



EAST BERKS RAMBLERS

Berkshire Area

Group website: www.eastberksramblers.org

Ramblers website: www.ramblers.org.uk

MEMBERS NEWSLETTER No. 140 - December 2022

We have prepared a **Walks Programme** for **January-April 2023**. Details of all the EBR walks can be found on the [Walks page of the EBR website](#). A printed copy of the Walks programme is attached with the newsletter

New Members

A very warm welcome to our new Members:

Sarah Curno Dave and Catriona Cappleman Rosemary Allan and Philip Shorvon
Gilly Miall Louise Nazzarri

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

From the Chair *writes Steve Gillions*

I write this a couple of days after another successful East Berks Ramblers AGM - you can read details of the proceedings elsewhere in this Newsletter. My thanks to everyone who came along and to all of you who have helped out over the year as committee members, walk leaders, path wardens and in lots of other ways. It's your work that makes our group the success it is. And special thanks are due to Gordon Marrs and Arthur Holland who have stood down from the committee after many years of service.

It has been good to see things gradually getting back to normal after the stresses and strains of the Covid years and our walk programme seems now to be back on track. If Covid did have one benefit it was to highlight the value of walking in the wonderful countryside we have around us, and further afield, and how good it is that we are now free to do so in the company of others. So if you have friends or neighbours who you think would enjoy a ramble in the countryside at a pace that suits them and with a friendly bunch of fellow walkers please encourage them to join us on a walk sometime.

By the time this gets published it will officially be winter. Winter walking in the mist, or even better, on crunchy frost and snow can be really enjoyable providing you are well wrapped up. And especially if you can enjoy a hot toddy afterwards. On the other hand, the weather can be, as the Scots have it, 'dreich'. This is best defined as 'miserable, cold, wet and gloomy'. The sort of day when even my dog looks out of the window and gives me the look that says 'if you think I'm going out in that, you can think again, my friend'. The sort of day when I start to plan walks rather than do them.

Which is why talking to others about the Oxfordshire Way led to me spending a wet afternoon looking around on the web for some other named walks not too far from home. There are more than you might



think. All of them have websites giving details of the route and points of interest along the way. It's also a fairly safe bet that the walks themselves will be interesting, otherwise they wouldn't have been created. Most of you will have heard of the Ridgeway and the Chiltern Way but maybe fewer will know of the Brenda Parker Way which runs for 79 miles across the heath and downland between Aldershot and Andover or the Fox Way which takes a 39 mile circular route around Guildford, passing through some very attractive parts of the Surrey Hills. I'll carry on with my research and who knows, I might even discover some walks that I'll offer to lead next year!

And if you too like to dream about where you would like to walk when the finer weather comes along, just let the Walks Coordinator know. Even better, think about leading it yourself. Don't worry if you haven't led a walk before, you'll find there are plenty of people willing to help.

So here's to another successful year of walking and companionship. A very merry Christmas and best wishes for a peaceful and prosperous New Year to all of you and yours. Stay safe and enjoy your walking.

Countryside and Planning - what does it involve within EBR? *By Ian Ient*

I have just taken on the role of Countryside and Planning Officer from Gordon Marrs. Gordon's are big shoes to be stepping into and I must admit I am a little nervous, not least because, until he showed me the ropes, I only had a sketchy understanding of what the role entailed.

The essence of what we are trying to achieve is to try and ensure that the path network within RBWM is not adversely impacted by new developments, or at least make a huge fuss when paths are under threat.

To do this, I keep an eye on planning applications which are under consideration by RBWM. The Planning Department alert me when they believe that an application may affect the path network. However, I also take a look at the weekly planning lists in case they missed something.

I then try to identify those planning applications which are likely to have a direct impact on the path network or may have a more general detrimental impact on the countryside. Where appropriate, I will object to, or comment on, the application on behalf of EBR. Usually the objections will seek to preserve current rights of way or demand that a suitable alternative be provided.

Of course we need to be aware of the RBWM approved plans for housing and development. With such larger housing developments we can insist that paths are protected or appropriately rerouted. New developments also give us the opportunity to seek to get new rights of way adopted that did not previously exist.

Recently a number of our battles have been with farmers wanting to reroute paths. We keep a close watch on such planning applications and would generally object unless the proposal delivers a clear benefit to walkers.

If you come across a planned development that impacts the path network in anything but a very temporary way then let me know. Committee5@eastberksramblers.org

The Footpath Secretary's Other Report *by Graham Sexton*

Hopefully some of you will hear my official report at the AGM or read it in the minutes. This is where you get the gossip from behind the scenes.

