



EAST BERKS RAMBLERS

Berkshire Area

Group website: www.eastberksramblers.org

Ramblers website: www.ramblers.org.uk

MEMBERS NEWSLETTER No. 145 - April 2025

We are preparing a **Walks Programme** for **May-June 2025**. 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:

Christine Fox Rachel Oakley Douglas Neal Christopher and Rebecca Burns
David and Claire Rolfe Diane Aslan Kirtus England
Angela and Derek Meades Carole Prior John Henry Sheila Gaunt
Beatriz Wray Elizabeth Thomas Nikki Bolsover Martha Desmond

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!

Planning and Countryside *Ian lent*

I am the EBR Planning and Countryside Officer. A grand title, but what does it mean? Essentially, I look at planning proposals raised within RBWM and, on behalf of Ramblers, comment or object where a planning proposal adversely affect paths. We like to think that objecting on behalf of Ramblers, gives a bit more 'clout' in such circumstances than objecting as an individual.

I sit on the RBWM Local Access Forum, a formal committee, with council members, horse riders and cyclists. This enables interested groups to discuss issues and to form a wider coalition against damaging proposals.

In the worst case a planning application could result in the loss of paths - as with the proposed Holyport Studios, to which we have objected. This is, thankfully, rare - generally an application may reduce enjoyment by compromising views etc.

On the more positive side, new build can also provide an opportunity to gain extra paths - at the moment this seems to be the case with the Lillebrook development and we hope will be the case with Maidenhead Golf Course.



As I'm sure you've noticed there is a lot of development going on in our area. Large developments are fairly easy to spot and object to if needed. Where you can help is if you are aware of smaller developments impacting on paths that I may have missed - particularly by farmers. If you see something like this then drop me an email.

Path Wardens *Ian Ient*

Our team of Path Wardens do valuable work to monitor and maintain the network of paths within RBWM. The team's remit includes all parts of the borough from Datchet to Ascot to Cookham.

The wardens regularly check their paths and also carry out twice-yearly surveys on behalf of RBWM. This is a valuable source of income for EBR.

We currently have 19 path wardens. We are always looking for more, particularly to cover some of the outlying parts of the borough (Ascot, Sunninghill etc). Please contact me if you are interested in joining the team.

Meanwhile, if you do see something amiss with a path then, in the first instance, take photos and report it to the relevant local authority Public Rights of Way department (e.g. RBWM, Buckinghamshire, South Oxfordshire etc). Most provide online forms to do this.

The RBWM link is: <https://www.rbwm.gov.uk/transport-and-streets/rights-way>

If the path is within the RBWM area, and you don't get a satisfactory response, let me know and I will escalate if necessary.

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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.

Walks Programme *Linda Francis*

A big Thank You to all the leaders who have given us walks through the winter. We have had some lovely walks despite some trying weather.

Also, thank you to everyone who has volunteered to be Back Marker on our walks. This is a necessary role when we have more than eight people on a walk to make sure we don't lose anybody and encourage the group to stay together. It would be great if everyone took a turn at back marking during the year but please don't volunteer to back mark just "because I will be at the back anyway". If you keep finding yourself at the back, try starting at the front and chat to everyone. You will surprise yourself with how long it takes to get to the back.

Inevitably some of our long-standing walk leaders are no longer able to lead walks and we really need new people to come forward if we are to continue to produce full programmes. If you think that you would like to lead walks but are not sure how to start, please contact me on lindaramblers@gmail.com - I'm happy to co-lead or to come with you to reccy a new walk if that would help.

Can I remind you to check online before you set out to join a walk? Sometimes there are changes to the start of walks or occasionally walks have to be cancelled due to illness or bad weather.

Here's to a wonderful summer of walking!

The South Downs Way Coach Walks 2025 / 2026 *Peter Koklitis*

The arrival of spring provided welcome dry weather for the start of a new series of East Berks Ramblers coach walks: The **South Downs Way** National Trail, 100-miles which follows the chalk hills from Winchester to Eastbourne.



The first leg on 2nd April (10.8 miles, 1109ft ascent, 583ft descent) attracted 35 members, including some from Amersham and Wycombe Walkers. The coach dropped everyone off at Broadway in Winchester, then after group photo, two started their day visit, whilst 33 walkers started the trail via the City Mill. We headed to the bridge over the river Itchen, followed the wall alongside Wolvesey Palace, out and over the M3 motorway into countryside to Chilcomb village, notable for its a black timber barn standing on staddle stones.



