



EAST BERKS RAMBLERS

Berkshire Area

Group website: www.eastberksramblers.org

Ramblers website: www.ramblers.org.uk

MEMBERS NEWSLETTER No. 147 - April 2026

We are preparing a Walks Programme for May-June 2026. Details of all the EBR walks can be found on the [Walks page of the EBR website](#). You can also download the Walks programme for printing.

New Members

A very warm welcome to our new Members:

Robert Heath Nigel and Deborah Harding Kat Stanislawek & Costas Anastasis
Gabrielle Elstow Sara Charlesworth Lorraine Coleman John Lawton Kevin Barnes
Katy Adams Kelly Rose-Hursey Eoin Harty Carole Yeadon Mihaela Paun
Pat Radley Lianne Harcup Nilanjana Chatterjee

You have joined a very friendly and sociable Group and we look forward to welcoming you on our walks. We hope you will enjoy your membership on walks, at our social events, and by volunteering. But even if you play a more passive role thank you for giving your support to the Ramblers, the national Association for walkers and for the protection of our rights of way heritage.

For membership enquiries contact Malcolm Stone
Email: membership@eastberksramblers.org

The position of Chair remains vacant so we are again missing our regular Chairman's Chat in this issue!

Notes from the Walks Coordinator *Linda Francis*

As always, a big thank you to everyone who leads walks for our group, and extra thanks to our leaders for 'qualifying' by leading a lot of walks and/or completing the training.

We need a few more people to lead walks to keep our programme full and varied. If you think you might be able to help, please talk to me on a walk or contact me on lindaramblers@gmail.com

I really enjoy leading walks. It's satisfying to devise a walk to suit the people who you hope are going to join you. It's interesting to find walks that are varied and that meet all the criteria - good parking, not too muddy, good place for breaks etc. I like reccyng the walks - it makes walking more enjoyable because I'm walking with a purpose. I find a lot of walks on the OS app - sometimes they are good as they are, but usually they need adapting, which is part of the fun.



There was an article on the BBC news website recently about the increased number of callouts for the Mountain Rescue teams in the Lake District - largely due to people setting out onto the fells without being suitably prepared. I know our walks are less remote, but please make sure that you are fit enough for the walk and have enough water, food and clothing to cover all eventualities. Don't be embarrassed about taking a stick - they are very helpful in slippery or steep circumstances and can help to prevent

falls from trips. Also ensure that you have next of kin and medical details on you, either on our key fobs, on a card in your bag, or on your phone.

Can I ask you, please, to check walks online before leaving home - unfortunately sometimes walks have to be cancelled due to bad weather or leader's sickness.

Happy walking!

Temple Bridge Update *Graham Sexton*

The Environment Agency have issued some updates concerning Temple footbridge. In November they removed the central span of the bridge (which had been deemed a hazard to navigation). They subsequently inspected it and decided that it was beyond economic repair. More recently they have inspected the side spans and decided these also can't be repaired, so the only option remaining is an entirely new bridge. They are supposed to be coming up with a design by the end of October this year. It has been rumoured that the cost estimate is in the region of £2m to £2.5m and, as far as I can see, no money has been allocated for this (or for the work needed at Marsh Lock). It has been reported that the EA will be taking the "begging bowl" around to local councils, charities and wealthy individuals.

'Bryan Ferry' service to bridge the gap in the Thames Path for walkers while Temple Bridge remains closed [from the Maidenhead Advertiser](#)

The new service, which was recently launched, will operate from Temple Lock. It is being run by a local businessman, Justin Whelan, and involves his restored electric solar powered boat known as Bryan Ferry, which can carry twelve passengers. The owner of the boat expects the service will be run at a 'slightly affordable loss'. The ferry will run between 10am and 3pm on Wednesdays, Saturdays and Sundays, potentially expanding to seven days a week during the school holidays, once a volunteer rota is established. Dogs and bicycles are welcome on board. Passengers can board from the Temple side of the Thames and travel to Hurley or vice versa. Fares are set at £2.50 each way for adults and £1.50 for children under 12. For more information visit [Bryan Ferry the ferry on Facebook](#).

