



EAST BERKS RAMBLERS **Berkshire Area**

Group website: www.eastberksramblers.org

Ramblers website: www.ramblers.org.uk

MEMBERS NEWSLETTER No. 129 - APRIL 2019

The **Walks Programme** for **May-August 2019** is attached.

You can save it for reference. The [EBR website](http://www.eastberksramblers.org) contains the latest information about the walks in the programme. Check this before turning up at a walk, in case anything has changed.

New Members

A very warm welcome to our new Members:

Richard Sutton Janet & Spencer Ferguson Trevor Cox
Patrick Romaya & Nadine Lott Ron Wood David Leggett & Sheila Gaunt
Larry Moore Chris Stockwell

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

Chairman's Chat *writes Phil Smith*

Perhaps it's just me, but 2019 seems to be getting off to a slow start. As I write this the clocks are about to be adjusted forward to summer time. Not before time one might think, spring is early this year with cherry trees already in full blossom and lawns having needed mowing for weeks. EU rules require that summer time should begin on the last Sunday in March, which this year happens to be the 31st so it is as late as it can be. Add to that, Easter Sunday is the 21st of April which is only four days earlier than the latest possible. Together with the advanced state of spring this may be why the year seems slow to get going. At least we have good weather for walking now that the March gales have abated.

The government has announced funding of £23 million to 'rejuvenate' cycling and walking nationwide. £21 million of this funding is to 'improve significant on and off-road stretches of the 16,000-mile National Cycle Network' and the allocation will be managed by cycling and walking charity Sustrans. It may be that some old projects in our area will be revived. The Sustrans website is very heavily biased to cycling so we will be keeping a close eye on this for any effect it may have on our rights of way network.

I recently joined the Map Reading Skills course run by Pera and Steve and I enjoyed it very much. I have been fascinated by maps and particularly OS maps since my childhood and many years ago I was trained as a professional navigator but Pera and Steve still taught me things I have never known and reminded me of many more that I had forgotten. It also showed me how easy it is to make simple errors in using a map and compass when one has become used to relying on a hand-held GPS receiver. I recommend the course to anyone who uses OS maps for navigation, for planning walks or anything else.

Path Warden Activities

We completed the Autumn survey in January; this is later than usual since we received the forms quite late and the survey work coincided with the holiday season. The wardens undertook a total of 165 man hours of work to carry it out and travelled nearly 400 miles in the process. I collated the returns and wrote a summary report for the RBWM rights of way team. There were no major problems, the new wardens soon got up to speed and I covered where necessary.

Planning Issues

There were several Planning Applications which potentially would have an adverse effect on public rights of way that I sent a consultation response to, listing objections. Thankfully the Applications were subsequently all withdrawn.

Stile Replacement Programme

Andrew Jeffrey and I put our plaques – “Sponsored by East Berkshire Ramblers”- on some gates in Bray parish which were funded by the group. Andrew will complete the signing on gates in the other parishes over the next few weeks. The programme has now been completed for the moment.

