



EAST BERKS RAMBLERS

Berkshire Area

Group website: www.eastberksramblers.org

Ramblers website: www.ramblers.org.uk

MEMBERS NEWSLETTER No. 142 - October 2023

We have prepared a **Walks Programme** for **September - December 2023**. Details of all the EBR walks can be found on the [Walks page of the EBR website](#). You can also download the Walks programme for printing on the website.

New Members

A very warm welcome to our new Members:

Anna Burn Christine Morison Virginia Pumares Martha Hammock Jackie Fricker
Guy Hoffelner Edward Piekut Swarna Pillai Zeta Messum Richard Donachie Yuen Har Tse
Chantelle and Craig Barske Liz Couper-Johnston Stuart and Mary Luxon

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 *Steve Gillions*

I don't know about you but I've just about given up with the weather. Back in the spring I was bombarded with sleet showers in the Great Park. In October I'm being told the temperatures here are way above normal. I've spent five weeks walking in the Hebrides this year and had only half a day of light rain. Which was a bit of a pain, because I rely on a wet day to give me an excuse for spending all day in a café drinking tea and eating cakes rather than flogging up hills. Still, on the bright side I'm probably a bit fitter and certainly less fatter as a result.

Closer to home I'm glad to be able to say that the main Millennium Walk is now fully waymarked (the Marlow spur will follow when we have the money) thanks to the efforts of EBR members and the Civic Society. The Walk is now on an equal footing with the Green Way and Boundary Walks as part of the footpath network that has been created by local people. I've submitted an article for publication in the next edition of South East Walker, which should also carry an obituary piece for Gerald Barnett written by Gordon Marrs.

Further afield, Ramblers Head Office have produced a new strategy that is due to be discussed at an extraordinary general meeting on 25 November. No doubt we will be informed of what is agreed at some stage but perhaps the most important thing for us is to carry on with the main things we do – which is to go walking and safeguard the rights of way network. I recently had a meeting with the CEO and Head of Paths at Head Office to talk about the future use of the Endowment Fund set up by the profits from Rambling for Pleasure publications. They have a couple of projects in the pipeline that may be appropriate. One is about developing better path monitoring across the country, the other about providing support and advice to groups in responding to planning proposals. Whilst our group has a good track record on both of these areas there is room for improvement in other



areas. We'll discuss this at the next committee and decide on a way forward.

As I've got older I've come to appreciate the benefits of taking an interest in what's around me whilst walking rather than just focussing on the route itself. There's a fascinating history of old, even prehistoric, farming methods to be found by looking out for the signs of old field systems and lazy bed cultivation. OS maps give some clues as to where they can be found and the internet is a very easy way to dig deeper (couldn't resist it!) if you want to. I still tend to walk over the tops of hills rather than go round them and have found myself visiting a lot of hill forts this year without really planning to. Mostly constructed in the Iron Age, they really are impressive structures, often with huge ramparts and ditches and worth a bit of exploration if you come across one. The nearest to us is Caesar's Camp just south of Bracknell: Green Book Ramble 20, so easy enough to find. There is still debate as to whether they were built as defensive forts or simply dwelling places – the answer seems to be a bit of both – but I intend to do some research over the winter and have plans to visit more forts around the West Berks/Hampshire/Wiltshire borders.

Finally, this is my last 'From the Chair' offering as I will be standing down from the Committee at the AGM in November. I've really enjoyed my time on the committee and putting these little notes together. My thanks to all and especially to our Editors Rosemary and Peter, without whom this wouldn't happen.

Keep rambling!

Planning and Countryside *Ian lent*

In the last newsletter I mentioned an outline planning application submitted for a film studio to be built near Holyport. We registered our objection as a number of paths would be impacted. To date there has been no progress - we are unsure why there has been a delay processing this application. We will continue to monitor the situation.

You may have heard about the submission of plans for 200 houses in Cookham. I have looked at the plans and there does not appear to be any impact on the existing path network and so we have not objected at this stage. I am sure that many Cookham groups will be having their say. We will monitor as things progress.

Path Wardens *Ian lent*

Have you ever thought of becoming a path warden? The valuable work done by our dedicated path warden team generates a significant source of income for EBR. More importantly, it is instrumental in ensuring that our path network remains in good shape for everyone to enjoy. We are always looking for volunteers to join the team. Please speak to Ian or any of the other Path Wardens if you would like to find out more. committee5@eastberksramblers.org / 07802 794483

Two new path wardens have joined the team. Eleanor Griffiths is taking over as Path Warden for Cookham West from Jenny Cooper and Peter Koklitis is taking on Bray Central from Martin Cox. Many thanks to Jenny and Martin for all of their efforts over many years.

