



EAST BERKS RAMBLERS

Berkshire Area

Group website: www.eastberksramblers.org

Ramblers website: www.ramblers.org.uk

MEMBERS NEWSLETTER No. 134 - December 2020

The EBR Committee wish all members a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year,
and we hope to see you on some of the walks in 2021.

We are pleased to announce the restarting of **Ramblers** and **EBR Group walks** following the suspension from March to September and again in November. 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

We will post our walks on the Ramblers system and on the **Walks Programme** page of our website. We are not yet able to offer a full programme of walks. As a result, there is no EBR Walks Programme with this newsletter. Please check the **Walks Programme** page on the website for details of walks being offered. We intend to prepare a Walks Programme when sufficient numbers of walks make this practicable.

Note: We have printed this newsletter in black and white. For a colour version please check the EBR website or subscribe to the email version.

New Members

A very warm welcome to our new Members:

Ms Michelle Leder Ms Marie Flusin Mr Peter Best Mrs Brenda Smith
Mrs Christine Lever Ms Sheila Casey Mr Vito Delfine Mrs Gaynor Truss
Ms Christina Fattori Miss Jessie Cooper

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

End of year message from Gordon Marrs, recently Acting Chairman

When Phil Smith resigned as Chairman at the last AGM, since I was Vice Chairman the buck stopped with me. What a time to take over the reins, it has been a year that no one will be able to forget.

2020 is the 50th Anniversary of the formation of the Group and was meant to be one of celebration, but we had to cancel or postpone our plans. Two projects are still being pursued however, a portfolio of 50 walks and a memorial bench for David Bounds (who co-authored the Rambling for Pleasure books).

Our Walks Programme has suffered severely; Ramblers suspended all group walks and events from 18th March due to the first lockdown so we had to cancel all other scheduled walks in our Spring programme. Plans for subsequent programmes have also been scrapped, but we continued to walk in groups of up to 6 friends un-officially. Once we entered a second lockdown even this was denied us.

It was gratifying to discover that, in lockdown, many of our members found interesting and productive ways to make use of the unexpected free time as we can see from reports in this newsletter.

I managed to persuade Ramblers HO to allow us to carry out the Spring/Summer survey of footpaths for RBWM. My thanks to all of our path wardens for carrying out the work efficiently (I think it was an excuse to get out of the house for a while).

The joint Anniversary walk with Maidenhead Civic Society finally went ahead on 20th September. It was well supported and attended by our local MP, Mrs May, and Kate Ashbrook from the Ramblers (see Steve's report for details). The route included our desired causeway path over Battlemead Common and we must thank Steve for spearheading our fight with RBWM for public access to the common.

This years' holidays were problematic; the Group Spring holiday was cancelled and the Autumn break with HF at Alnmouth went ahead with a much reduced uptake. Our thanks are due to Alan, the treasurer, and the holiday organisers, Arthur and Gail for sorting out and delivering refunds to our members.

My final words must be KEEP SAFE.

Vacancy for Group Chair

Phil Smith retired at the 2019 AGM on 8 November 2019 and Gordon Marrs stepped down from his role as stand-in Chairman at the 2020 AGM on 25 November 2020. The Group is looking for a successor. Details of the role of Group Chair can be found in the Volunteer Zone on the Ramblers website.

If you would like to have an informal chat about this role please don't hesitate to contact any committee member who will be pleased to help.

Countryside Matters *writes Gordon Marrs*

Footpaths

I have noticed during my regular walks that a lot more people are using the footpath network at this difficult time, I hope this will give them the taste for walking.

I have been in touch with Sharon, RBWM, and she will be letting me have the forms for the Winter survey of footpaths before the end of November. I will sort and distribute them to the path wardens so that we can carry out the work. It will give us a good excuse for getting out and about, to stave off cabin fever.

