

Walker

Coast path opened on Sheppey



The section opened is indicated in blue. A significant chunk of the Sheppey coast from Oak Lane in Minster to Leysdown beach is still to open.

A further 28 miles (45 km) of the King Charles III England Coast Path were officially opened by Baroness Hayman, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for DEFRA, on 24 June. This means that 66% of the 2,700 miles of the world's longest managed coastal trail is now open. It was originally intended to be fully open by 2020 but changes in government, Covid and other factors have led to delays. There is now a firm commitment to have the route

complete by the summer of 2026.

Around 40 invited guests turned up at the Island Works in Sheerness for the opening ceremony. The Island Works is a co-working space inside the spectacularly converted old dockyard church. Following a welcome by Neil Constable, Natural England's principal officer for the coast path, there were short speeches from Marion Spain, CEO of Natural England, Councillor Marion Lawes, the deputy cabinet minister for communities at Kent County Council, Lee Jarman, from the



At the opening are (left to right) Kevin McKenna MP for Sheppey and Sittingbourne, Baroness Hayman, Marion Spain, Lee Jarman and Neil Constable. Photos: Ian Wild.

Pyramid Project local charity, and James Seymour. Natural England's deputy director for Sussex and Kent. Straight afterwards, guests were led across to the seafront promenade where Baroness Hayman cut the ribbon. In her short speech she drew attention to the benefits the coast path would bring in terms of access for the community and business opportunities. The ribbon cutting was followed by lunch and,

for those who wanted it, a short walk along part of the new route.

The Ramblers was represented by Kate Conto, senior policy and advocacy officer at Central Office, and myself. I have been working with Natural England on the delivery of the coast path in Kent for the last 15 years.

We are fortunate in Kent in that most of our section of the King Charles III England Coast Path

is now open. There are a couple of minor issues still to be resolved and some establishment work and waymarking still to be done. Overall, we are ahead of the pack, and I have enjoyed working with a whole range of people from Natural England to get the best possible route for walkers.

Ian Wild
Coastal Access Officer
Kent Ramblers

A new park for London

London's largest new park since the 2012 Olympics was officially opened on 9 July by Mayor Sir Sadiq Khan. Called Springfield Park, it covers 32 acres (13 hectares) off Burntwood Lane in Tooting, south west London, on an open area used as a nine-hole golf course from 1992 until 2018.

The space was once part of a dairy farm attached to Springfield Hospital which opened here in 1840 as the Surrey County Pauper Lunatic Asylum. The decision to rebuild the

hospital was made about 15 years ago and now a new health campus and housing area, called Springfield Village, is nearing completion. The original hospital building, now called 'The 1840' and converted to residential use, overlooks the park.

The park has areas of wildflowers, wetlands, and a mound which can be climbed by a spiral path. There is also a cafe and toilets. Responsibility for the park rests with a private trust as Wandsworth Council, the local authority, was unable to afford its upkeep.



The view from Springfield Park's mound.

Poems for the Essex countryside

Previously in these pages I have reviewed, mostly positively, four books by Jacqui Farrants and Paul Bentkley on Essex walks. Now Jacqui has turned her hand to poetry which, as she says in her introduction, "enables me to ... capture my observations of the [Essex] countryside with a more whimsical voice".

Poetry books, I suspect, should be reviewed by more literary figures than me, with a decades-old-A-level 'B' in Eng Lit; my tastes are more Lee Child than Simon Armitage. But the poems here are not obscure - they are brief, often rhyming, and some are humorous. Each poem is introduced with a short preamble to provide some context, and the book is printed on thick paper with pleasant line illustrations. But it's a slim volume of 75 pages and it can be read in less than half an hour. Of course, the point of poetry is to return to individual poems again and again: whether these works merit that will be for each reader to judge.

The first Farrants/Bentley book was on puddingstone walks in Essex, so here is a sample which I quite like. It's about a puddingstone at Ugley Green.

Puddingstone

Pebble beds gave
birth to me

Under ancient seas

Dappled me with
flinty freckles

Destined for longevity

I've seen vast epochs
come and go

No landscape
stay the same

Glaciers cradled me for
a while, then

Sofly slipped away

Though now you
wonder over me

On your village green

Never can your small
lives know the

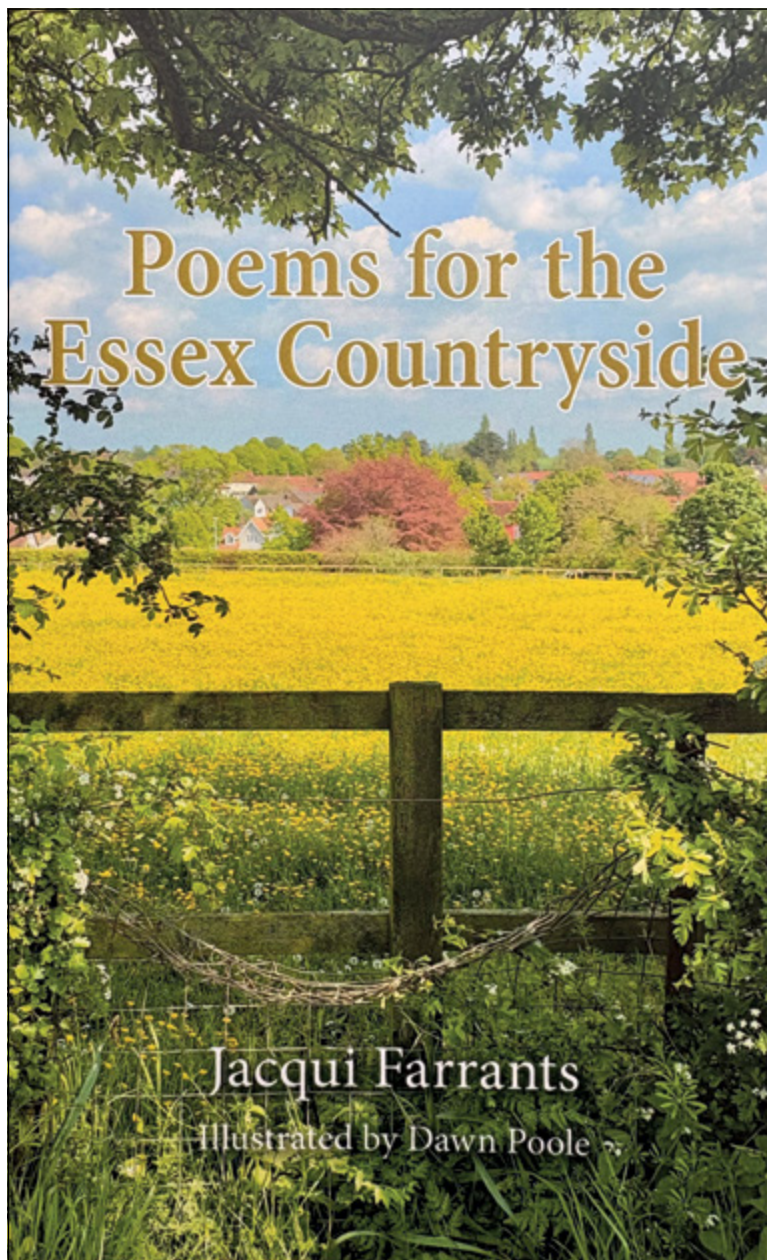
Eons I have seen.

I am told that further walking guides from the duo are in preparation. Watch this space.

Poems for the Essex Countryside by Jacqui Farrants, Half Way Publishing (ISBN 978-1-0369-1695-4) costs £9.95 plus £2.80 p&p from Amazon, or £8.95 plus £1.70 p&p from eBay.

Mike Cannell

Uttlesford Ramblers



SOUTH EAST
walker

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Path work Tracker launched

The Ramblers has unveiled a new initiative aimed at capturing the vital contributions made by path maintenance volunteers. The Path Improvement Tracker, launched in April, is a simple online tool designed to log maintenance and improvement work carried out on public rights of way.

Built using SurveyMonkey, the Tracker enables Ramblers path maintenance teams and individual path wardens to record a wide range of tasks - such as vegetation clearance, repairing path furniture and installing gates. It also logs volunteer hours. The data collected is already playing a critical role in showcasing the scope and value of volunteer efforts.

Sophie Reindorp, newly appointed Paths Programme Manager demonstrated the tool at the July Ramblers Footpath Forum. She emphasised its importance in recognising the work of volunteers and in supporting our strategic goals.

For a long time, we've known that many teams have been doing great work on the ground, but only a small number were reporting it. The Tracker changes that. We need this data to demonstrate

our impact to funders and local authorities - showing not only how much work is being done, but the hours our volunteers dedicate, and the benefits they are creating through safer, more accessible paths. We also have an ambition to expand our current path maintenance team network by launching new teams and also to strengthen support for our existing teams. This data can also be used to raise public awareness of the work that the teams are doing.

The Tracker is also a key part of our broader ambition to grow and support volunteers. A national target has been set: 2,000 miles of open and improved paths logged via the Tracker. While there is no fixed deadline, once the milestone is achieved, we plan to celebrate publicly through local and national media campaigns to raise awareness of Ramblers volunteers' contributions.

Since April, we've received just over 200 reports of activity, which is fantastic. The south east in particular has shown strong participation, with teams reporting everything from footbridge repairs, gate installations, and lots of removal of overgrown vegetation. Thank you to everyone who has sent reports. It really

is exciting to see these reports coming in - and to know all this work is making a real difference.

We are already planning the next phase. Discussions are underway to create a similar system for recording the work of footpath secretaries and path surveyors - roles crucial to the monitoring and protection of public paths.

Later in 2025, we will begin analysing and publishing data gathered through the Tracker. These insights will reflect both national and regional efforts, with tailored reports for individual teams. The Paths team hopes this information will further demonstrate the value of volunteer efforts to stakeholders and policymakers.

To access the Tracker and read more, please go to <https://www.ramblers.org.uk/support-us/share-your-paths-progress-our-path-improvement-tracker>.

Teams that haven't yet started using the Path Improvement Tracker are strongly encouraged to take part. Support is available and I can be contacted at paths@ramblers.org.uk.

Helen Bates

Programme Lead - Path Improvement



Bedfordshire's very active RIPPLE team recently worked at Billington to clear this path and install new handrails. Photo: Barry Ingram.

Take notice of the notices!



Richmond Thames Path closure signs. Photo: Des Garrahan

We've all seen them when out walking. Often tied to lampposts, rarely large, temporary display-board sized, free-standing structures and all sizes in between. Planning, diversion or closure notices. If we bother to read them, they're often full of bureaucratic English, quoting section this and sub-section that, of

various Acts of Parliament. Unfortunately, to the casual walker, the meaning can be obscured by the presentation. Other times they are obvious to all. A good example of this are the notices in Richmond as you approach the 20-metre breach of the Thames Path. All this information has not, however, prevented everybody from ignoring the warnings, from

pulling down fences and pressing on anyway. The problem was so bad for a while that Richmond Council felt compelled to employ 24-hour security guards while they installed more robust gates and stronger deterrents. All this added to the already high cost of repair. Highway Authorities up and down England tell me that notices are routinely pulled down or defaced, fencing cut, pathways created by people determined to continue to use condemned bridges. Needless to say, councils consider long and hard before closing these routes and persistent damage and ignoring only leads to more costs before repairs or replacement is carried out. Many of these structures are dangerous but may not appear so to the naked eye. In 2023 the Ashford Lane footbridge near Taplow, Buckinghamshire, was closed by an emergency order due to structural failings. The structure itself collapsed on 26 June this year. So please don't ignore these notices, they are posted for a reason.

Des Garrahan

Jubilee River footbridge collapse

The Ashford Lane bridge referred to (left) is one of a number of footbridges which cross the Jubilee River, a seven-mile flood relief channel which was constructed about 25 years ago to divert excess water from the River Thames and reduce the risk of flooding between Maidenhead and Windsor. A report in 2024 highlighted a complete failure of main deck timbers and the footbridge's 'very poor' overall

condition. Another Jubilee River crossing, the Berry Hill footbridge in Taplow, closed in 2021 due to structural failures. The central section has since been replaced and the bridge has reopened. Both Berry Hill and Ashford Lane footbridges were designed and constructed for the Environment Agency before being handed over to the former Buckinghamshire County council.



The collapsed Ashford Lane footbridge over the Jubilee River.

Along the New River in Enfield and Broxbourne

A new 2.9 mile (4.7 km) walking and cycling route adjacent to the New River in Enfield, north London, was officially opened on 18 June. It runs from Tenniswood Road to Bullsmoor Lane in the borough and includes a previously inaccessible section of the New River between Tenniswood Road and Carterhatch Lane. The works have included new surfacing, seating, planting, a new bridge over Turkey Brook and the provision of local history panels with information supplied by the Enfield Society. Called the Enfield Town to Broxbourne Walking and Cycling Route, it incorporates some sections of the New River Path and

some sections of new path on the opposite bank to the New River Path. The route also crosses the London Loop at Turkey Brook. Broxbourne Council has worked on providing a continuation of the route northwards from the M25 to Broxbourne but an official opening awaits completion by Thames Water of leak prevention works along the banks of the New River. Des Garrahan, adds: What is new is the source of some of the funding for this work. The project is predominantly funded by National Highways as part of the Designated Funds programme. The New River itself is not new and it ain't a river! The New River is an artificial waterway opened in 1613 to supply London with fresh drinking water taken from

Chadwell and Amwell Springs near Ware in Hertfordshire, and later the River Lea and other sources. Originally conceived by Edmund Colthurst and completed by Hugh Myddelton, it was operated by the New River Company for nearly 300 years until London's water supply was taken over by the Metropolitan Water Board in 1904. Although it was once threatened with closure, a large section of the New River remains part of London's water supply infrastructure, today operated by Thames Water, more than 400 years after it was first constructed. There is a designated walking route along the canal called the New River Path. It is a 28-mile (43 km) route which follows the course of the New River as closely as possible from its source in Hertfordshire to its original end in Islington, London.