Gates for Hurley Footpaths *Ian lent*

We recently met with Sharon Wootten (RBWM Public Rights of Way officer) to explore how EBR could assist in improving the borough paths network. We identified two paths in Hurley (Hurley 4 and 7) that needed stiles to be replaced and new kissing gates installed. We have agreed to fund the purchase of 3 kissing gates and 2 swing gates. The installation of the gates will be carried out by the landowner in the autumn.

Spring Break 2024 to Dolgellau, 3 – 7 June 2024 *Rosemary Davies*

The EBR Spring Break at Dolserau Hall, Dolgellau is now full. If you are interested in joining us please send an email to committee1@eastberksramblers.org and I will add your name to the waiting list. If there are any dropouts I will let you know. Please do not send any booking forms or deposits until you have heard from me.

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.



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Is the Environment Agency failing walkers? *Graham Sexton*

Many of you will have read the article in the September issue of South East Walker concerning the closure of Temple Footbridge. Not only is this a vital part of the Thames Path but this bridge also facilitates walks to the north of the river starting from the car park at Hurley. Since the article went to press there has been a further update from the Environment Agency (dated 6th September). Their assessment has concluded that short-term repairs are not possible and that major work is required. Although the work needed falls short of full replacement, it will depend on capital funding being obtained. Furthermore, the Environment Agency press release makes it clear that, in the competition for this funding, the interests of boaters (e.g. to maintain locks and weirs) will take precedence over the interests of walkers. In short, they appear to be trying to manage expectations around a long closure.

Unfortunately, this is not the only example of Environment Agency infrastructure that is affecting local walkers. The walkway at Marsh Lock, just outside Henley, which takes the Thames Path across to the lock island has been closed for safety reasons since May 2022. I was there only a few days ago and no repair work had started. According to a Henley Herald article dated 27th July 2023, tenders had not been issued and the EA had even challenged ownership of the structure,

despite having carried out the last set of repairs in 1991. Maybe the EA should employ more engineers and contractors and fewer lawyers! It appears that both Oxfordshire County Council and Wokingham Borough Council (the local authorities on either side of the river at this point) have been sucked into the discussions. So don't hold your breath. There is a diversion in place that takes the Thames Path along a permissive route on the Oxfordshire bank. This route is safe and involves no more distance than the walkway but is significantly less interesting. Were permission to be withdrawn (and this has been threatened), Thames Path walkers would face a horrible diversion along the main Henley-Reading road.

As if that were not enough, slightly outside our area at Benson Lock near Wallingford, the Thames Path is also diverted due to failings of the Environment Agency infrastructure. This diversion has been in place since January 2023. There does at least appear to be a timescale to *start* the necessary work here (spring 2024) although I could not find an estimated finish date.

There is also the matter of access to Sashes Island via Cookham Lock. We accept there is no legal obligation on the EA here. Despite there being a public footpath on the island, use of it was only possible by using the EA footbridge and permission for this was withdrawn in 2020 following a tragic drowning incident. Very recently there appears to have been some progress towards a partial reopening. The Cookham Society website is the best source of information on this. But why has it taken three years to get to this point? Walkers' interests at the bottom of the pile again?

Most footpath matters are dealt with by the local council and in my dealings with RBWM I have found them generally helpful, despite very limited budgets. However, there is no point haranguing your local councillor about the matters I have raised here. EA budgets and priorities are set by government so the only possible redress is through your local MP. Good luck!

Walks Programme *Linda Francis, Walks Coordinator*

I'm very pleased to take on 'Walks Coordinator' from Pera who has been in this role for 13 years. Pera has patiently shown me and talked me through the new Walks Manager system for publishing our walks online. Having recently retired, it's good to have a new challenge!

After a joint effort by Peter, Richard and Pera, the walks are published for the 4 months up to the end of 2023. I would strongly recommend that you check online periodically, in case there are any changes or new walks added after printing.

Thanks to everyone who has submitted walks - between us we have created a lovely selection of walks for the next few weeks. Unfortunately there are a few leaders who are not able to continue and we have quite a lot of spaces on Sundays. If you think that you would like to lead walks but are not sure how to start, please contact me - I'm happy to co-lead or to come with you to recce a new walk if that would help. It's not too late to add walks to the system, although they won't be on the paper copies.

Again a big thank you to all the walk leaders - without you we would have no programme at all!

walkcoordinator@eastberksramblers.org 07547 727042

Completing the Oxfordshire Way: May and June 2023

Peter Koklitis & Lesley Winch

The final two legs of the Oxfordshire Way, which in total is 68 miles between Bourton on the Water and Henley, were completed in May and June respectively, with later coach departures as the journeys were now shorter to the start points.