Planning

The planning application PA 19/03103, for the new car park on Battlemead Common was withdrawn, and will be amended to reduce the number of parking bays and improve the sightlines on leaving /entering. Several applications are under consideration at the moment which may affect rights of way, two have gone to Appeal.

I continue to review all new planning applications to check for any serious problems with regard to public access or rights of way.

Countryside

The management plan for Battlemead Common is taking shape and we have managed to get a reasonable amount of access for the public. It looks like the footpath along the causeway will be allowed to be used during the period from April to October.

I hope you will have seen Steve's article in "South East Walker" about the successful Anniversary Walk which took place in September, in collaboration with Maidenhead Civic Society. This used the path along the causeway and hopefully set a precedent.

Steve is our champion and I refer you to his report for an update on the situation.

From the Footpath Secretary *writes Steve Gillions*

Battlemead Common : Causeway Path decision at last

Its official! The Causeway Path across Battlemead Common will now be open for six months of the year, between April and October.



The Royal Borough have finally published their Environmental Management Plan for Battlemead Common and have included the Causeway Path we have long argued for. The closure over the winter period will protect over-wintering birds on the site. They did not accept our case for a boardwalked path through the Willow Fields but we, along with other groups, will continue to press for this.

Many thanks to all of you who have helped to make our case and to those who took part in our Anniversary Millennium Walk to show that the path could be safely opened up. We can all enjoy it at our leisure from next spring onwards.

EBR walks into the future *writes Pera Marrs, Walks Programme Co-ordinator*

After the first lockdown stopped us from publishing our Spring walk programme, in October I managed to gather 14 leaders who were willing to start to lead groups bigger than 6, from early November. But, then came another lockdown!!

I had enough people to do one Wednesday and one Sunday walk, mixing longer and short, running through to Christmas, however following the recent announcement that we are in Tier 2 I don't plan to produce a full programme of walks. On a positive note, I will be contacting those members who had agreed to lead walks back in October and I hope that we will have some walks available so please keep checking the website for more information.

If anyone is willing to offer to lead walks and has not already volunteered, please let me know, especially those of you who lead the shorter walks.

Three Castles Path Trail Coach Walk

writes Richard Falconer

Richard Falconer and John Harden hope to be able to lead the Three Castles Path coach walk in 2021 but this will depend on the Covid-19 rules and regulations in place next year.

There is currently a planning application for a solar panel farm of 40 acres to be erected between Armsworth and Old Alresford along almost half a mile of the route which is an especially beautiful area of open countryside. For more information please refer to the Winchester City Council website for Planning Application 20/01804.

Richard and John hope that everyone will be fit and able to join them on April 7th 2021 but please check the website nearer the time.

Saturday Coach Walks

Eve Norton reports that it is too early to make a decision on Coach Walks in 2021 but if the coach prices are right and there is sufficient interest from our members then hopefully they will go ahead.

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EBR Autumn holiday to Alnmouth, 11th to 18th September 2020

....from Eleanor Griffiths

Sixteen of us spent an enjoyable week at the HF house in Alnmouth, where certain Covid-19 restrictions were in place. In practice, this meant specific meal sittings, with specific tables and even specific seats allocated to us, plenty of hand-sanitising points, one-way flow in the public areas and table-service in the bar area. In terms of the walking, there were no group descriptions of the walks on offer, but there was information on notice boards and the leaders made themselves available for individual questions, all of which worked well. In view of social-distancing requirements, no transport was provided, so all walks started and ended at the property.