At the Start of the South Downs Way in the park at Winchester

The trail ascended to Cheesefoot Head, offering panoramic views of the area. This iconic area is a natural amphitheatre with a rich history. It is a designated Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) due to its unique chalk grassland ecosystem, which supports diverse flora and fauna. Cheesefoot Head also played a significant role during World War II. It served as a gathering point for Allied troops, and in June 1944, General Eisenhower delivered a speech here to American soldiers before the D-Day landings.

The trail continued along leafy tracks through fields, hedgerows and woodland, finishing at Beacon Hill Beeches car park, where the coach arrived on the dot. The feedback from the group was positive, reporting 'a perfect day out' in the glorious spring sunshine.

These monthly coach walks will continue on the **first Wednesday each month (except August) through until October in 2025**. The walks will be led by Peter K and Lesley W with the assistance of Dawn D and Julie M (all EBR members). The aim is to complete all sections throughout 2025 and 2026.

The second leg is organised for the **Wednesday 7th May**, and 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 their 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.

EBR's funding support at Elkstone in Gloucestershire

Rosemary Davies

In January four EBR members checked out the boardwalk in the Cotswolds that had been funded from the East Berks Endowment Fund.

In 2023 Liz Richardson, Secretary and Steve Gillions, past Chair of EBR, opened discussions with Ramblers to support some of the projects in the Path Accessibility Fund. The first project to be completed was the installation of a boardwalk and signage at Elkstone in Gloucestershire.



Liz, Linda Hayes, Graham Sexton and myself stayed at HF House at Bourton-on-the-Water mid-January and we thought it was the perfect opportunity to see where and how the EBR money had been spent.

Graham, our team walks leader, worked out a day's walk and off we went. We were all suitably impressed with the new 'bridge' which crosses a very marshy bog which was impassable in the recent past.

The installation has encouraged local landowners to carry out further improvements and local volunteers have helped with vegetation clearance and waymark installation so it is a win/win all round.

The morning's walk was very enjoyable but at lunchtime we needed to cross the A417 which is undergoing a **major** redevelopment due to

last until 2027. We made good progress and were feeling reasonably confident that we had overcome various obstacles including carefully crossing a strip of freshly-laid concrete without leaving footprints, rerouting because of Footpath Closed signs etc. But then we found ourselves in a secure area with no way of getting out.

We had to retrace our steps and were happily walking along the path when we turned a corner to find fencing stretching across the road – not to be outdone we scrambled down into a ditch, through a lot of bracken and got through and we were on our way again. Hurrah! The best bit was when we realised that if we had managed to follow the original planned route it was through a recently ploughed very muddy field so maybe there was a reason why we had to make a diversion! An adventurous day!



EBR Holiday in Dovedale - 1 - 4 September 2025

John Harden has booked an HF holiday for EBR for early autumn 2025.

Location	HF Dovedale - Peak District	3 Days Guided walks with 3 grades of difficulty
Date	Monday 1 st September to Thursday 4 th September	Depart Friday 5 th September
Price	Single £620 There are 4 Premium single rooms	Double £1240
	Self-Guided have a discount and will be £525 per person	
Deposit	£90 to reach EBR by Monday January 13th.	

If you would like to join this holiday please apply to John at holiday@eastberksramblers.org with your room request and whether you will walk with the Guided walks or prefer Self-guided.

Please pay the deposit by BACS. The EBR bank details will be sent when you apply.

EBR Summer Break 1 – 5 June 2026

at [HF Thorns Hall](#), Sedbergh, in the Yorkshire Dales

Rosemary Davies

At the time of writing there are still a few rooms available on this 4-night holiday. We are very close to 30 registrations, which is the required number for sole occupancy of the HF House,..... but not there yet. So, if you are deliberating as to whether to come please act swiftly!

The cost is £610 for guided or £525 for self-guided walking.

More information is available on the [EBR website](#). Please complete the [booking form](#) below and pay your non-refundable deposit of £75 per person as soon as possible. Places will be allocated on a first-come, first-served basis. Once we fill all the rooms we will hold a waiting list. The final balance will be due around 8 weeks prior to the holiday. HF state that travel insurance is mandatory on their holidays.