The sixth leg in May started at Tetsworth and finished at Christmas Common, incorporating a two-mile scenic loop at Watlington Hill. A sunny day afforded long distant views. We headed south out from Tetsworth, now a sleepy rural backwater ever since the construction of the M40. We heard the traffic noise increase, then recede as we walked towards, beneath (via an underpass) then away from the motorway towards Adwell. One aspect of the modern world transecting across the South Oxfordshire countryside.

The path then went by Wheatfield Church, 14th Cen. building remodelled in the 18th Cen. now in enclosed parkland. Walking along fields from Adwell to Pyrton, with a clear view of a former model farm which once housed steam driven machinery as a visitor attraction. Lunch was taken at Pyrton church, all bathed in sunshine. The onward route became increasingly clear as a direct flat line towards the Ridgeway crossing and then Christmas Common beyond with spectacular Chiltern scenery. The final ascent to Christmas Common was steep (115m), which left the remaining circular loop down to Greenfield Copse and back via Lower Deans Wood for more superb scenery.

The seventh, and final, 10-mile leg in June picked up at Christmas Common, the highest village in Oxfordshire and the Chilterns. Southwards through open and wooded areas towards Pishill, a banana break opportunity at the church. Continuing South to Maidensgrove passing by the Warburg Nature Reserve, with signs of ash dieback management along its perimeter. Another breather was taken at the remains of St James church at Bix Bottom. Then onwards along a dry valley before our roadside lunch break at Middle Assendon. Quite a steep ascent up Round Hill, then all the way a slow descent through the deer park with splendid scenery towards Henley upon Thames.

To mark the occasion of completing the Oxfordshire Way, a group photograph was taken by the bridge sign that was erected in 2021 (initiated by Walkers are Welcome Henley and paid for by Oxfordshire Ramblers).



The Brenda Parker Way (Coach Walks)

Dawn Davies and Julie Maidment

The current monthly coach walks have been following the [Brenda Parker Way](#) east to west, across Hampshire. This walk was created by the North Hampshire Downs Ramblers Group as a memorial to the life of [Brenda Parker](#), who put in an extraordinary amount of time and effort in numerous roles to secure access to the countryside for all walkers. She was nominated for a Lifetime Honorary Membership of The Ramblers' Association.



Led by Julie and Dawn, this 78 mile route has been divided into 8 very manageable sections, starting in Aldershot in August 2023 and due to finish in Andover in July 2024.



The Heroes Shrine and Garden in Aldershot was our starting point on 2nd August. We soon crossed onto MOD land which has been protected from development and forms a significant part of the Thames Basin Heaths SPA (Special Protection Area), a habitat virtually unique in Europe, with a high level of conservation protection. At Caesar's Camp the path was diverted as the area was being used as a location for filming 'House of the Dragon'.

Our next landmark was the Wellington Equestrian Statue (guarded by old cannons), which used to stand on top of the triumphal arch at Hyde Park Corner. We continued on to the Basingstoke Canal. At this point the heavens opened, umbrellas went up, waterproofs were donned and remained on for a couple of hours. By the time we reached Fleet Pond, Hampshire's largest freshwater lake, the rain had

eased. Crossing over the railway, the M3 and yet more MOD land, our walk finished north of Fleet (name derived from the Norman French for a stream or shallow water), at a layby in the woods. The rain had left us slightly bedraggled but hadn't dampened our spirits.

September's route once again saw us crossing MOD land, farmland and a very young and clear River Hart. We had our 'banana break' in the very pretty town of Hartley Wintney, with its ancient oaks on Oak Common. From Hartley Wintney we joined the Three Castles Path for a short time, following in King John's footsteps when he travelled from Odiham Castle to Runnymede to sign the Magna Carta. Continuing along attractive riverside paths, passing WWII pillboxes and West Green House with its National Trust gardens we finally arrived at our destination of Rotherwick. We were fortunate to have plenty of shade from the trees on this hot, sunny day.

The third leg, on 4th October, was our final coach walk of 2023. On a warm sunny day we crossed wide open fields, from the newly ploughed to those growing pumpkins, sunflowers and maize. Our path crisscrossed the young and clear Rivers Lyde and Loddon via footbridges and a ford, taking us to Hartley Wespall. A water mill straddles the Lyde at this point, possibly on the same site as a corn mill mentioned in the Domesday Book.

From here, the path skirts the Stratfield Saye Estate, home of the Dukes of Wellington, passing through woods and pleasant farmland. Towards the end of the trail we explored the very pretty St Mary the Virgin Church, which dates back to the 12th century, the Roman ruins of Calleva Atrebatum's Amphitheatre and town walls, and the Calleva Arms in Silchester, our final destination.



