



RAMBLERS

Brentwood

Newsletter

April – July 2024

Chair's Notes

Looking forward to spring and summer, I am going on the Bournemouth week in May, along with the April coach trip and then the October weekend away. How about you? These holidays and trips can be so important to members for their health, friendships and relaxation.

Since the last Newsletter we have had our AGM in December which went well and was attended by 34 members. Then, on Saturday 10 February, we had the Essex Area AGM where ECC Public Rights of Way manager, Shirley Anglin, gave a welcome presentation on the management and organisation of the ECC PROW team and how, despite a restricted budget, they have improved efficiency. However, only 14% of the footpaths will now be surveyed by ECC. She urged those attending to get Ramblers' members to report directly on the ECC website any defective paths.

Then followed a presentation by Gulshun Rehman, an RA trustee, who discussed the "Safety on Walks" issues raised and the subsequent published documentation. She also spoke of the 10 year planned strategies the RA is pursuing.

However, at a recent Zoom meeting with RA they explained more about the 'Safety on Walks' guidelines that they had published in draft and that we as a committee had responded vehemently to. I was told that they had taken on board Ramblers' comments and the 32-page draft document was now thankfully just 8 pages. Common sense has been awakened, and a more reasonable document is now proposed.

On a more important subject, our footpath clearing team has undergone a management change with Miles Cooper, the long-time organiser and coordinator, standing down. Thanks, Miles, for all you have done for the group. Fortunately, Don Clark, an experienced path clearing team member, has taken over the role. However, I must stress that new team members are always welcome. Contact Don or me directly if you think you can help out.

That's it for now, enjoy the spring and summer.
Regards

Brian Scroggs

News and Views

SPRING PICKERS CAMPAIGN (Organised by Essex Wildlife Trust)

This year, Essex Wildlife Trust are launching a new campaign called **Spring Pickers**. They are encouraging people to collect **5** (or more!) pieces of litter from **9 - 18 March**, ready for the arrival of spring.

The aim is to clean up the environment to protect wildlife and natural habitats from the negative aspects of litter.

Please click the link below to obtain further information.

<http://essexwt.org.uk/get-involved/campaign/spring-pickers>

Further information can also be obtained from the website of the Essex Wildlife Trust (www.essexwt.org.uk).

Dianne Ingram

Past Events

Christmas Lunch Tuesday 5 December

Sixty-four people attended the Christmas Meal on 5 December which was again held at Bentley Golf Club, Kelvedon Hatch. Brian Scroggs kindly led a very enjoyable pre-lunch walk beforehand.

As usual the choice and quality of the food on offer was excellent and it was a great opportunity for people to meet up with friends and enjoy a great social occasion.

Paula Howard

Hanningfield Get-together Tuesday 19 December





On Tuesday 19 December, thanks to Alan and Heidi Waddoups, we were delighted to be able to resurrect the tradition of a festive ramble just before Christmas. After a morning walk led by Alan we had a room to ourselves at

the Hanningfield EWT Centre in which to eat, drink and be merry. As ever, there was a surfeit of delicious food and a good time was had by all.

Ruth Hannon

Paul's first walk



Congratulations to Paul Dykes for successfully leading his first walk on 13 February, a Little Waltham and Beaulieu Park circular walk. As we'd had what felt like constant rain for days (weeks?) beforehand, it was a great relief to walk on solid paths much of the way. We had lots of variety but one highlight must surely have been the gravel pits with conveyor belts and diggers aplenty (sorry you missed it, Brian!). We were also fascinated by the archaeologists who were excavating a plot which will imminently become more Beaulieu Park and finding out what they'd managed to dig up – mainly Iron Age and Roman artefacts.

Ruth Hannon

Bookable and Forthcoming Events

Coach Ramble 14 April 2024

Roy Quince and Don Clark will be leading a coach ramble on 14 April of about 10.5 miles. The walk will be from East Grinstead Rugby Football Club and we can look forward to plenty of scenery, lakes and woodlands.

Those who only want to do the morning walk will be taken by coach after lunch from Kingscote Station to East Grinstead for a few hours.