On the newly upgraded path beside the New River in Enfield.

Stonestreet Green Solar proposals

The application for a huge solar farm around the village of Aldington, Kent (about eight miles southeast of Ashford), is reaching its final stage. The proposed solar farm would surround the village in a roughly 180-degree arc and - together with an adjacent proposal by a different developer - would cover about 20% of the land surface in the parish. As well as its massive scale and the impact this would have on the rural landscape, the developers propose to extinguish all 16 of the public footpaths which cross the area. Kent Ramblers - and I as a very concerned local resident - have been engaged in drawing attention to and arguing against the damage this project will cause to the public rights of way network. Since 2022 there have been several rounds of consultations and, from November 2024, a six-month planning inquiry, with several formal public hearings. Nigel Spencer, Kent Ramblers Local Footpaths Officer, and I feel that we have taken every opportunity to register our concerns about the proposed large-scale damage to the public rights of way network - which we feel would also set a potentially very serious detrimental precedent for developers to interfere with public rights of

way with little accountability. Kent County Council has also disagreed fundamentally with the proposals regarding public rights of way - stating that 'the effects will severely impact the public rights of way network and its users', and 'the severe impact on the open countryside, landscape and rural character of the area is inescapable and cannot be mitigated for'. The local parish councils, Ashford Borough Council, several borough and county councillors and two Members of Parliament have all made representations against the proposals - with many other concerns too, but the size of the project means that it is considered to be a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project and subject to the Planning Act 2008, so the decision to approve or reject the proposals will ultimately be taken by the Secretary of State for Energy, Security and Net Zero, following the planning inspector's report. This inquiry has now closed and we await the report and recommendations of the planning inspector. We should then know the Secretary of State's decision by November. Andrew Swarbrick White Cliffs Ramblers

Pioneering hostels continue as independents



The Hurtwood hostel



Jordans hostel.

Two of the longest-surviving youth hostels in the south east are now run independently as YHA 'Partner' hostels.

In the Chilterns, YHA Jordans, near Seer Green, is run as a franchise by Jordans Hostel CIC (Community Interest Company). It was officially opened on Saturday 12 August 1933, just three years after the YHA was founded in England and Wales.

The West Middlesex Gazette at the time reported "In a delightful setting on the brow of the hill overlooking Jordans, a youth hostel has been built and was opened by Sir Selwyn Fremantle, Chairman of the Town Planning Committee of Amersham Rural Council ". Speakers at the opening included Mr G R Mitchell, Chairman of the London Regional Group of the YHA and Secretary of the International Council of the Ramblers' Federation, who "acknowledged with gratitude the fine gesture of the local committee in erecting the hostel and expressed the belief that those who used it would not be noisy or objectionable, but would be most appreciative of the beauty and quiet of that historic spot".

Holmbury St Mary YHA in the Surrey Hills south of Abinger Hammer, is now known as The Hurtwood hostel and operated by Hurtwood Events Community Interest Company (CIC). This hostel was officially opened on 13 July 1935. Recent works at Holmbury St Mary have included access improvements thanks to support from the Surrey Hills Access For All fund. Free-to-hire all-terrain powered wheelchairs are also planned. This has helped provide for improved lighting and accessible

showers and toilets. It also has a cafe open to the public on weekends. After experiencing the rustic charms of Jordans hostel, the 1930s hiker might have found the more utilitarian design of Holmbury St Mary an astonishing contrast. The Nottingham Evening Post's walking and cycling page of 19 July 1935 described the opening under the headline 'Opening of 'The Perfect Hostel'. It went on to report: "The new £3,000 model hostel on the slopes of Holmbury Hill, Surrey, which was opened by Lord Allen of Hurtwood last weekend, is described as the perfect hostel. It was designed, built, and furnished to plans and specifications supplied by members of the Youth Hostels Association, and save for a small grant from the Carnegie Trustees, it has been paid for by the YHA subscriptions. More expensive hostels have been opened, and several model hostels are already in existence, but none can compete with the modern comfort of this latest acquisition. All-electric kitchens, concealed tubular lighting, and modern furnishings make this luxury rest-house vie with the best appointed hotels; yet the overnight fee remains at the standard charge of a shilling (5p) a night. Its dormitories, which house 24 double-decker beds, are decorated in a colour scheme of flesh pink, whilst the walnut panelled common-room is gay with cellulose finished tables and chairs. Brightly painted and flush-fitting doors, which make for easy cleaning are fitted throughout, and the floors are made practically sound-proof by being covered with heavy cork linoleum. Shower baths, radiant heaters, and electric clocks are also provided."

Surrey news in brief

Wandle missing link: When you walk downstream along the River Wandle you are forced away from the river bank at Earlsfield near the Merton/Wandsworth border and have to endure 15 minutes of dull

road walking before rejoining the waterside. For two decades, campaigners have been pressing for a solution. Merton Council has completed a feasibility study, presenting a preferred option which has the support of Network Rail (the

Wandle passes under a major railway line at this point) and the Environment Agency, which costs around £1.1 million. A petition to fix this missing link in the Wandle Trail had attracted more than 3,300 signatures by mid-July. You can find it at <https://shorturl.at/xzI5i>.



The Wandle passes under the railway bridge but trail users must divert around roads.

Wealden Heaths: Natural England announced the creation of the Wealden Heaths National Nature Reserve in June and that it would be the ninth National Nature Reserve to be included in the 'King's Series' which aims to create or extend 25 such reserves by 2027 to mark the coronation of King Charles and to promote nature recovery. Wealden Heaths National Nature Reserve has been formed by extending the existing Thursley Common National Nature Reserve to include 20 separate open spaces mainly in Surrey, but with some in Hampshire and West Sussex. The reserve now comprises 20 scattered sites including Waggoners Wells and the Devil's Punchbowl, covering an area totalling 6,832 acres (2,765 hectares). It aims to be a haven for wildlife, including rare species such as nightjars, woodlarks, sand lizards, adders and natterjack toads. **Grafton Stables:** A Surrey County Council-owned area of woodland and open land, known as Grafton Stables, is set to become a public green space. The 13.6 acre (5.5 hectare) site is close to the Epsom/Kingston border, and

appeared in estate agents adverts earlier this year suggesting it was suitable for development into 40 residential units. Following petitions the council has handed the site over to its countryside team to manage as a public open space. **Horton digital tour:** A digital guided tour of Horton Country Park Local Nature Reserve has been launched by Epsom & Ewell Borough Council. There are 14 stops on the tour of the 200-acre (81 hectare) site which is about a mile and a half west of Epsom town centre. The tour provides historical and botanical information, illustrated with photos, and highlights the Horton Light Railway which once served the Epsom Hospital Cluster of five mental health hospitals, the largest such cluster in Europe and possibly the world. The walking tour is available through Google Play or the App Store. David Cooper



SURREY *snippets*

Farnham Walking Festival

The annual Farnham Walking Festival took place over a three-week period from 10 May to 1 June. Farnham Town Council offered 33 varied walks on the programme with countryside walks with the Farnham & District Ramblers ranging from two miles to 10.5 miles and with some of the longer walks getting out to the Meon Valley, Abbotstone Down and South Warnborough.

We were, once again, very proud to be supporting the festival and provided 17 walks for the programme. As always, we extend a huge thank you to all our leaders who allowed their walks to be included in the festival programme and to Farnham Town Council for inviting us to take part. We mostly had good weather and welcomed 83 visitors to our festival walks.

Sue Harvey
Farnham & District Ramblers



Programme cover.

Glorious festival finale



An evening walk during the festival. Photo: Simon Strudwick.

Mole Valley Ramblers Spring Walks Festival (Saturday 26 April - Monday 5 May) was, without exception, a resounding success! The final day brought everything we could have hoped for - a triumph of organisation, a burst of community spirit, and the kind of joyful energy that

lingered long after the boots came off.

Blessed with predominantly warm and sunny weather, the festival attracted a record number of walkers this year. Over the course of the week, 34 walks were offered. On the final day alone, there were four diverse routes (tailored to

all abilities) to choose from. A gentle four-mile meander, plus two moderate challenges of six and a half miles and eight miles, and an 11-mile strenuous hike.

The final day was designed to showcase the variety and beauty of our Mole Valley area. All the walks converged seamlessly at Holmbury St Mary village hall, where a celebratory gathering awaited. This joyful conclusion featured not only the traditional presentation of awards and certificates but also entertainment. Our own John Peppard provided a musical treat and the Thames Valley Morris dancers added a lively and colourful flourish to the festivities.

During the festival, walkers collectively covered an impressive 3,313 miles, crossing the Mole Valley District Council boundary 1,800 times - a testament to both the scale and spirit of the event.

A huge thank you to the event organiser, Henri de B, and everyone who made this festival possible - from the tireless organisers and walk leaders to every single participant who brought smiles, stories and shared steps. Here's to more adventures and even bigger milestones next year!

Louise Stillwell-Stage
Mole Valley Ramblers



Celebrations at the end of the festival. Photo: Rob Tomlinson.

Explore with map and compass:

Local rambler, John Harmer, will be running another of his one-day beginners map reading courses on either Saturday 27 September or Saturday 18 October in Battle, East Sussex. These will

consist mainly of fieldwork in the surrounding countryside. There will be a standard charge of £10 (reduced rates available). If interested call John on 01424 773998 or email john@harmerfamily.plus.com

Future issues:

South East Walker will be published three times a year (instead of quarterly) from now on to coincide with the changed publication dates of walk magazine. Please see walk magazine for more details of the changes.

Open House Festival:

London's annual celebration of architecture (previously known as 'London Open House Weekend') runs from Saturday 13 to Sunday 21 September. For details, go to programme.openhouse.org.uk

Woking AGM:

Members of Woking Ramblers are invited to the group's AGM on Saturday 15 November, at 6.30pm in St Mark's church, 37 Westfield Road, Woking GU22 9NQ, followed by their annual 'bring and share' meal.



Area Secretary's diary



The Kingsferry Bridge, gateway to Sheppey. Photos: Robert Peel.



Footpath volunteers meeting in Lenham.

The joy of volunteering: In my last Diary, I sought a volunteer for the role of Local Footpath Officer (LFO) for five parishes on the north Kent coast. I am pleased to say that we received a response and filled the vacancy, which means that for the first time ever all our LFO roles are filled. We now have 45 LFOs covering the 387 parishes across Kent and Medway and wards in Bromley and Bexley where there are no parishes. The situation won't last so we must relish it while it does.

We can now turn our attention to recruiting a new Sector Coordinator. There are four such posts, each covering a 'quarter' of our area, offering advice and support to the LFOs within those sectors. We have people in post for the two western sectors but currently Tony Bristow is covering both the eastern sectors, which is not a sustainable situation. The sector for which we are seeking a new coordinator mainly covers Ashford and Swale, but there is no need to live there to take on the role. An ideal candidate would already have LFO experience but this is not absolutely essential and we would be happy to consider any enthusiastic applicant. If interested, do please get in touch

on prow@kentramblers.org.uk.

Sheepish on Sheppey: Sheppey - island of sheep (and prisons). Although, as reported elsewhere in this issue, the part of the King Charles III England Coast Path (ECP for short) around Sheppey was officially opened on 24 June, it is not yet possible to walk the whole route.

One outstanding issue is on the north side of Sheppey where the route comes inland from the coast because of landslips and the exact route has yet to be decided - but Plough Road can be used by default until a decision is made.

More of a challenge is the route along the south coast of Sheppey. The section clockwise from Leysdown to Kingsferry Bridge is over 16 miles long with no easy way of breaking it into smaller sections, although various possibilities are being explored for the future. So it can be quite a blow to arrive at the bridge and find that the route up to the road is blocked and a diversion adding 1.8 miles of road walking to this trip is necessary.

The problem is exacerbated because there is a nice short (a mere 57 metres) alternative route shown on the Explorer map and the Kent County Council rights of way map, straight across the railway to the road. Unfortunately

this path has long been completely obstructed but there is no easy way for a walker to discover this until they get there and find they have to walk an extra 1.8 miles, much of it on unpleasant roads.

The good news is that you can check in advance for closures on the ECP on the National Trails website (nationaltrail.co.uk/en_GB/trails/england-coast-path-south-east/trail-information). This is a bit of an indigestible address so you might find it easier to go to kentramblers.org.uk/coastal where there is a link. You can also get information about the coast path in the south east on Facebook (facebook.com/southeastcoastpath) and on Instagram (instagram.com/southeastcoastpath).

Public Rights of Way Administration Officer: Volunteers come and volunteers go. Sadly our long-serving Public Rights of Way Administration Officer, Glynis Clifton, has retired after more than 20 years of dedicated service due to declining health. In Kent we receive a lot of communications about footpath matters. In particular Kent County Council lets us know when they are planning to make a public path order or definitive map modification order, when they have made such an order and when they have confirmed such an order. They also send details of the making and confirmation of orders to Ramblers Central Office who then send them to us. All these documents plus copies of all planning applications in Ashford Borough have to be forwarded to the appropriate member of our team of 45 Local Footpath Officers who will scrutinise them to decide whether action is required to protect the interests of walkers.