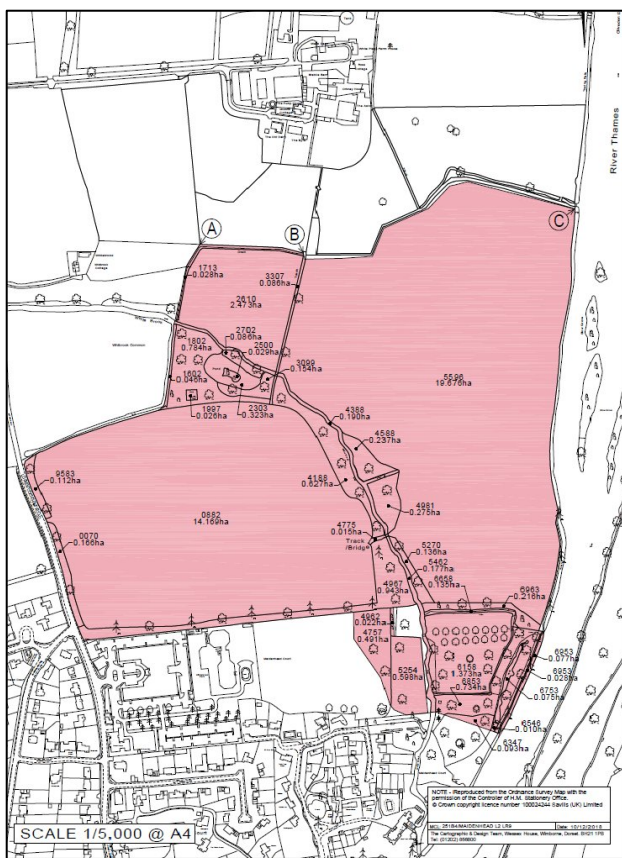
Public Access

A steering committee has been formed, called the Friends of Battlemead Common, to progress the missing link in The Millenium Way project. Steve Gillions and I have volunteered to join the group in order to look after the interest of walkers. If all goes well we will have a lovely new path fulfilling two of our longstanding objectives.

From the Footpath Secretary *writes Steve Gillions*

Some good news about two open space developments on land now owned by the Royal Borough.

Battlemead Common, Lower Cookham Road



The Borough has purchased 110 acres of White Place Farm, including the willow fields to the east of Whitebrook Park. The land, which will be known as Battlemead Common in recognition of the suggestion that the Danes and Saxons fought a battle here, lies to the west of Widbrook Common between the Lower Cookham Road and the Thames Path.

The acquisition will meet a number of long-standing objectives. It will complete a missing link in the Millenium Walk jointly proposed in 1994 by Margaret Bowdery and Ann Darracott of the Maidenhead Society and add a section to the Maidenhead Boundary Walk. Even further back, East Berks Ramblers proposed a path linking Widbrook Common with the Thames Path as a Silver Jubilee project. Better late than never, as they say.

The Borough will be producing a detailed plan for the open space, which will open in July. Some work, including re-siting a fallen Boundary Stone, has already been completed. The



Resited Boundary Stone

willow fields will become a wildlife area. The new footpath across the Common, offering superb views of Cliveden and Cliveden Reach, will be a valuable addition to our rights of way network.

Gordon Marrs and I will represent East Berks Ramblers on the newly-established Friends of Battlemead Common group.

Thriftwood, between Ockwells Manor and the motorway.

At its February meeting, the Local Access Forum received a presentation about the proposed development of a water nature reserve at Ockwells Park. The reserve will be developed around The Cut, which will be re-channelled. There will be a strong emphasis on encouraging wildlife and developing new habitat. The area is bounded by existing FP 11 and FP 13. The former is highly prone to flooding and the plan will include improvements to this. A separate cycling route will be included on the site.

The scheme is at a very early stage, with the technical design work not expected to be completed before this spring. Funding has yet to be identified. It appears the rights of way network will not be adversely affected. On the whole the proposal seems a very positive one.

Volunteering Opportunities with National Trust on Maidenhead and Cookham Commons *writes Steve Gillions*

We keep in touch with the National Trust as one of the largest landowners in the area and they have asked me to let EBR members know about volunteering opportunities with them. They are looking for volunteers from April onwards to help on the Commons.

What's involved is set out below. If you are interested, email dom.lethbridge@nationaltrust.org.uk

Role summary

It's important that our natural spaces are maintained and cared for, so that everyone can enjoy the benefits that nature and the great outdoors brings. By volunteering with NT you'll be helping to maintain and improve our footpaths and access across the commons

What's involved?

NT will supply you with a pair of gloves and loan you a pair of secateurs if you need them, to help maintain access points and pathways across the commons, by trimming back any overgrowing vegetation you see whilst out walking. This will help keep our paths clear and open for everyone to enjoy and explore the commons.

You will also be another set of eyes on the ground, so if you see any of the following NT would like you to take a photograph of where you found it and send it into: maidenheadandcookham@nationaltrust.org.uk

- Blocked paths and access issues which require more substantial equipment e.g. chainsaws
- Problematic areas of litter
- Fly tipping and hazardous waste

This role will suit you if you are...

- Passionate about the great outdoors and walking.
- Interested in nature conservation and looking after what we've got.
- Happy to work either independently or as part of a team.
- Would like to make a difference within the local community and across the commons.

By getting involved you could...

- Enjoy the great outdoors through all the seasons.
- Have a positive effect on those around you.
- Meet a variety of people from all walks of life.
- Improve the natural environment around you and share your love of Maidenhead and Cookham Commons with a wide range of people.