The £75 per person non-returnable deposit should be paid, preferably, by BACS. **Please contact me for the account information and then let me know via email/text message when you have paid your deposit.**

If you don't wish to pay by BACS, please send me a cheque, made payable to EBR, with booking form. Booking form can either be returned by email or, if enclosing a cheque, please send to Rosemary Davies, Frogden, Terrace Road South, Binfield, RG42 4DS.

If you have any queries please contact me by email at sedbergh@eastberksramblers.org or on my mobile **07777 641908**.

Q and A new committee member - Richard Whetton

What are your earliest memories of walking?

My mum and dad were keen walkers – so on summer holidays when I was six or seven, there would be walk most evenings after supper along the beach or cliff.

What does walking give you ?

A love for the countryside, appreciation for seasonal changes, and gratitude for the extensive network of paths in the UK.

What is your favourite view?

Of the north Cornwall coastline at sunset or sunrise.

What is your most important piece of walking kit?

Obviously boots – I currently have 5 pairs of boots in various states of wear, my latest pair are made by Lowa, these boots are the best I've ever had, I purchased these through a German Supplier, who managed to mix up the delivery with another customer in the UK, so we ended up exchanging boots via mail, but they were worth the wait.

What do you always make sure you take with you when going out for a walk?

My iphone to record the walk, indicate my location, take photos, identify birdsongs and plants along the walk and depending upon where I walk and time of year – a litter-picker/bag and or secateurs.

Do you always carry emergency eating rations and if so what are they?

Hazelnuts, Walnuts and dry fruit or Marmite Peanuts.

Do you prefer leading a walk, or being led?

I enjoy leading, as I like the process of devising new walks and receiving them.

Before you set off for a walk do you plan it meticulously or do you go where your mood takes you?

Depends if it is a new walk then I plan it exactly, but if it is a familiar walk I will often mix it up and change it on the fly.

Are you an all-weather walker?

I love most weather conditions apart from heavy rain – me and Miranda went out on walks twice this last winter where high winds were forecast (the Ramblers' walks that coincided, were both cancelled and NT Cliveden was closed), the walks were very invigorating until the horizontal rain!

What's the best thing you put in your Thermos to warm you up on a cold walk?



I don't tend to bring hot drinks on a walk, just cold water, unless it's a long walk and I might bring a hearty soup.

If you could choose your walking partner

Julia Bradbury – I've always enjoyed her walks on TV, just hope she doesn't walk too fast.

Cross-Country Skiing *Graham Sexton*

When I am walking with the group and I say that I have just come back from a cross-country skiing holiday, I am often quizzed about what I have been doing. In this short article I'll try to answer some of the questions I most frequently get asked.

The term "cross-country skiing" is a generic one covering various forms of "free-heel" skiing including competitive ski racing, recreational on- or off-track skiing, Telemark skiing and ski mountaineering. The crucial difference between all of these and downhill skiing is that the binding only connects the boot to the ski at the toe whereas, of course, a downhill boot is rigidly attached to the ski. This ability to lift your heel off the ski is crucial to making progress on level ground and, indeed, when going uphill (more of which later). Most of my experience is with recreational on-track skiing and that is what walkers would be most likely to start with so in the rest of the article that is what I will talking about.

I'm frequently asked about what equipment is used and, apart from the ability to lift the heel, there are some important differences from downhill skiing. The skis are longer, thinner and lighter, the poles are significantly longer while the boots are lighter and more comfortable. There is one other crucial difference, and this gets us back to the "How do you get uphill?" question. A cross-country ski is bowed, which means that, if placed on a level surface, it will only contact the ground at the front and back and there will be a small gap between the base of the middle third of the ski and the ground. However, the weight of a person is sufficient to bring that section of the ski down onto the snow. So, if the middle section of the base has something that will grip the snow, we have a way of getting uphill - weight one ski so it can't slip backwards, lift heel of the other foot and slide that ski uphill, transfer weight to the other ski and slide the first ski uphill.