This is a very important role and of course we are now looking for a successor to Glynis. The task is not hugely demanding. You just log into a dedicated email account every two or three days, identify the parish that each email received relates to and then forward it to the relevant Local Footpath Officer listed in a spreadsheet of all our parishes, plus a couple of copy recipients. Although the work is not likely to take more than a couple of hours a week, and probably rather less, we would be happy to consider a job share and anyway we will find someone to stand in during holidays if necessary.

It is salutary to reflect how times have changed since Glynis first took on the role. In those days everything arrived in the post. Glynis had to make multiple copies of every document, stuff them in envelopes, address them

and take them to the post. I was Area Treasurer then and one of the larger items of expenditure was on stamps for Glynis. The job today is a picnic in comparison - do please think about taking it on and if interested get in touch on prow@kentramblers.org.uk.

We should be very grateful to Glynis and other volunteers who beaver away quietly on our behalf year after year making sure that our huge operation to protect the footpath network runs smoothly.

Ordnance Survey matters: The good news is that a new edition of Explorer 148 (Maidstone and the Medway Towns) has been published so those of us who have been waiting can now replace our 2008 versions (the 2015 edition was just the 2008 version with a new cover). But beware, some online shops are still sending out the old version so check carefully beforehand.

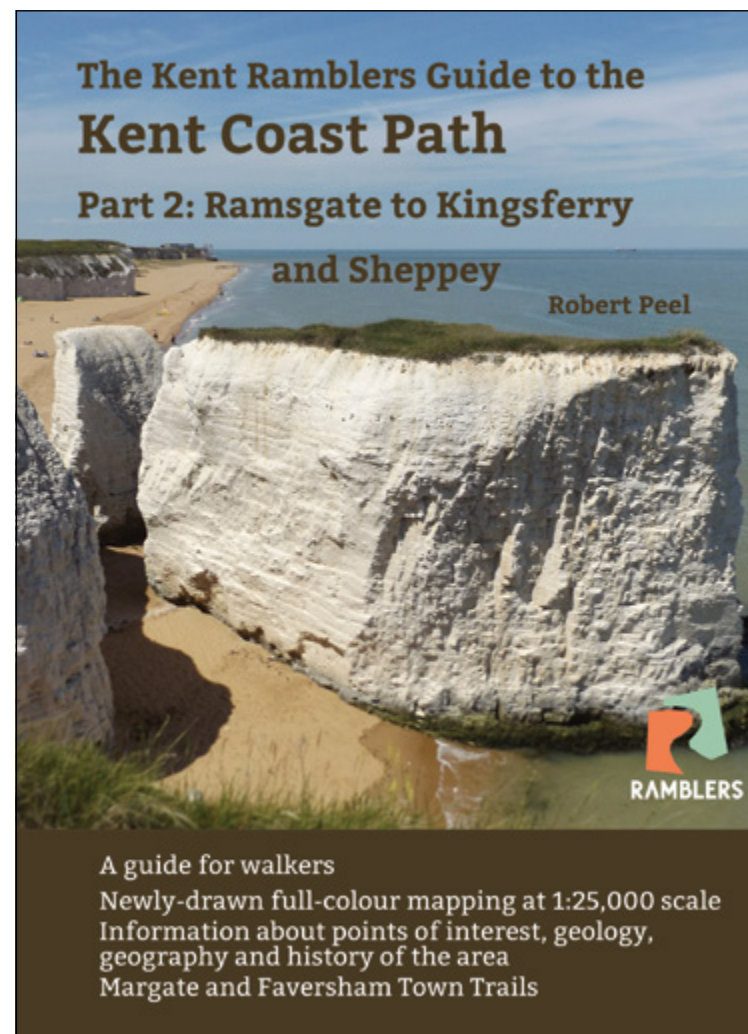
Last year there was a new edition of Explorer 149 (Sittingbourne & Faversham) which shows the route of the coast path for the first time. Such a pity it isn't shown in the right place where it crosses Milton Creek north of Sittingbourne. The Ordnance Survey has agreed to correct this but I doubt there will be a revised paper map in my lifetime, such

are the prolonged revision cycles in place nowadays. Never mind, we hope soon to publish the next part of the Kent Ramblers Guide to the Kent Coast Path. This will be Part 2: Ramsgate to Kingsferry and Sheppey. This will show the route correctly. Please keep an eye on our publications page (kentramblers.org.uk/books) but publication will probably not be before October.

Volunteer meetings: We held another of our regular full-day meetings of footpath volunteers in Lenham on 23 June. The next one will be on Thursday 27 November. At these meetings we have presentations on a variety of topics relating to rights of way and, equally importantly, we meet our fellow volunteers and learn from each other. The meetings are open to anyone who is interested - you don't need to be a footpath volunteer although we hope you might become one - but booking is essential at prow.seminars@kentramblers.org.uk stating any dietary requirements. Members from other Areas would be welcome too - we like to hear how other Areas do things.

Robert Peel

Area Secretary - Kent Ramblers



The cover of the forthcoming guide.



The sector territories.



Who will you spot at the festival?

Planning for this year's Bedfordshire Festival of Autumn Walks (6 - 14 September) is in full swing and we are hoping that this year's event will be bigger and better than ever before, with more than 40 walks on offer.

Walking and fresh air along with a friendly chat are some of the best things you can enjoy for your mental health. With that in mind we decided to engage with some of the local councils and Members of Parliament to try and push the message into areas that we might struggle to reach.

We are also looking at increasing the number of shorter, easy access and wellbeing walks to encourage the participation of

people who might be put off by a longer, more challenging event.

Responses have been encouraging, with positive replies from three of Bedfordshire's MPs including both Luton's MPs who are happy to be involved. Luton is an area where we have had a lower take-up for festival walks in past years.

Chairman of Central Bedfordshire Council, Kevin Collins, will be joining a walk and taking part in a 'photo opportunity' with his full chain of office on display. Also, look out for the Lord Lieutenant of Bedfordshire and the Mayor of Bedford Borough who have both offered their support and the Deputy Mayor of Bedford Borough will be joining a walk. It's

wonderful to report the engagement of representatives from all parts of the county and with all ward councillors contacted we hope they will drop in on walks local to them.

Bedford also has a new 'What's On' office so, trust me, we will be ensuring we exploit this great new place!

To keep up to date, join us on Facebook, Bedfordshire Festival of Autumn Walks: (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/1624342594751555>) or check our webpage (<https://www.bedswalkfest.co.uk/>) to see all that is on offer.

Sandra Kelsey
Area Publicity Officer

Bedfordshire Festival of Autumn Walks

Hosted by 

6th to 14th September 2025

Explore our beautiful little county on foot



Most walks are free to everyone and most do not require booking

Full details on
www.bedswalkfest.co.uk/walks



Leighton Buzzard Ramblers, North Beds Ramblers
Lea & Icknield (Luton) Ramblers, Ivel Valley Walkers

Festival flyer.

Leighton Buzzard's path work group

Our neighbours in North Beds Ramblers have had a RIPPLE path work group for some time and, working with Central Bedfordshire Council, we now have our own team in Leighton Buzzard to tackle path clearances in our own area, and this has wide support from

our membership. To date we have undertaken footpath clearance work in several areas which has also been much appreciated by the local community. Well done, Team LB!

Pamela Bates
Leighton Buzzard Ramblers



Nearly there! Photo: Paul Gransby.

Area events

There will be a Bedfordshire Ramblers Quiz Night on Saturday 13 September, the final night of the Bedfordshire Festival of Autumn Walks. This will be held at Millbrook Village Hall, MK45 2JD. Teams of four are invited. Further details at <https://www.bedswalkfest.co.uk>.

On Saturday 20 September,

the Area is organising a First Aid Course at Husborne Crawley Reading Room, MK43 0XE. Twenty places will be available for the event which will cover minor injuries, fits, faints and funny turns, choking and a refresher on CPR. Contact your group's Chair if you are interested in attending.

Sandra Kelsey
Area Publicity Officer

RIPPLE

Leighton Buzzard - We are delighted that a new RIPPLE path maintenance group has been started by Leighton Buzzard Ramblers. Led by Paul Gransby, their enthusiasm showed what a great asset they are going to be for the improvement of paths in the west of the county. In May they joined us on a task in Billington with work on the path surface, vegetation clearance, replacing handrails and repairing steps. Everyone worked hard and the parish council showed its appreciation by providing refreshments in the church.

May tasks - Our work included improving the surface and sides of a well-used bridleway at Keysoe, the opening up of a restricted dead-end byway in Riseley to make it more accessible for walkers, and a still to be resolved task involving a set of paths in Little Staughton. On this we were asked to check directional discs on marker posts over a two-mile route. Our team discovered that all the posts had the correct discs but the posts had only been put in to a depth of no more than six inches (instead of the correct 27 inches) and were either leaning or on the ground. In addition one post which had been put in correctly and was firm had been put in a field where there was no public right of way. Neither the council nor the landowner admit to installing the posts. We are prepared to reset the posts and, where appropriate, cut the path, providing we can vehicle access the land and are currently awaiting permission.

June tasks - On one Tuesday our group worked in three locations near Keeley Lane in Wootton. Two footpaths were significantly improved in just over an hour then, after a short refreshment break, everyone moved to a nearby bridleway where they improved the height, width and surface over some 200 yards. This successful splitting of the group was repeated later in the month at Clapham where we carried out surface clearing and replacing or resetting eight marker posts. More recently the surface of a 500 yard bridleway at Thurleigh behind the equestrian centre has been cut, a footpath on Sunderland Hill, Ravensden, improved and a 300 yard blocked path in Wilden reopened with two marker posts added.

Pavenham Marshes - The Bunyan Trail and Ouse Valley Way both pass through the marshes, about half way between Stevington and Pavenham. It has long been an unpredictable section to walk because of springs. Many years ago a boardwalk was laid across the worst part but this has deteriorated and ground on the bank



Resting after a job well done at Clapham. Photos: Barry Ingram.



Some of the RIPPLE team at Billington.

of the River Great Ouse has been eroded through flooding. Over the last five or six years the condition has worsened to the point last year we were asked to create an alternative path though even this turned out to be too boggy. Bedford Borough Council then put a closure notice on that part of the path. At the end of 2025, the council, having received estimates for some form of new boardwalk, called a meeting of the two parishes and landowners to discuss options. Winter moved to spring and spring moved to summer and, although the path was still wet and needed long-length Wellingtons to negotiate, the council temporarily reopened the path.

On 4 July this year, a site meeting finally took place. This was attended by local MP Richard Fuller, parish councillors and the Ramblers. All parties agreed that something had to be done. Ramblers suggested that a suitable alternative all-year route should be found. The consensus however was to seek funding for a new boardwalk. It seems likely therefore that the path will remain closed for the foreseeable future with no alternative route available except for a lengthy road walk.

Barry Ingram
Beds RIPPLE



BERKSHIRE *bites*

Berkshire Area AGM

The Annual General Meeting of Berkshire Area will be held on Saturday 29 November in Pangbourne Village Hall. Further details will be at <https://www.ramblers.org.uk/go-walking/ramblers-groups/areas/berkshire-area>

Reading Water Festival (Saturday 28 June)

The Reading Water Festival is the town's way of celebrating the area near the Kennet & Avon Canal and the historic spots on the towpath. It is a popular event with a programme of music and dance, and with stalls showcasing clubs and charities in the area. This year, Pang Valley Ramblers had a pitch to promote the activities of Berkshire Area's groups, including Pang Valley. Keen volunteers helped set

up the stall and organised the literature and materials to show the public what Ramblers offer. Despite the hot weather, the day was a huge success. We had a great deal of interest shown and our volunteers were brilliant at promoting the organisation. We even had a visit from the mayor who is a keen walker herself.

Tina Gusterson
Pang Valley Ramblers



Mayor of Reading, Alice Mpofu-Coles (second from left) meets Pang Valley members John Lincoln, Tina Gusterson and Richard Hanson-James. Photo: Diana Lincoln.

Reading Walks Festival (10-18 May)

Reading has been derided, unfairly given its growth over the last couple of decades, as an uninteresting transport hub with little of interest to offer the traveller. A few years ago it was clear that Reading's economic future would be greatly enhanced by persuading the public that it was a destination in its own right. So, in May 2023 the town (it's the largest town in the UK not to have city status) ran a two-week walks festival. It worked and was repeated in 2024.

In general, the walks were themed, concentrating on the many places of interest - historic, literary, religious, architectural, academic, cultural, sporting, riparian, industrial and its three museums including the award-winning Museum of English Rural Life. The walks, about 60 of them, were largely confined to the town itself and rarely more than four miles, though some longer ones followed the town's link route to the Camino de Santiago.

Most were led by specialists in the subjects. Feedback showed an interest in longer walks. We, in Berkshire Ramblers, told the festival organiser we were willing to meet that need in 2025 and our offer was taken up so we could show off what Bradshaw's 1863 Handbook described as "surrounding country ... agreeably diversified with an intermixture of hill and dale, wood and water, enlivened with a number of elegant seats". The manorial seats have mostly been repurposed or replaced but the countryside is indeed diversified.

The Area did six walks, with leaders from three of our nine groups. There were two imperatives: the walk had to start or end in or pass through the town; each end of the walk had to be accessible by public transport - rail or Reading Buses. Much to our surprise all our walks sold out quickly. The purpose of the walks was to promote Reading - the Ramblers was incidental - and that called for informed guidance. The research into all points of interest was revelatory and rewarding even to long-term resident leaders and provided the material for chatting to our fellow walkers, many of whom were not used to 'managed walking'.



