

PATHWAY

Issue no 74 spring/summer 2023 Newsletter for Wycombe District Ramblers

Welcome



April is my month and if I could stop the clock, it would be right now, mid Spring while the world is yellow; yellow daffodils, celandine, pastel lemon primroses, even the gaudy dandelions and the almost yellow of the willow trees (always first in the queue), all against the background of lively lime green as the leaves unfurl and emerge. These are a joy after what so many of us have remarked this year, has been a long, tedious winter. BUT, hey, with the passing of April, next comes the ethereal gift of our stunning bluebell woods until the harder green of chlorophyll crowds it all out for another year.

We have had an encouraging number of new members over the last year and some are walking with us regularly while many others, not knowing what they are missing, join in name only. If you are one of those, give us a try, all the above is yours for the taking, and in good company.

There are a few changes afoot. HQ is introducing new technology for entering walks on the system which should go live in May. Angela Vasylenko has yet to receive details of how the new "Walks Manager" will work, and when she does, I am sure she will be in touch with leaders with guidance as to how it may affect the way you add your walks for future programmes.

The committee has decided to actively reduce printing and posting of as many programmes and newsletters as possible. Canvassing the 50 or so relevant addresses, we asked if they a) wished to receive our mail at all, b) if they would consider email as an alternative or c) wished to remain as they were. This has led to a few (no doubt welcomed) redundancies and I want to personally say some thanks yours. Firstly, to Ivan Rutter and Pat Endacott who were managing our printing 19 years ago when I became membership secretary and have done so before then and ever since at cost, with huge financial benefit for the group. Back in the day we had 700 members; that represented over 400 copies of each issue every 4 months, so a huge thank you for that dedicated service. Then, to all those who used to footslog around their local areas delivering nearly half of those by hand, saving vast amounts of money on postage. I know who you are and so do you but in particular Simon, Joy, Alan and John E who kept it up in ever dwindling numbers until the end. All new members now agree to email, so hand delivery of hard copy would have eventually died out anyway.

Finally, what does your brain do while your feet are active on a solo walk or even if wandering along mid field on a ramble while everyone else is chatting around you? It has to do something, it is never idle. Walking from Lands' End to John O'Groats, John Hillaby in his book "Journey Through Britain", speaks of the "Skull Cinema" which apparently affects us all after a few miles. A stream of fantasies, memories, facts, fiction, flood the mind, connect and disconnect, keeping our brains occupied while the body drags along behind, step by unconscious step. Does this sound familiar? If you were unaware of it, you will be now. Sorry!!

Angela Shipley, Membership Secretary

Membership News

New members: We would like to welcome the following members who have joined us in the past four months, some of whom are walking regularly.

Steve and Rachel Clarke

Pauline Hayes

Sue Gaunt

Linda McColm

Dawn McAlister

Mary Murphy

Ann Palmer

Steve and Maryse Potts

Christian Onwumelu

Alan Phipps

Steve Southall

And Martina Nemec, affiliated from Chiltern Weekend Walkers

In memorium

So many of us remember with much fondness Betty Carr, who was taken from family and friends with no warning on the 16th February. Betty is one of those members who will walk with us for many years to come, thanks to the memories she left behind. Full of vitality and interest in others, she leaves a huge gap and we all wish Joe and their daughters, Beatrice and Sofia, the comfort of knowing her popularity. Betty achieved 419 walks from March 1995, when she joined the Wycombe Group, until very shortly before her death.

Angela Shipley, Membership Secretary

"Wye" not walk them all?

This Easter I walked by the River Wye, in Buxton, in the Peak District - the first Wye I ever visited as a child. Another river, closer to my current home, is the one which gives Wycombe its name, which is the shortest of the three Wy(e)s at eleven miles long. The second in length is the fifteen mile Derbyshire one. The longest, and the only tidal one of the three, is the one hundred and eighty five mile long River Wye which transverses the English Welsh border in part. [This was the scene of one of our branch's spring long weekends' away a few years back.]



Our Ramblers' branch is aptly named as Wy comes from the Latin vaga, meaning wander. The word vagabond comes from vagabundus, a person who wanders. It can sometimes be taken as interchangeable with the word vagrant. Despite the sometimes negative connotations associated with both words I prefer to think of the innocent meaning of carefree wanderer!