I mentioned that I had received an invitation to visit the Cayton Park estate. Afternoon tea in the big house? Unfortunately not. Just a meeting with a member of the staff in the area where they want to build their new barn. Cayton Park is a racehorse stud in the far north-west of the borough and it is immaculate in all respects. Buildings, fences and grass verges are all maintained to perfection. "Money no object" would sum it up. Anyway, it does give me confidence that if a rerouting of the path becomes necessary, all of the work will be done to a high standard.

Different landowners approach the business of applying for diversions in different ways. North of Maidenhead, Summerlease Ltd engaged planning consultants to come up with professionally produced plans for what they wanted to do (without talking to us first). When I read the blurb that came with the plans it talked about "diverting FP19 onto the line of FP20". Really? What, I asked, was the difference between "diverting path A onto the line of path B" and "extinguishing path A"? Never got an answer to that one. Anyway, after three attempts, the high-paid help came up with what we would have suggested in the first place.

On the south side of Ashley Hill, the landowner decided to restore the original line of the path, again without talking to anyone first. Now, fortunately he did get the alignment right but made one hell of a mess of the surface in the process. Some improvements have subsequently been made but I'm not sure how well the path will stand up to a wet winter. The landowner did this work so that he could fence in a field-edge path. Legally, the minimum width that

needs to be left is just 1m (2m for bridleways). This has the effect of forcing all walkers to follow the same line which then gets very muddy. And walkers often find themselves between a rock and a hard place or, rather, a barbed-wire fence and a thorny hedge. Of course, we can try to arrange appropriate work on the path but the fencing in of field-edge paths frequently creates path maintenance headaches where none existed before. So, you might reasonably ask, why are landowners spending good money to do this? From what I hear, the main reason is the problem of dogs worrying livestock. The law requires dogs on public rights-of-way to be "under close control". A dog on a lead is definitely under close control but the wording of the law allows wiggle-room to those owners who maintain "my dog is very well-behaved" or "my dog *never* chases sheep". And therein lies the problem, in my view.

You have probably heard about the proposal for the new studios near Holyport. If this gains any traction, it is going to be a whole new ball-game for me. This would be a multi-million pound development that would impact on several rights-of-way. I've got a lot of learning to do about how to protect walkers' interests when faced with a complex planning process.

Happy walking!

Booking a trip with Ramblers Holidays?

EBR are affiliated to the Walking Partnership. If you book a holiday with Ramblers Walking Holidays 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.

Thank you, Gordon as given by Alan Harding at EBR AGM, 25 November 2022

Well, you might not have expected to hear from me twice in one AGM, and I assure you that writing the notes for the financial statement was much easier than this duty, recognising Gordon Marrs' massive contribution to our group over nearly 30 years.

I've actually known Gordon for over 40 years myself as a close neighbour and because our children attended the same school, we live a couple of 100 yards away from him and Pera. Nevertheless I learned quite a lot about Gordon when it came to writing it all down and it's a pleasure to share this with you.

Gordon joined ICI Paints at 18 and this enabled him to become a student at what is now called Aston University. He went into research upon graduation, briefly with 3M and then for 30 years at ICI Jealotts Hill – which is where he met Pera. When he retired from ICI in 1994, he joined Ramblers and soon afterwards he was recruited onto the committee with responsibility for countryside matters as the countryside officer and -by the way -Margaret Bowdery was the footpaths officer. What a formidable pair!

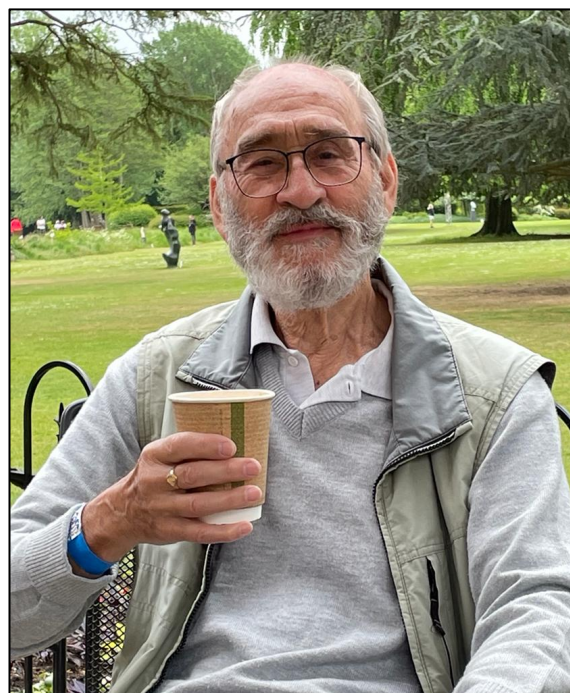


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Gordon noted weekly the planning applications occurring in and around Maidenhead in order to protect rights of way and the general interests of walkers; he also represented EBR on the Local Access Forum, the LAF, and he was on the Marsh Meadow Committee too. He is very well known to the RBWM and negotiated our good and financially beneficial relationship. By policing planning matters, he has materially affected the rambling environment all around us.

