



EAST BERKS RAMBLERS Berkshire Area

Group website: www.eastberksramblers.org

Ramblers website: www.ramblers.org.uk

MEMBERS NEWSLETTER No. 132 - APRIL 2020

From 18 March 2020, all Ramblers group walks and events have been suspended until at least 31 May 2020. Our top priority is protecting the health of our members and volunteers – and given the latest government instructions, we want to do our part to help suppress the spread of the Covid-19 virus.

Please visit the Ramblers website for further updates: www.ramblers.org.uk/coronavirus

As a result, there is no EBR Walks Programme with this newsletter. We expect to prepare a Walks Programme when government restrictions on group activities are relaxed.

New Members

A very warm welcome to our new Members:

Andrew & Monica Redman Carole Thelwall-Jones Marian Oatley
David Salac Rupert Moriarty & Gaynor Seckerson Gill Gibbs W W Godenzie
Malcolm Gray Martin Butcher Pauline Allies David Yates
Peter Koklitis & Lesley Winch Patricia Frost Sergey Kuznetsov & Olga Gotina

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 Gordon Marrs*

“Hard Times of Old England, in England is very Hard Times”.

I think this old ballad is appropriate at the moment.

As you know I had to cancel the rest of the current walks programme; the last one was on Wednesday, 18th March in the Hambleden valley. We have been unable to start this year's planned coach walk, the Three Castles Path, and I suspect that all coach walks will be off limit for the foreseeable future.

Pera and Viv had almost completed the next (Summer) programme, which was scheduled to start on 1st May but this is now on hold. Please check our website for up to date information.

The planned joint walk with the Maidenhead Civic Society on May 24th, to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the Millenium Walk and our own 50th anniversary, has had to be postponed (see Steve's contribution).

To cheer ourselves up, it is Spring! And the countryside will still be there waiting for us. Keep in touch with friends by telephone and on-line to avoid feeling isolated. Take a walk with your nearest and dearest in the same household, or on your own if you don't share your house with anyone. Go somewhere far from the madding crowds and stick to the government guidelines.

I will take refuge in my garden listening to music which will provide stimulus and comfort.

Lastly and most important - look after each other.

Path Warden Activities

The path wardens managed to complete the Winter Survey by the end of January, at short notice as the forms were late arriving. I checked them all and returned them to Sharon (RBWM Officer) together with a summary report to help her draw up a list of actions.

I currently have a full complement of path wardens so all parishes are covered; my thanks go out to them all for their efforts. In the last survey they undertook 200 hours of work and clocked up over 300 miles in the process.

Planning

The planning application for installing a public car park on Battlemead Common is still under discussion since there were a lot of adverse comments. I expressed concern over the sightlines when entering/leaving the car park from the Cookham road and I think this is being addressed.

I have checked lots of proposals for new housing developments but none of them had any footpath concerns.

Countryside

Battlemead Common still looms large and we are devoting a lot of time to it, although meetings are being curtailed due to the current emergency.

I did attend a recent meeting on site of the Whitebrook sub committee to examine the effects of a recent dredging experiment on the flooded areas. For more details on the current plans please see Steve's report.

From the Footpath Secretary *writes Steve Gillions*

Battlemead Common Update

Discussions about Battlemead Common continue but we are making progress. I have been working with people from the Maidenhead Civic Society, Maidenhead Water and Wild Cookham to develop an overall strategy that we can put to the Friends of Battlemead Common for agreement. We have made good progress and our report *Battlemead: A Way Forward* will be considered by the Friends in due course. This was to have been in May but that meeting is now cancelled with no further date arranged.

In broad terms we

- accept the Royal Borough's view that public ownership of Battlemead Common will ensure future generations of people and wildlife can continue to enjoy the area as a natural outdoor space and will also allow the completion of a missing link in the Millennium Walk
- confirm that the future plans for Battlemead should ensure an appropriate balance between the biodiversity and access considerations
- agree that biodiversity in both terrestrial and aquatic habitats should be protected and enhanced
- agree that there should be managed public pedestrian access, including disabled access
- agree a general principle that visitors to the site will be encouraged to keep to designated paths through the use of maps, signage, fencing, hedges or management regimes (eg mowing)
- accept that the route and size of the White Brook will not be significantly altered
- agree that proper arrangements to avoid flooding in Cookham should be taken
- agree that suitable arrangements for control of dogs should be put in place

I am hopeful that access to the Causeway Path for part of the year will be achieved, with a closed season to safeguard over-wintering birds. Details will not be known until the results of the bird survey are published, likely to be at the end of March. At the time of writing I do not know whether the Royal Borough will publish them even though the Friends of Battlemead Meeting will not take place.

