 1pm, venue to be confirmed.
- Wycombe District:**
Saturday 18 November, 2pm, Cedar Barn, Barn Lane,
Hazlemere, High Wycombe HP15 7BQ.

John Esslemont
Acting Area Secretary

Award

Bill Piers was 'highly commended' in June by the Haddenham and Waddesdon Community Board in the 2023 'Proud of Bucks' awards for his stalwart work in improving footpath access in north Buckinghamshire. Bill founded North Bucks rRIPPLE (ramblers Repairing and Improving Public

Paths for Leisure and Exercise) in 2015, two years after retiring. He leads a team of around ten fellow retirees which works with support from the Ramblers and Buckinghamshire Council to replace damaged stiles on rights of way with self-closing stock-proof gates, thus improving accessibility for walkers and security for landowners. Although the award is for individual contribution to the local community



Bill with his certificate (and trusty Land Rover).
Photo: Jerry Mitchell

during the last year, Bill and his team (average age 73) have installed over 325 gates to date, and he plans to keep going as long as members' fitness allows!



BERKSHIRE bites

Remenham parish goes stile-free

Loddon Valley Ramblers volunteers replaced three stiles with kissing gates in the parish of Remenham in Wokingham borough in May. These were the last stiles on public footpaths in Remenham and so the whole parish is now stile-free. This means that around 15 miles of paths through some very attractive countryside, including parts of the Thames Path and Chiltern Way Berkshire Loop, are now fully accessible to walkers with restricted mobility who may find it difficult to use stiles.

We replaced a number of stiles in Remenham about five years ago, but that left three others. It was really difficult to secure landowner permission to replace these last three, but patience and persistence paid off. The sites for these gates were also a bit challenging but our experienced

team of volunteers used all their expertise with excellent results. The gates installed were funded entirely by the Ramblers, with funds from Berkshire Area, East Berks Ramblers and Loddon Valley Group itself.

Loddon Valley Group has worked to support Wokingham Borough Council's policy of removing stiles for many years, and has installed a large number of kissing gates across the borough, but this is the first time that has resulted in all stiles on public footpaths in a large rural parish being replaced. The group is keen to continue with its work to make more of the borough stile-free and has a priority list of 26 stiles it would like to replace to improve access to the footpath network. Obtaining landowner permission is a real stumbling block, however, even though the offer is to provide and install a new gate free of charge. We have written to the landowners



The installation team after installing one of the gates. Left to right: Alan Robinault, David Moffat, Graham Croucher, Keith Hawkins.
Photo: Ray Sharp (who project-managed the installation).

of almost all 26 stiles, requesting to replace them at nil cost, but have had refusals from some and no response at all from others. It's very frustrating when we have the volunteers and funds available, and when the benefits of replacing stiles seem so clear to us.

Steve Vale
Footpath Officer, Loddon Valley Ramblers



ESSEX extras

Safeguarding Footpath 47 in Barking & Dagenham

Footpath 47 is a spectacular and incredibly important public footpath which allows pedestrians to walk on an off-road, vehicle-free path, from Renwick Road to Choats Road, Barking, with views of the Thames shoreline. This footpath is a rare 'green corridor' in an urban area. It is historically significant but also befits a modern development where public footpaths can be enjoyed by both local people and visitors.

Havering & East London Ramblers Group was recently made aware that the development at Barking Riverside may impact on Footpath 47. Kevin Hudson, coordinator of the local community action group, contacted us to express his group's concerns that the path may be either closed or diverted.

The path is well-used by various communities, including ramblers. There is an abundance of wildlife, wading birds and sometimes seals along the shoreline and it is considered to be an area of rugged beauty, which allows the natural habitat to survive. Access to the shoreline along the path enriches the lives of the various communities by allowing them to be close to nature which creates a sense of wellbeing for people in stressful times.

The Greater London Authority has said that the Thames shoreline is a Site of Metropolitan Importance for nature conservation, and this is something which all communities want to preserve.

Barking Riverside is a joint venture between L&Q, a regulated charitable housing association, and the Mayor of London and is one of Europe's largest brownfield developments covering 443 acres, along two kilometres of south-facing River Thames frontage. The developer's masterplan will deliver 10,800 new homes and the infrastructure to support them.

Havering & East London Ramblers have not received



Ellen Owen (in grey jacket) with rambler Julia Morgan. Community group member Kevin Hudson is behind (with cap).
Photo: Peter Owen



Footpath 47 runs beside the Thames. Photo: Peter Owen

notification of a formal proposal to divert or change the route of Footpath 47. If the council proposes any changes it must have regard to loss of convenience and/or amenity. We are keen to work with the council and developers. Through discussing any proposals or formal applications we would look to ensure that public access to this footpath and surrounding areas is retained for the benefit of future residents and visitors to the area. It is important to preserve our public rights of way and to work positively with councils and developers to reach a win-win situation.

Ellen Owen
Chair, East London & Havering Ramblers



INNER LONDON insights

London Loop, Capital Ring and Green Chain project

We're delighted to welcome three new coordinators to the London Loop team - Alan Parry (sections 8 - 12), Justin Lumley (sections 13 - 18) and Chris Simpson (sections 19 - 24), all of whom join Keith Rodwell (sections 1 - 7).

At the end of April we said goodbye to Paul Miner, who had been with the project since its inception in 2019, coordinating sections 8 - 15 of the London Loop, but who has work and other volunteering commitments. At the same time Andrew Hunt stepped down from coordinating sections 16 - 24 of the London Loop to focus on his role of editing and designing all of the PDF guidance for all three routes, maintaining the web pages and responding to email queries. We recently updated and republished our walk guidance for all sections of the London Loop.

We have a full complement of coordinators and section volunteers on the Capital Ring but need volunteers to look after sections 6 and 7 of the London Loop (Coulston South to Banstead Downs and Banstead Downs to Ewell). Please email me at vicechair@innerlondonramblers.org.uk for details of the role if you think you might like to take part in this project. We ask volunteers to walk their sections at least three

times a year, to report on issues, and to ensure the PDF guidance is up to date at least annually; other optional elements of the role include waymarking improvements, liaising with local groups, landowners etc, local promotion and litter-picking.

Whilst we have already made substantial improvements to the waymarking of both routes, there are a few sections of the London Loop in particular, where the waymarks still need replacing and we have been focussed on this over the summer months. At the start of the summer, we ordered a large new batch of London Loop waymark discs and stickers, along with some more Capital Ring discs, Ramblers hi-vis vests for volunteers to wear when repacing discs, etc (if they so choose) and vinyl overlays for London Loop arrow signs. Over the summer we installed more of these vinyl overlays where the original signs have bleached out or been badly vandalised - the new ones are much brighter and more eye-catching, making the fingerposts easier to spot from afar and the routes easier to follow. Thank you to Keith Rodwell for leading on this for the London Loop and to Jackie Gower for leading on it for the Capital Ring, and to the volunteers who have worked with them.

Clare Wadd
Vice Chair, Inner London Area



Old and new signs on the London Loop.



Photos: Keith Rodwell



SURREY snippets

Leader training

Farnham Ramblers were again pleased to host a training course for potential walk leaders in April. This was open to all Surrey Area groups and we had 13 participants from four different groups across west and mid-Surrey together to learn about what is required of a Ramblers walk leader, as well as brushing up on map reading and compass work. The morning session dealt with walk leading requirements, including where to walk,

what is expected of a walk leader, and also the necessary risk assessments to make sure walkers are safe.

After a short lunch break we split into small groups, each with a tutor, and were asked to follow a three-mile walk around Farnham Park (a medieval deer park like a smaller version of Richmond Park, but this one still has a castle next door!) All agreed that the course had been hard work but fun.

*Nick Baxter
Farnham Ramblers*

Hedgerow planting

Our footpath work party was given a new perspective on supporting the environment earlier this year. Usually we are hacking back vegetation encroaching on footpaths but this time we were given the opportunity of planting something that will mature into a haven for wildlife.

The Surrey Hills Society is involved with a rewilding project at a farm near Bramley and we were invited to support this with a morning of planting hedging whips. Most were hawthorn with some guelder rose, buckthorn, dog rose and field maple. The idea being that they are all native and provide both flowers and

berries for birds and insects. Planting was in sections of 50 metres and once mature these will provide corridors along which wildlife can travel.

The planting was carried out within deer-proof fencing but required the whips to be staked with canes and protected with tree guards from rabbits. To create a thick, bushy hedge we planted five whips per metre in a staggered pattern. With eight volunteers, the time went quickly resulting in 100 metres of new hedgerow.

Thanks to Christa Emmett of the Surrey Hills Society for organising this opportunity for us.

John France

Work Party Leader, Godalming & Haslemere Ramblers



Hedgerow planting.

Photo: Margaret France

London Rivers Week

Kingston Ramblers took part in this annual event with a walk along Beverley Brook on 2 June. Nearly half those who attended were not Ramblers members. The event is run by Thames 21 and this was its seventh year. Events included a Thames cruise, nature walks, litter-picking and controlling

invasive species such as Himalayan balsam. London Rivers Week is a good showcase for conservation work and any group broadly in the Greater London area should consider participating in 2024.

