

PATHWAY

Issue no 67 Winter 2021: Newsletter for Wycombe District Ramblers



“Bits & Bites” from our outgoing Chairman – Pat Endacott

Happy New Year everyone. Let's hope 2021 brings us back to some normality.

This is my last go at Bits and Bites as I stepped down as Chair on November 21st - sadly without finding a replacement as yet. But I am pleased that I've left at a time when we have a strong Committee so we'll be well looked after for at least another year.

I've enjoyed my time as Chair. I was able to attend three General Councils (Ramblers Association AGMs) in person and one remotely. These enabled me to meet the executive team and understand the issues challenging us as an organisation. I'd like to have done more - but time and energy did not permit!

We have had some good weekends away - Wye Valley, Sidmouth and Derbyshire with last year's at Selworthy rearranged for April 2021 - keep fingers crossed we won't have to change the date again.

My thanks to the other Committee members (Angela S, Mick, Jeff, Alan, Hamish) for all their work in 2020, likewise Angela V for managing the Walks programme and Sheila for delivering Pathway consistently.

Also thanks to Michael Symmonds and Hamish for starting up some proper walks while we had the chance - let's hope it's not too long before we can start again and stick to a programme.

All the best in 2021 - stay fit and stay safe.

Best wishes

Pat Endacott

Pathway – articles wanted

As ever, it would be good to have more content from members in *Pathway*. Please let me have your suggestions or articles to sheila.draper@btinternet.com or by post, see the committee list below for my postal address. We produce three newsletters per year and the next one will be in MAY 2021; **the deadline for contributions is 30/4/21.**



Welcome

New group members

We would like to extend a warm welcome to the following new members who have joined since our last newsletter. We are sorry we have been unable to offer little in the way of a walks programme but hope that they feel comfortable to join any of our formal or informal walks which will be emailed out as they crop up/ are permitted. They can also apply to join walks from other groups which appear on the RA website.

Alan France
Jane Herve
Sadia Mian
Diane Severson Mori
Richard Moore
Philip and Carol Pike
Alison Raby
Mr & Mrs Ramsey
Percy Grundy
Desica Spencer
Jill Spencer

New Leader

Jonathan Osbourne

New parking charges in local start locations...

Hello to all Leaders (and potential Leaders) of all our walks, Ramblers official and Groups of 6 unofficial/NTR. Unfortunately, two more of our popular Start Locations have become Pay and Display car parks 7 days a week. Charges are either £2 or £3 for over 2 hours, depending on whether you pay with contactless, cash or by phone. They are:

Hambleden village car park (behind Stag & Huntsman) (RG9 6RP, 171, SU785865)
Mill End car park - near Hambleden (RG9 6TL, 171, SU785855)

If you come across any more please let me know so that I can inform all Leaders.
Angela Vasylenko

Note: Angela Shipley also notes that charges are also now in place at the old garden centre in West Wycombe, but I couldn't find details online - the West Wycombe NT site is silent on the subject. *Editor*

Selworthy 2021

Date for your 2021 Diaries: For those who have booked to go on the spring weekend, a reminder of the date: Friday 16th to Monday 19th April 2021 at the HF house at Selworthy. Whilst we cannot at this stage confirm the holiday will go ahead, we are hopeful the country will be well advanced with vaccinations by then to enable us to come together for a safe and enjoyable weekend in the Exmoor countryside. Watch this space for updates in the coming months.

Alan Williams

The Path ahead...

Some of you will know that I have written diaries of all the Long Distance paths that John and I have trod in healthier times, about 10 of them. These diaries grew into books, to be typed up, ready to be relived from my bath chair in the dim, distant, never- to- be- reached future. When in March our country became anything but healthy, with the arrival of a nasty little super bug, it wasn't long before I saw the potential for another, which I titled "The Longest Path" with a sub title of "2020, the Year that Never Was." Little did I know that it would span the entirety of 2020 which I had mentally only partially written off, but might well spill with unseemly lack of care well into 2021.