Our first coach walk of 2024 will be on **6th March 2024**. The 4th section of the Brenda Parker Way is characterised by small patches of woodland and farmland, with an important nature reserve at Ashford Hill, home to a wide range of flowering plants and consequently many butterflies, birds and mammals. Also of interest is the small town of Tadley, the home of besom broom manufacture!

The 4 further legs take us through beautiful Watership Down territory, past Highclere Castle, aka Downton Abbey, and home of Lord Carnarvon, with its Capability Brown park. We also follow an old railway track, formerly the Didcot, Newbury and Southampton Railway, a victim of the Beeching cuts. Impressive views over 4 counties will be seen from

Pilot Hill, the highest point in Hampshire. We will stand on the watershed between the North Sea, drained to the north via tributaries to the River Thames, while to the south the River Test meets the sea near Southampton. We will cross chalk downland, pass through woodland and farmland and picturesque villages, including St Mary Bourne where each gate bears a poem written by a pupil from the local school. We briefly follow in the footsteps of the Romans on the Portway which runs from London to Dorchester via Silchester and Old Sarum, and eventually enter Andover from the west. After passing the Anton Lake Nature Reserve we arrive at journey's end, the Andover War Memorial. We may even stop at The Angel Inn, an old coaching inn and Andover's oldest building, just down the High Street, for an end of trail drink.

These are all lovely, easy walks through woodland, farmland and picturesque villages. We hope to see as many of you as possible joining us on this trail.

Offa's Dyke – Part 2 *Graham Sexton*

Last year, four members of the group (Rosemary, Liz, Linda H and myself) set off in a heatwave to walk the southern section of the Offa's Dyke path. We started near Chepstow and finished, after three and a half very tiring days, at a small village called Longtown. This is just on the English side of the Hatterall ridge, the easternmost part of the Black Mountains.



This year, at the beginning of August, we returned to Longtown to resume the task and spent our first night at the friendly Crown Inn. The line of the path goes right along the top of the ridge, so our challenge the next morning was to climb back up the 1500ft or so we had descended at the end of the previous year's walk. It was about 10am when we made it to the ridge and conditions could not have been more different from when we left the previous year. It was quite cool and, within minutes of getting there, it started raining. This had been forecast and we were, of course, prepared with waterproofs.

But another aspect of the forecast, for thunder and lightning, was more concerning. The Hatterall ridge is not in the spiky rocky category but is a wide flat grassy affair. It is not a good place to be in a thunderstorm, as it is hard to avoid making yourself the highest point in the area. We decided the best plan was to get a move on and hope the forecast storms didn't arrive until later (or at all!). About three hours later, we were sitting on Hay Bluff at the end of the ridge having our lunch without having heard even a distant rumble of thunder. Even better, as we descended towards Hay-on-Wye, some sunny spells appeared.



I have walked quite extensively in the Black Mountains and was familiar with the area of our first day's walk. But the remaining two days of this year's section, first to Kington and then on to Knighton, held out the promise of a completely new walking area, something I'm finding it increasingly hard to find, at least in England and Wales. Both days turned out to be pleasantly rural with a variety of scenery. We passed isolated farms and walked through tiny

hamlets. We saw large sections of the actual dyke, or earthwork, that gives the path its name. It comprises a ditch on one side, with the excavated soil built up to create a wall, of up to around 8ft, on the other side. Most sources suggest it was built in the 8th century although there is some debate around this. The only previous section of the dyke we had seen was a short length just north of Chepstow.

There was one other noteworthy feature on the walk between Hay-on-Wye and Kington. It has a name that those of you of a certain age (yes, that's you!) might be familiar with. It is an attractive upland area covered in grass and bracken called Hergest Ridge. Mike Oldfield, of Tubular Bells fame, was a shy teenager and when he found the attention a bit too much he retreated to a bolthole in this area. Finding inspiration from the landscape (as they say) he used the name of the ridge as the title of his second album.

Kington and Knighton, with populations around 3,000, seemed large by comparison with the settlements we had seen during the walking days. In both we stayed in inns right on the route. Kington is in Herefordshire on the English side of the border while Knighton is in Powys but both are small market towns with a similar character. At Kington it was steak night at the inn and, with Hereford beef enjoying a good reputation, we all tucked in. The final night at Knighton was a



little noisy but, after three walking days, all 14-15 miles and requiring around 2,000ft of ascent, we all managed to sleep (fairly) soundly. And are looking forward to next year....

Our holiday, including accommodation and luggage transfers, was arranged by Contours.