Miles Cooper

Nelson Mandela Way

This is a long-distance walk from the Royal Festival Hall in London to Wendover in Buckinghamshire, which should take 8 days to complete. Unfortunately, the walk is not shown on Ordnance Survey Maps. You may recall that the first section of the Walk was completed on 2 February 2020 and the second on 19 March 2023. See details below.

The third section of the Walk takes place on Sunday 5 May 2024. It continues northwest, mainly through open countryside, to Radlett Train Station. Breakfast is available at Oak Café or Popular Café, which are almost next to each other. At the station, exit left and walk approximately 300m to the cafes. Lunch at the "Mops & Brooms", a busy pub that only does cooked food on Sundays, so strongly suggest you bring your own food. Dinner option: restaurant in central London.

The fourth section of the Walk takes place on Sunday 2 June 2024. It continues southwest crossing the M1 and finishes at Hatch End Train Station, a Thameslink line where you can use your Oystercard. Breakfast at Café Radlett which is very near the station in Watling St. Lunch at Stanmore Common, bring your own food, followed by a drink approximately 30 minutes later at a pub called "The Case is Altered".

Colin Raven

Bournemouth Week May 2024

There are 30 of us booked on our holiday to Bournemouth. The final payment is due by 7 April.

A detailed itinerary will be available nearer the time. Thanks,

Chris Green

Brentwood Ramblers Autumn Holiday 2024

We are going to Bognor Regis in Sussex, staying at a lovely old hotel situated on the seafront with many rooms enjoying a sea view.

There is extensive on-site car parking and the railway station is within a short walk. There are numerous visitor attractions within easy reach for those who don't wish to walk every day.

Chris Green

Footpath Working Party - The Brentwood Bramblers

After over 8 years I am stepping down as Footpath Working Party Co-ordinator. It has been wonderful to work on keeping many footpaths in good condition with the volunteers' help over the years. While working, we often meet fellow walkers who are very appreciative of what we are doing. It is just a shame though that they not willing to help out. On odd occasions while clearing behind some back gardens, we are treated with drinks and chat with the people living in these homes. We rarely have any problems with landowners and often they are keen to offer a hand in one way or other. There is one that sits in my mind.

A group of us was working along a footpath near one of the houses that backs onto the footpath and I happened to do some clearing of a stile nearby with a pair of secateurs. There was this loud noise that kept coming across the field, and me being me having hearing problem I simply ignored it. About 10 minutes later or so came 2 policemen and a couple who live at the house. They could see I was holding secateurs. Well, one policeman took details from me while the other policeman went with the couple to see what the other footpath volunteers were doing further along the path.

It transpired that the couple from the house had phoned the police to say that we were vandalising near their home!

Of all the years I have been working on the footpaths it is the only time we had a problem with the police, thank goodness. No charges were brought against us!

Our young man, Don Clark, has taken over as our Footpath Party co-ordinator as from March. Once he has bedded in, I have no doubt he will make a great success of the job.

I would like to thank all the volunteers who have helped in keeping and maintaining the paths over the years.

Miles Cooper

Footpath Secretary

I guess many of you will have read the Ramblers/BBC report on the state of paths in England and Wales, where 32,000 blocked or obstructed paths were identified. It doesn't come as a surprise and is probably an under-estimate. Successive cuts to local authority budgets have adversely affected the upkeep of the Public Rights of Way (PROW) network.

As previously reported, the Essex Highways' cost reduction programme resulted in fewer inspectors being employed and working practices being revised. Those who attended the Area AGM on Saturday 10 February would have heard from Shirley Anglin, Essex Highways, of some of the changes being introduced. These included prioritising path maintenance and defect clearance into 3 groups depending on path usage, safety concerns and whether a national trail is affected.

Priority 1 paths will receive the most attention, with regular cutting programmes and speedier attention to defects. Priority 3, by far the bulk of paths, will receive minimal attention from Highways, if any at all, and will only be addressed if the public submits a defect report via the Essex Highways on-line system. Even then, Highways might deem the issue to be of sufficiently low priority that it does not deserve attention.