*David Cooper
Kingston Ramblers*

Farnham's path maintenance work



A footbridge is installed.

Farnham Ramblers programme of footpath work began earlier this year and continues on the second Tuesday of each month, hopefully until October. A small but enthusiastic group of volunteers turns up regularly but more volunteers are always welcome, especially younger ones!

Our first task day in March was in the area of Frensham Country Park, known as the Flashes and the Axe Pond. Nine volunteers turned up to assist two Surrey County Council rights of way officers to replace two sleepers on a bridge and install a handrail. We also installed a H-frame bridge on footpath 558, improved another sleeper bridge over a gully and installed a three way marker. This was on a footpath which had been obscured for some time because an alternative permissive path was being used more often and was becoming eroded.

In April we worked on footpath 92, taking out four worn steps and replacing with seven new ones. Then, on adjacent footpath 87 we cleared overhanging vegetation. Two bags of litter were collected too as well as an old ceramic sink (but didn't try to sell on e-bay)!

Our June tasks were around Frensham Pond and consisted of replacing a marker post, clearing paths and bridges, despite the intense heat!

July's maintenance day was in Peper Harrow where we replaced a sleeper crossing with a H-frame bridge. checked a boardwalk and cleared vegetation from a path.

*Anne Pullinger
Farnham Ramblers*

Fresher air

Once a year we invite visually-impaired members of the London Blind Ramblers with their sighted helpers to enjoy a walk in the Surrey countryside, followed by tea and lots of cakes in the garden of two of our members.

This year's event took place on Sunday 9 July when 17 members of our group met up with eight visually-impaired walkers and seven sighted helpers from London for a four-mile walk in the Chiddingfold area and enjoyed a picnic lunch on the village green.

One of our visitors commented on how fresh the Surrey air



An idyllic setting for tea.

was compared with that in London! It was obvious that our welcome visitors were all thoroughly enjoying their day.

Photo: Margaret Baxter

Heather Dillon

Godalming & Haslemere

Ramblers

Radical landscapes:

This free exhibition opens at the William Morris Gallery in Walthamstow on 21 October and runs until 18 February 2024. It explores the natural world as a place for artistic inspiration, social connection and political and cultural protest through the lens of William Morris, one of Britain's earliest and most influential environmental thinkers. More details at www.wmgallery.org.uk

Explore with map and compass

East Sussex Rambler, John Harmer, will be holding another of his one-day courses for beginners and those with little experience to gain confidence and experience in map reading and land navigation. The course will be in Battle, East Sussex, on either Saturday 23 or 30 September. A standard charge of £10 applies with reduced rates available. Contact John on 01424 773998 or email john@harmerfamily.plus.com if interested. Further courses will follow if there is demand.

Trains stop trains:

Buses replace trains between Princes Risborough and Aylesbury until 29

October while works are carried out to allow the HS2 high-speed line to pass under the existing line.

Thames walks:

Active Thames, a partnership led by the Port of London Authority has joined with the Go Jauntly walking app to provide a collection of family-friendly walks along the Thames Path. Routes include a puzzle hunt in Gravesend, and a nature wander around Surrey Quays. Routes can be accessed via the free Go Jauntly app.

Inspirational octogenarians

It was my pleasure to join 20 other White Cliffs Ramblers on a walking holiday to Molveno, Italy, in May. A beautiful part of the world, lush, green, surrounded by the Dolomite mountains with Lake Molveno nestling between. The age range of our group was 62 to 88. Many long-standing experienced members of the group joined us, many of them were heading towards their 80th birthday.

The first day consisted of a walk round the lake to test our fitness. The walks that were to follow would be more strenuous, with rocky climbs and descents; on top of that we were to experience inclement weather as the area had been suffering cold and wet conditions. Our leaders, Sam and Michaela, were both experienced and qualified mountain guides in their 20s and extremely fit marathon runners. On first impressions they may have been apprehensive as to whether we could manage what was to come but the group did themselves proud and were a testament to how regular walking over a long period of time keeps you healthy and active.

If you didn't know people in the group it didn't matter, everyone was made welcome. If you were alone or with a partner, sharing the experience brought a sense of camaraderie and fun. The walks were full of chatter and laughter, a happy band of walkers with a great sense of humour when the going got tough. The group between them had hundreds of years walking experience and tales to tell. By the end of the holiday everybody agreed it was challenging but a sense of achievement

and joyfulness was evident. Val, who had not walked much due to illness, told us that the pandemic had knocked her confidence and she had underestimated her abilities but the holiday had restored her resolution to keep walking.

The oldest of the group, Albert, 88, who walks with a group at least three times a week and whose ambition is to carry on walking into his 90s, told us "rambling has been a lifeline for me. I lost my wife 16 years ago having had 47 years together. I joined the Ramblers a year later as my social life had ceased to exist. I have met kind and caring people and for one's welfare, Ramblers holidays abroad are fantastic, lovely people to be involved with."

Elaine, who has already had her 80th birthday, said "the Ramblers have given me an active and happy life. I have made many dear friends, and walked in some wonderful places and countries with them."

The group received the ultimate compliment when Michaela, on our goodbyes, said that she was inspired by everyone and that in 60 years time she wished to be just like us. Regular walking has given us the fitness to manage a challenging walks programme and group holidays are a great way to make friends, walk in a supportive environment, discover new places and have lots of fun. For me, as the youngest of the group, I was motivated by my older friends. Walking is my love and if it's going to give me a fabulous level of fitness and the ability to explore new paths and make new friends well into my 80s, what a bonus!

*Lee Pickup
White Cliffs Ramblers*



Albert and Elaine on one of the sunnier walks in Molveno.
Photo: Lee Pickup

In artists' footsteps

The art critic John Ruskin described London in the mid 19th century as a "ghastly heap of fermenting brickwork, pouring out poison at every pore". It's no surprise therefore that with the coming of the railways artists themselves began to search for clean, country air. At all points of the compass, colonies of artists began to spring up around the capital, roughly where the M25 now runs. Notable members of the Royal Academy and the Royal Watercolour Society were to be found in Bushey, Epping, Guildford and Redhill.

I ran an art gallery in Reigate for over 40 years and shared my interest and knowledge in 12 such artists on 1 June when I was fortunate to lead a group of Croydon Ramblers on a 10-mile walk from Reigate Heath to Redhill.

The picturesque windmill on the heath is well known to ramblers and had great romantic appeal to 19th century artists until a golf club was built obscuring the view! I managed to obtain pictures to show how it once looked. After passing 'Heathfield', the house where film producer Joseph Arthur Rank lived, we visited Priory Park before calling at St Mary's church. The two most famous artists buried here are John Linnell and his son in law Samuel

Palmer. Their difficult relationship is much written about and the walk later passed both their respective homes. Other people of note encountered before lunch included the pioneer photographer Francis Frith and the Waterlow brothers, who introduced modern lithographic printing techniques to Fleet Street.

As luck would have it, the walk took us past my home in Redhill which, with perfect weather, provided a well timed stop for lunch in the garden!

The afternoon proved more strenuous with a climb up Redstone Hill before going down and up again onto Redhill Common. There were fine views to the south with glimpses of St John's church and the Royal Eastwood Hospital, established in 1847 and now luxury apartments like so many of the old Surrey asylums.

The final stop was at a high point looking north to Colley Hill, the exact point from where Reigate artist Tatton Winter painted a well-known picture reproduced in the 1913 Pilgrims' Pageant Book, celebrating the granting of public access to that section of the Pilgrims' Way.

If time had not been pressing I'm sure a cooling drink at the Skimmington Castle pub on the way back would have been most welcome!

*John Robertson
Croydon Ramblers*



John Robertson points out features to be seen from Redhill Common.
Photo: John Tickner

A good idea

When I joined Croydon Ramblers about 15 years ago, a mere slip of a lad in my early 60s, the thought of doing a 10 - 12 mile walk at a fairly brisk pace, especially in winter, seemed like a really good idea and presented no problem. The people I walked with then also seemed to cope admirably.

Today, I sometimes feel that a 10-mile walk is enough to satisfy my need for exercise and adventure - especially if the route is hilly or over rough terrain. Furthermore, my frilow ramblers of 15 years ago who are still walking have aged 15 years as well, (strange that!), and I know that some are more than happy to take a shorter and perhaps slightly slower paced walk.

In our group's April to June programme I noticed that on eight Thursdays - our most popular walking day - there were no less than eight double walks, ie two walks start from the same place, they walk

together for part of the way, perhaps lunchtime, then one group peels off to do a shorter, slower version whilst the other group continues to walk a full 10 - 11 miles. With luck, we meet up at the end about the same time where and when we can enjoy a cup of tea, perhaps a slice of cake and, of course, a bit of a natter.

Our July to September programme had nine double or what I call 'piggy-back' walks. This arrangement seems quite popular and not long ago on one of the hottest days of the year when the time came to split into two groups, most walkers decided to go for the shorter option. This was much to the disappointment of Dave, the leader of the longer walk! Flexibility is the name of the game with walks to suit as many members as possible. My photo shows a small group of Croydon Ramblers about to ascend Seaford Head. An even smaller group opted for an easier route! But we still met up at the end for tea and cake!