Over these many years Gordon has worked with a variety of chairmen, John Vint, Peter London, David Bailey, Phil Smith and then he took on the role himself on an interim basis until more recently Steve stepped up to be our Chair. Gordon has served as vice chairman for many years and in harness with Gerald Barnett who was the secretary of the committee. That list of names demonstrates to you what a strong group EBR is and has been, and I'm delighted that most of them have been able to come tonight.

Besides countryside matters, Gordon has been an active member in other ways; he walked out many routes with Gerald, and led many many walks. He and Pera went on many EBR holidays, averaging more than one a year. At HF locations especially, he was a walk leader when EBR supplied its own team. The Marrs team ran the coach walks for 13 years to 2018, and I think more is in the pipeline!

What about Gordon the man? You will have noticed that Gordon can be quite quiet but that's because Pera can be pretty noisy too! But when he gets going, he is a man with strong views: Gordon is fierce about politics, a socialist and very anti Murdoch. His musical taste is very broad but essentially he goes for serious classical with a hint of folk. He has a very good sound system at home with his chair in a critical position for best stereo results. He prefers R3 to Classic FM, and attends the Hexagon and the Proms. He plays the guitar, but sadly golf is one area in which he does not excel. He has been a runner, but now confines himself to walks without hills. He supports Chelsea and Wycombe Wanderers and Uxbridge (how did that happen?).

He is a proud father and grandfather.

Finally, you may know that Pera's birthday is on April 1st, she is an Aries. Gordon is a Gemini. I read a serious newspaper, and a couple of weeks ago it featured an article about star signs: Of the Aries and Gemini combination, it said, and I quote "Aries signs tend to get bored quickly so they need a partner who will keep them on their toes! And Geminis will appreciate their partner's aversion to being clingy."

Ladies and Gentlemen, we thank Gordon for so many contributions in so many ways to this committee and to EBR, please join me for three rousing cheers,

Selworthy Holiday 12-15 June 2023 *from Pera Marrs*

We have booked an HF 4-night break at **Holnicote House, Selworthy** with 3 days walking on and around Exmoor. The holiday is from Monday 12 to Thursday 15 June, driving home after breakfast on Friday, 16 June 2023.

We have a viable group of 26 who have paid their deposits, but would like to have 30, to get maximum discount. We have takers for all the single rooms, but I will start a waiting list. We still have twin rooms which can be taken by couples or sharing singles or as a single with a £50 excess per night.

There will be 3 all-day walks offered each day, for up to 7.5, 9.5 and 12.5 miles, with increasing amounts of ascent. You will be briefed in the evening about the next day's walks, and can choose which group to join each day, or do your own thing.



I hope to arrange a short walk locally in the early afternoon, before we arrive at the house (usually) at 4.00 pm on Monday, 12 June.

For those of you who have not experienced HF (Holiday Fellowship) before the price includes 3 leaders; 3 meals a day; cooked or continental breakfast; deluxe Packed Lunch and 3-course dinner. The packed lunch consists of pre-ordered sandwiches and a selection of fruit, biscuits, cake, crisps. Unfortunately the swimming pool will not be open due to cost savings. The leaders organise activities after dinner, usually a quiz on Thursday and a visiting speaker another night. If you don't fancy the evening activity, you can always socialise in the lounge bar.

The basic group price is £619 pp for 10 or more. We have 15 people, so we get one free place, and, if we get to 30 people, we get another free place. Depending on numbers the price will be between £619 and £578. At 26 people it is **£595**. You can also upgrade a double room to Premium or Superior rooms at £20 and £25 / night.

If you would like to join us on this holiday, please let me know as soon as possible at longerwalks@eastberksramblers.org. There will be a deposit, but to start with I would just like numbers. If you have friends who walk and would like to join you, then include them. Final payments are due on **31st January 2023**.

There are more details available on the HF website: <https://www.hfholidays.co.uk/country-houses/locations/selworthy-exmoor>

Path Wardens Tea Party



To thank the path wardens for their hard work and contribution in caring for the footpaths in the EBR area they were invited to afternoon tea which was held in Pera and Gordon Marrs' delightful garden, hosted by the Committee. Path wardens are unsung heroes and their commitment to checking out the paths is much appreciated by us all.