The Nidderdale Way Trail *Malcolm Stone*

In late July, I travelled to Harrogate in North Yorkshire, where the Ramblers holiday was based. Harrogate has a history of being the English Spa town in the Georgian era, when the wealthy but sickly would visit to 'take the waters'. There were twelve of us, including the leader, who walked the trail. The trail is officially 53 miles long and was covered over five days of walking between 10 and 12 miles daily. It started and finished at Brimham Rocks, a collection of gritstone rocks formed over 300 million years ago. The waymark discs have the image of a curlew wading bird on them, as the symbol for the trail.

On the first day we passed through Pateley Bridge which is popular with tourists. During the day we followed the River Nidd, hence the name of the trail. We also passed by Gouthwaite Reservoir. It was mixed weather with rain at times. The second day (1 August) happened to be Yorkshire Day, which was invented after I was born in Huddersfield, West Yorkshire. It proved to be a mainly dry day. We passed by Scar House Reservoir, which was the largest dam in Britain when built in 1936.

Day three was very wet, for the most challenging walk of the week. We followed a valley to Ramsgill and climbed up to see the now disused lead mines. The walk was shortened, cutting out the climb to Nought Moor. On the fourth day, which was dry, we started with the climb up to Nought Moor. At the top there are two stone pillars (originally there were three) called Yorke's Folly, built in 1779. Actually, it was a philanthropic act by John Yorke, who gave unemployed men work which paid 4d a day plus a loaf of bread. Following the River Nidd, we visited Birstwith and finished in Hampsthwaite, where we enjoyed drinks in the garden, at Sophie's Café.



The final day proved to be the third wet day of the walk. We visited the village of Ripley which has a castle and church. The village has been the ancestral home of the Ingilby family for twenty eight generations. We then walked across fields and along country lanes, then had lunch in a large barn to shelter from the rain. Afterwards we finally reached moorland and Brimham Rocks to complete the trail.

A nice touch back at the hotel for the final review meeting, we all received a metal 'Nidderdale Way completed' pin badge. Despite the weather, I enjoyed my first trail walk. A good leader and friendly group of like-minded walkers makes all the difference.

Looking For Volunteers

New Year's Lunch

Does anyone wish to pick up the role of planning a short Sunday morning walk in January followed by lunch? In previous years this has been held at Winter Hill Golf Club but this is no longer an option so a new venue needs to be found. Pera has plenty of tips to pass on

Autumn Break 2024

Have you enjoyed a holiday with EBR? We are looking for someone to organise an autumn 4-day holiday in the UK. Are you interested in taking it on for 2024? A subcommittee will help you choose a company and location, and offer support when needed.

Remenham Parish Goes Stile-Free

In May 2023, Loddon Valley Ramblers Volunteers replaced three stiles with kissing gates in Remenham Parish in Wokingham Borough. These were the last stiles on public footpaths in Remenham, and so the whole parish is now stile-free. This means that around 15 miles of paths through some very attractive countryside, including parts of the Thames Path and the Chiltern Way Berkshire Loop, are now fully accessible to walkers with restricted mobility who may find it difficult to negotiate stiles.

Obituary

Gerald Barnett *from Gordon Marrs*

It is with sadness that we report the death of Gerald Barnett. Gerald died peacefully at home on July 17th from complications following bladder cancer. He had been a member of the Group since he retired in 1993, joining the committee soon after and taking on the role of Group Secretary, which he undertook with diligence and skill. This was at an important time for EBRA as we were raising our profile, establishing the group as a major force for the Countryside. We were becoming a stronger voice in negotiations with the Council and local landowners, in order to achieve improvements and enhancement to the ROW network.

In addition to his secretarial duties, Gerald researched and led walks and, with help from his wife, Sheila, organised holidays twice yearly for the Group. These mainly took the form of three night breaks, at an HF hotel in the Spring and at a private hotel (researched and booked by Sheila) in the Autumn. They did this for fourteen years, and the holidays were very popular with members and were often oversubscribed.

On the social side Gerald was the MC at Christmas parties, setting quizzes and running indoor games and barn dances. He enjoyed cooking, especially Bar-B-Qs for friends and family, and baked his own bread (providing some at the parties).

He retired from the committee at the age of 85 to spend more time on his other interests, such as playing golf and socialising with old friends, who will feel his absence.

His services to the Ramblers and the walking public were immense and as a friend he is irreplaceable.