*John Tickner
Croydon Ramblers*



Approaching Seaford Head.
Photo: John Tickner

Supporting Surrey Search and Rescue



Left to right: Darren, Syd and Alan. Photo: Alan Holloway

Well done to our members Alan, Syd and Darren who had a little jaunt to the Lake District in May in aid of Surrey Search and Rescue. Raising £1,260 and covering 47 miles, 8,500 feet of ascent and descent, in 19 hours and seven minutes. Twelve solid hours of sunshine made it even tougher than expected! Alan and Darren are volunteers with Surrey Search and Rescue and over the last five years have attended many callouts

between them, totalling over 2,700 hours.

Surrey Search and Rescue is a voluntary specialist team which assists the emergency services, primarily to help find missing people. but also provide support in water rescue incidents and wildfires. On call 24 hours a day, with a team of 70+ people and search dogs they respond to calls from across Surrey and surrounding areas.

*Shirley Creed
Surrey & Beyond (SABRE) Ramblers*

Night walk

One of the joys of the short summer nights is to take a night walk. Rickey Costas joined a joint Metropolitan Walkers and Capital Walkers overnight jaunt along the north Kent coast. Here are his impressions of the event.

Full of nervous energy at the start, watching the sun go down and getting surprisingly cold waiting as more and more people arrived. Finally it was time. Thirteen intrepid walkers set off, the magic number, at 22.30. Walk east out of Whitstable, along the coast. The sea to our left, a good wind behind, and high tide brought the waves up close. A constant reminder that this was a coast walk with the sounds and smells of the sea. To Amy Johnson's memorial at Herne Bay, a quick stop at around 23.45. Walking through normally busy seaside towns when they are quiet and dark is a surreal experience.

Onwards into the dark, the road gives way to a concrete path. Until we get to Bishopstone. A missed turn, understandable in the dark, easily recovered. Up to the cliffs at Bishopstone where we finally get to see the full moon. Then the gentle downhill through Reculver country park, past the local heroes sculptures,

and the surprisingly busy car park. Up to Reculver medieval church and Roman fort, where 'lunch' was had, sat on the grass around our excellent 'camp fire' lantern, time around 02.30. The stars showed themselves as the sky cleared. Was it lightening up just a little in the east? Onwards away from old England's coast across the Wantsum channel on a very flat straight path towards the Isle of Thanet.

Gradually, ever so slowly, with every footstep the sky lightens. I zoned out at this point, drifting along in the dark and quiet, apart from a few words from other adventurers.

The dawn chorus starts with one little bird getting a bit too excited about the sky changing colour. It chirps. Others are woken, they chirp. Eventually all the little birds are chirping. The seagulls are woken, they squark. I'm not a bird person, as you might be able to tell. I don't know their names, sorry. But listening to it all happen in the pre-dawn is incredible. At around 04.20 we decided to find a suitable place to watch the sunrise, we are just past Minnis Bay at Birchington. A nice flat piece of concrete sea wall facing the east was selected. Gradually, slowly, the sky went through every shade of blue, grey, red, orange and all the other colours you only see just before dawn. Eventually the first

dot of orange/yellow appears which widens to a line, to a semi-circle, to a circle, lifting off the sea, increasing in colour and size and lovely warmth. The sunrise is a truly awesome experience, and when you've walked 10-plus miles in the dark to see it, lacking sleep, it melts the brain.

The call of Margate increases until we can no longer resist. Time to start moving. Now walking into the rising sun. It's bright and warm, and I can see why the birds were so happy earlier. The concrete is swapped for sandy beaches, which we opt for whenever we can. The tide is out, the sand is firm. Westgate-on-Sea is nice but we don't have time to stop, we are walking. Each headland we hope is the last, but isn't, until eventually, finally, we get to Margate beach. The time is 06.20. The earliest cafe is not open until 08.00, first train is at 07.05. Do we stay out, do we go? Most decide it's time to leave. It's been a long walk, at night; sleep isn't just calling, it's shouting with a megaphone. We say goodbye to our old and new friends. A few stay for coffee and a paddle before reluctantly also getting the train back to London. A really nice bunch of people, all of you, thanks for a great time. I hope you enjoyed it as much.



Ephemera and other things

Many walkers will hang on to their guides and maps forever and in some cases will keep guides to routes they will never actually walk. In other words, many of us hoard our walking material until the time comes when we realise that you don't really need to hang on to the maps, guides, leaflets and books overflowing your shelves and cabinets. And here's an example as I'm not likely to use the Walking Routes of West Jutland guide which I've had for years. So, what happens next? Does it go into the recycling bin or should it be left on a train or bus for somebody to pick up if they're interested and if nobody wants it, the poor bus and train cleaners will have to decide what to do with it. Almost certainly it will go straight into the rubbish bin. Finding links with people who might be interested in some of the stuff is not easy. For instance, a guide to a route like the North Downs Way will have many editions which raises the question about whether the early editions have any value? So, we ask, are the early guides worth collecting? The answer is almost certainly negative but we can live in hope!

There are plenty of hoarding and decluttering stories to be told in future but we will now move on to talk about the rise of pilgrimages. In recent years pilgrimages have changed from being mainly religious activities to having a more expanded concept of walking, perhaps still with a spiritual element, while exploring nature, culture and wellbeing. The British Pilgrimage Trust recognises 48 major pilgrimage routes in the UK and over 500 minor ones often with low-cost hostels and community-run accommodation attached. The Camino Ingles, through the work of the Confraternity of St James, recognises a start of routes in Britain which link with the Camino de Santiago in Spain and take you all the way to Santiago de Compostela. There are eight recognised routes in the UK which include Rochester to Ramsgate, London or Winchester to Canterbury, London or Norwich to Walsingham and Reading to Southampton. While the pilgrimage routes are long, there is also a useful guide by Andy Bull called Pilgrimage Pathways to short one or two day walks which is worth having a look at. There is also a host of literature written by authors who have journeyed largely on foot across Europe and on to Jerusalem.

Hopefully this scribbler will have tried a short pilgrimage or two and have plenty more decluttering stories for you in the next issue.

John Pestle



The St James' Way begins in the centre of Reading - a centre of the cult of St James in the Middle Ages - and extends for about 68 miles (110 km) to Southampton. Pilgrims can then take a ferry to Spain before joining the Camino de Santiago in the city of A Coruna. Pilgrim passports and a guidebook, A Pilgrim Guide to St James' Way, can be obtained at Reading Museum, Winchester City Museum and Winchester Cathedral or from the website of the Confraternity of St James at www.csj.org.uk.

Flood Barrier:

Set around the Barking Creek Barrier where the River Roding meets the Thames in east London, Flood Barrier is a new film by Turner Prize nominee Catherine Yates which will premiere at a free outdoor screening at Valence House Museum in Dagenham on Friday 22 September. The film will then be part of an exhibition on the Princess Alice Disaster (when a paddle steamer of that name collided with another vessel on the Thames in 1878) from 26 September to 21 October. Further screenings will be at the ICA in London on Tuesday

14 November and the Turner Contemporary in Margate on Saturday 18 November. The film aims to raise awareness of rising sea levels on the 70th anniversary of the Great Flood of 1953 when thousands lost their lives on the Essex and Dutch coasts.

Straw & stubble

This poem is a conflation of images from walks on the North Downs Way and Wealdway after combine harvesters have brought in the wheat, barley, and maize. Walking those paths in warm autumn light - even with all the harvest dust - brings delight and new perspectives as the harvest has seemingly swept the landscape 'clean' for a different season of the year.

*Even as late as now--
in mid-September--
field-edges where we trek
are dusted with daisies,
powdered with pimpernel
and groundsel, white seeds
of dandelions lifting
in the breath of autumn to float away
and parachute to populate these fields ...*

*Burdock & thistle husks
catch at our sleeves, stiff
on their desiccated stems.*

*Bees busy themselves
on spikes of purple knapweed
along the field-side path.*

*Now the whole earth comes to rest,
ploughed ready for later sowing
under the squabble of jays,
under the loops & swoops
of green woodpeckers.*

*The farmer also rests, mellow
as he watches a bonfire's blue smoke haze
rise in the Wealden distance.*

*Even the straw & stubble
of the season's end
are beautiful.*

*A scent of appplewood
drifts in tendrils
up the slope towards us.*

Words and image © Lizzie Ballagher



Footpath matters

Diversions, claims etc

The public inquiry into the extinguishment of the Culham rail crossing ended on 26 January. The closure has now been confirmed. Network Rail is proposing three more closures, at Tackley, Sandy Lane and Yarnton Lane. As things stand, Yarnton Lane will be provided with a stepped bridge with a cycle ramp, Sandy Lane will have a ramped bridle bridge, and Tackley bridleway (BR2) will be diverted west of the railway to the underbridge

on restricted byway 3 near Whitehill. There is considerable opposition in Tackley.

We have received a series of diversion proposals in the Baldons and Nuneham Courtenay which appear to reflect the situation on the ground. A proposal at Ardley also reflects the position on the ground, as the definitive line is covered in fairly recent farm buildings.

The diversion of Shilton BR1 at Whitehill Quarry will allow pedestrians to cross the haul road (which will be in a deep

cutting so unsuitable for horses to approach) when it is not in use. The bridleway will run along the perimeter of the site.