The party was planned to take place in July but warnings from the weather forecasters was for extremely high temperatures and so the decision was taken to postpone until September. There was always a risk that we may have a wet Saturday but we were lucky and had perfect weather conditions. A very enjoyable afternoon was had by all.

Walking the Oxfordshire Way *from Steve Gillions*

These days many of us travel long distances through the countryside by car without really appreciating what it is that we're driving past. The coach walks are a chance to savour the variety of landscapes, geology, villages, wildlife – and weather – that make walking throughout the UK so enjoyable and rewarding.

They are a great way to enjoy a whole day out walking in an area you normally wouldn't get to without making a lot of effort. They give you the opportunity to complete an end-to-end walk without having to spend hours beforehand poring over bus and train timetables. They're also good fun and not too expensive: the coach fare is typically less than £20.

In last year's survey many of you said you would like to see more coach walks in the programme. So this year we decided to undertake the Oxfordshire Way which runs for 68 miles between Bourton on the Water and Henley and makes a great connection between somewhere quite a way away to somewhere much closer to home. Three of the six legs have now been completed and the remaining legs are scheduled for 2023.



Kaye Carver, Margaret Carlyle and Richard Whetton talked to me about the enjoyment - and occasional pitfalls – of going on an EBR coach walk and why others should join them. They all talked about the chance to walk in areas they wouldn't usually visit and of the attractions on this particular walk: picturesque villages, the walk close to Blenheim and crossing the Oxford Canal. One leg was walked in what was described as atrocious weather but was 'still enjoyable' so if that isn't an advert for joining in one of these walks I don't know what is.



On the upside, they mentioned the camaraderie on the coach during a journey that's further than you would probably want to drive but not so far that it gets boring. A stop at Oxford Services provided an opportunity to stretch the legs. Journeys never exceed two hours and leaving Braywick Car Park at 8.00 means walking can start about 10.00 and finish about 3.00 or 4.00. One downside is the cost of parking at Braywick, which is now £10 per day, but as with all dark clouds there is a silver lining: if you decide to

eat at the Toby Inn when you get back, and many do, the parking is free.

The legs covered so far have included the village of Stonesfield, aptly named as the fields were covered with honey-coloured Cotswold stone. One of them was a potato field, which could make harvest time interesting.

The Blenheim estate was especially memorable: the route followed the Roman road of Akerman Street and gave fine views along a grand avenue of trees leading towards the palace. A five foot high stile over the estate boundary wall provided an interesting challenge. The community planted orchard with multiple varieties of apples was a fine sight, as was the last-of-its-kind signal box at Ascott-under-Wychwood where the route crosses the River Evenlode making its way to join the Thames.

I always like to read a little about the history of an area that's new walking territory for me and there's lots of interest on the remaining legs of this walk – the stocks at Weston on the Green; the village of Islip was an important Royalist stronghold in the Civil War until Cromwell's victory there in 1645; the way from Islip to Noke is known as the 'Wake' or 'Coffin' path; and the path between Beckley and Waterperry goes by way of Drunkards Corner. There is some information on our own website and the Oxfordshire CC website has some excellent maps and historical notes.

I hope that's enough to whet your appetites to sign up for one or more of the last three legs. It has mine, so I'll try to make sure I free up one day when I can get on the coach. I'm sure the weather will be better than atrocious, but I guess you never know.

And last but certainly not least, many thanks to those who organise and lead the coach walks. It's not an easy job: the walks all have to be researched even though they are a distance away; coaches and drivers have to be sorted out and pick up points agreed; monies collected. So thanks to those who organised and led the first three legs and to Peter and Lesley who have volunteered to lead the final three.





FOR MORE INFORMATION AND TO BOOK
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First Aid course - 21 February 2023

The next first aid course is booked for Tuesday morning **21st February** 9.30 to 12.30 at **Eton Wick Village Hall**, Eton Wick Road, Eton Wick SL4 6LT.

There will be 2 trainers with 12 participants each. Eton Wick Village Hall has 2 separate halls. There is plenty of free parking in front of the village hall and in the recreation ground car park which is next to the village hall. Participants will need loose comfortable clothing as the practical sessions involve lying on the floor.

The course is open to walk leaders and any other members who would be interested in a first aid course. Please contact Joyce Keegan (jjk382@yahoo.com) to book a place. There is no charge to EBR members for this training.

National Outdoor Expo 2023 – 18/19 March 2023 - NEC Birmingham

One of the biggest community meet-ups of the year, bringing together inspirational speakers, cutting-edge technologies and the best in gear, all under one roof.

<https://nationaloutdoorexpo.com/>

Obituary: Neil Adamson *by Gordon Marrs*

We regret to announce the recent sudden death of Neil Adamson, after a short spell in hospital.