Beauty and Beast with festival t-shirts.

No note about the festival would be complete without acknowledging the meticulous planning and faultless performance of Reading's team, led by Alex Brannen. Thanks, Alex.

Happily, feedback from the paying customers on our walks was positive and the enjoyment of walking with and recruiting enthusiastic strangers was a bonus. Planning for the 2026 festival will start soon and we're eager to repeat. We've done it and, literally, have the T-shirt!

Richard Hanson-James
Chair, Berkshire Area

30th anniversary for Windsor & District

Thirty years ago, on 15 June 1995 to be precise, Windsor & District Ramblers came into being as a separate entity when the East Berks group was split into four parts (the other two being Pang Valley and Loddon Valley). The group was first known as the Great Park group but changed to its present name in 2003.

On Wednesday 11 June this

year, we celebrated this milestone with a morning walk led by Joyce, our Chair. This was followed by a buffet lunch in the WI Hall in Datchet, organised by a small number of members, with treats including sandwiches followed by scones, jam and clotted cream (don't ask in which order). Then we enjoyed a beautiful cake and plenty of tea and coffee. Entertainment followed

when Amita Sharma, a group member who sings professionally, performed for us and succeeded in getting most of us up dancing. Amita then took us through the basics of line dancing, something she has taught in the past.

It was a very sociable occasion and enjoyed by all. Here's to the next 30 years!

Judy Valentine
Windsor & District Ramblers



BUCKS *briefs*

News from Bucks, Milton Keynes and West Middlesex

One-and-a-half goodbyes

At its AGM in February, the Buckinghamshire, Milton Keynes and West Middlesex Area said goodbye to one volunteer, Roy Johnson, and a half goodbye to John Esslemont who has stood down as Area Secretary but remains as Treasurer.

We are extremely grateful to John who served as Secretary from 2012-13 and then as Acting Secretary for a further 12 years. Before that he was Vice-Chairman from 1999 to 2001, and Chairman from 2001 to 2012. A glutton for punishment, he took the role of Treasurer in 2013, and continues to this day. He has

been an exemplary Area Secretary, keeping us all up to the mark and communicating efficiently. We have not yet filled the post but have a temporary arrangement for splitting the role between volunteers.

Roy Johnson also had many roles in the Ramblers, serving as Aylesbury & District Group's footpath and countryside secretary, and membership secretary, a member of the Area committee, and

then Area Access Officer. He joined the Ramblers when he retired and discovered that Aylesbury Vale was bandit country, the paths being in a far inferior state to those in the Chilterns. He walked the 32-mile Aylesbury Ring, surveying the paths, waymarking, and reporting problems. He then developed the Outer Aylesbury Ring and wrote a guide to it. As group footpath secretary he advised on path changes, and co-ordinated the annual path-check by volunteers. He also led a group path-check and maintenance walk every month, blitzing a parish and fixing or reporting problems. This certainly made a difference, and introduced members to the importance of path checking. He also served on the Buckinghamshire Local Access Forum. We shall miss him.

Thank you John and Roy.
Kate Ashbrook



Roy Johnson (left) receives a gift from the Area presented by Area Chair, Trevor Jones.



Promoting Rippling

Whilst installing a gate recently, a ramblers passed by, halfway through surveying a route for his group. He explained his involvement in developing a RIPPLE group. Exchanging anecdotes and advice brought home to us the unique set of skills and experience that our group draws on to facilitate these jobs. From negotiations and organisation, to fundraising, ordering materials, raising invoices and significant amounts of other administration, the more enjoyable aspect is working outdoors as a group and improving access for fellow walkers.

At best, a job will be in open ground with no sub-surface obstacles, such as large stones, tree roots, or concrete foundations for old posts or stiles. Much of the time however, we will have to clear substantial overgrowth, remove and refit

adjacent fencing, sometimes laying in a pipe for electric fencing continuity, deal with large buried flints and debris, and clear litter from the site.

A little ingenuity is often required, as well as persistence and sheer brute force. Our scaffold pole tripod and hand winch is occasionally needed to remove a reluctant post stump that has rotted at ground level, and we have encountered concrete foundations for old posts that would have easily held up a street lamp. That is one of the reasons we use packed stones to anchor the support posts for our gates - less prone to cause rot and easier to remove and replace when the time comes. As that should be 15-plus years in the future, this will not concern older members of our group, but we are always trying to recruit younger members, and it's a pleasure to be able to pass on our knowledge to them, to like-minded groups - and to passing enthusiasts!

Jerry Michell
North Bucks rRIPPLE Group



Josh Hilbocus and Peter Smith stand proudly over two immense concrete blocks excavated whilst fitting a gate. Photo: Bill Piers.



Phil Dudley was relieved that the base of the timber post had finally been lifted clear using the group's makeshift tripod and winch.

Walking with the London Blind Ramblers A ramble for all the senses

Undeterred by a rather gloomy weather forecast - which, true to form, delivered its share of rain - a spirited group of 24 ramblers, including seven visually-impaired walkers, set out from Richmond station on Thursday 5 June for a five-mile walk along a stretch of the Capital Ring via Syon Park to Boston Manor Park, finishing with a unique sensory experience in one of west London's hidden gems.

The recently restored Boston Manor House - a striking Grade I-listed Jacobean manor, sympathetically restored thanks to a National Lottery Heritage Fund grant - provided the perfect setting for an extended lunch break. Those who wished had time to explore the house's beautifully preserved interior and learn a little about its rich history, whilst others took the opportunity to shelter under the park's ancient trees.

After lunch, we regrouped for the highlight of the day, a sensory tour led by Tash and Vanessa from the park's outdoors events team. Both guides demonstrated exceptional skill and sensitivity in delivering the tour, offering clear and thoughtful audio descriptions throughout, with special attention to terrain changes and surrounding features for our visually-impaired walkers.

The tour took us through Boston Manor Park's varied landscapes, which include ancient woodlands, wildflower meadows, an ornamental lake, a walled garden and the aforementioned manor house. Along the way, participants were encouraged to engage all their senses - feeling the textures of bark and leaves, inhaling the scents of seasonal flowers and fresh herbs, and listening to the natural soundscape punctuated by a specially curated Sound Walk. This audio trail, set at selected points throughout the park, featured a selection of music and ambient sounds that enhanced the immersive experience.

One memorable moment involved tasting freshly-brewed mint tea, prepared from leaves grown in the park's community garden - a small but lovely touch that added to the sense of connection with the environment. Tactile signs and interactive moments, such as handling tree sap and various natural objects, made this a truly inclusive experience for all.

Despite the persistent rain, the group's spirits remained undampened, and feedback on the day was overwhelmingly positive.

Tim Sai-Louie
Capital Walkers



At Boston Manor. Photo: Bruce Sai-Louie.

Croydon weekend

In May last year, Croydon Ramblers hosted the London Blind Ramblers for our first walking weekend together. It proved a great success, so much so that by mutual consent we agreed it should be repeated. Jan Campion, organiser for Croydon Ramblers, wisely stuck to the format that had worked so well the year before, and we met at the Coulsdon Manor Hotel on the morning of Saturday 16 May, eager to renew acquaintances.

You may disagree if you have unlovely relatives that you see only at Christmas, but I think a year is the optimum interval for catching up with occasional friends. You can remember enough of their back-story to avoid starting from scratch, but have plenty of news from the year just past to enliven the conversation. And our friends from the London

Blind Ramblers certainly lead busy lives, working in demanding jobs as well as travelling widely.

Our walk on Saturday from the Fox on Coulsdon Common took in Kenley Aerodrome and incorporated a stop at the Wattenden Arms at Kenley before returning via Happy Valley to tea and cakes at the end.

On Sunday the walk from Elmore Pond was by way of the Well House Inn at Chipstead before concluding with more tea and cakes. If you can discern a pattern here, it was a very enjoyable one.

Jan and her helpers are to be congratulated for all their efforts to make the weekend such a success. Would we do it again? You bet!

Peter Southgate
Croydon Ramblers

For more information on the London Blind Ramblers please go to: londonblindramblers.org.uk



Members of the London Blind Ramblers and Croydon Ramblers at the Wattenden Arms, Kenley. Photo: John Tickner.

Steep Orchard

Just south of Cobham, in the North Downs, the landscape is still patterned with a tapestry of apple orchards. In October, especially, pathways over this fruitful part of Kent make for a mellow, inspiring autumn walk with sweeping views to the south from Henley Down, and the beguiling scent of ripe apples all around.



*Below mist lifting to thin cloud, to blue:
below the march of pylons, the broad track widens
first, then narrows:*

*a steep climb over a froth of clover,
late dandelions and buttercups, through
soft speedwell, groundsel, pimpernel,*

*with the scent of apple cider, tart
and sweet in our noses as we pass
branches weighted, freighted*

*with cascades of apples blushing
under sunshine's unblinking gaze.
We feel the hill's pull, autumn's gravity.*

*Claiming space, a random oak-tree
stands guard halfway up the slope--
out of place, bearing acorns among apples,*

*yet overlooking as crab-apples flesh out
to plump red beads; as apples fatten
to crisp and fragrant globes--*

*globes hung all around us, bright
as lanterns flaming in orange, crimson, to light
this soft grass path between the trees.*

Words and image © Lizzie Ballagher

High Weald Walking Festival:

Now in its eighth year, the free walks festival returns from Saturday 13 to Sunday 21 September. The festival is a collaboration between the High Weald National Landscape Partnership and some Ramblers groups in Kent and Sussex. New partners this year include Hastings Country Park and Kent Wildlife Trust. Find out more at www.highwealdwalks.org.

Wandle Fortnight:

This annual festival celebrating the sights and history of the Wandle valley in south west London runs from Saturday 13 to Sunday 28 September. For details of events, go to wandlevalleyforum.org.uk/wandle-fortnight.html.

Sixty years of the Vanguard Rambling Club

In 1965 a group of young walkers who regularly went on the Sunday ramblers' excursions from London found themselves in the guard's van on the homeward journey from Axminster and Seaton with a bottle of Drambuie (as you do) and the Vanguard Rambling Club was born.

Sixty years later, 31 of us congregated in Paignton in May to celebrate, three of them being part of the original crowd. Over the next four days we set out from the Palace Hotel to sample the delights of the Devon coast such as a Round Robin ride on a steam train to Kingswear, ferry to Dartmouth, boat up the Dart to Totnes and open-top bus ride back to Paignton. We also enjoyed walks on Dartmoor, along the coast to Torquay in one direction and to Brixham in the other, and many more besides. On the way we saw seals on the River Dart and dolphins from the ferry at Brixham.

On our final night we all dressed up and met up on the lawn for the tradition of raising a glass of Drambuie to absent friends and to the future. Presentations were made to the organisers of the celebration, Pam and Steve Deverill, and to the organiser of our steam trip, Lesley Secker. They even managed to lay on the weather which was perfect for the entire time - an event to remember.

Angela Bellwood
Vanguard Rambling Club



Celebrating 60 years of the Vanguard Rambling Club. Photo: Angela Bellwood.

Walking the Monopoly board

As a child growing up in New Zealand, one of my fondest memories is of sitting around the kitchen table with family and friends, playing the UK version of Monopoly. The names on the board - places like Pall Mall, Coventry Street and Mayfair - were mysterious and exotic to me, conjuring up images of a distant, bustling city filled with history and intrigue. Little did I know that, many years later, I would be walking those very streets for real.

When I finally moved to London, I was immediately struck by how many of those names from the Monopoly board popped up in everyday life. The idea of visiting them all in person soon took hold, and what began as a personal curiosity gradually evolved into a series of organised walks. Over time, I developed four separate routes covering every location on the classic Monopoly board. Naturally, a little creative licence was required for places like 'Chance', 'Community Chest' and 'Jail'.

These Monopoly-themed walks were originally devised for my group, the Capital Walkers, as informal evening outings, each one finishing in a pub for a sociable post-walk drink. The response was so positive that I've since repeated the walks for Age UK Kensington & Chelsea, where I volunteer regularly, and I'm now leading them for the London Strollers group as well.

One of the highlights of this ongoing project came recently when the Lord Mayor and Mayoress of Westminster joined us for one of the walks. The Lord Mayor, during his current term of office, has declared himself the 'walking Lord Mayor', spearheading a programme of walks throughout the year aimed at promoting environmental awareness, personal wellbeing and community connection. It was a great pleasure to have them with us, embracing the playful spirit of the day.



Tim Sai-Louie (left) at the start of the Monopoly walk with the Lady Mayoress and Lord Mayor, Cllr Paul Dimoldenberg. Photo: Bruce Sai-Louie.

This particular walk took place on a gloriously sunny Sunday afternoon - a joint event between Capital Walkers and London Strollers and set at a London Strollers pace, making it accessible and enjoyable for a wide range of participants. A cheerful group of 34 walkers, including the Lord Mayor and Mayoress, gathered at Blackfriars station. After a brief introduction, we set off towards our first Monopoly location: Fleet Street. Once the heart of Britain's newspaper industry, Fleet Street retains much of its character, even though the presses fell silent long ago.

From there, we continued up to the Strand, another familiar name from the board, before heading down to the Thames for a cafe and comfort break in the peaceful setting of Victoria Embankment Gardens. By happy coincidence, a brass band was playing in the bandstand, providing an uplifting soundtrack to our mid-walk stop.