Diversion orders at Idbury footpath (FP 15) (to put the path where the creation order should have put it in the beginning) and Waterstock FP6 (which required work on adjacent paths), and modification orders at Cropedy (to add a village path) and Henley have been confirmed.

Other matters

Oxfordshire Area is still in need of a Southern Area Footpath Secretary and a Lost Ways Coordinator. I will be retiring from both roles at the next Area AGM in January. I need to retire while I still have

a functioning brain and knees, and can accompany a successor if necessary without falling over.

The impossible stiles on Tiddington FP5/6 have been replaced by new stiles and a gap; the bridge is rotten and covered

in vegetation, but can easily be bypassed. The stiles were replaced by the Thame & Wheatley Group maintenance team, who also cleared the overhanging branches and other vegetation. The fence alongside the gate on Lewknor FP1 has also been removed and the gate replaced or repaired.

David Godfrey
Area Footpath Secretary

Abingdon Walking Festival

The first Abingdon Walks Festival, in April, was a great success. Ramblers - Vale of White Horse and Didcot & Wallingford groups - contributed walks in addition to ones from the local Health Walks and a Nordic

Walking group. Eighty five people attended the five Ramblers walks. As most of those were not Ramblers members it meant that we had increased the visibility of our walks with the public. We also had a stand in the Market Place

where we engaged with interested passers-by. We are looking forward to a repeat of the event next year.

John Gordon
Vale of White Horse Group



Taking a break at Sutton Courtenay on one of the festival walks.

Photo: Peter Skuse.



OXFORDSHIRE on-line

Footpath matters

Valeting the Vale Way and other routes

Vale of White Horse Group's Vale Path Volunteers were in action no fewer than nine times in the second quarter of the year. It would have been 10 times but a last-minute recce revealed that the landowner had beaten us to it - a very pleasant surprise. Two sessions, one on a sweltering day, were required to clear 500 metres along a footpath from the east of Grove to a level crossing over the railway, opening up a blocked circular route. We also cleared long paths in the parishes of Drayton and East Hendred/Milton.

Five of the Vale Path Volunteers outings involved

small teams along the 27-mile Vale Way. We fitted additional waymark discs and Vale Way decals as needed, and cut back vegetation. The Vale Way, which was created by members of the Vale of White Horse group, runs generally east to west, connecting the market towns of Abingdon, Wantage and Faringdon. It is marked on digital versions of Ordnance Survey maps, and further details can be found at www.ramblers-oxon.org.uk/thevaleway/valeway.htm.

Pat Rosum

Coordinator, Vale Path Volunteers



Just one of the Vale Path Volunteers' lineups during the second quarter.

Photo: Andy Boyd

New project

Thame & Wheatley Group's path maintenance team expanded its horizons earlier this year by rebuilding some stiles, but didn't start with easy ones. They chose stiles on a footpath through Albury, near Thame, which had been in need of restoration for many a year.

Before working on the stiles they cleared the overgrowth (nettles, brambles, tree branches etc) from the 180m path, including reopening a causeway across an old railway cutting. This gives walkers a choice of the high (and dry) road or the low (and lush, wet) road. They then made a gap of a broken stile (where there was no livestock to protect) and rebuilt a very dangerous stile.

Here, they provided two stile steps with proper dimensions and height and added a handhold. They also cut steps down the slippery bank below the stile to improve the path. Finally, they repaired one slightly less dangerous, but equally awkward, stile. Oxfordshire County Council's Countryside Access Team provided some materials scavenged from old stiles, and consent was obtained from the landowner. The whole route is now reopen and much safer for walkers.

The team was led by Bob Merry and included Martin Gibson, Tim Howard, Mike Haffey, Ken King and myself. It was good to welcome Bill Piers of North Bucks rRIPPLE path maintenance group.

Ruth Cornish

Thame & Wheatley Group



Before work. Photo: Ruth Cornish.



And after.

Photo: Bob Merry

Audio Trails:

A new audio trail at Seven Sisters Country Park in East Sussex is designed to connect people with sights, sounds and seasonal changes. Walkers can scan a QR code located on benches to tune in to an immersive audio that delves into the wildlife at the country park. The trail is the latest offering at the site, which has seen £2 million of renovations over the past three years since the national park authority took over ownership and management.

A further new audio trail in the park follows the footsteps of Augustus Pitt-Rivers, considered the founding father of modern archaeology. Another 'in their footsteps' audio trail was launched on the western side of the South Downs National Park in July, celebrating the life and times of artist Flora Twort (1893 - 1985) who moved to Petersfield after the First World War. Many of her works can now be seen in Petersfield Museum and Art Gallery.

Open houses:

The annual Heritage Open Days and Open House London festivals return in September, both promising the chance to view properties of all kinds for free. Heritage Open Days (mostly outside of London) runs from 8 - 17 September, brought to you by the National Trust with support from players of the People's Postcode Lottery. More details can be found at www.heritageopendays.org.uk. Open House London runs from 6 - 17 September with details at open-city.org.uk/open-house-festival-2023.

High Weald Walking Festival:

This annual event takes place from 9 to 17 September in the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty which includes parts of Kent, Surrey and Sussex. Details are at highwealdwalks.org.

YHA sales:

The Youth Hostels Association is hoping to sell 20 of its 150 hostels in England and Wales. Amongst the properties on the market are the hostels at Holmbury

St Mary in Surrey and Streatley-on-Thames in Berkshire. The organisation is hoping that the properties might be operated as franchised or independent hostels.

Wandle Fortnight:

A celebration of the Wandle Valley in south west London runs over three weekends in September (Saturday 9 - Sunday 24), includes walks and tours. See wandlevalleyforum.org.uk/wandle-fortnight.html.



KENT calling

Area Secretary's diary

By far the largest call on my time over the last three months has been work on a new guide to the Wealdway, about which you can read elsewhere in this issue. The most stressful stage in producing a new guide is getting it printed. When we produced our first guide, to the Coast Path, the printers we initially chose failed to produce any guides despite having been paid so we had to find new printers at twice the price and get the money back from my credit card provider. Our second guide, to Three River Valley Walks in West Kent was produced with defective lamination and had to be reprinted. Our third guide, to the Tunbridge Wells Circular Walk, was bound with the sections in the wrong order and also had to be reprinted. This time around I have had to delve into the murky world of colour spaces, ICC profiles, Pantone versus CMYK pinks and the difference between process black and rich black. It all seems unnecessarily complicated and I have had to learn a lot of stuff I never wanted to know.

While researching the Wealdway guide I popped into the Visitor Information Centre in Gravesend and had a very useful chat about the lack of information they hold to give people enquiring about walking opportunities such as the Saxon Shore Way. As a result I have undertaken to design some leaflets about the Saxon Shore Way, the Wealdway and the

Coast Path, all of which start from or pass through Gravesend. I also hope to engage with them about replacing the Wealdway information board which has for many years stood close to Gravesend Town Pier and is now a bit the worse for wear. I am wondering whether a replacement board should promote not just the Wealdway but also the other two walks mentioned, just as the replacement that we have installed for the Wealdway board in Tonbridge promotes also the Eden Valley Walk and the Medway Valley Walk. Meanwhile I have just delivered a brand new Tunbridge Wells Circular Walk information board to the Men's Shed in Groombridge for installation in the car park there once East Sussex County Council has delivered the poles on which it will be mounted.

I lost a couple of Ordnance Survey Explorer maps recently which I had to replace. I was shocked to discover that some of those currently on sale at 2023 prices are actually really rather old editions, at least one having not been updated since 2008. We are not talking about some remote part of the Scottish Highlands where the paths and roads haven't changed in a century but about Maidstone and the Medway Towns or, a mere 13 years out of date, Sevenoaks and Tonbridge. I think that we lifelong, loyal customers of the Ordnance Survey deserve better. However, it does give our guides with their up to date 1: 25,000 mapping an additional selling point.

Inevitably a lot of complaints from the public about unsatisfactory paths come my way. I have particularly noticed lately that many more of these relate to Medway (a unitary authority separate from the rest of Kent) than used to be the case. Particular issues have been complete blockages due to vegetation on the Saxon Shore Way and elsewhere and substandard signage for the England Coast Path which allows the fingerblades to rotate in the wind. Yes, I know the coast path has a fancy new name, but who wants to use seven words when three are perfectly adequate? Additionally Medway's Local Access Forum is in default of its legal obligations to meet at least twice a year and produce an annual report. We are waiting to see if a change in control of the council in the May elections brings about significant improvements in performance.

In May we held a meeting in Lenham for our footpath volunteers at which we had speakers from the British Horse Society, Kent County Council and the Kent Association of Local Councils as well as our own members. We are planning to hold another meeting on 4 November at which we will be happy to welcome anyone interested in footpath work, whether or not already in a volunteering role. If interested, please contact us on prow@kentramblers.org.uk

Robert Peel

Secretary, Kent Ramblers



Gravesend's ageing Wealdway board.