This service will avoid walkers having to use a dangerous detour onto a busy road. It will allow Thames Path walkers to continue as if the bridge was still in use, but in a different and potentially fun way.

Booking a trip with Ramble Worldwide?

EBR are affiliated to the **Walking Partnership**. If you book a holiday with Ramble Worldwide please remember to nominate **East Berkshire Ramblers** when you do your booking to ensure we receive funds. For UK holidays - £10.00 per person, European/short haul it is £20.00 per person and Worldwide it is £30.00 per person.

Please note the nomination must be done before the holiday and cannot be done retrospectively. For details please go to www.thewalkingpartnership.org.uk.

For the last fiscal year the group earned £120 from Ramble Worldwide through this scheme

The South Downs Way Coach Walks 2025 / 2026 Upper Beeding to Ditchling Beacon (Leg 7)

Peter Koklitis

The arrival of spring brought the continuation of the East Berks Ramblers coach walks: The South Downs Way National Trail, 100-miles (160 km), follows the chalk hills from Winchester to Eastbourne. In 2025, we completed over 60 miles (96 km) over 6 legs. .

The seventh leg on 1st April (10.3 miles, 1900 ft ascent, 1135 ft descent) attracted 35 people, including individuals from West London, Chiltern Weekend and Wycombe Walkers. The coach dropped off the 30 walkers at Castle Town, Upper Beeding, whilst the remaining five stayed on to be dropped off at Brighton for a day of seaside fun. The walkers faced an initial upward climb to link with the South Downs Way at Beeding Hill. The initial 640 ft ascent over 2 miles provided quick access onto the chalk ridge with rewarding far reaching views.

The weather conditions were ideal for walking, dry with a cooling light breeze. Visibility was good with Truleigh and Edburton hill tops providing early panoramic views across the Weald and towards the coast. At five miles in, we reached "Devils Dyke", an iconic feature of the South Downs now owned by the National Trust. This is the largest single chalk Coombe, a dramatic dry valley 100 m (328 ft) deep. In the late 19th century, this area was a popular tourist attraction with a funicular railway down to the village of Poynings. The golden age of steam brought day trippers from Brighton. Today, visitors enjoy the remarkable landscape, whilst naturalists can find orchids, wild thyme and birdsfoot trefoil.





We descended into Pycombe village, crossing a busy main road, before the final 500 ft ascent to Ditchling Beacon. On the climb out of Pycombe towards Clayton, the nearby Jack and Jill Windmills could be spotted, a clue to how a windy ridge once powered grain milling. This final stretch offered expansive views across Sussex, the Weald, and all the way to the North Downs.

The coach arrived on the dot. Some members enjoyed ice cream on sale at the car park before we started our return journey. Feedback from both walkers and Brighton day trippers was positive.

The next coach walk will be on Wednesday 6th May, taking us a further 11 miles along the South Downs Way to Southease. Then, the penultimate and final legs will take place on Wednesday 10th June and Wednesday 1st July respectively. The walks will be led by Peter K, Lesley W and Dawn D (all EBR members).

Note as usual, the EBR's coach will depart from The Shire Horse Pub, Bath Road, Littlewick Green at 9am. The coach fare is £25, payable on the coach, preferably by card, otherwise by cheque (payable to EBR) or exact cash, please. Please bring food and drink for the day. Details will be posted on the Events Calendar of the EBR website. If you have any queries, please contact coachwalks@eastberksramblers.org



Information on the whole of the South Downs Way can be found on the SDW website www.southdowns.gov.uk/. The Long Distance Walkers Association also have detailed information about the South Downs Way on their website ldwa.org.uk.

If you are interested in leading future coach walks, please contact a member of the EBR committee or send your ideas to coachwalks@eastberksramblers.org.