We have all had to evolve our own ways of keeping to our "paths" with an inevitable loss of our communal friendships; many of us are now content to walk alone with only nature for company, others soon founded informal groups of 6 which have thrived and later, between lockdowns, the RA was able to put on larger walks of up to 30 with Covid risk assessments and recording of participants in place, although most of us neither want to lead or walk with these sorts of numbers. Michael and Hamish gave it a try limiting the numbers to 10-12 and we are grateful to them for starting the ball rolling. We could do this again (for a while) and Angela Vasylenko would love to hear from you if you feel you could start leading on a small scale again when it is again permissible . These walks would be under the umbrella of the RA and their Covid safe precautions and would be available to all through the RA website. Leaders can seek advice from Angela regarding the few extra bits of paperwork needed.

We understand and feel ourselves that there is a loss of confidence, and rightly so, amongst leaders and walkers but as we come "out of the woods," we hope to rebuild our programme and our trust in the close contact with our fellow human beings. It will indeed be a long road, in all aspects of our lives and I for one readily admit to not being ready to venture far from my burrow until the global situation improves.

You will also know that we are now without a Chairman and we would like to express our gratitude to Pat Endacott for the 5 years that she gave us but understand her need to shift her priorities towards her home, her work and her health. It has been agreed amongst the remaining 5 on the committee that we will share the responsibility of chairing meetings between us on a rota basis and I have offered to keep the day to day running of the group on track, easy for me as I have hold of the lines of communications.

At present there is very little to do but rest assured, our finances are safe in Hamish's hands, Alan is ready to organise BBQs, Christmas meals and weekends breaks if only he is allowed, Mick's pen continues to fly over the notepad collecting minutes, Jeff is an old hand at controlling footpath checking and I am happy to report a flurry of new members this year and look forward to welcoming them on our beautiful footpaths as soon as when. Also, our two very significant non committee helpers, Angela, who runs perhaps the most important job of all - our walking programme- and Sheila, the newsletter editor. Thank you both.

In the meantime, none of you, the members, are forgotten and we look forward to the day when I can be back in the car parks, notebook in hand, collecting names for those much coveted points, once again. Meantime, I am busy recruiting my grandson – and here he is, "walking" by the Thames from Bourne End.

Angela Shipley



AGM: November 2020

Summary

The papers were sent out ahead of this year's AGM as normal and the AGM itself was held via the electronic meetings facilitator, Zoom. With 23 people online we were quorate. The meeting went well and the minutes will be available as usual next year.

Certificates for number of walks undertaken (in order of achieving)

Fewer certificates this year, of course, and there were a few near misses, but congratulations to:

500 - Michael Symmonds

250 - Jenny Wiltshire

100 - Stella Marsh

Sue Clarke

Charles Penman

50 - Yarla Nobbs (It comes to something when a dog gets a certificate before her owner, sorry Linda but keep going for yours).

Angela Shipley



In Memorium



Obituaries

Stephen Palmer: a member for 24 years, died on 30th October after a short illness. We didn't see Stephen that often but when we did, he would always be a quiet, faithful presence at the tail end, rounding up the stragglers as back marker for partner, Eileen Carroll's leisurely Sunday walks around Winchmore Hill and Cadsden. A knowledgeable historian, Stephen gave insightful talks around the local area and he did one for us following an evening AGM, on the subject of local artist, Stanley Spencer, as well as auditing our accounts for some years, way back. We send our condolences to Eileen and hope she gleans some comfort to know how much he was respected.

Angela Shipley

Ron Sims: I can't explain quite why, but it came as a bit of a shock to learn that Ron Sims, life member of the Wycombe Ramblers Group has died around the age of 88, sometime in the Autumn. Maybe this is because I have always seen Ron as our group mascot; you could in days long gone now, go anywhere in the country on a walking holiday and if you mentioned the Wycombe group, then Ron's name would come up. His identifying features were well known in far flung places – long gabardine mac, straw boater, black Oxford brogues, polished within an inch of their life, and of course, his famous leather, attaché case. We tried in vain for years to see what he carried in that case, until it fell open one day and out tumbled his sandwich, a copy of the day's newspaper and the 1inch Ordnance Survey map for 1932 (or thereabouts) in case he got lost.