There are several ways of getting grip. Traditionally this was achieved with wax and elite ski racers always use this method today, but you need different waxes for different temperatures and using the wrong wax leads to a world of pain, either no grip when going uphill or snow sticking to the skis when running downhill. Hence recreational skiers normally use either "fish-scales" (tough plastic in a fish-scale pattern bonded to the base of the ski at manufacture) or "carpets" (tough synthetic fibre stuck to the base of the ski, which needs replacing periodically at a ski shop). I'm sure you are getting bored with all this technical stuff, so I'll just mention one last thing. When you go to hire your cross-country skis, you will not only be asked your height but also your weight. Please don't get offended as this is important. It is your weight that brings that middle part of the ski into contact with the snow, so the heavier you are the more resistance there needs to be in the ski, or, in other words, you require a stiffer ski.

The other question I'm often asked is "Where do you go to cross-country ski?" Most larger ski resorts have a few kilometres of track where you can give it a go but I'm at the stage where I like to ski different tracks every day



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for a week and there are a limited number of places you can do this. In the Alps, I've found myself going back to Seefeld and Ramsau in Austria, the Engadine valley in Switzerland and the Pustertal in Italy. Cross-country skiing is more popular in Scandinavia and there are many places with extensive track networks, but it is a somewhat different experience to the Alps, where there are lots of opportunities to stop for hot chocolate, lunch or apple strudel. In Scandinavia, you could be out all day without access to shelter so you will be carrying a pack with food, a flask and quite a lot of spare clothing, as the weather can turn very nasty in winter.

The last question I get is "Why do you go cross-country skiing? Isn't downhill more fun?" Well, cross-country skiing is certainly better exercise but that is not the main reason why I prefer it. It provides a way of getting away from the crowds and enjoying the winter landscape. In Scandinavia, you can get a real sense of remoteness while out on skis although, as mentioned previously, that can have its downside in poor weather.

Lastly, just to give you a flavour of what it is like, I've included a photo taken in January of this year while skiing near Ramsau in Austria.

Finding a Closed path on a Recce *Barbara Skaife*

Gail Cullen and I had to recce this walk twice to find a walk around. We took photos to report the closure which Gail advised had been since November 2024.



Then we met the local path warden who advised there was an ongoing dispute between the land owner & Wokingham council over responsibility to reopen. Thankfully on the day of the walk I led the group from the other side of the walk as they were interested to see the well and to my amazement found tree surgeons working for the council had started to clear the pathway. We had not reported the footpath closure at that stage.

Short bites

The car park at Coopers Hill, convenient for walks to Runnymede or to Savill Gardens and the Great Park, has started charging. It is free for 3 hours, after which there is a charge of £2.80.



We are reviving our **Facebook Group**, which has been largely dormant for a while. Please join and add comments, news or pictures, making sure that you have permission from any people in your photos.

Reading Walks Festival is back for another year! Running from 10-18 May, this year's programme is more diverse than ever and includes 50 walks in and around Reading plus two bike rides and a talk. For more information see <https://www.visit-reading.com/whats-on/reading-walks-festival>

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.

The views or opinions expressed by individuals in this Newsletter are their own and do not necessarily reflect those of the Committee. The Editors welcome letters and articles from members but reserve the right to reject or edit contributions. Would contributors please note that all items for inclusion in the next issue of the Newsletter should be submitted, preferably by email, to the Editors (address below) as soon as possible and no later than **Friday, 3 October 2025**.

Editors: Linda Francis Tel: 07547 727042 Email: walkcoordinator@eastberksramblers.org
 Peter Griffiths Mob: 07765 232178 Email: committee4@eastberksramblers.org

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The Ramblers promotes rambling, protects rights of way, campaigns for access to open countryside and defends the beauty of the countryside.

BOOKING FORM FOR EBR SUMMER BREAK – 1-5 JUNE 2026

Name(s)	
Address	
Contact details	Phone: Email:
Accommodation	Single Double Twin/Double Would you be willing to share a twin room if we run out of single rooms: Yes/No If you have agreed to share a room, name of room buddy:
Walking:	Guided walking Yes/No Self-guided walking Yes/No
Dietary requirements	
EBR Member	Yes/No <i>Bookings will be taken in order of application with preference going to members of East Berks Ramblers.</i>
Bank Details	For BACS payment of deposit (£75 per person)/balance of payment A/C Name: EBR Sort Code: 30 98 97 Account Number: 66700860 Reference: Your initial, 3 letters of your surname and SEDB e.g. mine would be RDAVSEDB

Please email or post this form to Rosemary Davies, Frogden, Terrace Road South, Binfield RG42 4DS

Email: sedbergh@eastberksramblers.org Tel: 07777 641908