EBR Funded Gates In Selborne *Liz Richardson*

Members may remember that we used some of the funds held in the **EBR Endowment Fund** to support a project submitted by **Alton Ramblers** for the replacement of stiles with three kissing gates. They were kind enough to invite us to join them for a walk to show us in person all the gates we had funded. On 12th March, six of us headed off to Selborne for, what turned out to be, a very muddy but enjoyable seven-mile walk. It was very clear Alton Ramblers has an active and enthusiastic path maintenance team which has good relationships with local landowners and East Hampshire District Council. Several of the maintenance team were on the walk to tell us at first hand of how the work had been carried out. Replacing the gates had involved quite a lot of heavy lifting (literally carrying supplies across fields in some cases) and difficult ground into which the gate posts had to be fitted. Not only that, but they also had to contend with poor weather conditions.



It was pleasing to see the tangible benefits that had resulted from one of the worthwhile projects which the Fund has been able to support. This is all thanks to the profits which came from the sale of the "Rambling for Pleasure" walks books many years ago. The Fund still holds a modest balance and we are hoping to have details from Ramblers shortly of further projects for consideration so this balance can be put to good use.

EBR members at the first of three new gates in Selborne: Liz Richardson, Peter Griffiths, Eleanor Griffiths, Margaret Carlyle, Steve Gillions, Graham Sexton.

Next EBR AGM Saturday, 14th November 2026

Last year's AGM was held at Knowl Hill Village Hall on 15th November 2025 in the afternoon. Since the turnout of members was similar to the numbers attending previous AGMs on Friday evenings we have decided that this year's AGM will be held on Saturday, 14th November 2026 at 2.30pm at the Knowl Hill Village Hall, The Terrace, Knowl Hill, Reading RG10 9XBA. The meeting will last for approximately one hour and will be followed by light refreshments.

Berkshire Area AGM Saturday, 28th November 2026

This year's AGM will be hosted by EBR. It will be held at Knowl Hill Village Hall on Saturday 28th November 2026.

This is the annual get together of all Ramblers groups in Berkshire, so please do come along and meet new people from different Ramblers Groups and learn about how the area coordinates group activities and supports walking in the county.

There will be two walks in the morning before a talk and the meeting in the afternoon.

Last years Area AGM hosted by Berkshire Walkers and Berkshire Weekend Walkers was held at Pangbourne Village Hall on Saturday 29th November 2025.

Full details will be provided nearer the time.

Obituary

Mary Williams

Celebration of a Life well walked! *Dotty Lindsay*

Mary was always an early riser, probably from her commuting days to London when she worked for the French Tourist Agency. Here she excelled and won a prestigious award for Tourism. She also won recognition for a photo of a Heron on the Jubilee River and this was presented to her by the Baroness May of Maidenhead. The prize for this was cash and Mary blithely said "Oh, I'll take some friends out for a meal."

After her retirement Mary came up with the idea of promoting a "Dawn Walk". It would commence at 6.15 am and we would walk six miles in order to be back at Jenners Cafe by 8.30 am for a hearty breakfast. This was very successful and up to a dozen walkers took part for nineteen years and this year I led the 20th walk in Mary's memory. It now takes place annually just after Easter, the weekend after the clocks have gone forward for Summer Time.



Mary never gave up; she led “Strollathons” during her illness and was always pleased to hear news of where and when walks were taking place and how well attended they were. We even had a fun trip to Marlow on the “Marlow Donkey” (just the two of us) to have lunch at, you’ve guessed it, “The Marlow Donkey!”

On Monday 20th April, we all gathered at “The Kings Arms” in Cookham to celebrate Mary’s life. Mary’s niece, Toni, had arranged a programme of varied readings followed by a repast served on gigantic plates! There was much clapping and enjoyment as the afternoon wore on.

Mary was modest and loyal and a super friend whom I am missing immensely. She taught me many lessons and one was to accept life as it is.

EBR needs a new Treasurer

Our Honorary Treasurer Richard Falconer will be standing down from the position on the EBR Group Committee at the AGM in November. Would you like to become EBR’s new Treasurer, or do you know someone who might be suitable? No formal financial qualification is required, but a logical approach and familiarity with spreadsheets would be useful. The primary official responsibility is to prepare a report on EBR’s financial activities annually following the end of the financial year on 30th September, have it inspected by our external Examiner and submit it to Ramblers Central Office, who provide a simple template for the report. The main activities are managing EBR’s bank accounts and dealing with payments relating to coach walks and group holidays.