Ron joined Ramblers in 1990, was on our committee for years, serving as treasurer for ten of them, Area treasurer for three and led over 60 of the 134 walks he clocked up, no mean feat as he had no car. He travelled extensively across Europe alone and by train well into old age. We don't know much about Ron's life but I vividly remember on one weekend away in Dovedale walking beside him and he told me, full of emotion, of his lonely time as an evacuee in the Second World War, something that left its mark on his childhood. For many years he lived with his mother in Wycombe but after her death he became more reclusive until a fall led to deterioration in his ability to manage in his rather chaotic home and he spent the last few years in sheltered accommodation in Widmer End. I find myself still looking out for him at the bus stop waiting for transport into Wycombe and of course he has a gate, in Church Path, Terriers, so if you pass through it, as I often do, spare him a thought and a smile of remembrance.

Angela Shipley

Where to walk next?

I guess that as much as we love our own step-outside-and-go localities, we are all longing for a bit of variety these days and/or mapped routes. For those who want some directions and/or suggestions, in addition to our own Ramblers site of course, here are a few free useful sites:

<https://www.ramblers.org.uk/go-walking/find-a-walk-or-route.aspx>

<https://chilternsociety.org.uk/free-walks-leaflets/>

<https://www.bbowt.org.uk/explore>

https://www.nationaltrail.co.uk/en_GB/trails/thames-path/

<https://canalrivertrust.org.uk/enjoy-the-waterways/walking/>

<https://www.visitbuckinghamshire.org/article/buckinghamshire-best-walks>

Let's celebrate our work

The upside to lockdown was that lots of people discovered their local paths. But few will have realised that those local paths only exist because of the work of the Ramblers and our predecessors.

Without the Ramblers there would probably have been no definitive maps of public rights of way, which we won 71 years ago in the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949. Before then, if you went for a walk and found your path blocked, you had to prove it was a public highway before you could expect any action to clear it.

The definitive maps were just the start though. Then we had to claim the paths for the maps— not so easy in the 1950s when far fewer people had their own cars. Later we had to persuade the Ordnance Survey to show the paths on its maps. Later still, the Ordnance Survey threatened to stop producing the 1:25000-scale maps on which we rely for planning walks, and the Ramblers led the fight to save them.

Nor will many of these new walkers know that it is a constant fight to keep the paths open and usable, that volunteer working parties install gates and steps and clear vegetation, and that our group footpath secretaries and pathcheckers help to scrutinise every application to alter the route of a path and object where it is against the public interest. We lobby Buckinghamshire Council, as highway authority, to maintain the paths budget in increasingly difficult times. Ramblers' path workers throughout the country are doing similar jobs.

It is thanks to the Ramblers that we have many named trails as well as a fine path network. It is because of us that we have access land where we can roam free—locally there is Beacon Hill above Ellesborough and Cobstone Hill near Turville, as well as the many Chiltern commons. We have played a vital part in achieving the England Coast Path; this will amplify the existing coastal paths with adjoining access land and in many parts of the country create a brand-new route along the coast. Now we are campaigning for agricultural funding post-Brexit to be directed to paying for new and better access, and for grants to be withdrawn from farmers and landowners abuse public paths on their land.

We should publicise the work which we do to enable people to walk, and encourage them to get involved, for instance by surveying their local paths and reporting problems, carrying secateurs on their walks and snipping away the brambles, and researching historic ways before the definitive maps are closed to new claims on 1 January 2026.

Now is the perfect time to inspire a new taskforce of path workers. Those who enjoy their local paths should not take them for granted. Let's make sure that they know what we do to secure paths and access, and that their help and support would be truly welcome in the post-pandemic world.

Kate Ashbrook

Your Committee for Nov 2020-21

For contact details see <https://wycomberamblers.org.uk/contacts.html>

CHAIR	VACANT	
Secretary (committee)	Mick Magdeburg	
Treasurer (committee)	Hamish Ross	
Events Manager (committee)	Alan Williams	
Footpaths (committee)	Jeff Smith	
Membership (committee)	Angela Shipley	
Web manager	VACANT	We need someone to run our local site @ https://www.wycomberamblers.org.uk
Walks	Angela Vasylenko	
Newsletter	Sheila Draper	