It also means that Wycombe & District Ramblers is thus tautological in its title, a fact I hadn't considered until recently.

Sheila Draper

Confessions of a Walk's leader



I'd been walking with Wycombe Ramblers for a few years when the call went out for new leaders and I thought... 'Why not?'

So I sat down with OS maps and focused on the Hambleden area and found a series of footpaths which formed a circular route which seemed to be approximately 6 miles in length (by use of a piece of string and the scale bar on the map), and took me through some of the prettiest villages in the area... I went out to recce it and apart from getting slightly lost a couple of times, managed to follow the route, found it included a stunning view and didn't have any completely unassailable hills, so I was pretty pleased with myself. I repeated the recce a couple of times just to really know the way, I didn't want to take a group down a wrong path or worse get completely lost. I later found I had inadvertently fallen upon a classic Chiltern walk known as "The Three Villages", so not 'my' walk at all!

When the day came, I was relieved it wasn't raining, and a good sized group had gathered at Skirmett, my chosen start place. We set off uphill from the village and a group of very experienced walkers headed away uphill. I wanted to turn right along a different path and I called them back and indicated the 'correct' direction and they all apologised for getting ahead and followed my route. It was then that I knew I was going to enjoy leading walks... the power... I was in charge and it was just a little bit intoxicating. I tried to identify why I had reacted like this and came to the conclusion that it was probably a residual memory of having been a Primary school teacher.

I've noticed another time when this has presented me with a dilemma... crossing busy roads or railway tracks. My instinct is to keep everyone together and be a 'marshal', even to walk out and stop the traffic, and it took a little while before I was able to remind the overzealous me that these were all adults, intelligent and capable of judging for themselves, but I still tend to avoid these situations wherever possible. I've been lucky in that so far (and keeping everything crossed) I've never had a bad accident happen on one of my walks, but at least after Covid, I am now fully risk assessed , good old 'elf and safety'!

The issue of getting ahead of the leader is a thorny one. I've done it myself on many occasions, once being deliberately allowed to go much further up a hill than needed, by a leader who has gone down in history as notorious for 'losing' walkers and changing his route to confound those who thought they knew... and I know of leaders who like to lead from the back, or the middle. I prefer to be in front but this may have to change as I found on my last walk that I was the last one up a hill... and I'd been really trying!

I couldn't just repeat the same walk so I set about finding others. The process was the same: plan it using the OS maps, recce it a couple of times to be sure and then hope some ramblers turned up and enjoyed it. I got lost more than once. On one occasion I walked at least 20 miles after getting lost, at other times the walk wasn't that great and I decided not to use after all, it but I built up a folder of walks I could offer. Over the years, I have tried many different start points, covering a large area and trying not to metaphorically step on the toes of other leaders by seeming to copy their routes. I now know of suitable 'banana break' stopping places and when to factor them into the walk and to notify participants ahead of time via the walk description, if it is especially hilly.

One change is that the planning has become much easier since the advent of GPS apps and I spend evenings planning the walks virtually then checking whenever possible, but I must admit to occasionally turning out without having physically walked it, because it's so much harder to get lost following a little cursor of a perfect miniature map held in your hand.. I can read maps, I can even navigate using a compass from time to time when really pushed. Wireless 4 and 5G have made it a lot less likely I will march off confidently to the corner of a field and find the isn't a footpath there because I've been on the wrong path, and I have to embarrassingly lead the group to retrace their steps. This has happened, but mercifully only once.

So despite my shortcomings, I enjoy introducing new walkers to some favourite paths, I love meeting up with fellow walkers I've known for over 20 years so I will continue for as long as I can. I try to include a hill as it's always rewarded by a beautiful view - even if I am last up!

I know we have a shortage of leaders, so if you've been wondering whether to give it a go, I'd encourage you to go for it as I don't think you'd regret it and it would be greatly appreciated.