This is a flexible volunteering opportunity; NT are not looking for lots of commitment – just an hour or two here and there whenever you can!

Saturday Coach Trips 2019 *write John Sainsbury & Juliet Witcher*

There will again be two trips this year, to Hastings on Saturday, 8 June and to Winchester on Saturday, 3 August. There will be organised walks or you can simply spend the whole day exploring at your own pace.

The first trip is to 'Sussex-By-The-Sea' and the resort of Hastings, a town forever associated with the most famous date in English history. The optional linear walk of 6.0 miles in the High Weald AONB starts on high ground with commanding coastal views to both east and west. Much of the route is in the 850 acre [Hastings Country Park Nature Reserve](#) which includes sandstone cliffs, deep valleys, heathland and grassland, ancient woodland, conservation areas and sustainably managed farmland.

The scenic walk is mainly on good, wide paths but is hilly with plenty of ascents and descents and there are some sound but rather uneven stretches with lots of rustic steps in places. The walk ends high above Hastings Old Town and the sea, where there are open grassy areas ideal for a picnic lunch if you chose to bring one. Otherwise, there is a funicular railway straight down the cliff to the Old Town where there are plenty of choices, in particular seafood places and fish & chip shops selling locally landed fish (the town is home to Europe's largest beach-launched fishing fleet). Those not walking will be driven to Hastings with its many seaside attractions, including the award-winning pier which was completely rebuilt in 2016 as a modern take on the Victorian original which had been destroyed by fire. There are several local museums and the remains of Hastings Castle, the first one in England built by William the Conqueror.



The second trip is to Winchester in Hampshire. The city is alive with historic architecture and treasures including its cathedral, the building of which began under William the Conqueror in 1079. The 13th century Great Hall of Winchester Castle is one of the largest and finest in the Country and contains the iconic Round Table of Arthurian legend. Milling demonstrations take place at the 1000 year old City Mill (National Trust), a working watermill using the power of the River Itchen. We will offer an optional 6.4 mile linear walk into the city. The undulating route uses parts of the Itchen Way as it follows the pretty River Itchen, but in places diverts on to other paths including St. Swithun's Way and King's Way (a 45 mile footpath named not after Arthur or Alfred but Allan King, a Hampshire rambler!) and passes through three separate nature reserves. It finishes by the imposing statue of King Alfred the Great in the city centre, right by the lovely Abbey Gardens where there are plenty of seats for a picnic lunch if you bring one but with many eating places close at hand if not.

You can reserve a place on either trip by completing the relevant form at the end of this newsletter and sending it with a cheque for £14 per person (made payable to East Berks Ramblers) to: John Sainsbury, 9 Ribstone Road, Maidenhead SL6 3HJ. Alternatively, please e-mail johnposthaste@gmail.com to reserve your seat, with payment on the day. If you e-mail please provide all of the information requested on the booking form. All bookings will be acknowledged by e-mail.

The meeting point, as in previous years, will be the Braywick car park in front of Stafferton Lodge (free parking at weekends), with access from Braywick Road (A308), Maidenhead. The departure time is 8.00 am. The trips are shown in the EBR summer walks programme.

The Ridgeway : Final Legs *writes Chris Roper*

Quite where the six months since our last leg of the Ridgeway path has disappeared to, Nigel and I are not too sure.....?!! However, here we are having completed our penultimate leg, on **Wednesday 3rd April**: Chinnor to the pretty town of Wendover.

Despite the BBC Weather forecast, 39 of us set off from Braywick at our usual 8am start time, in overcast, but dry, weather! Fingers firmly crossed that we would not experience a repeat of our first leg back in April 2018!

We were truly blessed. Forty of us set off from Chinnor, with mist hanging over the ridge above us. However, it was not long before the cloud started to break, and the sun came through.

We experienced some stunning views across The Vale of Aylesbury, climbing Lodge Hill and on to Whiteleaf Hill, with its chalk figure of Whiteleaf Cross, overlooking Princes Risborough. With a welcomed stop for our lunch at Whiteleaf Golf Club, we were treated to the kind hospitality of Jane and her staff of one, who ensured, those who wanted to be, were well fed and watered! Then on we walked, passing Chequers (very quiet there!) and on to Coombe Hill, topped by its magnificent monument honouring the men of Buckinghamshire who died during the Boer War.



