



Newsletter

December 2024 – March 2025

Chair's Notes

Hello everyone, hope you enjoyed the summer and the autumn so far. I still have very slight foot problems and am missing seeing everyone out on walks but hopefully things will improve with time.

Reading the Ramblers Association Walk magazine the other week I realised the amount of preparation and editorial work that goes into the RA Walk magazine, and realised the effort put into running the Brentwood Group Website, Walks Programme and Newsletter by your Committee members and the walks leaders. Take Steve Johnson who, after 8 years as your IT man on Committee, is retiring. He has spent hours and hours keeping our website and members' access passwords, etc up to date. Luckily for us Barry Sharpen, an IT expert, has taken over and will carry on the good work. Thanks Steve (and Maggie) and thanks Barry.

Regarding new walk leaders, we as a group have lost at least one potential leader due to the newly imposed 'on line tests' before the member is able to be registered as a leader. I have again written to the RA about what we the Committee feel is taking away our ability to encourage and sanction new walk leaders within the group. However, the RA still thinks that a 2-hour online computer course is required, since May this year.

The RA said they would include my comments in a common folder for future discussion and, when I pursued the subject, I was told: "We are currently looking at how to gather feedback from all new walk leaders undertaking the training, so I will ensure your feedback is included in that review." Let's hope it is. The RA may be realizing that putting obstacles in the way to leadership doesn't help recruitment and are now promoting an online session for boosting leader recruitment on 19 November.

Meanwhile we have had the October weekend in Bognor Regis, which again was welcomed by all who like the coast and the seaside. It was an excellent 4 nights away with almost perfect scenery and weather for walking. Thanks to Chris, Colin and Geoff.

Currently the Committee is arranging the May 2025 week away in Jersey which, with 39 signed up will, I'm sure, be a roaring success.

On a much sadder note, news of the death of long-time member John Scannell, known affectionately as Judge John, reminded us of those enjoyable Saturday walks chatting and laughing with him.

Anyway, enjoy your walking and let's hope the winter treats us kindly.

Brian Scroggs

The Brentwood Bramblers in Focus

Miles Cooper remembers when the footpath clearance team was first set up:



"The Committee had discussed forming a footpath clearing group and agreed to set one up. Dianne Ingram approached me to see if I would like to do this and I agreed to do so. I stepped down after 9 years.

"It was May 2015 when we did our first footpath clearing which was in fact to replace the footbridge footpath number 40 at Mountnessing. We made some errors in doing this footbridge but the bridge is still standing and we have learnt from it."

Photos: Miles Cooper

And then Don Clark was promoted to Leader:

"Things have progressed quite considerably since the team was first set up. When I first joined people were cutting back brambles with secateurs and, needless to say, progress was slow. Thanks to Miles, we now have a good selection of hand tools: shears, loppers, saws and pitchforks, as well as power tools - 2 brush cutters and a hedge cutter. We also have tools for the Way Marker post installation/maintenance: a hole digger, fencing bar and dubber. We have 4 people who have completed the relevant courses to use the equipment and also 3 who have completed a First Aid course.



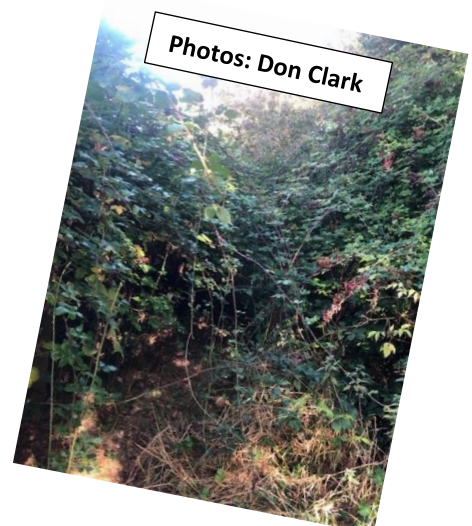
"The majority of work we do is footpath clearance, which is mainly up growth and side growth. We also install and maintain a fair number of Way Marker posts and the occasional bridge installation.



"We work on a Monday from 10 am – 1 pm. Although it is a productive work party it is also a social event. We have a morning break to have a chat (if we are lucky Geoff supplies flapjacks cooked by Ann) and, after the work has finished, we retire to the pub.

"On a personal note, I am always pleasantly surprised at the amount and quality of work we achieve in the time we put in (maximum 3 hours). We have a total number of 12 people in the team with generally 6 who work regularly. In practice, this works well as sometimes tasks to be done are relatively small."

And the latest update . . .