A year round circular walk is seen as a prime requirement by many Friends. We feel a route through the Willow Wood is feasible and this is recommended in *The Way Forward* report. It would follow the route of the old Boundary Walk that many members may remember, going along the flood bund before passing through the Willow Woods to meet the Thames Path. There would be a considerable cost involved as the path would require a boardwalk and the old bridge, which no longer exists, would need to be replaced. Gordon and I are adamant that this route should be developed and will argue strongly for it.

Dog walking will be a particularly difficult issue to resolve. There is a wide range of strongly held views amongst the Friends, from those who would like unrestricted access for dogs to the whole site to those who want no access at all. The likely outcome is for a mix of areas where there are some no-go areas for dogs, some areas where dogs are

allowed on leads, and some where they can run free.

Although the Royal Borough has set up the Friends of Battlemead as a consultative group it has made it clear that it and it alone will take decisions on the future of Battlemead.

Millennium Anniversary Walk Sunday 24 May 2020

Well, I had prepared a comprehensive article on this telling you all about where and when. It even included a full colour map However, it will be no surprise to you all that the walk is now postponed. I've had discussions with Maidenhead Civic Society as the co-organisers and we will decide on an appropriate date when the Covid 19 situation is clearer.

There's no other news to report at the moment so I'll close by saying I hope all of you are managing to get out for your permitted daily exercise. I'm writing this in the last week of March and the sunshine has been glorious. It's been lovely on my daily walk to see spring arriving and to listen to the birdsong – and all without the usual disturbance from the Heathrow flight path. Difficult times I know, but it's important to remember there are things to enjoy as well.

In the meantime, here's a cheery reminder of what's to come in the Great Park Punch Bowl before too long.



Stay well and keep safe.

Steve Gillions
Footpath Secretary

Improving access for people with disabilities to our rights of way network *writes Steve Gillions*

In April the Royal Borough will publish the updated version of its ***Rights of Way Milestones Statement and Improvement Plan***. This is an important document as it sets out the priorities and targets for our rights of way network over the coming year. I'm pleased to say that this year the Plan will include a series of recommendations about access to the network for people with disabilities arising from the work undertaken by the Disability Working Party set up by the Local Access Forum. I am a member of the Working Party and have worked with others to recommend how things could be improved in this area, as well as undertaking some path surveys and its heartening to see our efforts bearing fruit.

The Working Party's remit was to make recommendations that

- Resulted in improvements to the PROW network and green spaces for people with disabilities as well as others, such as people with pushchairs
- Focussed on practical achievements
- Advocated for inclusive design in PROW and green space as an integral part of the planning process
- Identified key routes and sites where improvements could be made

We identified six sites we thought had potential: Battlemead Common; Boulters Lock; The Green Way; Ockwells Park and Thrift Wood; Cock Marsh; and the Thames at Runnymede. I have surveyed the first two and part of the Green Way and made recommendations accordingly. At Battlemead this has informed the footpath network and location of information boards and resting places – benches have now been installed. The remaining sites will be surveyed once the COVID 19 crisis has passed. It's worth noting that not all paths will be suitable for everyone, so we have categorised paths as providing access for all; or access for many; or access for some.

Our other recommendations that will be included in the Improvement Plan are actions for the Council to take forward. They will

- Identify best practice for path surface materials to enable people with disabilities to use the paths network
- Develop a footpath survey template to be used where access for all or for some routes are considered feasible
- Adopt the signage and information approach used by the South Downs National Park and others that show access ability levels, gradients, resting places and access controls.
- Consider the needs of people with disabilities in all footpath design and improvement programmes

So, a lot of progress in an important area - with a lot of work still to do. But it's very encouraging to have the Royal Borough signed up and I think there is a clear way ahead towards delivering a more inclusive and open approach to our rights of way network. It can only be a good thing if more people are able to get out there and enjoy it.



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Booking a trip with Ramblers Holidays?