Finally, Bacombe Hill, a site of Special Scientific Interest and BBOWT Nature Reserve, led us into Wendover ...! After our 12.4-mile ramble it was a delight to see John waiting for us with the coach. A grand day out amongst the stunning Chiltern landscape

Our final leg of the Ridgeway, on **Wednesday 8th May**, will leave Wendover for an undulating walk through woodland, crossing the Grand Union Canal east of Tring, before heading over Pitstone Hill and the final, approximately two miles, stretch to the Beacon at Ivinghoe!! 87 miles completed!!

North Downs Way

Our plans for the rest of 2019 are to commence the **North Downs Way** from Farnham, heading east towards Canterbury! First leg will be **Wednesday 5th June**. Nigel is working on the new website and details of this and each leg will appear in the EBR Walks Programme.

So, do hope we see some of you over the next six months on the long-distance footpath walks for 2019.

Autumn Break - 8-12 September 2019 - The Malvern Hills *writes David Bailey*

There are just two rooms still available for this holiday, which runs from the evening of Sunday 8th September to the morning of Thursday 12th (ie three full days of walking). The two remaining rooms allocated for our Group are both twin rooms so would be available to either couples or two people sharing (£389pp), or to a single person paying the £60 supplement for sole-occupancy (ie. £449).

Full details were in the December newsletter, or contact David Bailey on 01628-634561 or at autumnbreak@eastberksramblers.org

Spring Break 2019 - West Lulworth House, 29th April, 4 Nights

28 members will assemble at the HF house at West Lulworth preparing to undertake three days of walking around the spectacular Jurassic coast.

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Obituaries

Barbara Fort, who was a member of EBR for many years died at the Thames Valley Hospice on Monday, 25 February. Barbara usually came along to the shorter walks with Don and Jean Todd and had been ill for a long time.

Kath Cutting, one of the original members of EBR, passed away peacefully at Wexham Park Hospital on 13 March aged 95 years. Kath had been an active member of the group, and served on the committee for many years as Publicity Officer, Footpath Helper and, after retiring from the committee, was Group Archivist for a time. She was active in local politics as a Labour councillor, had a stall at Maidenhead Farmers Market for a number of years and was involved with Friends of Earth among other things. EBR were well represented at her funeral and in her final days Kath told her son that joining the Ramblers is a cure for everything.



Dawn Walk April 2019 *writes Mary Williams*

10 of us set off early for the 13th Dawn Walk. I always find it very special getting up early in the dark with the start of the dawn chorus.

We felt very lucky to come across 2 new born calves, still wet from birth, with their proud mother on guard. Nearby, where this photo was taken, was a seat presented by the EBR. This is at the start of the Thames Path back to Maidenhead via Boulter's Loch.

We all went to Jenner's cafe where they really do supply a hearty breakfast, before returning via The Guards' Club Park.

Autumn Break 2020 *writes Gail Cullen*

I've agreed/volunteered to organise the Autumn break for September 2020.

As it's EBR's 50th anniversary in 2020 I thought a week's break a little further afield and to a location we haven't been to before might be an idea.

After some research, I have requested a one week break with HF at Alnmouth in Northumberland. Nether Grange House is by the coast. I won't know if the request has been successful or the costs until later in the year (the current brochure price is circa £800). So this is an early alert, and the dates I have requested are the weeks commencing Friday 12 September 2020 and Friday 19 September 2020 with the third option the week beginning Friday 4 September 2020. For sole occupancy of the house we will need in the region of 43 guests. Depending on the level of interest from EBRA we could open the holiday up to other walking groups eg South East Berkshire or/and Croydon Ramblers for example. Ken and I joined Croydon for their holidays in the Dolomites and also Whitby (HF) in 2018 and will be joining them for a week in St Ives (HF) in September 2019.

This will be the usual led walks with a choice of 3 walks on walking days.

In addition to walking in the Cheviot Hills or the coast line there are a number of places of interest nearby including Alnwick Castle (where Harry Potter was filmed), Craggside, National Trust property, (the first home in the world to be lit by hydroelectricity) , Farne Islands, Hadrian's Wall, the Holy Island of Lindisfarne and the tidal causeway etc.