“These last months we have been busy clearing overgrown paths and fitting/maintaining Way Marker posts; I have attached 2 pictures, before and after, of a path we recently cleared. The team have been as usual working hard with our energy levels being refuelled by Ann’s delicious flapjacks. We did have a situation recently where Chris Green reported to me that on a local footbridge several treads were missing and others broken, and that he had reported it to Essex Council some time ago but nothing had been done. I went to survey the job and agreed it was dangerous. As we had 5 replacement treads in stock I contacted the Public Rights of Way Officer at Essex Highways and got permission to replace the treads. After completion both Chris and Jane commented how happy they were with the result. Then a few weeks later the Council removed it and installed a brand new bridge!!!! It’s like a bad joke.



Past Events

Blind Ramblers Walk 15 September



Photo: Frankie Carpenter

On Sunday 15 September 23 of us enjoyed a ramble with the London Blind Ramblers Group from Brentwood Station to Thorndon Country Park. There were 11 visually impaired walkers who needed a guide. The weather was perfect and Thorndon Park was looking beautiful. Some rested in the sunshine at the Visitors’ Centre but most enjoyed exploring further afield. For the visually impaired the opportunity to touch the Gruffalo and his child was much appreciated and an extra tactile bonus was a crocheted post box topper at Cornsland. The group has a new organiser, Steven, who wrote to thank us for hosting the group and giving everyone such a very pleasant day. Thank you to everyone.

Frankie Carpenter

Colin Raven's Nelson Mandela walk



Brentwood Ramblers Autumn Holiday 2024 - Wednesday 16 October to Sunday 20 October



The venue for this year's 5-day holiday was the Sussex coastal resort of Bognor Regis staying at The Royal Norfolk Hotel on the seafront. Thirty-two ramblers enjoyed 3 days' walking with a long and shorter option on each day. Those not walking had a good choice of places to visit and explore. We were blessed with sunny days and exceptionally warm temperatures for the time of year.

The first walk was from Singleton to Chichester which is the last section of The West Sussex Literary Trail. We set off through the Sussex countryside before climbing up The Trundle. We had good views towards Chichester Harbour and Goodwood Racecourse. A slow descent into East Lavant brought us to the pretty church for our lunch and The Royal Oak for drinks. We continued downhill to Chichester where we followed the remains of the old Roman City Wall to finish at the Cathedral.

The next day's walk started at Amberley and along the South Downs Way. The sun gradually dispersed the early morning mist to give us views over to Amberley, still partially shrouded in mist - very surreal. Rolling countryside spread out below as we descended into Burpham for lunch at the church and drinks in

The George. The afternoon was spent following the Arun Valley Way beside the River Arun. This proved challenging, with plenty of deep mud, partially flooded fields, a broken stile - which required a novel method to cross - and finally a section of path overgrown with brambles requiring clearance with our secateurs. We did however have lovely views of Arundel Castle. The shorter walk option did not encounter any of the above and had a lovely day with great views from Arundel Park.



Photos: Colin Raven

On the last day we walked around the shoreline of Chichester's tidal harbour. On the mudflats and shoreline



Photo: Chris Green

we could see swans, wildfowl, waders and the occasional cormorant. Lunch was at the pretty village of Bosham, with plenty of choice for refreshments and some superb ice-cream. In the afternoon we continued along the shore and boardwalks through the reedbeds to the village of Fishbourne.

Our thanks go to Chris Green for organising the holiday and to Geoff Sharman, Colin Raven, and Chris for leading the walks.

Jane Green

Bookable and Forthcoming Events

AGM Saturday 30 November

Pre-Christmas festive walk Tuesday 17 December

We are once again continuing the annual tradition of having a pre-Christmas Tuesday walk which starts from the Essex Wildlife Trust (EWT) Hanningfield Reservoir Visitor Centre. This year Brian will be leading a half-day morning walk of between 5-6 miles. We will be allowed free use of the EWT car park, but please park in the section furthest away from the Visitors' Centre. In addition, EWT are again generously providing us with our own seating area within the Visitors' Centre to eat our lunch, which will be available from 1.00

onwards. Traditionally we have brought our own food to eat and share including traditional Christmas fayre such as mince pies, Christmas cake, nibbles etc.

The Visitors' Centre does have a small cafe area where people can buy coffee/teas and they also sell some very nice cakes! This is a nice way to help support the EWT. In recognition of the generosity of the EWT in allowing us to use their facilities we also like to collect a donation for the Wildlife Trust to support a very worthy charity which is largely run by volunteers.

Last year, despite the weather not being very kind to us, Alan led a very enjoyable morning walk which was followed by a really nice afternoon of pre-Christmas festive cheer.