Three walks were offered each day, differing mainly in length rather than difficulty. The first day saw us following the coast to the South, as far as Warkworth, returning partly along the beach, where we picnicked and tried to avoid sand in our sandwiches. Day two gave us inland walks, in extremely blustery conditions, though remaining dry. The third day was free, of which more later, and day four saw us back on the beach, heading North this time, with an inland loop towards the end. Alnmouth's position meant that every walk ended in a similar way, which could be varied slightly by walking either through the town or along the estuary of the River Aln. This option was most attractive, offering the chance to spot seabirds and appreciate the fluctuations of the tides. Day five took us back inland, towards Alnwick, and we caught a distant glimpse of its castle (aka Hogwarts) as we crossed and recrossed the A1. The final day's walking had to be a repeat of one of the earlier days, originally expected to be the first coastal walk, but Gail worked her magic on the leaders to persuade them that a repeat of day two (the very windy day) would be preferable. Those who took up the option walked the route in the opposite direction, which provided a very satisfactory 'new' walk, in glorious sunshine.

A number of us decided to do our own thing on the final day, as the area abounds in places of interest, particularly if you have your own transport. On the free day, as well as the final day for those who chose not to walk, members of the group visited Alnwick Gardens, Cragside National Trust, Holy Island, the Farne Islands and the castles of Warkworth, Bamburgh or Dunstanburgh.

As we left for home, on Friday 18th, Northumberland had just been placed under 'tier 2' restrictions, so we counted ourselves very fortunate that we had just completed our stay. Our thanks go to Gail for persevering with the organisation of a very enjoyable week, allowing us a 'getaway' in lovely scenery, with the usual cheerful and interesting companionship that we have come to expect.



A windy day near Alnmouth



Ken resting during a walk

....from Gail Cullen

On our free day Ken and I went to Craster a small fishing village about 6 miles up the coast, and home of the Craster Kipper. Having found a pound coin for parking, no cashless options and no change machines, we explored the coastal path south of the village before returning to extend our parking and walked the other way towards the ruined castle. Ken resents paying to park but £4 would have given us all day.....it also had toilets. The coastal walk to the ruins of Dunstanburgh Castle is approximately one and a half miles, so we enjoyed the coastal path as did those heading for a (prebooked) visit to the castle ruins. We had our HF picnic lunch looking out to sea. Ken had a snooze. We saw a seal in the harbour as we returned at the end of the day. We visited another coastal village on the way back to Alnmouth, lots of 1920s bungalows, a lovely harbour and beach and an ice cream van. Again lack of change meant we couldn't support a local business, it was cash only and the cash machines frequently dispense £20 notes! At the end of the holiday Ken and I visited Lindisfarne. It was a short visit as the tides meant if we didn't leave by 1pm-ish we would be stuck until after 8pm.

Rooms at HF Nether Grange weren't cleaned daily due to the restrictions, but if you wanted fresh towels etc the rules were to put the dirty ones outside the room and they would be replaced. Got back from a walk mid-week and noticed there were no towels. The house was like the Marie Celeste, except for the kitchen staff, so no means of acquiring fresh towels. Fortunately I spotted this before I got into the shower. Ken had also noticed this, but had then gone to the pub and not left me a note. Eventually got clean towels, but then more kept arriving when we put the smaller towels and the bathmat out.



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East Berks Ramblers Spring Break 2021

Arthur Holland will be investigating options with Ramblers and HF for the EBR Spring Break and will circulate ideas to members to measure level of interest.

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.

EBR Autumn Break 2021 *writes Gail Cullen*

HF Abingworth Hall, 4 nights Monday–Friday, 20-24 September 2021

I have paid a small deposit to HF, just before lockdown 2, to hold a booking for Abingworth in September 2021. I've already received a number of expressions of interest for this holiday. Can you please let me know if you are interested in making a booking for September 2021 by emailing autumnbreak@eastberksramblers.org by **Thursday 31 December 2020**. (mobile 077 3308 7217).

I will then judge the level of interest and provide details for sending deposit cheques (£75.00) etc. This will be a guided walking holiday using HF leaders, offering a choice of three walks on each of the three walking days. I anticipate that walks will be from the house rather than the pre-Covid arrangements which was to set off on a coach to the walk starting points.

The house has capacity for 38 people but as usual single rooms are limited.

The total price for 2021 will be £475p per person, however if we have sufficient numbers to fill the house this price will fall. This price is for full board, including the famous HF packed lunches.