Neil and his wife Diane have been members of the Group for many years, having joined the Ramblers in 1997. They were regular walkers in their younger days and Neil was a walks leader.

Neil was our Membership Secretary from 2008, when he took over from Margaret Welch, until 2017 when the job passed to Malcolm. He kept records of the members on an old card index system, organised recruitment campaigns (as the Group's point of contact) and arranged the printing and distribution of the Walks Programme and Newsletter. Pera and I had regular convivial sessions with Neil and Di "stuffing" envelopes with the documents and then sorting them by postcode, for hand delivery or mailing.

Aside from walking, Neil and Di were keen gardeners and tended an allotment in Windsor, to which they would cycle. They were enthusiastic members of the Clematis Society, manning their stalls at shows, such as the one at Hampton Court.

Neil was a talented artist, some of his work adorns the walls of their home, and he enjoyed taking part in painting sessions with the local Windsor Art Group.



On a personal level, Neil was a convivial companion and we four had some memorable holidays together. He will be sorely missed by all of his friends and family.

Traditional "New Year's Lunch" revived on 15th January 2023 *from Pera Marrs*

For the first time since 2018 we can offer you a splendid Sunday lunch to launch the group into, hopefully, a healthy and successful 2023. We will have sole use of the dining room at **Winter Hill Golf Club, Cookham, SL6 9RP**, and access to the Club bar, where you can buy reasonably priced drinks.

The menu is:-

Bread roll and salted butter

Mains

Poached Salmon, samphire and preserve lemon beurre blanc
Butterfly leg of lamb, rosemary and black garlic rub, roasting gravy
Pan roasted chicken supreme, wild mushroom and tarragon veloute
Stuffed aubergine, spiced lentil + caramelised red onion with vegan cheese glaze

All accompanied with tender stem broccoli, french beans, sugar snap peas and crushed herb baby potatoes.

Puddings

Sticky toffee pudding, caramel sauce, toasted pecans and vanilla ice cream.
Lemon and orange tart with vanilla bean cream
Fruit salad

Coffee and chocolate mints

All for only £24

Please do not pay yet. We are hoping to use our new card reading gizmo on the day. If you do not want to pay by card, then cash or cheque to EBR on the day will be fine. The Club needs 7 days notice of cancellation, after that you are committed to pay for your meal.

Send your choice of meals to longerwalks@eastberksramblers.org or message Pera on **07769 952884**. Space is limited so please reply soon to avoid disappointment.

Before the meal there will be a 5.4 mile walk round **Winter Hill** and **Cock Marsh**. The walk is open to all, but you can only stay and eat if you have pre-ordered your meal. The changing rooms are available for those who wish to spruce up before sitting down.

Open Access Land *by Keith Dunford*

I recently led walks for East Berks and Wycombe Ramblers over Open Access Land on Bledlow Ridge and have been asked to provide more information on the subject.

The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (CROW Act) provided for Open Access Land. The public have right of access to such land but it can be subject to restrictions. Ordnance Survey maps shade such land as yellow but, of course, old pre-2000 OS maps do not as it did not exist!

General information on such land can be found here:-

<https://www.gov.uk/right-of-way-open-access-land/use-your-right-to-roam>

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/open-access-land-management-rights-and-responsibilities>

Information regarding general restrictions can be found here:-

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/open-access-land-and-the-coastal-margin-how-to-restrict-public-access>

Open Access land can be useful when designing a walk in providing for a missing link between Rights of Way. This was shown by the walks I recently led.

The government's adviser for the natural environment in England, Natural England, is the authority for Open Access Land. It maintains a database of maps and specific restrictions for open access land which can be accessed here:-

<http://www.openaccess.naturalengland.org.uk/wps/portal/oasys/maps/MapSearch/>

Enter 'Chawley Manor' (without quotes!) into the Place Name box, click on 'search', and scroll to the bottom for links to maps and specific restrictions for the Bledlow Ridge land I walked on.

Finally, the local highway authority (Bucks CC for Bledlow Ridge) is the authority for access to Open Access Land.

Adding ICE (In Case of Emergency) information to your mobile phone *by Malcolm Stone*

The Windsor group recently had a serious issue on one of its walks when a member was taken critically ill and the group struggled to find her *In Case of Emergency* contact details. They finally did and help was summoned but it is a timely reminder for everyone to always carry their emergency contact key fobs with them on walks. The EBR Committee also recommends that members add emergency contact details to their mobile phones.