EBR are affiliated to the Walking Partnership. If you book a holiday with Ramblers Walking Holidays, Cruise and Walk or Adagio then please remember to nominate East Berkshire Ramblers when you do your booking to ensure we receive funds. Please note the nomination must be done before the holiday and cannot be done retrospectively.

For details please go to www.thewalkingpartnership.org.uk.

Message from Ramblers Central Office

Ramblers Central Office send regular notes to all members giving updates on Covid-19. They provide tips on how to stay active at home and how to keep kids happy during the current lockdown.

Ramblers offices are closed until further notice and staff are working from home. This means that they are currently unable to receive post and payments by cheque or cash but you can still get in touch by email or phone. **Email:** membership@ramblers.org.uk **Tel:** 020 3961 3232 (Mon-Fri, 9am-5pm).

For the latest information please check out Ramblers website: www.ramblers.org.uk.

The Three Castles Path

The 2020 series of coach walks along the 3 Castles Path has had to be cancelled due to the Covid-19 pandemic. We do not know what the future holds but, once the situation improves, please check the EBR website for further news.

Saturday Coach Trips 2020 *writes Eve Norton*

Editor: At the time the newsletter goes to print we have no idea whether or not the following coach trips will take place but indications are they are unlikely to go ahead. However, just in case we are wrong, before we all went into lockdown the status of the coach trips was as follows – please check EBR website for information and updates.

The lists for seats on the two coach trips are already half-full and so if you are planning to come, please e-mail or phone me.

Just to remind you, the first trip on **Saturday June 13th** is to Hever Castle and Penshurst Place with a 5 mile walk to Hever from Crowden for those who wish to walk. The properties are not National Trust and the entrance fee for Hever is £15.60 or £12.75 for gardens (a pound cheaper if you book on-line). The walkers will then go on to Penshurst Place, again not National Trust and the entrance fee is £12.00 or £10 for gardens. The coach will pick up from Hever and Penshurst. There may be an additional loop around Chiddingstone but as I haven't done a recce, this may not occur.

The second trip on **Saturday August 15th** is to Arundel with a 6 mile walk to Littlehampton along the River Arun. Those not wishing to walk can spend the whole day exploring Littlehampton or just relaxing in a deckchair. The coach will pick up from the visitor centre. Alternatively, some people may wish to spend the day in Arundel and then catch a train to Littlehampton to meet up with the coach for the return home.

The cost for each trip is £15 which will be collected on the coach by my friend Shelagh Whitehouse.

My e-mail address is evemail@nortonrl.plus.com and my phone number is 01628 622279 (leave a message if there is no reply).

Strollathons *writes Arthur Lewis*

The original concept was thought up by John Vint and has proved to be both successful and popular. We very often have 18-24 people on a good day and they all seem to enjoy themselves. (albeit walking or drinking coffee).

The criteria for our strollathons are:

- Decent car park.
- Refreshments.
- Toilets.
- A very leisurely walk (about 2 miles).

Many mature walkers now only participate on strollathons which give the opportunity to meet up with friends from longer Ramblers walks in the past. We often get walkers recovering from knee and hip replacements, which helps get them back on their feet (excuse the pun). All EBR members are welcome to come along and join us.



2020 EBR Group Holidays

Spring Break 2020 – Craflwyn Hall, Snowdonia

The Spring Break, scheduled for end April, was cancelled by the HF House because of the coronavirus outbreak.

Autumn Break 2020 *writes Gail Cullen*

HF Alnmouth Northumberland 11 September 2020

As I write this update the HF Country Houses are closed until the end of April 2020.