Look forward to seeing as many of you who are able to join us on 17 December.

Paula Howard

Christmas Lunch – December 2024

Just a reminder that the Brentwood Ramblers Christmas Lunch this year will again be held at Bentley Golf Club, Kelvedon Hatch.

Ruth Hannon

Jersey Update

May 2025 (7 days/6 nights)

We have had a very good response to the above trip and 39 members are now booked.

Dianne Ingram

Webmaster's Notes

I have to announce that I will shortly be handing over the role of Webmaster to Barry Sharpen. Barry has already taken over the role of Facebook Editor and is making a very good job of improving the visibility of Brentwood Ramblers on Facebook.

He comes with a wealth of IT experience and has had some experience of the Website Builder (Joomla), in the past, so I am sure you will see some good innovative changes in the Website.

There will be a period where I will gradually hand over full responsibility to Barry, so please bear with us during this time.

Steve Johnson
Barry Sharpen

Walks Editor

Future Walks Programmes

Members will have noticed that the last few published Walks Programmes which accompany the Newsletter have had a number of blank spaces with notes like "no leader available at time of publication" or "walk details not available at time of publication". However, we do manage to fill most of the empty dates, eventually, and have had only 2 of our regular walking days this year for which no leader has volunteered.

Each Walks Programme covers 4 months and is distributed a month before its start date. This means that, in practice, walk leaders are having to plan their walks and commit to a date up to 6 months in advance and, with the need to assess conditions and risks on each walk, it is quite difficult to look so far ahead.

We are relying increasingly on our websites to publicise our walks and most regular walkers seem to be getting

into the habit of checking our walk details online rather than referring to a printed Programme. The websites will always be up to date with any last-minute changes or cancellations and we would like to encourage all members to consult one of the websites before attending a walk. The best option is our own Brentwood Ramblers website which will show only our walks,

<https://brentwoodramblers.org.uk>

but you can use the Ramblers App or the main RA website to find all walks in a particular location

<https://www.ramblers.org.uk/go-walking/group-walks>

In the short term, we will continue to publish a list of our future walks with the Newsletter, but the format may not be as detailed as before and we expect there to be gaps, so please use the website.

Walks Manager

Walks Manager is software which has been introduced by RA to allow walk leaders to put their walks onto the website. It allows a lot of detail about each walk to be entered including very accurate location details for the start point such as What3Words and up to a 10-digit grid reference. A cursor can be dragged to the exact spot on the map where walkers should meet.

Eventually, we hope that walk leaders will be able to enter their own walks in draft form and that our Rambles Secretaries will check and publish the walks. However, at the moment, the Committee has agreed that Rambles Secretaries will enter walk details on Walks Manager and the Walk Programme Editor will publish them.

In the past, Rambles Secretaries have entered walk details on a spreadsheet from which the Walks Programme Editor creates the programme. The programme is then formatted to be sent to members with the Newsletter and a version of the spreadsheet is uploaded to Walks Manager to publish walks on the websites. This process does not allow us to take advantage of all the features available in Walks Manager and our walk details are not as good as they could be. For example, members who use What3Words may have noticed that the website details differ from what was expected and this is because we can upload only a 6-digit grid reference which represents a 100m square, which contains over 1000 W3W squares and the software has to guess which one!

Any Walk Leader wishing to find out more about Walks Manager can find a guide on the website at <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1QsK1GpQAMgmy5YUjXdKzIlvHYpNveH5k/view>

Geoff Sharman

Walk Leaders

Saturdays – Dianne Ingram

We've had some good turnouts lately, probably due to the mild weather with not TOO much rain! Also we've had a couple of different walks on the programme, ie Paglesham and Brave Nelson, which haven't been done for a while which makes a Saturday morning a bit more interesting!

We have a list of a few hundred places to lead walks from (known as the WASP list) so if you feel like having a look and leading one of them, please let me know. New leaders are always welcome and although I still can't walk properly, I will gladly talk you through any walk on that list. Many thanks.

Dianne Ingram

Footpath Secretary

It has been a quiet period although I did survey paths in Herongate and found only one significant problem - a fallen tree blocking the path. Generally the paths in Brentwood appear in good health. In the coming months Essex Area Ramblers PPA programme will focus on identifying and fixing problems that raise safety issues, for instance, broken stiles and bridges. If you encounter such a problem on your walk please take a photo(s) and either report it directly to Essex Highways via their website and copy me, or email the details to me and I will report it. Although I have made similar requests in the past I have only been advised of one in the last 12 months.

Gordon Bird

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>