On behalf of Berkshire Area Ramblers, the Chair of Berkshire Walkers has provided two hyperlinks for Apple and Android phones respectively, which can be found at the end of this note. In the case of Apple phones, Peter Griffiths tried the hyperlink and gave the following feedback:

'I have finally set up emergency contacts on my iPhone following the instructions in the link to Apple Support. I had to look through all my apps to find the Health app, but it was easy to add each contact to my Medical Id once I'd found it. I displayed the instructions on my iPad while adding the information on my iPhone to save switching screens. There was no ambiguity.'

I tried the Android link but was confused by the number of Personal Safety apps that came up, not knowing which one to use. I therefore googled 'How do you enter in case of emergency information on a Samsung A21s (my phone) which will be accessible by the emergency services' The answer was to go to the home Contacts Page and click on my name which was at the top of the page. This brought up a page which if you scrolled down, you could add your medical information including blood type and your emergency contact/s. It was a bit confusing, but when your phone is locked and the emergency services swipe upwards to reveal the numbers for you to enter your passcode, there is a button below titled 'Emergency Call'. When I clicked on that button it did not make an emergency call, instead it brought up a page with the numbers for a call and an icon for the Medical Information and one with the name of the Emergency Contact both to be clicked on to get the information. I have discussed this with two other EBR members who also had Samsung phones but different models. One had the same procedure as for my phone, the other was slightly different in that you had to click on the contact at the bottom of the home Contacts Page.

For Android phones, if the hyperlink does not offer a solution, I suggest you try googling the answer as I did, inserting

the make and model of your phone. If you do not get an answer that way, I suggest you check your phone manual or contact your Customer Support team on the manufacturers website.

The hyperlinks are below:

See Android steps here: <https://support.google.com/android/answer/9319337?hl=en-GB>

Apple IOS steps here - <https://support.apple.com/en-gb/HT208076#:~:text=You%20can%20also-.add%20emergency%20contacts,-.%20After%20an%20emergency>

EBR Annual General Meeting

The 52nd Annual General Meeting of the Group was held at Claires Court School on Friday, 25th November 2022. 38 members attended.

The following provides a summary of the proceedings. Steve Gillions took the Chair.

- The minutes of the 2021 AGM were approved.
- **Chairman's report:** The Chairman offered thanks to the Committee members, walks leaders, footpath wardens and members who had taken part in the survey carried out early in the year. Also thanks to Kaye Carver for the walks reports and the new leaders who had come forward.

The questionnaire had provided some useful feedback. Members had voiced support for the long distance coach walks and for some longer walks to be included in the walks programme. Both these had been addressed during the year. Peter and Lesley would be leading the remainder of the Oxfordshire Way in 2023 and it had been suggested the next trail could be the Macmillan Way but that would require more volunteers to step up.

The "Don't lose your Way" project initiated by Ramblers Head office continued for lodging claims for "lost" paths with the deadline of 2026 had now been removed. EBR had made a contribution to publicity costs for the project. A small local group had done valuable research in our area to identify and prioritise possible claims. Thanks go to Heather Brown and Brendan Monaghan for their particular contribution.

EBR membership remained high; 342 in October. A small reduction had been seen in line with most Berkshire groups. The walks programme was back on track after the hiatus caused by the pandemic.

During the year a number of members had passed away: Mrs Evans, Dave Mackay and Neil Adamson, a former Membership Secretary.

The Chairman's involvement with the Local Access Forum had focussed on working with other groups such as horse riders and cyclists and especially on creating walking routes for less able people.

A motion had been proposed by Berkshire Area at the Ramblers' General Council that the risk assessment process be simplified and preferably removed. This, and another seeking to remove the requirement altogether, were passed by a large majority. The Trustees had undertaken to review the risk assessment process but indications were they will do nothing to improve matters.

The Committee had reviewed how it operated and communicated with members. The main actions which resulted:

1. Need for a sharper focus on publicity and PR to attract new members possibly through use of social media.
2. The Newsletter to be issued twice a year from 2023 onwards but will look to make it more comprehensive with more articles (if members contribute them !). The website will be used more often to announce news items and email/post for more urgent items.
3. Establishment of a library of walks on the website using .gpx files allowing members and walk leaders to download routes.
4. Path wardens to be asked if they would be happy to take a first look at any path problems reported to the Footpath Secretary which were on their patch.

To achieve these action points will require additional (human) resource so please consider whether you can volunteer help with any of them.

- **The Footpath Secretary** reported as follows:
He thanked the Path Wardens for their work. The local rights-of-way network remains mostly in good order. Faults and problems should continue to be reported as they arise.

Mount Farm diversion: this had been approved by the Council (passed only on the Chairman's casting vote) despite significant opposition. After the required public consultation, the significant negative feedback had resulted in the Panel reversing their decision.