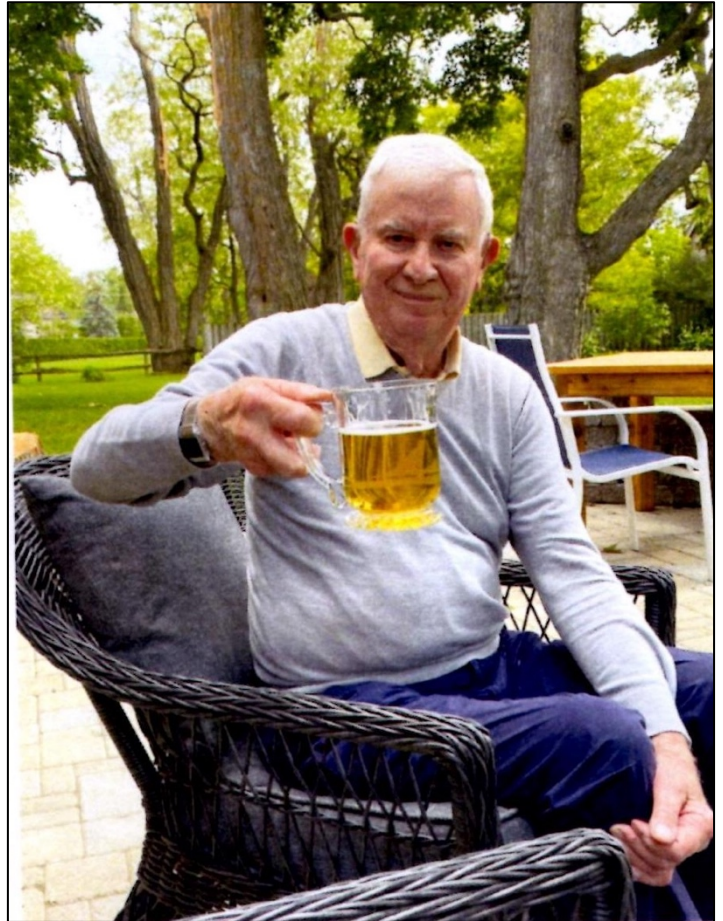
Campervan Adventures *from Eve and Roger Norton*

We had a great 5-day trip in early sunny September to West Sussex. The small campsite at Slindon is in a 3500 acre estate owned by the National Trust and managed by the Camping and Caravanning Club. There are many lovely walks directly from the site into the woods and farmland. Bignor Hill (near the Roman villa) is 7 miles away, reached by a cycle and footpath (unfortunately too far for us). Stane Street, a Roman Road from Chichester to London passes through the Slindon Estate. The small village of Slindon with a duck-pond, farm shop and fantastic tea/lunch shop is a 1 mile woodland walk from the site.



We also visited the open-air Weald and Downland Museum and pushed Harvey (our elderly dog) around in his pushchair. This is where the TV programme "The Repair Shop" is filmed although the public are not admitted during filming. However, Roger had an interesting chat to a camera-man about his close-up lens!

Our journey to Slindon was via Guildford and Godalming and we stopped at Petworth Park for lunch and a walk. The return was via the A3 with a walk at the Devil's Punchbowl at Hindhead. This area is not too far away although the M25/A3 junction roadworks should be avoided for the next year, so we returned via Bagshot.



Introduction of Walks Manager *Peter Griffiths/Richard Whetton*

Late last year Ramblers Central Office announced that they would be creating a new website and a new tool to manage walks, replacing the system that had been in place for a number of years. EBR member Richard Whetton agreed to learn about and coordinate the group migration to the new Walks Manager. Richard created a new version of the spreadsheet to upload the walks into the new system.

With Walks Manager each walk leader has an entry in the Ramblers Assemble database showing that they are a Walk Leader. Each leader is also required to give permission for their contact details to be used in the walk detail display.

The main features of Walks Manager are:

- an easy-to-use interface for leaders to enter their own walk details
- leader details held centrally so the leader's name is selected from a list when a walk entry is created
- map showing the location of each walk
- additional features of walks such as refreshments, toilets, and stiles for display to walkers

The new system went live at the end of May and all the walks in EBR's April-August programme were transferred (*thank you Richard and Pera*). It took some while to get all the leaders to set their contact permissions so that their details would display correctly but the summer walks programme went smoothly. The display of walks on the EBR website looks the same as before, with some more details now available.

We used Walks Manager to create the walks programme for the September-December period. Many leaders chose to enter the walk details directly into Walks Manager, thus saving the Coordinator some work.

The latest printable version of the walks programme is now created by combining data extracted from the Ramblers Walks Manager and the EBR Walks programme.

The new system seems to be working well now, and will be used for entering walk details for the next period of walks.

East Berkshire Group AGM - Friday, 17th November 2023

The AGM will be held on Friday, 17th November 2023 at **7.30pm in the Dining Hall of Claires Court School, Ray Mill Road East, Maidenhead, SL6 8TE (Grid Ref: 898 822)**. The meeting will last for approximately one hour and will be followed by refreshments. In addition to reports from the Chair, Footpath Secretary and the Treasurer, there will be election/re-election of Officers of the Group. A formal Agenda for the meeting will be posted to the website the week before the meeting.