Suitably refreshed, we pressed on to Northumberland Avenue, taking in the stately surroundings of Whitehall and Trafalgar Square. Pall Mall was our next Monopoly destination - long associated with clubs and royal residences - followed by a detour to Coventry Street. To avoid the inevitable West End crowds, we took

some quieter side streets towards Leicester Square, bustling with its mix of tourists, buskers and cinema-goers.

Our final Monopoly stop was Bow Street, once home to the famous magistrates' court and police station. Along the way we also passed Charing Cross police station, which I have conveniently interpreted as Jail for the purposes of this walk. Sadly, Free Parking remains elusive, though perhaps one day I'll stumble across a London square or street worthy of the title.

As always with these Monopoly walks, it was a delightful afternoon - a chance to rediscover familiar streets, uncover new stories, and enjoy good company along the way. The beauty of walking in London lies not just in the grand landmarks, but in the stories each street holds, the unexpected details you notice on foot, and the chance to trace your own playful route through history.

I'd wholeheartedly recommend following the Monopoly board in real life to anyone with a love for London history or a fondness for that old family board game. It's a light-hearted, engaging way to experience the city afresh - and you might just pass Go and collect £200 in memories.

Tim Sai-Louie
Capital Walkers

The Ridgeway - in a series of day walks

If you like expansive skies, sweeping views and enjoy a sense of freedom, then The Ridgeway National Trail is for you! Every step steeped in history as you walk the 'oldest road' in the country.

There are countless ancient sites, monuments, white chalk horses and, of course, the atmospheric Avebury henge and stone circle dating from the Neolithic period.

I considered a series of two-day weekend walks for my group, the Capital Walkers, but settled for day hikes. This did take some planning, working out train and bus connections and routes to link these to the trail. There were, of course, travel costs to consider, notably the train fare from London to Swindon. However, these were worth every penny, as the walk has so much to offer.

The travel added charm, especially the tiny community bus from Ashbury to Swindon. Each track to and from the path gives insight to the local geography and is a reminder that the Ridgeway route weaves its way on the lofty heights above local towns and villages.

It was an amazing experience, walking as a group, building friendships, learning about each other's lives and experiences as well as insights and perspectives of the trail.

A selection of my favourite sites:

First and foremost, arriving at Avebury village by bus on a warm sunny day with a clear blue sky. Walking the stones and green grassy

raised banks in fields of sheep.

Uffington Castle, three sites for the price of one - a large Iron Age hillfort, a large White Horse, one of the oldest in the country at around 3,000 years old, and the nearby Dragon Hill, a natural mound around 10 metres high.

The steep ascent from Princes Risborough town with unexpected and rewarding views from Whiteleaf Hill over the Vale of Aylesbury and with the Wessex Downs in the distance.

Finally, the walk to Ivinghoe Beacon, passing through Aldbury Nowers nature reserve and the ascent onto the end of the ridge with red kites - our constant companions for much of the path - hovering above.

In many ways the simplicity of this walk is the ease at which one follows the path, often a wide and clear white-chalk road. The path is thought to originate from animal trails developed by travellers moving from place to place and more recently used by drovers.

The Ridgeway has the feel of being a 'working road' and as such very rewarding for the inquisitive Rambler.

Liam Hall
Capital Walkers
Some useful websites
Ridgeway National
Trail: nationaltrail.co.uk/en_GB/trails/the-ridgeway/

Friends of the Ridgeway:
ridgewayfriends.org.uk

Traveline (for buses):
www.traveline.info

Our Ridgeway plan

- 13 July 2024: Avebury - Ogbourne St George, 14 miles
- 10 August 2024: Ogbourne St George - Ashbury, 15 miles
- 14 September 2024: Ashbury - Wantage, 12 miles
- 12 October 2024: Wantage - Goring & Streatley, 19 miles
- 16 November 2024: Goring & Streatley - Wallingford, 13 miles
- 14 December 2024: Wallingford - Lewknor, 13 miles
- 15 March 2025: Lewknor - Wendover, 15 miles
- 26 April 2025: Wendover - Tring, 16 miles



Walking the Ridgeway - a moving experience. Photo: Liam Hall.

Anniversaries

Thank you and Kirk for the lovely article (Anniversary walk - page 13) in the June issue.

Whilst I was the founding Chair of both the Capital and Metropolitan Walkers groups,

setting them up was a team effort with the initial committees, Area Council and Ramblers staff.

It's been fantastic to see the groups both grow and become part of so many people's lives under subsequent generations of volunteers. For the record,

the Metropolitan Walkers was founded in autumn 2001. I'm looking forward to seeing how they celebrate their first quarter of a century next year.

Phil Marson
London

Running repairs while walking

My maxim is that every path should be in a better condition after I have walked it. To this end, I carry secateurs and a small folding saw in my rucksack. Secateurs can be used to remove any low-hanging vegetation in seconds and sometimes help to reveal obscured signs and waymarks. The saw can be used to put pay to potential

trip hazards in under a minute and can be used to tackle fallen branches with some muscle power!

If more of us were prepared to pause and carry out such simple tasks it would make passage easier and sometimes save a less-popular path from the vicious circle of decreasing use and neglect. Tool kits for walkers anyone?

Michael Render
London



Secateurs and a hand saw - essential kit for every walker? Photo: Michael Render.

Ephemera - and old and newish things

We're having a look at a book called Bon Vivreur's London and the British Isles published in 1955 and thinking about condemning it to the rubbish or recycling bin until we've had another idea. The book is essentially a guide to hotels and restaurants and suddenly we thought it might be a good idea to wander the streets of London to see if any of these establishments still exist. We might then be able to explore the difference in values of the mid-1950s and today. Hopefully we can report on our explorations in the next issue.

Most walkers probably know about Slow Ways, a national walking network linking towns, cities and 'the National Landscape' across Britain. Previously it concentrated on walking and wheeling (which covers wheelchairs, pushchairs, scooters and skaters) but is now going to extend to include running, cycling and horse-riding. Another interesting development of theirs is the National Parks Trail Challenge covering the national

parks of England, Wales and Scotland, with the objective of developing this trail for the future. The suggested route has 277 'legs' which cover about 2,500 miles. About 200 people have started reviewing these 'legs' of the trail and 820 miles had been reviewed by the middle of June. Anyone interested can sign up for this project via the Slow Ways website at <https://beta.slowways.org>.

A London Walking Festival, hosted by London National Park City in collaboration with the Go Jauntly app and Footways, took place in May, kicking off with a conference titled New Perspectives on Walking and Wheeling in the City. The festival claimed to be 'celebrating walkers, writers, wanderers, film makers, foragers, campaigners, chroniclers and folk that just like to stroll'. We might just add walking to the shops and adding adventurers and explorers to the list. The London National Park City claims that there are walking groups for everybody in London and identified 19 groups which includes the Ramblers but not a few others.

John Pestle

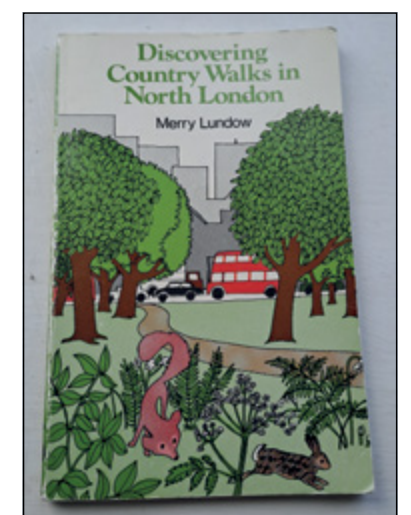
Back to the future

Recently I was given a copy of Discovering Country Walks in North London. This slim volume, containing 20 suggested walks, was written by Merry Lundow and first published in 1978. I've lived and worked my whole life in London and in 1978 I was a year removed from graduation, a season ticket holder at Chelsea, the scorching summer of '76 was still fresh in my memory and amongst many gigs that year I remember going to see was The Clash at the Lyceum just after Christmas.

Intrigued by the book I decided to investigate Walk 8: A Cardinal's Village, a six-mile circular from Mill Hill East station. I was convinced that the walk as detailed in the book would be impossible to follow 47 years later, but I was determined to see what was still on the ground.

Remarkably, the walk is completely intact, easily followable and using the book was a joy. The halfway point was Totteridge and if anywhere personifies 'village' London it's here. The village pub, The Orange Tree, is surrounded by picturesque open land, parks and golf courses, as well as nature reserves. Totteridge also has some splendid houses/mansions and has seen the 'great and the good' including one 007, Roger Moore, and Sean Bean, Bruce Forsyth, Cliff Richard, Hank Marvin, several Arsenal footballers, and Arsene Wenger. Mike Ashley, Lord Levy and Cardinal Manning and not forgetting the marvellously named Flammetta Wilson, an astronomer from the late 1800s London in 1978 had no London Loop, which now goes through the outskirts of Totteridge, and no Capital Ring. The Thames Path was years from being a National Trail and the nearby Parkland walk was still seven years or so from completion. How times have changed and how much seems the same.

Des Garrahan



According to back cover of Discovering Country Walks in North London, author, Merry Lundow "spent many years roaming the hills and moorlands of southern England before a move to Hampstead Garden Suburb in 1969 led him to discover the beauty that lay all around him on his new north London doorstep" and goes on to describe him as "A marketing executive with a record company, married and in his fifties". Can any reader add to this? If so, please email southeastwalker@gmail.com.



Annual General Meeting

Notice is hereby given for the Annual General Meeting of Inner London Ramblers to be held on Sunday 7 December 2025 from 2.00pm to 4.00pm. Venue: Band Room, Coram Fields, 93 Guilford Street, London WC1N 1DN..

The following positions on the Inner London Ramblers Council will be open for re-election.:

Chair, Vice Chair, Secretary, Treasurer, Membership Secretary, Publicity Officer, Digital Officer, Affiliated Groups Representative. Please email your nominations to secretary@innerlondonramblers.org.uk by 21 November. Nominations for representatives to the General Council in 2026 will also be open. Please submit your nominations by email to

secretary@innerlondonramblers.org.uk by 21 November. If more than three nominations are received for any position, a brief CV will also need to be submitted and a vote will be held at the AGM to appoint the representatives. Further details about the AGM and the agenda will be posted on the Inner London Ramblers website closer to the date.
Tim Sai Louie
Chair, Inner London Ramblers

New priorities agreed for walks project

Following our recent project volunteers meeting, the group has agreed that its priorities for the Capital Ring, London Loop and Green Chain Walk over the coming period will be signage from stations and replacing stiles with gates. These new priorities follow considerable success over recent years on improving waymarking and keeping the detailed walking guidance and maps for these routes up to date.

We have already succeeded in getting Harrow School to replace the last remaining stile on the Capital Ring with a gate and, with Croydon Ramblers footpath working group, we were able to replace a stile on the London Loop a few years ago. - however around 40 stiles remain. Our plan is to photograph them, rank them in terms of urgency (safety and difficulty of use) and then gradually try to replace them all - which we realise is an ambitious plan which will take us some years. We have funds available for the initial ones, so the next step is to contact the landowners. The Inner London Area has no footpath working party so we would very much like to work with working parties in neighbouring Areas who can assist in this project.

When originally waymarked, the routes all had good signage for routes linking from stations, but in the two decades since, many stations and council-run spaces in front of stations have undergone upgrades of one form or another, meaning that the key signage which sets walkers off in the right direction at the very start of their walk has been lost. As that signage is really fundamental to enjoyment of a day's walking, our plan is to survey each station, recommend where signage could most usefully/easily be added, to ascertain who owns that land and then try to get it installed. Once again, we don't underestimate the scale of this project.

We're grateful to have a good number of excellent volunteers committed to the improvement of the Capital Ring, London Loop and Green Chain Walk. However, we're conscious of the need to continually recruit and to plug gaps as they arise. We're currently looking for someone to help promote the routes, and our work in the media/on social media. We also need volunteers for London Loop sections 3 (Petts Wood - West Wickham Common), 5 (Hamsey Green - Coulsdon South) and 19 (Chingford to Chigwell), and would welcome additional section volunteers to help on sections 9 (Kingston Bridge - Hatton), 11 (Hayes & Harlington - Uxbridge), 12 (Uxbridge - Harefield West), 13 (Harefield West - Moor Park) and 14 (Moor Park - Hatch End). You can see the sections on our innerlondonramblers.org.uk website.

Recent project successes include Andrew Hunt updating the walking guidance for the London Loop



Is this stile at Cummings Hall Lane on Section 21 (Havering-atte-Bower - Harold Wood) of the London Loop the worst stile on the entire 150-mile route? Photo: Chris Simpson.

on GoJauntly - and it's now in their Top 10 walks. Via Keith Rodwell, on Shirley Heath and in Kennel Wood, Croydon Parks has agreed to install/replace a total of eight posts on the London Loop, which we hope will be in place by the time you read this. And, through a Green Grid grant, and thanks to Tony Butcher, Harrow has installed 10 new posts and re-erected a further five around Harrow Weald Common on the London Loop. We're also starting to see councils make other interventions to improve waymarking as we raise the profile of these iconic routes both through Transport for London and directly.

If you're able to help us with the project, please contact me at vicechair@innerlondonramblers.org.uk.
Clare Wadd
Vice Chair, Inner London Ramblers



A 'lost path' in the heart of Oxford



A detail of Isaac Taylor's map of Oxford (1750), showing the footway that became known as Love Lane. Reproduced courtesy of John Leighfield.

The annual Oxford Open Doors event has become an established part of the Oxford scene, and this year the Ramblers will be involved. With the help of expert advice from local historians, I identified a 'lost path' in the middle of the city. Its name is Love Lane.