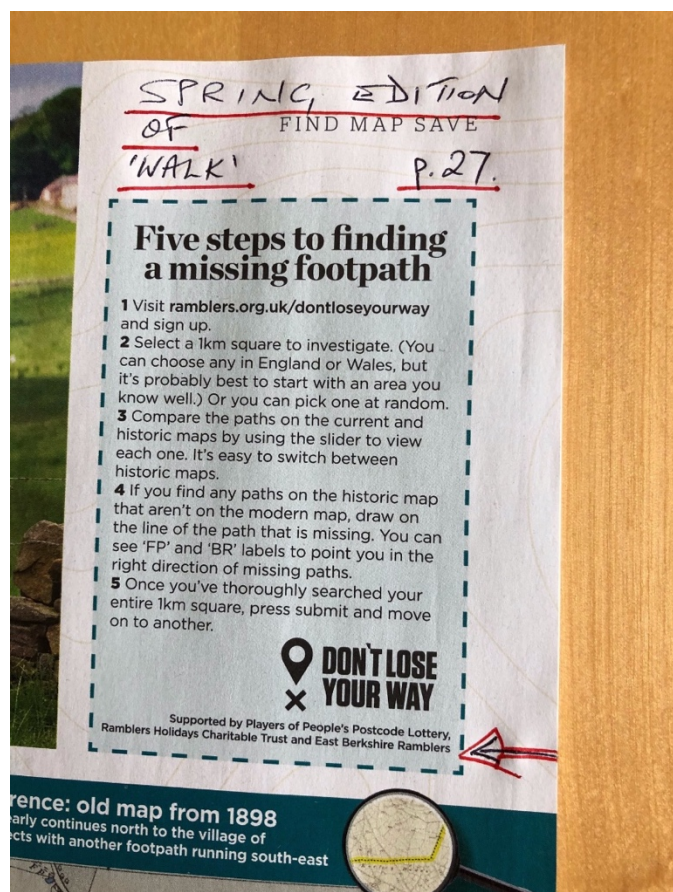
I will update folks booked on to the holiday nearer the time the balance is due (July), the options available to us and the advice from HM Government.

On a brighter note I did make a request in December for an HF holiday booking in 2021.

The Ramblers 'Don't Lose Your Way' Initiative

Thousands of miles of paths across England and Wales could be lost forever if they're not added to the definitive map by 2026.

On 11 February 2020 Ramblers launched its Don't Lose Your Way mapping tool, allowing anyone to easily compare current and historic maps to uncover these lost paths. Our paths are one of our most precious assets. They connect us to our landscapes, our history and the people who formed them over the centuries.



From 1 January 2026 it will no longer be possible to add paths to the definitive map based on historical evidence and any missing paths could be lost forever. But we don't know how many paths are missing, or even where they are, and time is running out.

Join the search to help us find these paths and you'll become part of the movement that puts them back on the map for generations to come! For more information on Don't Lose Your Way go to <https://www.ramblers.org.uk/get-involved/campaign-with-us/dont-lose-your-way-2026/faqs.aspx> or email berkshirelostpathsproject@gmail.com, contact Heather Brown.

EBR has contributed £10,000 from our accumulated reserves in support of the Don't Lose Your Way initiative. The reserves result from the sales of many copies of the popular Rambling for Pleasure series of books of walks originally written by the late David Bounds (obituary, Dec 2019 Newsletter 131) with maps by Dave Ramm, and published by EBR.

EBR's contribution is acknowledged in the promotional material for the DLYW initiative, including the 'Five steps' in the recent edition of Walk magazine shown on the left.

FOR SALE

Mens MEINDL Hiking Boots - High quality Meindl MFS system boots. UK size 10. Comfort fit with goretex in brown. Hardly used/as new condition. Bargain price - £50.

Ladies BRASHER Hiking/Walking Boots - UK size 5.5. Brasher Supalite GTX model in dark brown leather. Hardly used/as new condition. Complete with original box. Absolute bargain price - £50.

If you are interested in either of these boots please telephone 01628 670968.

First Aid Courses

First Aid for Ramblers courses cover the basics and the scenarios that are most likely to arise on a group walk. Whether you are faced with cuts and grazes, broken bones, or something more serious, the half-day course will give you the tools and confidence you need to react and manage the situation until help arrives.

All volunteers will benefit from attending, but particularly walk leaders, backmarkers, and anyone willing to volunteer as the nominated 'first aider' on a group walk. No prior knowledge or experience is necessary.

For more information please contact the Ramblers delivery team via 020 3961 3180

/ volunteersupport@ramblers.zendesk.com.



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Gail Cullen does her bit for tidying up the country lanes

Gail was fed up with seeing so much litter and waste material when exercising locally during the coronavirus lockdown and so she went out with her litter-picker and has been doing an excellent clear-up job.

Well done Gail !

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 the **Group Secretary**.

Send your details to groupsecretary@eastberksramblers.org.

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 26th July 2020**.

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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.