Steve Gillions, Chair and Alan Harding, Treasurer will not be offering themselves for re-election and will stand down from the Committee at the conclusion of the AGM.

Richard Falconer was co-opted to the Committee in October as Treasurer (designate). Pera Marrs has stood down from her role as Walks Co-ordinator (she retains the role of Vice Chairman) and Linda Francis was co-opted to the Committee in October as Walks Co-ordinator. Resolutions for formal election to the Committee for these two new Committee members will be included in the Agenda. To date there is no volunteer to assume the role of Chairman. All other Committee members are expected to stand for re-election. If any other member wishes to put themselves forward for election to the Committee, then such nominations should be submitted to the Group Secretary **by Friday, 3rd November**, using the Nomination Form provided at the end of this Newsletter.

At the AGM there will be opportunities to discuss topics of interest with members of the Committee and to socialise over cheese and wine. If you have a subject for discussion, please submit it on the Nomination Form. The event should end by 10.15pm. Please note that a report on last year's AGM was given in the December 2022 Newsletter and the 2022 AGM Minutes are available on the Group website under the Members' Section/AGM documents.

This is your chance to put forward your views and to question the Committee so please do try to make the effort to attend this very important event in the Group's calendar.

hf holidays

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<https://www.berghaus.com/repairs.list>

Recent Walks

We have added a new tab to the [Walks web page](#) in which walk leaders can describe walks led recently, to show in more detail the type of walk and the countryside we walk in. Have a look at the entries on the tab, as a guide, we suggest one paragraph on the walk and no more than two or three photos.

Walk Leadership and Map Reading Skills Course *Pera Marrs*

EBR is short of new leaders to fill the gaps in our current walks programme. What is stopping **you** leading a walk? If you are not sure about anything then we are here to help you.

This short Walk Leadership and Map Reading Skills Course will help to improve your OS map reading and compass work, cover tips to develop leadership skills and answer any queries you may have. It is designed to build confidence in leadership and finding your way in normal weather conditions. We do not propose teaching you how to walk across Dartmoor in a fog!

Steve Gillions and I will run the course which includes 2 indoor sessions, in the evening (7.00 – 9.00 pm), and one all-day practical session, dates and venue to be confirmed when we know who is interested. 3 people have expressed interest so far and with your help we can make this a viable course.

If you are interested please contact me on 01628 629155 or longerwalks@eastberksramblers.org.

Ramblers Berkshire Area AGM - Saturday, 18 November 2023

Reading School, Erleigh Road, Reading RG1 5LW, hosted by Loddon Valley Ramblers

The AGM will start off with a couple of short local walks in the morning:

λ Walk 1 - 8.5 miles, starting at 9.30

λ Walk 2 - 4 miles, starting at 10.30

Following the walks will be lunch from 1pm; please bring your own food, although tea, coffee, soft drinks, cakes and biscuits will be provided.

At 2pm there will be a talk by **Peter Innes** from Reading University about Climate Change and its impact on the natural world.

This will be followed at 3pm by the AGM meeting, which will start with presentations, and election of the new committee for 2023-2024.

Question and Answer session at 4pm.

Berghaus Repairhaus

Did you know that Berghaus offer free repairs on all their kit, with very few exceptions? All you have to pay is for the cost of delivering the item back to them and no matter how worn or weathered your kit is, they undertake to repair it for free, if they possibly can, as many times as you need them to.

Q and A

Linda Francis – Walks Co-Ordinator

Where is your favourite place to walk?

I love walking in the Chilterns - or anywhere with a good view. I can't think of anything better than sitting with a cup of something, looking for miles over the countryside, watching tractors in the fields, cars on the roads and people getting on with their lives.

Do you prefer to walk on your own or in a group ?

I like both. During the pandemic I got into the habit of listening to audiobooks while I walked alone which is very enjoyable. I like the challenge of finding my own way and sorting myself out when I get lost. I enjoy the groups too - it's a lovely way to socialise without too much pressure.

What are your earliest memories of walking?

My parents used to take me up the Malvern Hills when I was very young. I revisited Malvern this year for the walking festival and had a wonderful holiday. The views from the hills were amazing - even better than I remembered. We used to go to the Lake District for family holidays when I was a child. One year, being a rather nerdy child, I made graphs of how high we'd climbed, how far we walked and how wet we got each day.

Do you prefer walking near the sea or in the mountains?

Probably mountains - coastal paths can be busy or have scary cliffs.

What does walking give you ?

I find that walking helps me mentally as well as physically. It helps to restore equilibrium when life gets complicated and generally keeps me feeling well. I definitely get 'itchy scratchy' when I haven't walked for a while.

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

My phone - for navigation, emergencies and entertainment if I have to wait anywhere.