A Walk for Christmas *writes Steve Gillions*

St Luke's Church in Maidenhead has for some years held a Christmas Tree Festival in the church and raised money for local charities and church funds. That just isn't possible this year but undaunted they are organising a **Christmas Tree Trail** instead. They have invited local businesses and organisations to decorate a tree in the town. On Dec 3rd they will be publishing a list of all the trees that people can go and spot. You can see the trees between 9th and 24th Dec. Details can be found at www.stlukeschristmastreetrail.co.uk



Maidenhead Civic Society has hitherto sponsored a tree and this year will be placing its tree, together with a banner *The Green Way - A Lifeline in Lockdown*, on the Green Way at the junction of Green Way West and East just north of North Town Moor.

The Green Way was a joint project of MCS and EBR and we have devised a walk of about 3½ miles that includes a visit to the tree. A leaflet giving more details and including a map and directions for the walk has been posted [here](#) on the East Berks Ramblers website, and also on the Maidenhead Civic Society and St Luke's websites.

We are grateful to Peter Prior at Summerleaze, who has arranged to open up the gates at the junction of Summerleaze Road and Blackamoor Lane so that disabled people can drive through and park in the spaces previously used by the football club. If they approach the gates they will open.

Walking in 2020 *writes Ian Ient*

I was going to call this piece "Walking in Extraordinary Times", but then I thought: "No! You'll come over like Gregg Wallace" - so I've gone with a more unassuming title. Either way, here are some recollections and observations from my summer and autumn walking.

Like many of us, I have been out most days plodding round the lanes and field paths. Quite a lot of miles have been covered in the Great Park - and I have been working through my collection of *Rambling for Pleasure* books, re-walking some old favourites and trying out a few new ones.

On most Wednesdays, before Lockdown 2, I joined with various EBR friends for group walking (never more than 6 of us). These walks were great fun. The smaller numbers meant we didn't need to find the extensive parking required for a normal EBR walk. We therefore managed some walks in areas I had not been before.

However, one of my best experiences came closer to home. A walk, led by Pera and Gordon, took us from The Golden Ball, around the lanes north of Maidenhead. During the walk, as we crossed a Copas Farm, we came across a large field filled with sunflowers and a variety of other flowers. We were awestruck by the sight although unsure why the farmer should have sown such a beautiful crop, surely not for the visual artistry. We thought perhaps it was for bird seed? It turned out to be for a new type of silage!



Looking back over the summer my favourite walk was one of 7.5 miles that I tackled in early October with a couple of friends. Starting at Hambleden, we walked through a beautiful wooded valley up to Old Luxters Farm - the Chiltern Valley Winery and Brewery. Here we stopped for a break and, despite the temptation to try something stronger, we had a coffee. We looked around the vineyard and I purchased a bottle of Dry White which I stuffed in my rucksack (reasoning that it was mainly downhill back to the start). Apart from the ubiquitous red kites we saw hares and were nearly knocked over as a startled deer hurtled out of the undergrowth in front of us. After a lovely walk we arrived back in Hambleden and lunch in the garden of the Stag & Huntsman.

One positive that I have taken from the current situation is that generally there seem to be a lot more people out walking. Hopefully many of these folk will get the walking 'bug' and will be candidates for Ramblers membership.

Well, hopefully, we'll be able to get back to some semblance of normal group walking in the new year. Even if we can't, I'm sure we will (in the words of Robert Plant and Jimmy Page), Ramble On!!



Kissing Gate near Coombe Hill



Deer in Windsor Great Park

Some Photos *from Mary Williams*



I took the photo of the Thames, showing the Autumn colour of trees, whilst walking along the tow path from Cookham towards Boulton's Lock.



The memorial garden of Sir Nicholas Winton. I go out twice a week with Dotty Lindsay for a local walk: Taplow, Cookham, Bray etc. The walking continues!