Lindsay Vale

The Chiltern Way



The Chiltern Way is a path devised by the Chiltern Society to show off the various landscapes in the Chilterns AONB. The route starts in Hemel Hempstead, goes more or less SW to Ewelme, then more or less NE to Dunstable. Then, instead of closing off the route, it goes on a long loop around Luton before coming back to Hemel. Why the loop? Well, there is a quite large section of the AONB to the north east of Luton based upon Sharpenhoe separate from our familiar area.

After walking the Ridgeway, my friends and I now have the linear walk bug. So we thought we'd try this. It took us over a year (it is 184 miles long) but we finished it at the end of last year. It goes through lots of familiar places, Penn, Hambleden, Maidensgrove, Stokenchurch. And lots of places that we don't go to, Sharpenhoe being one for example, see the photo below.

The western section is what we are familiar with. Hills, woods, views. The eastern section doesn't have the large woodlands we have and the scenery is more rolling but it's still pretty.

One benefit is that you can do a lot of this by bus if you live near Wycombe. Did you know that you can get a bus from Wycombe to Hemel which stops right by the start of the path? Or you can get the bus from Wycombe to the Three Horseshoes on the Marlow road, walk to Hambleden, on to the Henley road and then a bus back. Or even, a bus to a stop on the A4010 below Lacey Green (the middle of nowhere, the bus driver didn't know the stop), walk to Stokenchurch, then a bus back to Wycombe.

And, there are lots of pubs along the way so you can do a 12 mile stage and stop 2/3rds of the way through for a meal. Only on one stage did we have to take a packed lunch.



My favourite section was between Ewelme and Stokenchurch. We had views, woods and hills - everything you'd want from a local walk. My least favourite section was connecting Dunstable with Sharpenhoe. We had three sewage works, the A5, the M1, lots of warehouses and a housing estate that was on no map I've seen.

But all in all it was worth it. It's pretty well signposted and the paths are well maintained. We actually walk along large sections of it in our normal walks. Look out for the signs.

Brian Greenow

Update from the AGM

Those of you who were at the AGM will recall that we discussed various options for spending the self-funded money we have accrued in our accounts. This amounts to approximately £1100. Although there is some flexibility as to how the money can be spent, it must benefit the group as a whole.

The preferred option of the Committee was to arrange for the installation of a gate or gates to replace difficult styles. However at the time of the AGM the Bucks scheme was in abeyance. The suggestions put forward at AGM were –

1. A booklet of local walks
2. A coach trip, possibly to a National Trust place, once or twice a year
3. Organise a long distance walk over time using a coach
4. Offer a course in first aid or map reading.

These suggestions have been discussed by the Committee and it was decided to canvass members to assess the interest in a first aid course. However, such interest proved to be quite low and the Committee agreed that to go ahead would not meet the requirement of “benefitting the group as a whole”. Whilst suggestions 2 and 3 appear attractive, they both involve a considerable time commitment to pursue and unfortunately your Committee is carrying a number of vacancies and is rather stretched in carrying out its main duties. If however, a member would like to come forward and explore these possibilities in terms of cost, interest etc, I am sure the Committee would be pleased to accept such an offer!

In the meantime, it appears that the Bucks Donate a Gate Scheme may become available again so the Committee is actively pursuing that possibility.

Advertising our Walks

Although numbers on our Wednesday walks appear to be much improved this year, the Committee still feel that it is important to advertise our walks to encourage others to join us in enjoying our wonderful countryside. Members who receive a Local Directory booklet at their homes may have seen an advert on the Community Board in recent editions. Committee members have also delivered leaflets to local cafes and libraries. Leaders have started putting photos and a short description of the walks on our website, so members can encourage friends who might be interested in joining us by guiding them to the website, www.wycomberamblers.org.uk

Sally McEvoy, Secretary

Wycombe & District Committee for Nov 2022-Nov 2023

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

CHAIR	VACANT
Secretary:	Sally McEvoy
Treasurer:	Hamish Ross
Events Manager:	Alan Williams
Membership:	Angela Shipley
Walks:	Angela Vasylenko

Other roles: Brian Greenow, Footpaths and Web manager & Sheila Draper, Editor of Pathway,

End word: The branch long weekend away at HF Longmynd, Church Stretton has just ended; early reports were very positive with good walks, companionships and views. Hopefully there will be a full article in the vnext issue from one or more of the participants. Thanks to Alan Williams for organising it.