Love Lane is an ancient footpath from Holywell Lane to Wadham College wall, then north to the Parks. It was upgraded in 1755 to become a university walk; its unofficial name in the 18th - 19th century presumably denoted its popularity with courting couples. Jowett Walk and Saville Road covered the path in the late 19th-century, and the remaining section between Saville Road and South Parks Road, still shown as 'Love Lane' on contemporary maps, was closed off to the public, probably around 1910. On Saturday 13 September, Love

Lane will be open to the public, for the first time for well over 100 years! There will be organised walks through the lane on the hour, six times during the day. Members of the Ramblers will be helping with the administration. There will be an expert commentary along the lane where remnants of Civil War ramparts may be seen. It must be emphasised that it is to the credit of Wadham and Mansfield Colleges, as well as the Rothermere American Institute, along whose property the path runs, that permission has been granted for this opening. There is no intention to claim this path.
Tony Dale
Oxford City Ramblers
For more information on the Open Doors Oxford event on 13 September, gotooxfordpreservation.org.uk/love-lane.

Path maintenance

Face-to-face meetings can work wonders. During a parish path warden workshop, organised by coordinator David Tole, the leader of Thame & Wheatley group's path maintenance team, Bob Merry, said that they wished to improve access along the Oxfordshire Way by attending to eight stiles. Participants in the conversation included a member of Oxfordshire County Council's Countryside Access Team, and Richard Birch, Chair of Oxfordshire Ramblers.

Subsequently the Countryside Access Team entered into negotiations with the respective landowners, resulting in permission to replace six of the stiles with gates. Richard arranged for Area funds to pay for three of the gates, whilst the Countryside Access Team paid for the others. Bob and his team removed

three of the stiles, replacing them with gates, and greatly improved two other stiles, as well as removing pesky vegetation. In addition to improving access along the Oxfordshire Way, the Thame & Wheatley team also increased the takings of nearby pubs after each piece of work. Cheers Thame & Wheatley!

Bicester and Kidlington group's path maintenance team, Blitz and Klean, cleared a footpath close to the M40 near Little Chesterton.

In the second quarter of the year the Vale Path Volunteers (Vale of White Horse group's path maintenance team) undertook three more vegetation clearance sessions on Scutchamer Knob, an Ancient Monument on the Ridgeway above East Hendred. In addition, they did path improvements in Ashbury, Lockinge, Faringdon, Wootton and Ardington.

Dave Cavanagh



Some of the Vale Path Volunteers, plus Historic Ridgeway Project Volunteer Coordinator Hayley Gray, on the top of Ancient Monument Scutchamer Knob after a morning's scrub clearance. The photo was taken by Andy Boyd (third from left) using his drone. That's why, rather than looking at the camera, he is concentrating on his controller. Or, in other words, a very cool selfie. Andy uses his drone camera to record videos before and after each of the Vale Path Volunteers clearances along public rights of way.



Three members of Thame & Wheatley group's path maintenance team after replacing a stile with a Berkswell kissing gate on the Oxfordshire Way in Stadhampton. Photo: Bob Merry

Those we have lost

Geoff Farrow 1950 - 2025

G Geoff, the long-serving Chairman of North West Essex group, died unexpectedly in February whilst on his annual holiday to Tenerife.

Geoff was born in East Ham, the eldest of three with two younger sisters, before the family moved to Leigh-on-Sea where he grew up. After gaining a degree in chartered surveying at Salford University, he worked first in London as a quantity surveyor

before moving to a construction company in Cambridge until his retirement. For most of this time he lived in Halstead before moving to Gosfield in about 2010.

By 2000, Geoff was a member of the Ramblers and by 2006 his name was on the list of members potentially able to help with the surveying of public rights of way which volunteers used to undertake for Essex County Council. Geoff was elected to the North West Essex group committee at its AGM in

November 2010 and the following year became their Publicity Officer. Despite a severe illness in 2012, Geoff played an active role in the group both as a walks leader and as Publicity Officer, setting up and managing the group's website. Ironically for a Publicity Officer, Geoff was a man of few words.

In 2013, Geoff was elected Chairman of the group whilst still continuing in his other roles. In 2019, under Geoff's initiative, the group signed up to undertake light path maintenance work like surveying and waymarking. Geoff

kept the group going during Covid but as the internet connection from his house was poor, there were no virtual events. Even before Covid, finding new committee members was difficult with many stalwarts getting old or moving away. Although group membership hovered around 100, finding members to lead walks or serve on the committee proved problematic. By this time, Geoff was also serving as Secretary, Chairman and Publicity Officer. He was very sad when in 2022, the group decided that there was no longer enough support to continue as a formal Ramblers group. Geoff transferred to the Chelmer & Blackwater group.

As Footpath Secretary for Braintree Ramblers, Geoff was my 'go-to' person if I needed somebody to check out public

rights of way in the northern and eastern parts of Braintree district. His reports, complete with photographs, were always helpful and reliable. In addition to his other Ramblers commitments, Geoff was also a regular leader for the Walking for Health walks in Halstead. His sisters noted that he was also a keen cyclist - something not well known amongst ramblers.

There was one month a year when Geoff didn't lead walks. From 2014, he spent three weeks holidaying in Tenerife every February. Tragically, this February, Geoff caught Norovirus and left it too late to seek medical attention and so died, aged 74.

Katherine Evans
Ramblers Braintree District
Footpath Secretary

Roding transformation

Redbridge Council in east London has been awarded £3 million to transform the banks of the River Roding between Ilford and Wanstead Park. The plans include the provision of public access to the riverside and the rewinding of an existing golf course. Funding has been provided by the Greater London Authority's Civic Partnership Programme for the Ilford Arrival project

which has designed the scheme.

Daniel Rea, founding director of the design company behind the Ilford Arrival project has said: 'Ilford is fortunate to have the River Roding and the Roding Valley. However, at present, what should serve as a public resource is nearly forgotten'.

The River Roding flows for about 30 miles (50 km) from near Great Dunmow in Essex to the River Thames at Barking Creek.

Open houses

The England-wide festival, Heritage Open Days, returns this year from Friday 12 to Sunday 21 September with free entry at many properties, some of which are not normally open to

the public. Details can be found at heritageopendays.org.uk. A similar event for London, previously called London Open House Weekend but now the Open House Festival, runs at the same time with details at programme.openhouse.org.uk.

Surrey quarry to be restored

Surrey County Council has given planning permission for the restoration of Clockhouse Quarry, near Capel, into a nature conservation site, including the creation of new wetland habitats. Utility company Suez is expected to begin work next year on the site

and for the full project to take 14 years to complete. The company will bring in around 740,000 cubic metres (almost the equivalent of 300 Olympic-sized swimming pools) of inert material, such as soil, from large construction projects to create the site.

Wish you were here?

El Escorial, Spain

Eighteen members of Capital Walkers enjoyed a memorable three-day walking holiday from 9 - 12 May in the beautiful surroundings of El Escorial, a historic town in the foothills of the Sierra de Guadarrama, just outside Madrid. Thanks to the expert planning and warm, thoughtful planning of our wonderful organisers - Alberto, David and Rosa - the trip was a resounding success, filled with scenic walks, cultural treasures and delightful meals.

El Escorial, is a charming town famed for a striking 16th-century complex of monastery, palace, museum and royal mausoleum. The palace itself with its imposing grey granite walls and rich historical significance, served as the burial place for many of Spain's monarchs. Several of our group took the opportunity to visit this extraordinary site, marvelling at its impressive architecture, vast library and fascinating royal pantheon.

Some members also visited the Valley of the Fallen (Valle de los Caldos), a vast and controversial monument built after the Spanish Civil War. This imposing site features a towering stone cross and an underground basilica carved into the mountainside. Intended as a memorial to those who died in the war, it is a place that stirs reflection, given its complex and contentious history. Visitors were struck by both the scale of the site and its dramatic setting.

The walking programme was equally impressive. Over the three days we completed two circular walks from San Lorenzo de El Escorial, each offering varied terrain, peaceful woodland paths, and far-reaching views. The third walk took us to Las Dehesas de Cercedilla, a popular



A memorable trip. Photo: David Alvaro.

starting point for hikes in the Sierra de Guadarrama. There, we followed Roman roads, crossed stone bridges, and climbed through aromatic pine forests.

No trip to Spain would be complete without savouring its culinary delights, and our organisers ensured we experienced the best of local hospitality, arranging dinners in traditional restaurants where we enjoyed hearty regional dishes and fresh local produce. Laughter, stories, and toasts to future adventures filled the evenings.

For many, the holiday was also a chance to explore further afield. Some extended their stays to experience Madrid's museums, parks and lively streets, while others embarked on day trips to nearby historic cities such as Toledo and Segovia.

With stunning scenery, fascinating history, delicious food and excellent company, it was a truly memorable trip. We left with fond memories - and are already looking forward to our next Spanish adventure together.

Tim Sai Louie
Capital Walkers

Dovedale, Derbyshire



Striking a pose with the Warrior 2.

Ladies from Chiltern Weekend Walkers (and one gent) stretched themselves as never before on a walking and yoga weekend in the Peak District in May.

Sue Zelin says the idea came to her following a chance encounter with some visitors from across the Atlantic. "I was on a walking trip in Yorkshire last year and met a group of Canadians who would start their day with yoga and have another yoga session to unwind after the walk. I thought it sounded like a great idea."

The three-night break included three walks and six yoga sessions. Setting the tone for the weekend, the first yoga session took place on the lawn in front of the Pevril of the Peak hotel. "It was still lovely and warm," said Sue, "and the views across the rolling green landscapes were fantastic. It was a great start." Days started at 7.45am with the first yoga

session before breakfast. Once the group had returned from their day's walking, more yoga followed at 5pm.

"Walking and yoga go really well together," says Sue. "Yoga improves flexibility and balance, and it's great for stretching, which is perfect for warming up before a walk and cooling down afterwards. Every session would end with Carol, our yoga teacher, coming round and sprinkling each of us with some lavender oil."

At first, beginners were tested by some of the more demanding positions. Janice Gilder said "I am a yoga novice. So many of the poses were a challenge but I had a go at most of them. The Downward Dog was the most memorable as I found myself having to adjust to being bent so low and starting to gradually strengthen my weak wrists! I felt really well-stretched afterwards though."

Andrew Lyon, who has three years of yoga under his belt, said: "I was the only man, which isn't unusual in my experience. I'd definitely encourage more men to incorporate yoga into their routine. Even a couple of times a week can help to improve our flexibility and strength as you age."

As confidence grew, the group came to embrace the Warrior 2. The standing pose involves a wide stance with arms extended to strengthen the legs, improve posture and build stability. "We loved it so much we took every opportunity to try it on our walks, particularly when we reached the top of a hill," said Sue.

The walks themselves were all much enjoyed. A favourite was Dovedale, with the famous stepping stones across the River Dove, the Twelve Apostles rock formations, Tissington Spire and Reynard's Cave.

After three full-on days, the group was looking forward to a relaxing finish. It came in the form of the yoga nidra, a state of consciousness between walking and sleeping, typically induced by a guided meditation. "It involves lying down for a lot of time," said Sue, "which was much needed after our walks and early morning starts. But by the end, the combination of walking and yoga left us feeling as if we were floating on air. Everyone agreed what a fantastic weekend it was."

Mark Percy
Chilterns Weekend Walkers

Clonmel, Ireland

Towards the end of April, 14 Croydon Ramblers descended on the town of Clonmel in County Tipperary. It was meant to be 15 but Mary's cat did a runner the day before! I am pleased to say that the cat and owner have since been reunited.

Anyway, the name 'Clonmel' in old Irish means 'honey meadow' which sounds lovely and the town is, in fact, not bad at all. There are quite a few historic buildings to be seen as one wanders through the town whilst checking out the available restaurants, hotels and hostelries, of which there are many and varied. We stayed in a hotel

called Mulcahys which had a good bar (essential), a restaurant and a big television for us to watch the FA Cup semi-final. Oh yes, and lovely rooms with comfortable beds!

Ann Toomey is our member who organises everything for us and you may gain from the surname that she does indeed originally hail from the Emerald Isle and on her frequent visits 'home' to see relatives, takes the opportunity to sort everything out for us lucky people. Ann had arranged for us to walk the East Munster Way and we took it in turns to be leaders.

John Tickner
Croydon Ramblers



The Clonmel group dazzled by the Irish sun! Photo: John Tickner.

Gloucester

Forty-two Dartford & Gravesham Ramblers spent five days hiking in different parts of the Cotswolds in May. We were based at the Cheltenham Chase Hotel near Gloucester

which was very nice. One walk took us to Broadway Tower. Here the 'long walkers' found their route was easier than that of the 'short walkers' and got them to the top and back first!

Christine Raynsford
Dartford & Gravesham
Ramblers



The climb to Broadway Tower. Photo: Julia Holloway.

Kingussie, Scotland



On the open moors on a stretch of the East Highland Way. Photo: Joan Clark.

Twenty-two ramblers and one small dog spent a wonderful week in Kingussie (10 - 17 May), in the Cairngorms National Park, close to Aviemore in the Scottish highlands. We stayed at the Railway Rooms, a part of the station which has been converted into en-suite bedrooms with a well-equipped kitchen and a large lounge and dining area. We combined evening meals eating-in with visits to local eateries. The station is still in regular use and on one of our eat-in evenings the Royal Scotsman, a private Pullman train, pulled into the adjacent platform. On board were diners dressed in evening wear, enjoying their three-day adventure.