Walking the Kennet and Avon canal *writes Eleanor Griffiths*

Starting one day in late July and finishing in mid-October, Peter and I spent a total of nine days walking along the Kennet and Avon canal from Reading to Bath, then following the river Avon as far as Keynsham – a total distance of some 90 miles. We reached our various start points by car, train and bus, with overnight stays in Devizes and Bath as we got further afield. How relaxing to walk beside water, hardly needing to follow our course on a map, and with no hills other than the picturesque downhill stretch by the Caen Hill flight of locks just past Devizes.

The occasional pub lunch or coffee stop, plus an interesting variety of boats to be seen, whether holiday hires or residential, some wonderfully smart and others looking almost too decrepit to be used! Along some stretches we hardly saw anyone, but at other times the towpath was full of other walkers, joggers, dog-walkers, cyclists and anglers. Herons sat calmly by the water's edge until we got very close, only to fly up to a tree and then return to their appointed spots after we had passed by.



Heron by the Canal



Peter by the Caen Hill Flight of locks

This was a long-distance walk I had promised myself for some years, and it can now be marked off as something achieved in this year where so little has seemed possible. We now need to continue along the Avon to Bristol and on down to the Severn Estuary – but that will have to wait until the Spring!

Snippets ...

Anniversary Millenium Walk - here is a link to Chair of Ramblers, Kate Ashbrook's blog about the Anniversary Walk that took place at the end of September.

<https://campaignerkate.wordpress.com/2020/09/23/mp-joins-maidenhead-millennium-walk/>

West Wycombe Hell Fire Caves car park – the car park that is frequently referred to as the Garden Centre car park has recently introduced a daily charge. There is a free car park at St Lawrence's Church on the summit of the hill, near the Mausoleum.

Don't Lose Your Way - Thousands of people joined the search for lost paths – the following YouTube links make interesting viewing.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1fL7eN6LGhw>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QIIWIR9SiFo>

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oECTlymIY_U

HF Membership Rewards - Are you an HF member? If so, you may or may not have noticed that in their October Footnotes magazine HF announced that they are launching a new Membership Rewards Scheme in 2021. Their current scheme will close on 31 March so encourage everyone to make sure any outstanding points are used before then. In view of recent lockdown and possible further restrictions these timings may well change !

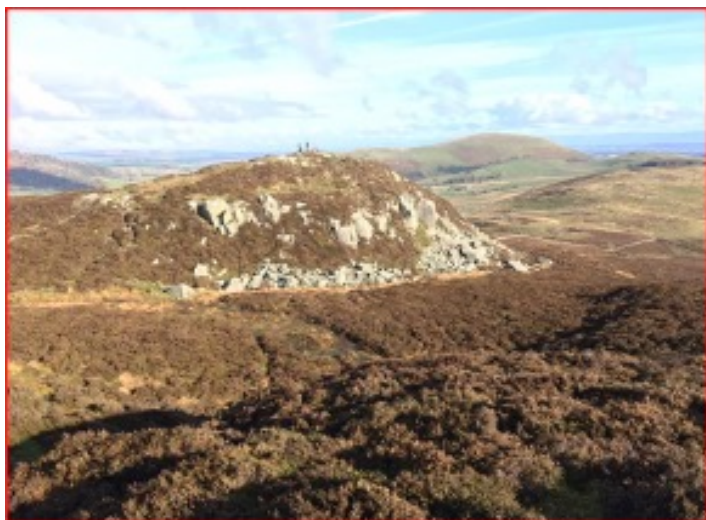
Obituaries

Sven Fossgard - long-standing member of East Berks Ramblers died on October 21st. Last November he was given 3 weeks to live but he defied all the doctors and lived for another year ! He was having coffee at the garden centre a couple of days before he passed away so he wasn't bedridden for long. We send condolences to his wife Hazel.

Mavis Bush - long-standing EBR member passed away at the end of September. We send our condolences to her husband Frank who was a member of the committee for some time, representing the short walkers.