Photo: Robert Peel

Those we have lost

Richard Mosses 1943 - 2023

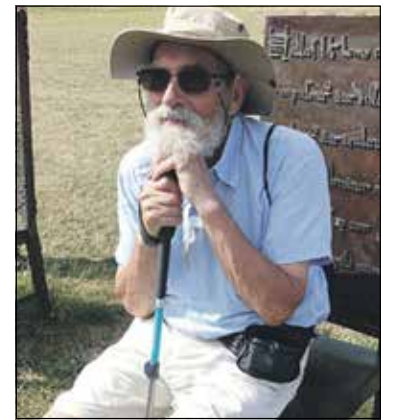
South East Berks Group and the Berkshire Area Committee were all very sad to learn of Richard's death due to an accident while walking in Hawaii.

Richard had been a member of the Ramblers for around 50 years. There are records at Central Office which show him as Countryside Secretary in 1975. He had been a member of South East Berks Group since its formation 37 years ago and had been the group's representative at Area meetings for much of that time.

Richard was an enigmatic 'character'. Everybody knew him well. He was a very private person who lived for walking and travel. If he wasn't walking with us on a Wednesday he would almost certainly be walking on another continent. In 2022 it was Antarctica, in 2023 it was a three month round-the-world cruise which unfortunately he never completed.

Richard knew and walked every footpath in south east Berks and surrounding area and when leading a walk he rarely needed to use a map. He must have led hundreds of walks and covered thousands of miles over the years.

Richard had also been a member



Richard Mosses. Photo: Chris Lovejoy

of the Bracknell Forest Local Countryside Access Forum for at least 20 years, being Vice-Chair for much of that time. He kept an eye on all council development plans and we would hear from him if any impacted on his precious public rights of way. His reports at our group AGM were always extremely comprehensive and reminded us how much time and effort he spent without us knowing about it.

Our thoughts are with Richard's family and friends at this time. Walk in peace, Richard.

Brian Poulton

South East Berks Group

Henriette Van Zaelen 1948 - 2023

Members of our group are mourning the loss of Henriette Van Zaelen who died from inoperable lung cancer on 9 May, a little over a year after being diagnosed. She willingly submitted herself to a succession of gruelling but abortive treatments and remained optimistic and cheerful to the end. She spent her final few weeks in University College Hospital and the Marie Curie London Hospice where many fellow ramblers visited her. She left her body to medical research and didn't want a funeral.

Henriette's association with Hampstead Ramblers began in 2003 when she led the first of her 52 walks for our group. She joined the committee in 2005 and in 2013 became Membership Secretary, a position she held until 2018 when she transferred to North West London Ramblers in an endeavour to keep that group going. Fellow North West London committee member Elena Marc said "I would only add that the North West London Ramblers Group was dissolved in October 2021, and that the committee was very appreciative and grateful to Henriette for leading walks and taking up secretarial duties so helpfully at a difficult time for the group."

As for Henriette's life outside rambling, her good friend Pauline Lobo provided the following information:

Henriette came here in 1972 to take part in a floristry competition which she won. She liked London



so much that, after giving notice to her employer in Brussels, she returned to England. After working as a florist, Henriette trained and qualified as a nurse, working in various hospitals, followed by work as a health visitor. She studied and qualified in therapeutic massage and aromatherapy and set up a practice. Her interests were travel, learning languages such as Spanish and Japanese, reading, local history and visiting stately homes, castles, museums and art galleries.

Henriette was a supporter of Connections at St Martins in the Fields and volunteered in the soup kitchen. In Covid times she helped at a food bank. Besides enjoying rambling with various groups, Henriette took part in the Arundel and Brighton Pilgrimage for many years. She was a member of the Confraternity of St James and as well as walking the Camino de Santiago spent time doing voluntary work at hostels along the route.

Jane Rosoux

Hampstead & District Ramblers

Those we have lost

Ken Richards

Our group said goodbye to their long-standing friend Ken Richards on 28 June. Ken, who was 93 years young, had an outstanding 30 year history as an active Rambler, walk leader and former committee member. He will be remembered as a kind and gentle man.

Ken's cremation took place at Upminster Crematorium and was well attended by his rambling friends. The service was reflective of Ken, with upbeat big band music. Big band music and dancing were just two of his passions in addition to the love of his life, his wife Mary. In his earlier years he formed and led his own band and played both

clarinet and saxophone. Ken and Mary spent 68 happy years together and had two children, Alan and Anne, and four grandchildren.

After serving on our group committee for 16 years as Secretary, Ken stepped down in 2019 at the age of 90. In total he had served for over 23 years in various committee roles and as Area representative. I presented him with a certificate, signed by Ramblers Vice President Kate Ashbrook, which his family said was kept proudly on his mantelpiece and meant a lot to him,

Alan and Anne thanked our group for their kind words and support to Ken during his illness and for the donation to St Francis Hospice in Havering. We will miss kind and gentle Ken and every



Ken with his Ramblers certificate which had to be presented to him on his doorstep to conform with the social distancing rules in place during the pandemic.

Photo: Peter Owen

time I hear 'Don't Sit Under the Apple Tree' I will think of him.

Ellen Owen

*Havering & East London
Ramblers*

Wish you were here?

Keeping it simple in Dorset

Going on a walking holiday with a Ramblers group might not be to everyone's taste. Undoubtedly we all share a passion for walking, but beyond this we may lead very disparate lives.

Our usual week-long holiday at a HF centre is very popular but we wanted to be able to offer something to a broader range of our members. Barriers to joining a group holiday included things like cost, taking time off work, atypical dietary requirements and wanting to take a dog. People of a quieter disposition tend to steer clear of this type of holiday altogether.

We started investigating ways that might lessen these hurdles and discovered other Ramblers groups had found a mini-break type of walking holiday was becoming increasingly popular. We decided to try something similar but with a variation. We gave people the opportunity to organise their own accommodation which meant they had much more control over the cost. In addition, participants were offered the option of a pub meal one evening, and a restaurant meal on another. There was no compulsion to attend either of the meals. At the end of each day we would choose which walk to do from a list of suitable options, how best to travel there and where people might like to eat.

Accommodation costs ranged from £16 to £140 per night and included proper camping in a cider orchard, camper vaning, a bed and breakfast in Bridport, a dog-friendly pub in Powerstock and a luxury four-star B&B towards Beaminster.



Enjoying the stunning Dorset countryside.

Photo: Fiona Spencer

Another advantage was that participants were able to join the holiday for various durations depending on their other commitments. The holiday was staged over a long weekend which minimised how much leave needed to be taken.

The destination chosen was West Dorset, based in and around Bridport. This allowed us the chance to explore part of the Monarch's Way during mid-May, a uniquely appropriate moment in our country's history! There were four led-walks in the wonderful Dorset countryside, with plenty of time to visit churches, pubs or anything else that took our fancy.

All in all it was a very inclusive, flexible, democratic and civilised vacation. It involved surprisingly little administration and I, for one, would definitely do it again.

*Louise Stilwell-Stage
Mole Valley Ramblers*

Winchcombe, Gloucestershire

A June weekend away was enjoyed by SABRE in the Cotswolds. The weather was at its best, the scenery stunning and the walking was great.

We met up on Friday afternoon for a seven-mile walk around the Sudeley valley and caught a glimpse of Sudeley Castle, Catherine Parr's final resting place. One of the highlights of the walk was the sight of a magnificent yellowhammer sitting proudly high on a hedgerow,

On Saturday the group split and nine of us opted for a nine-mile walk starting in Stanton and walking to Broadway for a welcome coffee stop, then on to Snowhill and back

to Stanton. On this walk we passed through some lovely picture postcard villages, saw spectacular wildflowers, including the white helleborine orchid. A hardy three in the group opted for a longer walk of over 20 miles!

On Sunday our eight mile walk took in long rolling views between the picturesque villages of Turkdean, Hazelton, Notgrove and Cold Ashton. A highlight here was the sighting of hares.

Our thanks to Chris B and his wife Pat for organising such a fabulous weekend of walking, along with some great meals in local pubs!

Shirley Creed

Surrey and Beyond (SABRE) Ramblers



SABRE members in the Cotswolds.

Photo: Mike Boon



On Offa's Dyke.

Photo: Richard Trimmer

Holywell, Flintshire

Twenty-four eager walkers of all abilities made their way to the Springfield Hotel just outside Holywell for a three-night holiday, arriving in time for the first of five walks organised by Clwydian Walking Holidays. This was to be a five-mile walk around Halkyn Mountain but was cut short when dark clouds were spotted followed by flashes of lightning. The leader's decision to cut the walk short was deemed sensible given that the majority of us had not packed waterproofs due to the earlier unbroken blue skies.

The next day dawned hot and sunny and it was considered safe to consign waterproofs to the wardrobes. The shorter walk enjoyed a stroll along the beach at Prestatyn before visiting St Asaph Cathedral while the longer walk followed Offa's Dyke path from Gwaenysgor to Bodfari.

Our second day was probably

the most exciting with both groups dropped off at Conwy and following much the same circular route around the Conwy mountains before the longer walk diverted to the top of the mountain for spectacular views across Conwy Bay.

The final full day's walking saw both groups take a relatively flat route from Capel Curig to the Ogwen visitor centre. The longer walk then continued along the Snowdonia Slate Trail to Bethesda while those on the shorter walk enjoyed ice creams in Betws-y-Coed. Departure day saw another walk around the Halkyn Mountain including a search for pirates' graves at a local church, before saying goodbye to Bob and his team from Clwydian Walking Holidays and departing for home.