We were blessed with excellent weather throughout our stay, which enabled us to explore the varied scenery of the valley and surrounding hills. There was a

choice of a longer walk, usually of 11+ miles, or a shorter one of up to nine miles. The longer routes took in two Munros and the shorter ones included a 'pocket' Munro on one day. The walking is varied, from high peaks and elevated moorland tracks to picturesque lochs in the glaciated valleys.

The valley is well served by bus and train. This meant that trips further afield, as well as those starting directly from our home for the week, could be included. We had several cars, which were helpful but not absolutely necessary. Kingussie station is served by InterCity services, which we found useful.

This was a very special week for everyone involved, combining great walking with a variety of social activities and entertainment. Many thanks to the organisers!

Geoff Finch

Henley & Goring Ramblers

Dunster, Somerset

A group of 19 Hillingdon Ramblers met in the town of Dunster, near Minehead on the north Somerset coast in late April for a three-day walking holiday with Julian Wilkes as our guide. We were very fortunate with the weather and enjoyed warm sunshine throughout our stay.

On our first day we took a circular route from the hotel, walking in the hills at the edge of Exmoor and visited the tallest tree in England, a Douglas fir, 63 metres tall. Next day we started in Minehead and walked along cliff tops where the vivid yellow gorse looked fabulous against the blue sky, to end at Porlock Weir where we had time to relax and get an ice cream. After dinner we were treated to a short stroll along the beach near Dunster which was

delightful with the red sunset and deepening blue twilight sky. Our final day was the toughest when we went up to Dunkery Beacon, the highest point on Exmoor, but did have the opportunity later to dip our bare feet into the cooling waters of the River Horner. That evening we were reminded that it was the 1st of May when a May Day hobby horse and travelling players performed in the square outside our hotel.

It was a very good three days and we all agreed that Julian had been an excellent leader and the Yarn Market Hotel where we stayed was a very good and welcoming place to stay.

Simon Thornhill

Hillingdon Ramblers



Hillingdon Ramblers at the start/finish of the South West Coast Path in Minehead on the second day of their trip to Dunster. Photo: Julian Wilkes.

Southampton

For our sixth walking weekend away, Kingston members took a trip to Southampton in May.

The Friday afternoon started with a walk around Southampton's city walls. Next day the group took a train to Dean, the stop before Salisbury, and enjoyed a circular walk via Farley. Unfortunately, the Hook and Glove pub at Farley was temporarily closed for a change of management!

On Sunday the party went by train to Sholing

and walked down the Itchen Way to Southampton Water, then along the coast path to Netley Abbey for a picnic and to see the remains of this once vast military hospital. After lunch we continued along the shoreline before turning inland at Hamble-le-Rice to follow roughly parallel to the River Hamble to Bursledon for a train to Southampton. This group was ably led by itself as we were not able to take part due to an unfortunate accident in Hungary!

David and Brenda Horwill

Kingston Ramblers



The group at Farley church. Photo: Neil Taylor.

Scarborough, North Yorkshire

Leighton Buzzard Ramblers enjoyed their annual spring break in the lovely town of Scarborough in May. What a fabulous time we had with the most amazing weather, a great hotel and the delights of the town to explore.

Each day we had a selection of walks to choose from, with many featuring stunning cliff-top views (and ice cream). We walked sections of the Cleveland Way and one day took a nostalgic ride on North York Moors Railway to Levisham before walking back to Pickering. We couldn't travel by steam because of the fire risk, but we did wave to the train from the hillside with echoes of the Railway Children! After dinner, many of us enjoyed evening strolls to discover the town in a different light, literally, with the seagulls feeding on the dusky lit beach, the castle and the wonderful Diving Belle statue at the end of the harbour. There was also a visit to an Irish pub...!

Pamela Bates

Leighton Buzzard Ramblers



The group at the Hole of Holcrum. Photo: Anne-Marie Holloway.

Cromer, Norfolk



Weybourne station master Bob Johnson with North Beds member Clive Pattle. Photo: Sandra Kelsey.

Twenty-five North Bedfordshire Ramblers headed to Cromer on 6 June for our annual walking weekend away. Although the weather forecast was less than inspiring we headed for the coast knowing there is no such thing as bad weather, just inappropriate clothing.

We began with an afternoon walk from Blakeney, featuring countryside, coast and the windmill at Cley next the Sea. The second day's highlights were Roman Camp, the highest point in Norfolk, and the Beeston Bump, before ending with a great walk along the cliffs to Cromer. Sunday saw us walking from Sheringham Park to the North Norfolk Railway at Weybourne. At the station we discovered that the stationmaster on duty was Bob Johnson, a fellow Ramblers member from Fakenham group, who made us all most welcome. Bob was even treated to one of Cherrie's home-made ginger biscuits which are legendary in North Beds Ramblers!

It was a fabulous weekend and the weather was better than forecast. Thanks to all those involved in organising the trip, not just the walking but also the three evening meals

Sandra Kelsey

North Beds Ramblers

Elan Valley, Powys



The group at Elan Valley Lodge. Photo: Jonathan Sayers.

Twenty-nine West Berkshire Ramblers set off in mid-June for mid-Wales and the stunning location of the Elan Valley, an area of 70 square miles in the Cambrian mountains. Our walks were expertly guided by staff from the Elan Trust and ranged from five-miles to 13-mile epics, all of which coincided with unseasonably hot weather which sometimes made the going challenging. Our two guides not only led the way but shared their knowledge of the

history and engineering marvels of the dams, reservoirs and local birds, wildlife and geography. The Elan Valley is a fascinating place; although it looks natural, it is in fact a series of reservoirs and dams built to supply Birmingham and constructed in the 1890s - 1904. It originally had a series of railways to move all the stone and these have since been repurposed in part as walking and cycling paths. Another dam, Claerwen, was built just after the Second World War and opened in 1952. Our group booked a fully-catered stay at Elan Lodge, a converted school that opened to residential stays in 1988. Although sometimes tough going, the best way to see the Elan Valley is probably on foot. Jonathan Sayers West Berkshire Ramblers

Abingworth, West Sussex



Ascending the South Downs near Abingworth. Photo: Lindsay Vale.

After our break in the Lakes last year when we faced some of the fiercest winds recorded there for many years, the group of Wycombe Ramblers who travelled down to the South Downs at the end of April for a walking weekend were wondering what the weather would deliver this year.

In Abingworth we were lucky to be able to enjoy sun and warm temperatures and all tackled one of the three walks on offer each day. Most walks included a part of the South Downs but also visited some of the lovely Sussex villages. The range of walks available enabled both the strongest walkers and the less-confident to be able to participate. The slopes up were demanding but the views from the tops were glorious. We enjoyed mixing with fellow guests at the hotel and found getting together on the terrace for pre-dinner drinks became a daily event. We have already secured our break for 2026 and hope the sun shines on us again! Lindsay Vale Wycombe Ramblers

Glendalough, Ireland



The 12th century St Kevin's Kitchen (aka St Kevin's church) at Glendalough. Photo: Catherine Ewart.

In June, a group of 16 Henley & Goring Ramblers ventured to Glendalough ('Valley of two lakes' in Irish), the monastic site of the Irish saint Kevin, located about an hour's drive south of Dublin, in the Wicklow Mountains National Park. We stayed at the Glendalough Hotel, and enjoyed six varied days of walking and sightseeing in the Glendalough Valley and other nearby locations.

Short walks of up to seven miles took us along beautifully maintained local trails and nearby rivers, lakes and reservoirs. Longer walks of up to 14 miles explored the more mountainous areas and included upland hiking on boardwalks, boggy peat and along remote mountain passes. On our rest day we were treated to a film and guided tour of the Glendalough monastic site, which was a great introduction to the area and its fascinating history, then some of the group took a short walk to a nearby mining village. Apart from the fantastic walks, we also enjoyed live music, board games and some of the famous Irish hospitality. Two intrepid members even tried wild water swimming! A huge shout-out to our holiday leader, Alie, and to Wim, Robin, Peter and Jeanne (and Alie again) for leading the walks and making this such a fantastic and memorable trip. Catherine Ewart Henley & Goring Ramblers

Around the groups

Azalea time

On a sunny Thursday in mid-May, a select group of Croydon Ramblers assembled for a visit to Richmond Park and, in particular, the Isabella Plantation during azalea season. This has now just about become an annual event. John Tickner was our leader and photographer for the day. The visit did not disappoint and the azaleas and rhododendrons

were putting on a full technicolour display. Weather conditions it seems had been ideal this year with rain and sun in the right quantities and in the right order. After a leisurely stroll through the blooms and a spot of lunch we increased the pace a bit and walked down through the park to Ham. Tea and cake were consumed in Gerda's garden before the final leg along the Thames Path. I'm sure we will be back again next year! Kate Turnbull Croydon Ramblers



At the Still Pond in the Isabella Plantation. Photo: John Tickner.

Coach trip

Forty-eight Dartford & Gravesham members took a coach trip to Dover on Monday 12 May. A choice of walks of five and a half

miles or eight and a half miles along the Kent coast to Deal was offered. The weather was perfect with a gentle sea breeze, and the day was rounded off with chips and ice cream! Christine Raynsford Dartford & Gravesham Ramblers



Enjoying a day on the coast. Photo: Susan Truzzi.

On the march

Five of our Wednesday Walkers took part in the Banham Marsden March on Sunday 11 May. This is a major annual fundraising event for the Royal Marsden Cancer Charity and entrants can choose to take a 15-mile route between the Royal Marsden hospitals in Chelsea and Sutton or just the final five miles. Our group is known as the Vintage

Walkers and we have participated in the challenge for many years. It was a most memorable day, walking in 24 degrees of lovely sunshine. Everyone was so friendly with all different ages and abilities represented. In total, there were 7,329 walkers in 825 teams and, so far, over £1.7 million has been raised with our team contributing a staggering £4,098. Martin Thomas Epsom & Ewell Ramblers



The Vintage Walkers team. Photo: Marie Garrard.

A visit to Mother Ludlam's Cave



In Mother Ludlam's Cave. Photo: Sue Harvey.

Our Monday and Wednesday walkers were in for a rare treat on 16 and 18 June when leader Richard H organised walks that included the chance to explore Mother Ludlam's Cave at Moor Park, near Farnham. Walkers were able to pass through the usually locked gate to visit the cave and later to be taken into the garden of Richard's neighbour to view Father Foote's Cave.

Forty walkers (twenty on each walk) met at the

Shepherd and Flock pub before setting off along the Greensand Way. It was a fairly hot day so we were grateful for the shade which the trees provided. We were greeted by Mike Grindy, the custodian and owner of both caves. Most of us managed to fit in the cave where we were treated to a talk on the history of the caves and the mysteries behind them. We were then taken on to Mike's garden and the short steep climb up to Father Foote's Cave. This was much smaller and only one of each party ventured (or rather crawled) inside. The opportunity to go inside the caves was really special as usually we only get to walk past the locked gates.

Both walks were enjoyed by all walkers. Thanks to our leader, Richard, for arranging this and to his neighbour, Mike. On the Wednesday walk we also had a talk on the caves by Maurice Hewins, who is considered to be *the expert* on the caves.

The caves will be open to visitors again as part of Farnham Heritage Open Days, 12 - 21 September. Details will be at farnhamsociety.org.uk/valuing-our-past/heritage-open-days.

Sue Harvey

Farnham & District Ramblers

Walking the White Cliffs

We had a full and fun-packed day trip on 29 June when members took the train to Dover for an 11-

mile walk to Deal. At Dover, we met up with our leaders, Bob and Maggie, and four other members, before setting off with wonderful

views of Dover Castle through the mist. We passed plaques telling us of Louis Blériot's first powered flight over the Channel in 1909 and of Captain Webb's first swim across the Channel in 1875.

We had a break at the South Foreland lighthouse, the first to use electric light, before continuing to St Margaret's Bay where we enjoyed a tasty fish and chip lunch. The last few miles into Deal were on the flat and we passed Wallmer and Deal castles, both built by Henry VIII. As we neared Deal, we visited the Zetland Arms to enjoy refreshments whilst looking out to sea.

We enjoyed a varied and scenic walk, complete with sunny weather and a cooling breeze. Our grateful thanks are extended to Bob and Maggie for organising the day.

Valerie Dawson

Lea & Icknield (Luton) Ramblers



Approaching Deal. Photo: Ajay Gandhi.

Happy 40th anniversary Leighton Buzzard Ramblers



The 1985 ad that started it all. Photo: Leighton Buzzard Ramblers.

Late in 1985 a small advert was placed in the Beds & Bucks Observer about the formation of a Ramblers group in Leighton Buzzard. Then, at 2pm on 5 October 1985, 42 people joined the first walk along the Grand Union Canal to

Old Linslade church and back. A meeting followed and by the next Sunday the first programme of walks was launched. For the 40 years since then, Leighton Buzzard Ramblers has had a full programme of walks, only pausing during the Covid pandemic in 2020.

Such is life that none of our founders can walk with us these days but fortunately we do have long-standing members who remember the beginnings of our group. In 2010, the group's 25-year history was published (and now available on our website). The gauntlet was then thrown down to succeeding generations to continue to document our exploits: Challenge accepted with the years 2011 - 2025 currently being drafted.

We continue with many of the traditions started in the early years such as long-distance walks, annual holidays, a 21-mile challenge, Christmas lunches, garden parties, evening walks and a busy social programme. These days we are even more adventurous with ceilidhs, archery and gliding added to our

activities. As well as exploring the delights of our home territory, we also enjoy exploring Hertfordshire and Buckinghamshire and even venture as far as Oxfordshire.