Walking further afield after lockdown *writes Steve Gillions*

Like many of you, the pandemic meant I had to cancel planned walking trips. However, I did manage to get away a couple of times between lockdowns to visit the Lake District. I was determined to stay away from the heavily visited areas and as a result re-discovered Wainwright's *Outlying Fells of Lakeland*. It is dedicated to 'The Old Timers on the Fells,' which tells you much and describes me well.



This little book, superbly revised by Chris Jesty, contains some very enjoyable walks away from the more crowded fells. Although some of them are quite challenging, many are shorter and do not require any great navigational skills. In any event, the directions in the book are good. I especially recommend Cartmel Fell, starting from St. Anthony's Church; Orrest Head and School Knott from Windermere; and Dunmallet from Pooley Bridge.

So, if in future you find yourself in the Lakes wondering what to do for a few hours, you could do worse than take a look at some of these walks. The book itself - available of course from all good bookshops - is worth looking through for its own sake, given Wainwright's unmistakable style of writing and drawing.

East Berkshire Group Annual General Meeting

The **EBR AGM** took place over Zoom on Wednesday, 25 November. The reports that were prepared for the meeting are on the EBR website in the Members Section under AGM Documents. The reports are appended to the newsletter:

- **Chairman's Report**
- **Footpath Secretary's Report**
- **Treasurer's Report**

All resolutions were passed unanimously.
The full committee is:

Chairman	VACANT
Planning & Countryside Officer/Footpath Warden	Gordon Marrs
Co-ordinator	
Group Secretary	Liz Richardson
Honorary Treasurer	Alan Harding
Walks Organiser & Longer Walks Co-ordinator	Pera Marrs
UK Spring Holiday & Shows Organiser	Arthur Holland
Joint Newsletter Editors	Rosemary Davies/Peter Griffiths
Footpath Secretary	Steve Gillions
Membership Secretary	Malcolm Stone
General Member	Ian Ient
General Member	Graham Sexton

Non-committee positions are:

Working Party Organiser	VACANT
Walks Reports Co-ordinator	Alma Richardson
Shorter Walks Co-ordinator	Viv Williams
Autumn UK Holiday 2021 Organiser	Gail Cullen
Webmaster	Mike Taylor

The minutes of the AGM will be posted on the website shortly.

Berkshire Area AGM *writes Paul Castle*

The Berkshire Area AGM, originally planned to be at Sandhurst and run by South East Berks on 7th November, was held instead as a Virtual AGM via Zoom on 9th November 2020. The chairman, David Moffett, summarised the effects of the lockdowns and the effect of the Government Guidelines on the individual groups' arrangements on numbers of ramblers.

Chris Fox, Treasurer, reported a surplus as at September 2020 compared to a deficit a year ago.

Jason Owen, Publicity Officer, said there was not much that could be done during lockdown but a few new members had joined when the first lockdown ended.

The number of members in the various Berkshire Groups declined overall by 2.2% to 2204. East Berks declined by 4.7% to 348 from 365. The only groups with an increased membership compared to a year ago were Berkshire Walkers (up 10.2%) and West Berks (up 3%). The decrease of 2.2% in Berkshire is smaller than the 3.3% decrease in overall membership of the Ramblers Association.

The speaker at the virtual meeting was Kate Ashbrook, Chair of the Board of Trustees. She said it was encouraging that Ramblers Association membership had been increasing 4 months in a row and is now more than 99,000 so nearly back at 100,000. Kate also mentioned that Helen Trantner is the first Berkshire Area person to be on the Board of Trustees.

South East Berks will run the 2021 Berkshire Area AGM. Date to be advised.

2021 New Year Lunch *writes Alma Richardson*

In view of the 2nd lockdown relating to the spread of the Covid-19 virus, we have not progressed with arrangements to hold our New Year lunch in 2021 and so it will **not** take place on the proposed date of 17th January. It is very sad as this annual event has always been very well attended and an opportunity for us all to socialise with each other. The safety of us all must be the priority and I hope that life will get back to normal sooner rather than later.