There is plenty of information on the HF website including virtual walks (but to me that spoils the surprise).

I have a back-up plan and have also checked that Arthur didn't have Northumberland on his list for future Spring breaks.

Mental Health Awareness Week - Friday 17th May 2019 at Braywick Park, Maidenhead

East Berkshire Ramblers have been invited by Maidenhead United FC to take part in a festival they are organising during Mental Health Awareness Week. The aim of the event is to raise awareness for mental health, battle loneliness, social isolation as well as getting local residents active and healthy by introducing them to a new activity that they could pick up and attend regularly.

We have organised a moderate walk starting at 10:15am in Braywick Park to represent our group's activity. It would be great if any EBR members are free to join in the walk to chat about what we do and what we enjoy about walking. Please check the Walks Programme on the EBR website for more information. EBR will also be represented by having a stand and members will be on hand to talk to people who attend the festival. Hope to see some of you there!

East Berks Ramblers Golf Society

writes Meg Knight

We have four golf days planned for this year, the first is on April 26th at Hennerton, followed by Farnham Park on June 14th, Richings Park on August 9th and finally Huntswood on September 13th. All are very friendly days, usually with a team format, and the standard is very mixed.

We would welcome more members, no handicap is needed. Please contact me if you are interested in joining us.

On another note, I am planning to stand down from organising the society at the end of this year, so volunteers needed please to take on the role if the society is to continue.

golf@eastberksramblers.org 07811 149789

EBR Offer to Summer Party

Planners *writes Pera Marrs*

If you entertain and cook for large numbers, you might like to borrow the EBR slow cookers. They are excellent for keeping food, (cooked meat, casseroles, rice, potatoes, etc) warm for long periods, without the food sticking to the dish. Ideal for those summer garden parties.

The cookers are available all year round from Pera Marrs: longerwalks@eastberksramblers.org or 01628 629155.



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Gaps, gates and stiles - an invitation

Those of you who are involved in gate-related work (or who have colleagues who are) may like to consider taking up this invitation:

At its next meeting, the Mid & West Berks Local Access Forum is hosting a talk on public path structures (Gaps, Gates & Stiles), the new British Standard BS 5709:2018 and the new gate demonstration centre at Aston Rowant, on Wed 22nd May 2019 at 11.30am for 12 noon at Shaw House Newbury, RG14 2DR, presented by Chris Beney (of the British Standards Institute Committee) & Tom Bindoff (formerly of Centrewire, gate manufacturers). Lunch available. Shaw House is an Elizabethan mansion well worth a visit in its own right.

See <https://www.westberkshireheritage.org/shaw-house>.

All welcome but places are limited. Please email sandra.griffin1@westberks.gov.uk to reserve a place.

Membership Secretary

We are pleased to welcome Malcolm Stone as Membership Secretary following the announcement in the December newsletter that Neil Adamson wished to step down from the role. Thank you Neil for all your hard work on the committee over the past 19 years.

Autumn Holiday Break 2020

Gail Cullen has stepped forward to arrange the Autumn Holiday Break in 2020 – and her thoughts for September 2020 are included in this newsletter.

Do you need to update your collection of the Group's *Rambling for Pleasure* walks guides and Parish Maps?

The books are available from Amazon and other book suppliers. They are also available from **Steve Gillions** or from our stand at local Shows. They are also available by post from

East Berks Ramblers Publications, 63-65 St Luke's Road, Old Windsor, Berks SL4 2QL.

Please add £1.00 per copy for guidebooks and 50p per copy for footpath maps.

Please make cheques payable to **EBR** or **East Berks Ramblers**.

Parish maps can now be downloaded from the [EBR website](#).

Books: *The Secrets of Countryside Access* £3; *The Three Castles Path* £7.99;

In East Berkshire £7.99; *Along the Thames*; *Around Reading Series 1 and 2*;

Kennet Valley and Watership Down (at £4.95 each).

Maps: *Windsor and the Great Park* (£1.50); Parish maps (see [EBR website](#) for list) (50p).

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 **Sunday 28th July 2019**.

Editors: Rosemary Davies Tel: 01344 422707 Email: committee1@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.