With time comes change and after 40 years our group is evolving with a new generation of walkers creating memories. We can share our adventures and promote our activities on social media, and technology now allows us to plan and share routes on apps. With a growing membership based on friendship as well as a mutual love of walking, we look forward to the continuing success of our group for many years to come.

To celebrate our 40th anniversary we have commissioned a commemorative T-shirt and badge and planned special walks and events which will culminate on 4 October, the eve of our anniversary, with a Cockney knees-up evening.

Happy anniversary to all our members, past, present and future.

Pamela Bates

Leighton Buzzard Ramblers

In Jane Austen's footsteps

Mole Valley Ramblers enjoyed walks in and around Chawton, Hampshire, on Wednesday 11 June. The charm of Chawton goes beyond its natural allure and of the lovely thatched cottages. The village is famous for Jane Austen's House museum where the renowned author lived for the last eight years of her life. Stepping into the museum, visitors are transported back to Regency England. The small garden,

brimming with quiet elegance, further adds to the connection between the visitor and Austen's creative spirit. Not far away lies Chawton House, once the home of Jane's wealthy brother Edward. The trip was a celebration of Jane Austen's enduring influence on literature and popular culture in this, the 250th anniversary year of her birth.

Rob Tomlinson
Mole Valley Ramblers



Jane Austen's House Museum in Chawton. Photo: Rob Tomlinson.

The power of radio



Anne Griffiths with radio presenter Andy Collins. Photo: BBC Three Counties Radio.

National Walking Month began on Thursday 1 May and North Beds Ramblers welcomed-in the month in a different way. Earlier in the week we were contacted by BBC Three Counties Radio which covers Beds, Bucks and Herts. A Three Counties researcher had seen one of our adverts in the local Beds Life publication inviting people to join our walks during National Walking Month. 'Would a couple of your members like to come into the radio station for a live interview on the Andy Collins Breakfast Show to talk about the benefits of walking?'

Never a group to down down the opportunity to extol the pleasure of walking, we said 'yes' before realising we needed to be at the other end of the county by 7.30am! So, Clive Pattle, a recent new member, and I met up at 6.30am to drive to the studio in Dunstable. On arrival we were given a cup of tea but no

briefing or rehearsal. Shortly after, we were ushered into the studio to be interviewed. Andy swiftly put us at ease and prompted me to talk about the Ramblers, our specific group offer and the benefits of walking in terms of both physical and mental health.

Clive explained that he joined the group after a period of ill-health. He was initially worried whether he would be able to keep up on walks and would he find people to talk to, but all that was forgotten in seconds and he now looks forward to going out every week with his 'walking family'. Clive also proved to be an excellent advertisement for Ramblers membership.

We left the studio on a high! It was a great experience but would it have any effect? Imagine our pleasure when on the following walk we welcomed a newcomer who had heard the interview on the radio?

Anne Griffiths
North Beds Ramblers

SABRE ventures across the counties

In the true spirit of our name, our walks extended across Buckinghamshire, Hampshire, Kent, Surrey and Sussex between April and June.

On Good Friday we began our series of bluebell-themed walks with a walk from Chipstead to Mugswell. The last time we took this route was in 2018 it snowed but this time we found bluebells throughout the beech woods. In Kent we walked from near Westerham to Mariners Hill, Ide Hill and Toy's Hill and found carpets of bluebells stretching for miles. We finished the day with Simnel cake, an Easter tradition for us. In the Chilterns we were rewarded with the sight of many more bluebells (and wild garlic) on our walk from Ibstone to Turville, and back in Surrey there were still plenty of bluebells (and a field full of red clover) on our walk from Holmwood Common to Leith Hill and back.

We had a great day in Winnie the Pooh country in Sussex on our walk through

Ashdown Forest which included crossing the Pooh Sticks bridge.

Eleven members spent the first May bank holiday weekend walking the last two sections of the Greensand Way in Kent. On Saturday we walked over 14 miles from Fairbourne to Great Chart and the following day continued on for nine miles to Hamstreet. We were surprised at the poor state of the stiles on this stretch of the Greensand Way

Having completed the Greensand Way we have moved on to the Serpent Trail which runs for 65 miles from Haslemere to Petersfield. Thirteen of us walked the first section from Haslemere to Liphook in May. This section literally snaked its way through the Surrey and Hampshire countryside

We're looking forward to more walks across the counties in the coming months.

Clair Baynton
SABRE (Surrey and Beyond
Ramblers)



SABRE members on a bluebell walk. Photo: Shaun Claridge.

A right royal walk



A close encounter. Photo:Andrew Johnson.



Walking by the Hamble Photo: Roger Jobes. .

An annual event for South East Berks members is to combine a walk with the start of the royal party's journey to Royal Ascot. This began a few years ago but this year Alan, our usual leader for the walk, was unable to lead and was substituted by Andrew who also arranged some wonderful weather!

In June our annual coach trip to the

south coast saw 40 of us take a coach to the Hamble estuary in Hampshire, a trip which soon became known as the 'Hamble Ramble'. Our walk took us along the river to Bursledon and lunch in the Rising Sun's river view restaurant. The weather was kind and the walk was full of interest.

Brian Poulton
South East Berks Ramblers

Hats off to the king

A brush with royalty was enjoyed by a group of Surrey Heath Ramblers during Royal Ascot week in June. Starting through the Great Park, the group walked past Savill Gardens, over the polo fields and through the heather gardens to Virginia Water lake before joining the Three Castles Path. A picnic was enjoyed before watching the spectacle of horses and carriages transporting the royal party which included the King and Queen and the Princess Royal. It was a truly British event on a warm sunny day.

Hazel Dewey
Surrey Heath Ramblers



On the way to a royal encounter. Photo: Paul Seidman.

Sutton's 30th anniversary



Some of the founding members at the anniversary party. Photo: Jan Reckett-Turner.

Sutton & Wandle Valley Group celebrated their 30th anniversary in May. The event was marked by a programme of linked walks covering 30 miles over three days. A celebratory bring-and-share

party was also held. This was attended by some 50 guests, five of whom were original members.

The group was formed in 1995 when rising membership numbers necessitated an increase in the number of groups in Surrey Area.

The group's first walk on Sunday 14 May 1995 was a five and a half mile circular route from Dorking, an event that gained a mention in our local paper at the time! Since then, our walks programme has grown to an average of five per week. Social activities have always been important and the first winter saw the introduction of pre-Christmas lunches which have continued to this day. The next initiative was coach trips which enabled walks in areas not easily reached in the normal walks programme. Visits to places of interest, monthly coffee mornings and monthly evening get-togethers have also boosted our social activities and are always greatly enjoyed.

All in all, Sutton & Wandle Valley Ramblers is an active, thriving and friendly group which looks forward to another 30 years of rambling.

Marian Flory and Peter Rogers
Sutton & Wandle Valley
Ramblers

AGM and Social

Members of West London Group are invited to the group's Annual General Meeting and Social on Tuesday 9 December from 7pm at Northfields Community Centre, 71a Northcroft Road, London W13 9SS. The venue is near Northfields station on the Piccadilly Line and

close to local bus routes.

Please bring some food and drink to share for the finger buffet. So bring something you enjoy, but not too much. Please come along and enjoy the evening and if you would like to get involved or want to know more, contact us at secretary@westlondonramblers.org.uk.

Martin Harris
West London Ramblers

Joyce's 500+ walks

During our 30th anniversary celebrations (see also 30th anniversary for Windsor & District on page) we took the opportunity to say a special 'thank you' to Joyce Keegan. Joyce has been a member of the Ramblers since 1997 and in that time has led over 500 walks. If you include pre-walks, that's over 1,000. What an achievement!

Joyce led her first walk, jointly with her husband John, on 23 June 2000. She has led us through fields and forests, along coastlines and canals, up hills and down winding country lanes. She has found tea shops and loo stops and linked buses, community coaches and trains to get us home. Through it all, she has done so with her trademark good humour, steady leadership, and that wonderful knack for making everyone - newcomers and regulars alike - feel welcome and looked after.

In addition to this, Joyce is currently the Chair of our group, our Walks Coordinator and our representative on the Berkshire Area. She first joined the committee in January 2002 as Walks Coordinator and, at different times, has also been our Treasurer and Secretary.

In appreciation for all her work, she was presented with a gift token to spend in her favourite shop, bought with donations from many grateful members. Flowers plus a card and certificate, designed by our own Pam Donaldson, were also presented. Joyce, somewhat overwhelmed by this, thanked everyone.

Judy Valentine and Amita Sharma
Windsor & District Ramblers



Joyce with her certificate. Photo: Howard Sadkin.

Farnham highlights

Our Saturday Special in July took us to the Isle of Wight for a fantastic day of walking. We met at Lymington in good time for the ferry over to Yarmouth and were 'piped aboard' the ferry by the Lymington Town Band. We were bang on time arriving so easily caught the Island Hopper bus to Alum Bay from where we would start our walk. After a quick stop at the Old Battery for a bit of history, we made the stiff climb up to the New Battery where we looked for a sheltered picnic spot. Then we started the steady climb to Tennyson Down and to the monument which looked miles away.

We had a lovely meet-up with a group of young Duke of Edinburgh expeditioners, all Year 10s from Lord Wandsworth College in Long Sutton which is very local to us in Farnham.

They were lugging 12kg packs and feeling 'worn out' but said they were enjoying the experience. We then caught up with them on the way down to Freshwater, as our lighter packs compensated for our creaky knees. After an ice cream break we followed the River Yar and the old railway track back to Yarmouth.

Having just missed our 17.05 ferry, what an opportunity it gave us to sample the Bugle Coaching Inn before boarding the 18.05 crossing! What a fabulous day and a big thank you must go to our organiser and leader, Chris H. The walk was approximately eight and a half miles, so a little more than the six miles we were promised, but it was absolutely worth it.

An earlier highlight in our programme came on Thursday 19 June when members met at Colt Hill, Odiham, for an early evening walk, fish and chip supper and

evening cruise on the Basingstoke Canal. Clive P led a lovely three-mile walk for those brave walkers (20+) who didn't mind the heat. The rest of the party (a further 20+) met at the wharf later to join the John Pinkerton, a broad narrowboat, for the cruise. Our suppers arrived by taxi and were served onboard (together with a complimentary glass of Prosecco) onboard by committee members.

After our meal we were free to move around the boat, with some talking to the fore deck well and some to the bow with the skipper. It was such a lovely, peaceful and tranquil way to travel, whilst we enjoyed the scenery and conversation and looked out for birds and wildlife.

We arrived back at Colt Hill around 10pm with pretty much everyone heaping praise on the seamless organisation of the evening. Thanks too to our crew: Geoff, Carol, Duncan and Rakshi.

Sue Harvey
Farnham & District Ramblers



Freshwater Bay. Photo: Barbara Boylan.

Ray Lawrence retires

After more than 40 years with the Ramblers, Ray Lawrence is stepping down as our Membership Secretary. Ray's journey began with the Maidstone group, but he and his wife Carole switched to Tonbridge & Malling group when they found themselves walking in the Tonbridge area more often.

Ray's fingerprints are all over our group's history. In 2004, he took on the role of Walk Programme Secretary, sending out three printed programmes a year to all members. Postage wasn't so expensive then, but it was a lot of work getting the walk offers from leaders, compiling the programmes, stuffing envelopes, etc. Life became a bit easier in 2009 when the walks programme moved to email distribution. He launched the annual group newsletter, reminding members of all our activities, including holidays, footpath protection and maintenance. For many years he has been a Parish Path Observer and has regularly joined path clearance crews.

When Ray added Membership Secretary to his roster in 2010, our group had about 300 members: today it hovers around 260, with

just over 100 walking regularly. Ray 'credits' the internet for this slight decline - walks are now widely promoted online in local media, making the programme more accessible than ever. "Is that good or bad?" he muses, at least it draws in potential new members for our 'taster' walks.

Managing membership data wasn't always smooth, it being "pretty ropey" early on, Ray recalls. Even now, the central database says that I joined in 1996, but it was 1984! Things have improved over the years but there are still a few glitches.

Former committee colleague, June Hammond, remembers Ray as the one who had his finger on the pulse, always knowing the membership count and keeping the group on the right side of the law, particularly with data protection. But Ray relished the fun side too - darts nights, coach trips, group holidays and exchanges with a French walking group from Valenciennes. With a GPS device in hand, he was the reliable backup when a leader drifted off course.

Ray didn't limit his talents to our group - he served as Kent Area Treasurer from 2008 to 2019,



Ray, with the neolithic burial chamber of Kit's Coty in the background.

managing the books with precision and pragmatism. Robert Peel, Area Secretary, remembers Ray for this and his 'wise counsel' in committee.

Ray leaves behind a legacy - countless walks led for various groups, footpaths cleared, tidy and detailed accounts, accurate membership records and

friendships forged. His Tonbridge & Malling colleagues wish him all the best in retirement, though as former group Chair, Dave Wetton, quips, "He'll probably need the right arm to be strapped down to stop him volunteering again!"

I thank Ray for his many years of commitment to the

Ramblers amongst many other organisations he was involved with. I extend a warm welcome to Phil Blackburn who succeeds Ray and will help lead our group membership into the future.

Neil Whittall
Chair, Tonbridge & Malling
Ramblers

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Leighton Buzzard Ramblers, North Beds Ramblers
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