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 our stand at local Shows or from the **Group Secretary**.

Send your details to groupsecretary@eastberksramblers.org.

Please add £1.40 per copy for guidebooks and £1 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 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 March 2021**.

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

Peter Griffiths Mob: 07765 232178 Email: committee4@eastberksramblers.org

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AGM 2020

Chairman`s Annual Report

When Phil Smith resigned as Chairman at the last AGM , since I was Vice Chairman, the buck stopped with me. What a time to take over the reins, it has been a year that no one will be able to forget. 2020 is the 50th Anniversary of the formation of the Group and was meant to be one of celebration, but we had to cancel or postpone our plans. Two projects are still being pursued however, a portfolio of 50 walks and a memorial bench for David Bounds (who co-authored the Rambling for Pleasure books).

Our Walks Programme has suffered severely; Ramblers suspended all group walks and events from 18th March due to the first lockdown so we had to cancel all other scheduled walks in our Spring programme. Plans for subsequent programmes have also been scrapped, but we continued to walk in groups of up to 6 friends un-officially. Now we have entered a second lockdown and even this is denied us. It was gratifying to discover that, in lockdown, many of our members found interesting and productive ways to make use of the unexpected free time (some of these were related in the August Newsletter).

I managed to persuade Ramblers HO to allow us to carry out the Spring/Summer survey of footpaths for RBWM. My thanks to all of our path wardens for carrying out the work efficiently (I think it was an excuse to get out of the house for a while).

The joint Anniversary walk with Maidenhead Civic Society finally went ahead on 20th September. It was well supported and attended by our local MP, Mrs May and Kate Ashbrook from the Ramblers (see Steve`s report for details). The route included our desired causeway path over Battlemead Common and we must thank Steve for spearheading our fight with RBWM for public access to the common.

This years` holidays were problematic; the Group Spring holiday was cancelled and the Autumn break with HF at Alnmouth went ahead with a much reduced uptake. Our thanks are due to Alan, the treasurer, and the holiday organisers, Arthur and Gail for sorting out and delivering refunds to our members.

I would like to thank everyone on the committee for their hard work and support during this difficult time, with special thanks to Liz, our overworked secretary.

To end on a sad note, we lost John Vint in the summer. John was one of our longest serving members, and a past chairman. He was a real character and will be sorely missed by everyone who knew him.

My final words must be KEEP SAFE.
Gordon Marrs

Treasurer`s Report to EBR AGM in November 2020

At the end of our financial year we had £2,839 in the Bank, and a further £16,000 on deposit, total £18,839. This remains a healthy situation in what has been a quiet year for our finances.

The `Main` heading includes the income and expenses of our `official activities`. The RBWM continue to support our path wardens` excellent work to repair and maintain footpaths in the Borough. We sold fewer books (unsurprisingly!) and earned interest on our bank deposit. HF and RWH supported the EBR as in earlier years. The £4578 cost of practical work comprises £2,000 to the Woodland Trust whose ongoing project in Bisham Woods we wanted to support, and £2,500 to Ramblers Berkshire Area for footpath projects which other Groups are undertaking.

The `Self-funded` heading covers Day coach walks -almost entirely cancelled; one Social event in January; and Holidays. Whilst the Spring break was cancelled and the Autumn break took place, all monies were collected, paid over, and processed to refund where necessary.

The deficit for the year (£3,968) arises from the above (Main) activities, the funding for the Woodland Trust and to Area. The Group remains in robust financial health. The Independent Examiner has signed off the Accounts which have been posted separately to the website.

In conclusion, members may recall that the East Berks Ramblers Endowment Fund is held at Central Office – it represents profits from the successful publishing project “Rambling for Pleasure”. Your committee agreed that the national Ramblers “Don’t Lose Your Ways” project can be supported with £10,000 from the EBR Endowment Account; credits to EBR appeared in press releases and other publicity this year.