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

I always take a 'trail mix' of nuts, dried fruit and chocolate peanuts - it's a deconstructed energy bar really

Have you encouraged other members in your family to walk?

I'm trying to get my son, Eddy, who has Down Syndrome, to walk more. He has a few health issues which I think would be improved with walking. He is happy to go for about 2 miles, especially if ice cream is involved! I'm quite interested in starting or joining an inclusive walking group.

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



I normally plan where I'm going - I like to use the OS app. It tells me whether I'm on the right path, a bonus with my map reading skills. I like looking at the stats afterwards - how far, amount of ascent, average speed etc.

Did walking help you during recent Covid lockdowns?

Definitely. I used to pack up a flask of soup and set off with an Anthony Horowitz novel on my phone and disappear into the countryside. Even now there are some parts of Quarry Wood that I can't walk without images of (fictional) grisly murders.

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

Home made soup - the thicker the better!

...and finally, if you could choose your walking partner – real or fictional, from any time, who would it be ?

I'd like to go for a walk with Chris Packham. He would know all about the wildlife and I am also interested in his autism, having worked with autistic students at BCA.



Killer cows

We frequently come across cows on our walks, they usually seem benign and ignore us. However, cows can be dangerous and walkers should take sensible precautions. The Sunday Times recently ran an interesting article about the dangers posed by cows to walkers - this is a summary of the main points.

Ruth Livingstone, a keen hiker and a retired GP, has been looking into the issue of cow attacks on walkers. In 2017 she launched a blog, *Killer Cows*, to publish her research and allow others to report their own incidents. <https://killer cows.co.uk/author/ruth/>

Over almost six years she has collected 580 reports of cow attacks or near-misses on members of the public, 562 of which occurred on public footpaths. Only 2 per cent involved single bulls. The perceived wisdom is that the vast majority of attacks occur when cows with calves are threatened by dogs. But, according to Livingstone's data, no dogs were present in more than half of the incidents and calves were present in only about a fifth. Many of the attacks occurred in the spring as "Cows are kept indoors during the winter, so it's about this time of year that it all begins to kick off. People are out walking and the cows are frisky because they've been locked up for so long."

Cows are heavy, they can weigh up to a ton, which is what makes them dangerous. They are territorial, they can learn that if they run up to humans, the humans will run out of their field. Then they can become more confident and more determined to remove what they perceive as a threat. It can be frightening if a herd comes towards you. There are different reasons why cattle approach humans — it could be out of curiosity, fear or the maternal need to protect their young. Whatever the reason, if they are leading with their noses ahead, they are curious. But if their ears go up at ten to two that's the classic threat posture.

Hiking Boots for Sale

Men's Meindl Comfort Fit Hiking Boots. Brown. UK Size 10. Good condition. £48.00

Contact Sheehan on 01628 670968 or tjams@btinternet.com



Distribution of Newsletter and Walks Programme

The newsletter is issued twice a year, in April and October and the walks programme is issued three times a year, in April, August and December.

Following a review after the AGM in November 2022 the committee agreed that the newsletter will continue to be printed for those members who have asked for it in hard copy. However, the walks programme will only be available online. If anyone does not have any online access then they should contact the **Walks Co-ordinator** longerwalks@eastberksramblers.org who will arrange for a printed copy to be sent.

The online walks programme provides flexibility for adding new walks and making changes to walks arranged etc.

The views or opinions expressed by individuals in this Newsletter are their own and do not necessarily reflect those of the Committee. The Editors welcome letters and articles from members but reserve the right to reject or edit contributions. Would contributors please note that all items for inclusion in the next issue of the Newsletter should be submitted, preferably by email, to the Editors (address below) as soon as possible and no later than **Friday, 29 March 2024**.

Editors: Rosemary Davies Tel: 01344 422707 Email: committee1@eastberksramblers.org
Peter Griffiths Mob: 07765 232178 Email: committee4@eastberksramblers.org

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

AGM FRIDAY 17th NOVEMBER 2023

NOMINATION FORM

For the 2023/2024 Committee and other Group posts

Proposer's nameSignature
(in capitals please)

Seconder's name Signature
(in capitals please)

We, being fully paid up members of East Berkshire Ramblers, hereby nominate:-

Nominee's name (in capitals please)

Nominee's signature

Who has volunteered to stand for election as:

I/We would like the following subject discussed at the Question and Answer session at the AGM:

.....
.....
.....

Please return this form **by 3rd November** 2023 to:-

The Secretary, East Berks Ramblers, 6 Aldwick Drive, Maidenhead, Berkshire SL6 4JQ or by email
groupsecretary@eastberksramblers.org

Contact phone no: 07785 953751 (preferred)/01628 625171