Two other potential diversions have been under consideration during the year:

1. Summerlease had suggested changes to footpaths north of North Moor which affected the Green Way. The initial proposal had been unacceptable to EBR as it would have left only one cycle-free route in the area. It now seems that a compromise has been found that could keep all stakeholders happy leaving the cycle-free route as it is.
2. Cayton Park estate intends to apply for planning permission to extend their barns at Juddmonte Farms. If granted this would at least require a minor footpath diversion. The suggestion of a more significant re-routing of the path would offer some advantage to walkers. Relations with the estate are good and EBR is being kept in the loop.

General queries which come from the public about blocked paths are investigated which often indicate either poor map-reading or poor signage!

Pressure on the landowner responsible for Hurley FP33 would be continued. This path had been re-aligned back to its original line but without any consultation. The resulting surface is unsatisfactory and needs to be improved.

EBR was aware of (a) the Holyport Studios public consultation and that the outline plans impact several rights-of-way. Previous attempts to re-develop this land have been unsuccessful and plenty of local opposition is expected and (b) a proposed development at Lillibrooke Manor in Cox Green. These plans do not appear to require the diversion of any PROWs but there could be concerns about the loss of rural character from paths in the area.

- **The Treasurer** took the meeting through the 2021/22 accounts, which can be found on the EBR website under AGM Documents in the Members section.

COVID had affected activities in 2021 and into the '22 financial year. EBR had taken a grant from Central Office and received two annual instalments of the grant from the RBWM in recognition of the great work done by our path wardens in the Borough.

Other income was minimal with interest rates being exceptionally low and few sales of publications although a late contribution of £124 for book sales would be recorded in the 2023 accounts.

Main expenditure reflected the costs of re-commencing face-to-face Committee meetings and the AGM, the publication of the Newsletters and £68 for some stream and river clearance.

Self-funded: included the deposit for the group holiday. A loss of £416 had been recorded for coach walks but numbers were increasing and a small increase in the price should help to breakeven in future. A mobile card reader had been procured to allow contactless credit and debit card payments.

EBR recorded a £904 surplus in the year which included the double payment from RBWM. Funds of £16,180 were held in the bank.

- **Re-election of Officers:** Gordon Marrs and Arthur Holland did not offer themselves for re-election and have retired from the Committee. All other Committee members stood for re-election in their existing roles with Ian lent also taking on the Countryside Officer role. Following the re-election of officers, your Committee for the next year will be as follows:

Chair
Vice Chair, Walks Organiser and Longer Walks Co-ordinator
Group Treasurer
Group Secretary
Membership Secretary/Recruitment Contact
Footpath Secretary
Footpath Warden Co-ordinator and Countryside Officer
Joint newsletter editor

Steve Gillions
Pera Marrs
Alan Harding
Liz Richardson
Malcolm Stone
Graham Sexton
Ian lent
Rosemary Davies

- Steve Gillions was appointed as the EBR group representative for Berkshire Area committee meetings.
 - **David Moore** was re-appointed Independent Examiner to the group's accounts.
 - Any other business.
1. It was confirmed the coach walk would begin in March not April to ensure continuity of leaders for the remainder of the Oxfordshire Way.
 2. A query was raised on why the cost for newsletters was high when members received the documents electronically. It was explained that there remained a number of members who continued to receive hard copy documents either because they did not have internet access or they had declined to accept e-communications.
 3. Pera Marrs said she would be taking bookings for the Christmas lunch on 21 December and the New Year lunch at the Winter Hill Golf Club on 15 January 2023. Two twin rooms remained available for the June 2023 break to Selworthy. She was also seeking more volunteers to lead walks in the Spring programme.
- The Chair thanked Gordon Marrs and Arthur Holland for their contributions to EBR over the years. A voucher would be passed on to Arthur who had been unable to attend the meeting. As Gordon had held various Committee roles over some 33 years, a special vote of thanks was given by his good friend, Alan Harding. A voucher was also given to Gordon.

The full minutes of the 2022 AGM (including the accounts for 2021/22) can be viewed on the EBR website at https://www.eastberksramblers.org/images/group/Archives/AGM/AGM2022/AGM_minutes_2022_FINAL.pdf

“Something different” *by Martin Cox*

The first week of August I spent ten days in bright sunshine as a volunteer at the Commonwealth Games in Birmingham. Having seen a feature about the Games asking for 14,000 volunteers, I thought why not?? For a number of years I had worked in a paid role as an Event Steward at Ascot Racecourse, Henley Regatta and on four State Visits in Windsor. Through this I gained qualifications in Spectator Safety and Customer Service, so felt I had an understanding of what I was letting myself in for.