If you can help or want to discuss what is involved, please contact Richard at treasurer@eastberksramblers.org or any committee member.



Reading Walks Festival 9th - 17th May

Our neighbouring walking group **Loddon Valley Ramblers** are helping to organise and promote this festival.

Tickets for this year’s [Reading Walks Festival](#) went on sale on 6th March.

We have 43 guided walks across 7 days between Saturday 9 and Sunday 17 May. The theme of this year’s festival is Reading’s great waterways, tying in with the 30th anniversary of the Thames Path National Trail so look out for walks with a watery theme or route.

Walks range from a 1 km history walk to a 31km pilgrimage route spread over 2 days, with every distance in between. As in previous festivals, the focus is mainly on learning something new about Reading and the surrounding area as we walk, but we also have walks that are just social affairs or designed for healthy exercise. In previous years, many walks have booked up quickly so do book asap to avoid disappointment.

Spanish supermarkets are now offering appropriate refreshment for Ramblers, as the photo shows.

Challenge Walks for Local Children’s Hospice

The **Alexander Devine Children's Hospice Service** in Maidenhead has some challenge events planned for 2026 to raise funds. Three of these are iconic **walks** that might be of interest to members:

- [Jurassic Coast Hiking Challenge \(16-17th May 2026\)](#) – join #TeamDevine for an unforgettable challenge along this spectacular World Heritage coastline.
- [Snowdon Sunrise Walk \(4th July 2026\)](#) – experience the magic of reaching the summit of Snowdon as the first light of day breaks across the horizon.
- [Camino 2027 Hike \(12th-19th September 2027\)](#) – already looking ahead to 2027? Register your interest to join us for our Camino de Santiago Challenge to mark our 20th anniversary year.

EBR Summer Break Sedbergh: 1 - 5 June 2026 Rosemary Davies

Full house at Thorns Hall! I am delighted that 34 members will be heading up to the Yorkshire Dales at the beginning of June to enjoy gentle walks along green valleys or more challenging walks, including Howgill Fells which was adored by legendary fell walker Alfred Wainwright.

The Cumbrian market town of Sedbergh offers cobbled streets, artisan shops and bookshops and Kendal (home of the mint cake), Hawes and Wensleydale are just a few of the places within easy driving distance.

Newsletter Delivery

Malcolm Stone Membership Secretary

The Newsletter is sent to all members who have provided an email address. If you wish to receive the newsletter and have email, please ensure that we have your email address on file. Email me at membership@eastberksramblers.org. In addition, a copy of the Newsletter is available on our website, under the Members Section tab.



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Invasive non-native plant species to look out for on your walks Sally Waterman

There are currently around 2,000 invasive non-native species (INNS) in the UK with 10-12 new species establishing themselves every year¹. They can have a significant impact on the environment causing physical damage (e.g. Japanese knotweed), alterations to the ecosystem (Himalayan balsam) and loss of biodiversity (grey squirrels). INNS can also carry diseases which are deadly to native species (e.g. crayfish plague). It has been estimated that INNS cost the UK economy around £4bn a year (2023). The fungus which causes ash dieback has become the costliest INNS in the past decade¹.

The GB Non-native Species Secretariat (NNSS) provides information about INNS and an online portal for reporting sightings (link below). The NNSS is particularly interested in reports of species that are only just starting to establish as by recording these 'alert' species quickly it might be possible to prevent them spreading and becoming a new INNS². The NNSS has a poster on its website showing the full range of current alert species³. There are six plants on the list, half of which are associated with water. The other three (shown below) are ones to particularly look out for on your walks and if seen report.

Sightings of any alert species should be reported immediately, with a photo, to <https://irecord.org.uk/enter-non-native-records> or by email to alertnonnative@ceh.ac.uk.