Essex Highways' approach to changing work practices is understandable after being confronted with reduced resources and insufficient capacity to handle all the complex factors in managing the PROW network. However, there is a high risk that priority 2 and 3 paths – out of the way, low footfall – will become unusable over time, thereby reducing the variety of experiences available to those who wish to walk; a serious concern to Ramblers!

What can we, Ramblers, do to improve the situation? Four activities spring to mind – surveying paths (PPA programme), undertaking maintenance tasks, helping Highways prioritise path issues, and reporting defects on the Highway web site.

Three of these activities are being addressed. Brentwood has its own maintenance team, which is highly valued by Essex Highways' management and staff. Ramblers Area now coordinates with Highways on both a regular and an ad hoc basis to resolve and prioritise path issues and we have a PPA programme surveying paths, albeit more volunteers are needed since some areas of Brentwood District are not covered. Contact me if you wish to join the PPA initiative.

However, it is clear there is minimal reporting of defects found by individuals and groups. If a fault is found it is unlikely to be fixed unless recorded, with a reference number, on the Highways website. Leaving the reporting to someone else is bad practice. I hear a major concern is the difficulty in using the Highways site. Is this just an excuse? There are comprehensive instructions and guides on the Essex Area website (www.essexarearamblers.co.uk) and if reporting a defect is still problematic Alan Goffee, Area Footpath Secretary, requests the problem details are forwarded to him at alan@turnbury.plus.com. If this fails, contact me.

And finally, David Radford, Area Chair, produced and circulated a paper to all Essex members which explained proposed changes to Area's operation. He presented this at the AGM and received approval to proceed. I hope you have had the chance to read it since it provides the rationale for Area members focusing on

footpath matters via a sub group called the Footpath Hub. All other activities, save Treasury, will be the responsibility of Head Office and Groups.

Rambles Secretaries' Notes

Tuesdays

At the time of writing there are still a few empty dates in the Tuesday walks programme and with some of the leaders who are still to submit their walk details on holiday, please keep an eye on the 'Next Walks' section of the Website for any updates and additions.

As this is my last programme as Tuesday Walks Secretary I would like to thank all of the leaders who have offered walks and helped during this time. Paula Howard has kindly agreed to take over the role of Tuesday Walks Secretary and as a regular Tuesday walker Paula should be well placed to liaise with the current leaders and recruit new leaders to hopefully fill the programme going forwards.

Best regards
Colin Banner

Saturdays

Numbers fluctuate wildly, between 7 and 32, depending on weather and occasion, and the post-walk gatherings in various hostelrys continue to attract!

Please may I remind you of the necessity of having about your person some form of identification and a number to be used in case of emergency. A tag on your rucksack perhaps and ICE (In Case of Emergency) in your phone, are both helpful. Heaven forbid that we should ever have to use them but it's best to be prepared.

Many thanks.
Happy hiking!
Dianne Ingram

Webmaster's Notes

Due to the way the New Walks Manager works, you may not see the usual "Cancelled Banner" in Our Next Walks if there is a change to a Walk. However, please be assured the Website is always kept up to date. So always check with "Our Next Walks" on the day of the walk to ensure that you have the correct details.

It's a good idea to add Brentwood Ramblers Website to your Mobile Phone Home screen (you can Google how to do this).

Steve Johnson

PLEASE NOTE! In view of the fact that occasionally we have had to cancel walks through adverse weather conditions and move a start point of another walk for other reasons PLEASE note our advice at the beginning of the programme and phone the leader of the walk if you have any doubts about it taking place. We do try to warn you of any changes via email, on the website or by announcements on walks, but it is not always possible to ensure that all our members are informed. Apologies for any inconvenience caused.

Change of Address

If you move home, please remember to let **Ramblers** know: 020 7339 8500
ramblers@london.ramblers.org.uk

Health and Safety

Please see link to the Ramblers website <http://www.ramblers.org.uk/go-walking/advice-for-walkers/safety-and-equipment/personal-safety.aspx>

Next Committee Meetings

24 June, 2 September, 11 November