My initial interview took place in Birmingham Library, where I decided I was happy to do whatever as opposed to being a volunteer at a particular venue/sport. I was offered a venue of Coventry Stadium where Rugby Sevens was taking place followed by Boxing & Wrestling. Next followed two sessions of training in Birmingham & Coventry with volunteers who were very much a mixed bag from all over the country. The facilitators who were from Oz and had worked on the 2018 Games on the Gold Coast put us at ease, despite being ribbed a lot about cricket!!

Next I had to sort out accommodation which is not provided. I booked a room with Coventry University in a modern block in the city, with easy access to bus and rail stations. My uniform arrived and rosters were published. I found I was now 3 days at Coventry and 5 at Alexander Stadium, Birmingham. As part of the package I got free travel on public transport for the duration of the Games.

So Day 1 and I had to be at Coventry Stadium for 6.00am, catching the first free shuttle bus at 5.30am. Like most big sporting events behind the scenes it was pretty chaotic getting everyone into place, and we began with meeting and greeting spectators. Also had to get to grips with the venue layout, answer lots of questions, hand out face paint, colouring books, wave the foam hands etc. Unfortunately initially there were not enough entry points open so a long queue built up and it was getting close to opening time. A member of the Games Operations Team came out and asked the volunteers “to manage the public’s expectations”. That translates as smile and take the flack !!!

So with more volunteers and military personnel opening extra entry points, alongside private security staff we cleared the queue in 13 minutes. Everybody was happy and it was time for bacon butties and coffee all round.

Day 2 & 3 went a lot smoother, in addition to meet and greet I also did some ticket scanning. Decided I prefer paper tickets as opposed to tickets on phone apps. I was able to watch some of the Rugby 7s during my down time.

Day 4 was spent in Coventry exploring the cathedral, art gallery, local pubs and parks.

For the next 5 days I had to travel to Birmingham to volunteer, as my shifts did not start until 3pm. So I travelled with a fellow volunteer having a hot meal first before contending with train strikes, and the elusive Avanti West Coast Service. We did travel 1st class wherever possible. Popped into Birmingham City Centre which was absolutely buzzing, with the Raging Bull from the Opening Ceremony being the main draw.

At Alexander Stadium which was the main venue for Athletics everything was on a much bigger scale, and I spent most of my time ticket scanning. The venue catered for 28-30,000 people most days. Spectators mainly arrived by free shuttle buses, where double decker buses and drivers from all over the country had been drafted in. So I found myself on occasions in a bus branded with a service normally found in Wokingham, Glasgow, Oxford together with the drivers local accent. In the evening whilst waiting for our buses to leave we were entertained by a man in a converted Airstream trailer blasting out a variety of songs which we danced to to keep the circulation going.

Apart from being well fed, Volunteers were given a reward gift as they completed a set number of shifts. My first was a water bottle from a main sponsor Severn Trent water, bizarrely on the first day the refill stations ran out of water. My next gifts were a pin badge, coasters and a metal baton containing a thank you certificate.

During down time, I took the opportunity to watch hurdles, running, discus, shot put, hammer, pole vault and para sports. Hard life this volunteering lark!

On reflection I realise I have been part of something special, the camaraderie amongst the volunteers infectious with some wicked sense of humour displayed.

For relaxation from this event I helped a friend move a canal boat for five days, but that's another story.

Thank you for writing this article Martin – from the Editor

Book Review – The Wild Silence by Raynor Winn *Reviewed by Malcolm Stone*

The first part of the book chronicles Winn's childhood, meeting Moth later to become her husband despite her parents' disapproval, and their walking trips in the UK. After walking the South West Coastal Path (SWCP), a friend is allowing them to stay in a chapel in Cornwall while trying to rebuild their lives. This is where Winn writes 'The Salt Path' chronicling their completion of the 620 mile SWCP, while Moth is studying for an advanced degree in land management. When offered a tenancy of a nearby farm by a reader of *The Salt Path*, the couple have a chance to return to life fully in tune with the land and seasons. The farm is rundown and Ray and Moth despite the latter's illness start a rewilding project to bring the farm back to life and attract nature back. In the final part of the book Ray and Moth decide it's time for another challenging and unforgettable walk across Iceland, this time joining up with friends Dave and Julie who they met on the SWCP.

This was an enjoyable read, which I recommend to anyone interested in life experiences.

EBR Newsletter – The Future

From 2023 the timings of the newsletter will change and there will be 2 editions produced in April and October.

The content of the newsletter will be similar to the present format but it very much depends on what you, the members and readership, contribute and we encourage you to submit articles for inclusion in the publication. Thank you. newsletter@eastberksramblers.org

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 March 2023**.

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