*Richard Trimmer
West Berks Ramblers*

Wish you were here?



Communal supper at Farditch Farm.

Photo: Inge Mikkelsen

Buxton, Derbyshire

Twenty four members spent a great self-catering week in April at Farditch Farm, near Buxton, in four fabulous interlinking farm cottages.

There was a choice of two walks each day, most of which were blessed with pleasant sunny weather, and paths sprinkled with early spring flowers. Walks were usually within a half hour's drive from the farm and we enjoyed some of the classic Peak District routes. The good weather allowed for 360 degree panoramic views from the summits of Kinder Scout, Mam Tor and Stanage Edge. All walks were varied and interesting, not least the time spent following the Monsal Trail, and the views looking down to the Edale Valley. For some, the rock scrambling along part of the jagged limestone bank of the River Wye was a real challenge and a highlight of the week, even though it did involve a few slips and muddy bums as we tried to avoid falling in the river! For others, the long, steep ascent of Kinder Scout and the satisfaction of reaching the top, was a lasting memory.

Special thanks to those who planned and led the walks and to the food organisers, cooks and kitchen teams who ensured we enjoyed wonderful meals at the end of our walks. Their efforts were greatly appreciated by all.

*Dylan Jones and Inge Mikkelsen
Henley & Goring Ramblers*

Freshwater Bay, Isle of Wight

In May we again chose to visit one of HF Holidays' excellent country house hotels. This time around 20 members set sail from Lymington to reach the Freshwater Bay Hotel on the Isle of Wight.

The first evening was a chance to meet everyone and to hear about our three walk choices each day. Walk choice made and packed lunch ordered, early to bed and early to rise seemed appropriate.

Saturday was Coronation Day and we had to decide whether to walk or watch the event on television. We decided on the easy walk option though not sure that 'easy' was the right word in the circumstances as rain, wind and mist enveloped the lost souls trekking over Tennyson Down. There was still an opportunity to enjoy the celebration with an evening Coronation Dinner followed by a 'royal quiz' where, despite some obscure questions, one of our teams came a close second.

The sun shone on Day 3 and out came shorts, t-shirts and sun cream for the walk to Ventnor which encompassed rolling hills, white cliffs and views of St Catherine's lighthouse. Our packed lunch was taken on a cliff with spectacular views along the coast.

Our final day's walks were from the hotel. As the threat of rain had returned we chose the easy walk and set off behind the other two groups. We left with the competitive spirit from the night before, wanting to prove that the 'tortoise and the hare' was feasible. As we neared Yarmouth we spotted the second group and with a final push the tortoise overtook the hare. That night our after-dinner speaker gave us an introduction to the island. Perhaps he should have come on the first night but it was an enjoyable evening and the talk gave us an incentive to return. A most enjoyable five days!

*John Lincoln
Pang Valley Ramblers*



Braving the weather.

Photo: Diana Lincoln

Gwbart, Ceredigion

In May, 13 members of our group travelled to the West Wales village of Gwbart, which is just outside Cardigan and on the estuary of the Afon Teife, for a four-day walking break led by Rob of Ramblers Holidays.

The weather forecast had not been very favourable but we were fortunate with two gloriously sunny days and two mainly dry and fine days. The scenery and walking along the Pembrokeshire and Ceredigion coast paths is well-known for its spectacular views and rugged beauty. It certainly did not disappoint. Despite being quite strenuous at times, the miles melted away with the magnificent views and the occasional ice cream stops. Yellow gorse bushes, dotted all over the landscape, were in maximum bloom. Our hotel looked after us admirably with cooked breakfasts and evening meals whilst lunches were picnics either bought locally or made by the hotel.

Our third day was a little different and involved some simple rock climbing and scrambling to reach the top of Carn Ingli, a prominent hill on the edge of the Preseli hills. Coming down from the windy summit and crossing a moor, we arrived back at the coast for a dramatic cliff-top walk into Newport. The



At Llangrannog by the statue of Saint Carannog.

Photo: Simon Thornhill

final day was a walk from our hotel via the historic town of Cardigan. We walked through wetlands with marshes and reed beds, ideal for watching birds but despite an osprey being sighted that morning we didn't see anything of such interest. We returned to Cardigan via a steep-sided gorge and more wetlands with water buffalo grazing. Tea and cake rounded off the walk.

Our return home was on Coronation Day and some of us stayed to watch it on the hotel's television before travelling back. It had been an enjoyable few days and very ably led by Rob who went off to conquer another Welsh mountain on his way home!

*Simon Thornhill
Hillingdon Ramblers*

Portsmouth, Hampshire

Nineteen ramblers joined us for our Portsmouth Walking Weekend (19 - 22 May), the fourth one arranged by us for the group. One couple have been on all four of these weekends and have even put their names down for next year!

On Friday afternoon we took a stroll around historic Portsmouth then on Saturday went by train to Portchester and walked to Fareham. This included a stop in the church cafe at Portchester Castle, a picnic overlooking the harbour and a drinks stop at the Cams Mill pub on the outskirts of Fareham.

The following day we took the ferry to Ryde, Isle of Wight, where a broken rail on the railway meant taking a bus to Brading. Our walk was fairly flat to begin with but soon started to climb steadily to Culver Down before our picnic lunch at the base of the monument to the Earl of Yarborough. We walked along the coast path and then up again to the Bembridge windmill. Finally, across a nature reserve, a gorgeous field of crimson clover and Brading Marshes to Brading station where the trains were now running. Both the Saturday and Sunday walks were about eight and a half miles long.



Brenda and David Horwill were intrigued to come across a 'Brenda and David's gate' on the Isle of Wight. Does any reader know which 'David and Brenda' the gate refers to?

Isle of Wight Ramblers have this year installed their 250th kissing gate. It was fitting that the last gate we went through was in memory of Chris Lipscombe, a founder member of our group. Chris was born and raised on the Isle of Wight before her family moved to New Malden. On retirement she returned to the island and was very active with the local Ramblers until her death at the age of 97.

*Brenda and David Horwill
Kingston Ramblers*



At the monument on Culver Down.

Photo: Steve Ransome

Melrose, Scottish Borders

!! Fantastic, Amazing, Best Ever" These were just some of the positive comments made by the 45 ramblers on Roy Carter's holiday in Melrose in May. So well done Roy and thank you for asking Roy Dunham and me to help lead and recce the week of walks.

With the recce in March and the holiday in May, the difference in weather was noticeable, though I don't think we could complain. On our way to Melrose we could see the Eildon Hills ahead covered by that all too familiar 'Scotch mist' but by the time of our walk this had cleared. Our climb to Eildon Hill North was well subscribed, with me leading and RD backmarking. It was a long climb but steps aided the start! Our group, including 80-plus Val, an amazing lady, carried on to the peak which was once a Roman lookout post. I have to say that the only way to see Trimontium is to visit the



The group near Melrose.

Photo: Tom Collier

museum in Melrose and I would urge you to visit their website to see a short video on how the Romans lived.

Our Edinburgh day out was a stand out for me. I had spied a kilt on the recce but couldn't find one in my size. However, on the holiday I had time to find and buy one in Stuart tartan. We had a social evening as usual with a meal and wine. Sorry to say my attire that evening was that kilt!

We all had a good time and well done to all involved!

*Tom Collier
Ivel Valley Walkers*

Craig y Nos, Powys

Lovely May weather, spectacular scenery, fabulous accommodation and a lovely group of people, was how one member described our trip to this beautiful part of Wales. Our hotel, Craig y Nos Castle, was located in the Fforest Fawr UNESCO Global Geopark in the western half of the Brecon Beacons (now Bannau Brycheiniog) National Park. The area boasts a distinctive geology, history and archaeology and some terrific walks and trails. The castle is the former home of the nineteenth-century opera singer, Adelina Patti

Forty-two members, several of whom were new to our trips, enjoyed a varied programme of walks over five days. We wandered through the Craig y Nos Country Park; we walked around Penwyllt, once a bustling village serving the local limestone quarry, now a nature reserve full of industrial archaeology; we explored Cribarth, a

craggy hillside, with fantastic views across the eastern stretch of the National Park; we drove to the Black Mountain to explore the spectacular glacial lakes of the Carmarthen Fans. On our last day there was a lovely walk along a wooded valley to the Henrhyd waterfalls, followed by a pub lunch before heading home.

On the first night we enjoyed a talk by a local guide, who introduced us to the area by telling hair-raising stories of ghosts, plane crashes and murders. Another night, a hotel staff member gave us a behind-the-scenes tour, which included the cellars, the theatre built onto the hotel by Adelina Patti and the abandoned upper floors which still retain some features from when the house was a children's hospital.

The organiser, Susan Maguire, and the walk leaders and helpers deserve a huge thank you for their magnificent organisational skills (and for arranging such lovely weather). It was a wonderful, memorable holiday.

*Catherine Ewart
Henley & Goring Ramblers*

Wish you were here?