Terrestrial plants on the NNSS alert list

 Chilean needle-grass <i>Nassella neesiana</i>	 Purple pitcher plant <i>Sarracenia purpurea</i>	 Eastern baccharis <i>Baccharis halimifolia</i>
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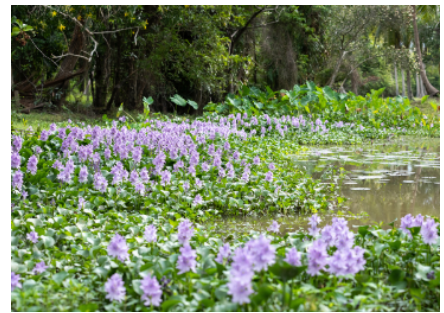
For information on their preferred habitats and how to identify these alert species see:

https://www.nonnativespecies.org/assets/Uploads/ID_Chilean_needle-grass_Nassella_neesiana.pdf

https://www.nonnativespecies.org/assets/Uploads/ID_Purple_pitcher-plant_Sarracenia_purpurea.pdf

https://www.nonnativespecies.org/assets/Uploads/ID_Baccharis_halimifolia_Eastern_baccharis.pdf

The UK Government lists 36 INNS that are of concern⁴. These species must not be intentionally cultivated but landowners are not required to remove them from their land. The list includes the pretty water hyacinth is the most invasive aquatic plant in the world⁵ although it has not yet spread widely in the UK as is unable to survive our winters. Despite it being banned from sale in the EU and in the UK under the Wildlife & Countryside Act it is often sold as a summer plant for pond shade.



<https://environmentcontrols.co.uk/target-weeds/water-hyacinth/>

Cotoneaster (various species)

Another plant that is sold in garden centres but is listed in Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act as an INNS is Cotoneaster. It was introduced to the UK in 1879 as an ornamental plant but several species are growing in the wild and taking over habitats, particularly limestone grasslands⁶. Locally, invasive species of Cotoneaster are found around the North Downs Way and in the Surrey Hills.

Cotoneaster berries are easily dispersed by birds contributing to its widespread distribution. Once established it can out-compete native flora and create dense thickets. Cotoneaster can also form an extensive root system which is difficult to remove⁷.

It is an offence to grow Cotoneasters in the wild but you are permitted to grow them in your garden. However, several wildlife organisations are trying to encourage people think carefully about its potential impact on wildlife and to consider alternatives.



Cotoneaster horizontalis

Photo: <https://www.rhs.org.uk>

Below are the three most common invasive terrestrial plant species in Southern England that you are most likely to see on your walks. They are already very widespread and are not included on the NNSS alert list.

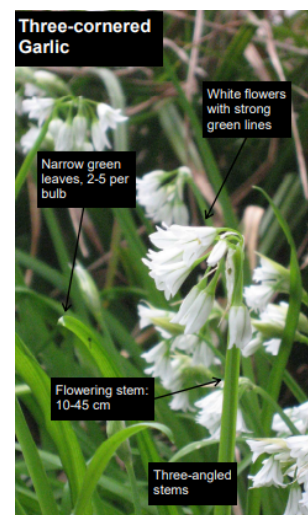
Japanese Knotweed



Rhododendron



Three-Cornered Garlic



Photos from the following identification guides produced by the NNSS

https://www.nonnativespecies.org/assets/Uploads/ID_Fallopia_japonica_Japanese_knotweed.pdf

https://www.nonnativespecies.org/assets/Uploads/ID_Rhododendron_ponticum_Rhododendron.pdf
https://www.nonnativespecies.org/assets/Uploads/ID_Allium_species_Garlics.pdf

References

1. <https://www.cabi.org/news-article/invasive-non-native-species-cost-uk-economy-an-estimated-4bn-a-year-new-cabi-led-study-reveals/>
2. <https://www.nonnativespecies.org/non-native-species/recording>
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4. <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/invasive-non-native-alien-plant-species-rules-in-england-and-wales#list-of-invasive-plant-species>
5. <https://www.kew.org/plants/water-hyacinth>
6. <https://www.bbwt.org.uk/wildlife-explorer/trees-and-shrubs/cotoneaster>
7. <https://insideecology.com/2017/10/04/invasive-non-native-species-uk-cotoneaster/>

<https://forestryandland.gov.scot/what-we-do/biodiversity-and-conservation/habitat-conservation/woodland/rhododendron>

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