ADH November 2nd, 2020

EBR AGM 25 November 2020 FOOTPATH SECRETARY'S REPORT

First, I must thank all of you who have helped to keep a watchful eye on our footpaths and other public rights of way in what has been a very difficult year for everyone. We were able to complete the Spring Footpath Survey and hopefully will be able to undertake the Autumn one in the New Year.

Our public rights of way network is generally in very good order and relatively few footpath problems have been raised over the year. There is one area we should keep an eye on, though. The Police obtained a Public Space Protection Order on the area around the Dorney rowing trench as a result of illegal rave gatherings during the first Covid lockdown period. Eton College are the landowners and they subsequently closed a footpath for some weeks whilst they installed fencing to prevent future raves. I contacted them and they reassured me they would re-open the path as soon as possible, which they delivered on. But I think we will need to make sure that other landowners do not use the lockdowns or the threatened changes to the trespass laws to restrict access or change footpath lines.

As in 2019 much of my time over the last year has been spent on working with other organisations and making sure our voice is heard on access and rights of way issues.

I'd like to spend a little time on three of these, starting with **Battlemead Common**. To sum it up, the saga continues but there may well be light at the end of the tunnel.

The main issue has always been getting a sensible balance between access and wildlife issues. Gordon and I sit on the Friends of Battlemead Common group and have always argued for this by working with others and making our position clear in the local press. Throughout the two years since purchasing the Common, the Council has completely failed to provide any sort of leadership or build any consensus between groups holding very different viewpoints. At the time of writing they have still not published a clear plan or way forward.

However, one may be emerging. We have always been happy with the network of paths proposed for the West Field bordering the Lower Cookham Road but have fought for 'the Causeway Path' across the East Field to link to the Thames Path. We are hopeful that such a path will be agreed for 6 months of the year, but closed in winter to safeguard over-wintering birds. We were able to use this path on the Anniversary Millennium Walk in September, led by Theresa May at quite a pace. Many thanks to all of you who were able to take part; it showed that the path can be used without causing damage or upset to wildlife and I'm sure helped our case.

I represent EBR on the **Local Access Forum** and reported last year that I have joined a working party looking at how to improve access to the footpath network for people with disabilities. Although the pandemic stopped work on this for much of the year, we are now beginning to make progress again. We have named the initiative **Walks for All** and intend to publish a series of walks in 2021 that people of all abilities and ages can enjoy. In the first instance we are focussing on 6 areas and have drafts for three in place.

Most of you will be aware of the **Don't Lose Your Way** initiative undertaken by Ramblers at national level, and which we have helped to fund. The whole country was surveyed to locate potential missing paths that need to be claimed by 2026 if they are not to be permanently lost. The preliminary results have just been published and there are quite a few on our patch, including the last missing link in the Millennium Walk which crosses Cemetery Field beside the Lower Cookham Road. I'm hoping to be able to do some research on this in the coming year to help make the case.

In my report last year I indicated that this year would probably be my last as Footpath Secretary. However, I have offered myself for re-election to the Committee to continue in the role as Footpath Secretary for a short while after which I will be handing over the reins to someone else remaining thereafter as a General Member. As a General Member I'd like to carry on with project work such as the Walks for All and Don't Lose Your Way initiatives. I think this is important work because it builds links with other organisations and people – and the Battlemead saga has shown how valuable this can be – and can help make our rights of way network both larger and more accessible to a wider range of people.

The pandemic has shown how valuable our footpaths are as more and more people have come to use and appreciate them. Let's hope in the coming year, which I fear won't be an easy one by any standards, we can work to make sure they are properly maintained and used as much as possible.

That's it for me, other than to thank all committee members for their support and all of you who ensure our public rights of way network remains one of the best.

Steve Gillions