At Henrhyd Falls. Photo: Michaela Genneper



Jo Marmoy crosses the famous Dovedale stepping stones. Photo: David Buckley

Dovedale, Derbyshire

Our group has just enjoyed its seventh HF walking holiday. This time 27 of us stayed at the Peveril of the Peak house in Dovedale.

As usual we were welcomed with a cream tea followed by an orientation walk around the local area. The house has a lovely view of Thorpe Cloud, a very interesting shaped limestone hill, and is within walking distance of the famous stepping stones.

We were on a four-night gentle guided walking break which included a choice of three walks each day, ranging from three to nine miles. As well as

the Dovedale Gorge walk we also visited Ashbourne following the Tissington Trail, a former railway line. Another walk was over the Chatsworth estate which gave us views of the magnificent Chatsworth House.

The food at the HF house was plentiful and tasty and we particularly enjoyed gathering on the terrace for pre-dinner drinks, relaxing in the evening sunshine. The walk leaders organised a fun game of skittles one evening and there was the regular house quiz on another.

We already have another HF holiday planned for the autumn, this time at Abingworth in West Sussex.

*Linda Buckley
Epsom & Ewell Ramblers*

Around the groups

Challenge met

In the March issue of South East Walker we set ourselves the challenge of walking all the Outer Aylesbury Ring this year. This is a 53-mile circular trail that was developed by members of our group in 2013 - so we wanted to celebrate the tenth anniversary. The route takes in the best views of the Chiltern Hills and North Buckinghamshire and was developed as a long distance path or a series of 23 circular walks which are described in 14 section guides.

The great news is that we will complete our walking of the trail

in September (apart from the short section currently blocked by HS2!). We would like to thank our enthusiastic leaders who organised all the walks. We encountered a range of weather conditions from cold, wet, muddy to hot, but all would agree that it has been good to recognise the contribution of those who put together the trail ten years ago and the path maintenance volunteers who ensure the paths are clear for all to enjoy.

For more information on the Outer Aylesbury Ring go to www.aylesbury-ramblers.org.uk/outer-aylesbury-ring.

*Liz Sutton
Aylesbury & District Ramblers*

Ramble for Natasha

A group of 55 Croydon Ramblers, friends and family plus Kevin the dog congregated at Milton Heath car park in Dorking on Thursday 13 April. Large puddles were everywhere, evidence of the downpours of the previous day but as we arrived the sun was shining. We had assembled for a special walk in memory of Natasha Claridge, Dorking resident, keen walker, intrepid traveller, photographer, artist, poet and member of our group since 1976 who passed away just before Christmas (see Those we have lost in SEW March 2023).

Of the group, 49 hardy ramblers set off to the lovely church at Wotton. A memorial gate for Natasha in keeping with the churchyard architecture is to be installed here and we inspected the location. After a coffee stop enjoying the views from the churchyard, a small group opted for a slightly shorter if muddier route back to Dorking. The majority proceeded on through a brief spell of hail, wind and rain followed by sun again to Abinger Common for our picnic lunch. Suitably refreshed we set off on the final stretch back to Dorking through Friday Street and Broadmoor. Along the way memories were shared and anecdotes

recalled. Eleven miles covered by the time we arrived back in the car park. The threatening rain clouds had been replaced by warm sunshine and the returning walkers were greeted by the welcome sight of Ritchie's tea table and vast quantities of cake.

Thank you Jenny, aided by Beryl, for planning and leading. We enjoyed a beautiful walk in the countryside around Dorking surrounded by early spring flowers and foliage, not too much mud for April, three seasons in one day for weather interest but still plenty of sunshine, good company and conversation and all rounded off with tea and homemade cakes - Natasha would have approved!

*Kate Turnbull
Croydon Ramblers*

Music while you walk

A small but select group from Dartford & Gravesham Ramblers met at London Bridge station on 28 June for the Royal London walk in the City of London. As a special start to the day, Bruce Davies, our walk leader and a maestro on the church organ, played an excerpt from Handel's Water Music on the organ at the station. This is the first organ in the UK to be placed on a station concourse and is available for anyone to play during the station's opening hours.

Then, suitably enthused and dodging the showers, we set off on a tour of the byways, alleys, wardrobes and churchyards of the City. At each stop Bruce gave a wide-ranging picture of London as a 'royal' city with each stop thoroughly researched as usual.

*Beverley Johnston
Dartford & Gravesham Ramblers*



Bruce Davies on the Henry Jones organ at London Bridge station. Photo: Beverley Johnston



This stile will be replaced by a gate in memory of Natasha Claridge. Photo: Rob Elderton

Around the groups

Festival walks

This year's Farnham Walking Festival ran for three weeks from 13 May to 4 June and, once again, our group was delighted to contribute some walks. The festival offered a vast selection of walks for all ages, fitness and abilities, from short strolls around town to 10-mile hikes in the countryside. We were able to contribute 19 walks to the programme, covering a total of 138 miles and it was very pleasing to see that we had 74 visitors joining us on the walks. Thank you to all our leaders who were happy to offer their walks to the festival. All the leaders were invited to an afternoon tea in Gostrey Meadow on the last day of the festival.

Our coach trip on 10 June took us to East Dean in East Sussex for the start of a walk on the South Downs Way to Eastbourne. Some members got off at Birling Gap for a shorter route whilst others stayed on the coach to Eastbourne for a leisurely day at the seaside. We mostly made our way in small groups, going at our own pace and then all met up at the Beachy Head Hotel to enjoy our picnic lunch. We continued on to Eastbourne for the delights of cream teas or ice cream before Mike the Coach came to collect us from the pier. A splendid day out!

Our first breakfast walk of the summer on 17 June attracted 17 walkers. It was lovely to be walking at



7am in the cool of the early morning and listening to birdsong as we set off. Our walk took us around Frensham Heath Nature Reserve, Tankersford Common and Pierpoint. Ten walkers stayed for breakfast later at Squires Garden Centre where we all enjoyed a very leisurely conclusion to our morning.

On Sunday 18 June, we had a great day out with the London Blind Rambling Club who came down with four of their own helpers. We met them at Farnham station and provided a choice of two walks, assisted by eleven helpers and two leaders from our group. We ended the day with a splendid cream tea, hosted for us in John and Mary S's garden, with mountains of scones, with jam and cream, and gallons of tea and coffee for about 30 people.

*Sue Harvey
Farnham Ramblers*

A collective of chairmen

We had a very successful four-day walking and sightseeing holiday to Rutland and Leicestershire in May. There were 57 members in the party and it was noticed by Damian Wheeler that, remarkably, it included eight former chairmen of the group plus the current Chairman.

The group has a rule which limits the time an officer can serve on the committee to three years. Rosemary Bryant, who was Chairman from 1983 to 1985 recalls that the three year rule applied from the start with the result that many members have had a stake in group activities over the years. During Rosemary's chairmanship the group celebrated its tenth anniversary in 1984 by walking the then newly-opened Surrey section of the Greensand Way.

*Carol Bateman
Godalming & Haslemere Ramblers*



Our collective: (left to right) Jenny Caddy, Rosemary Bryant, Damian Wheeler, Barry Holland, Richard Evans, Andy Piercey (current Chairman), Margaret France, Helen Corbett and Jim Chipchase.
Photo: Jim Robertson

Flying high

On a gloriously sunny June evening, 17 members and friends took to the skies with excitement, delight and some trepidation. One of our members, Mike Barrowman, is an experienced glider pilot and kindly offered us a gliding experience at the London Gliding Club on Dunstable Downs, to discover the joys of being airborne without an engine and the opportunity to appreciate our beautiful Bedfordshire countryside from a bird's eye view. The experience was surreal, sensational and stunning. We are extremely grateful to Mike (who enthuses passion and gentle

reassurance to all his passengers) for arranging the event, along with our ever-vivacious Social Events Officer, Paul Byatt.

In June, our members enjoyed two more opportunities to experience the magic and wonder of nature on Dunstable Downs. The first was an evening walk to view a spectacular display of wild orchids. Then, later in the month, we had a fabulous nighttime walk which gave us a glimpse of the gorgeous female glow-worm and her nightly glow which lights up the grassland habitat to attract a male. Both of these events were kindly hosted by Cliff Shaw, who has been an avid walker and admirer of the Downs for many years. Thank you Cliff.

*Steph Collins
Leighton Buzzard Ramblers*



Looking down on the Downs

Photo: Pamela Bates

Look to the sky

We continued to offer a walk most weekends in May and June, sometimes venturing into neighbouring Bedfordshire. We had a delightful walk from Houghton Conquest which included Ampthill Park and the ruins of Houghton House, reputedly the inspiration for the 'House Beautiful' in John Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress. We also started from Northill and enjoyed a break at the Cock Inn at Broom, known as 'the pub with no bar'. The highlight of the walk was an aerial display of iconic British biplanes for, unbeknown to the leader, this was practice day for the Shuttleworth Air Show.

Building on the success of last year's 'Curry Walk', on Saturday 8 July we offered members a summer evening five-mile walk followed by a meal at the Kam Tong Garden, a lakeside Chinese restaurant in Milton Keynes.

A Walking Workshop led by Jan Kendall was held on a beautiful evening in June around the Floodplain Forest Nature Reserve in the Ouse Valley Park. The aim was to encourage more people to volunteer as new walk leaders in an informal way. A walk leader



Members arrive for the meal at the Kam Tong Garden.
Photo: Boyd Fisher

shared tips on how to plan and lead a walk whilst we also enjoyed a walk together. Although attendance was not great we did gain one new walk leader and look forward to welcoming them to the team

*Sue Fisher and Jan Kendall
Milton Keynes Ramblers*

Summer activities

As part of the Coronation celebrations, Monday 8 May was designated nationally as 'The Big Help Out' when volunteer groups were invited to 'Lend a hand, Make a change' in their communities. We marked the occasion by organising a litter pick around the Bedford Park area with other members litter picking around their own communities. We had 10 willing volunteers and an hour's work yielded 11 kilos of assorted rubbish.

After the blazing heat of June, we were relieved to have a sunny, but not too hot day, for our Summer Event, a morning walk from the beautiful Ampthill Park led by our Footpath Officer, Steve Woodward, followed by a picnic in the park. One of our members, a keen student of history, provided background information on how volunteers of the Bedfordshire Regiment in the First World War were trained by being exposed to trench warfare in Ampthill Park before being sent to the front.

Our leaders are gearing up to provide local walks for the Bedfordshire Festival of Autumn Walks (9 -17 September). We will be offering a range of walks from short Wellbeing Walks, half-day walks and two full-day walks. Do come and join us!

Also on our programme are part 4 of the John



Well done litter pickers!
Photo: Sandra Kelsey

Bunyan Trail on Saturday 23 September (nine miles from Westoning to Millbrook, starting at 10am) and our AGM on Saturday 4 November in Keysoe Village Hall (1.30pm for walk, 3pm for AGM). Look on our website (<http://www.ramblers.org.uk/north-bedfordshire>) or follow us on Facebook ([facebook.com/groups/northbedsramblers/](https://www.facebook.com/groups/northbedsramblers/)) for more details.

*Anne Griffiths
North Beds Ramblers*

Around the groups

Memorial walk

Thirty five members of our group took part in a memorial walk in memory of Richard Mosses (see 'Those we have lost on page 11) on 12 July. The walk was along some of Richard's local footpaths and started at Frost Folly car park in Warfield.

After the walk we celebrated Richard's life with some members

of his family who had scattered his ashes along Mosses Path, a footpath named in memory of Richard's brother, Robin, whose ashes were also scattered here. They were joined by many rambling friends of Richard, some of whom had known him for more than 30 years.

*Brian Poulton
South East Berks Ramblers*

Super Short walks

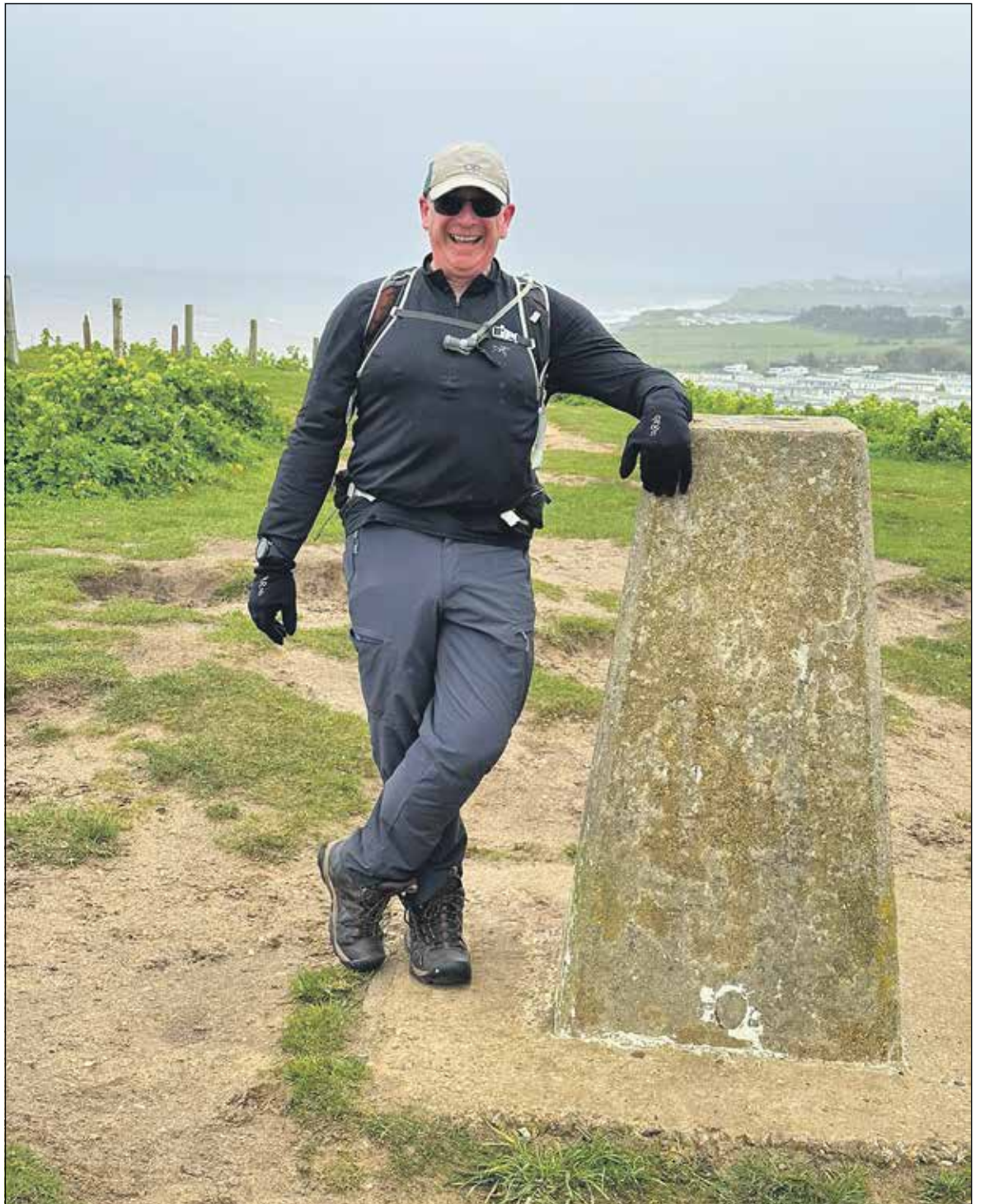
Our group committee came up with the idea that we should try putting some walks in our programme that are shorter than our usual length of five miles or more. These would be aimed at those preferring gentle exercise, maybe recovering from illness or injury, or just not sure they can manage longer walks. They would be of a social nature, so

would always include a coffee or lunch stop at a cafe or pub.

We have now organised three of these 'SuperShort' walks and they have been very popular. Each has been, at most, two and a half miles long. The last two started with coffee and finished with lunch. Perhaps next we should try SuperSpeed walks!

*Ruth Cornish
Thame & Wheatley Group*

Thank you David!



David Le Quesne.

Photo: Pamela Bates

David Le Quesne's role as Walk Coordinator for our group involved often daily support for walk leaders and posting up to three walks a week on the group's website. For four years he carried out this work with unfailing patience and good humour. But David's final, exceptional effort as Walk Coordinator was to plan and coordinate an amazing week-long holiday in Jersey for us.

Raised in an old Jersey family, David had long wanted to share his many experiences of holiday walking on the island with us. In 2019 he planned for an April 2020 trip, only to be defeated by that pesky Covid virus. It was the same story in 2021, whilst 2022 was just not possible for other reasons, but finally, in April this year,

David's meticulous planning succeeded in giving us all unique insights into the island's geography, history and culture. Staying in St Helier and travelling to our destinations by bus, we completed five coastal walks, all led by David and supported by his son, Matt. The sun shone every day, enhancing the beautiful scenery and the cliffs and fields covered in flowers. On our leisure day we were able to visit many of Jersey's tourist attractions - or just sit in the sun and eat ice cream! All in all, it was a memorable holiday for which we heartily thanked David at our splendid final meal.

*Shirley Creed
Surrey and Beyond (SABRE) Ramblers*

AGM and social

Members of West London Group are invited to the group's AGM and social on Tuesday 5 December from 7pm at Northfields Community Centre, 71a Northcroft Road, W13

9SS. The venue is near Northfields tube station and close to local bus routes. Please bring some food and drink to share for the finger buffet. During the evening you will hear

reports covering the past year and future plans. Please come along and enjoy the evening and if you would like to get involved and want to know more, please contact us at westlondongroup@yahoo.co.uk.

*Martin Harris
West London Group*

AGM date

Woking Group members are invited to attend this year's AGM which will take place at 1.00pm on Sunday 19 November at Chobham Cricket Club. Parking is available at Chobham High Street car park.

We hope to have a morning walk too - please check at <http://www.wokingramblers.org> closer to the date. The outgoing committee will present a report on the year's activities, annual accounts will be presented for approval and a new committee and independent

examiner will be elected. Members who wish to submit motions for discussion should send them to the Secretary via info@wokingramblers.org no later than 1 November. Sandwiches will be provided.

*Malcolm Brickwood
Woking Ramblers*



One of the SuperShort walks.

Photo: Ruth Cornish