Loddon Valley Ramblers Committee Members

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How far is that in kilometres?

Miles	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
Km	1.6	3.2	4.8	6.4	8.0	9.7	11.3	12.9	14.5	16.1	17.7	19.3	20.9	22.5	24.1

LODDON VALLEY RAMBLERS' NEWSLETTER
September to December 2018

I start with some sad news that Phillip Rothbart (72) a Leader of our Sunday walks for several years, died in June. Some of our members will know him from U3A 'Walk and Talk French' as he was a linguist who taught at Reading School and was fluent in French, German, Spanish and Italian. The Group made a donation to a cancer research charity in his memory.

I am sure you all enjoyed the Summer BBQ, organised by Sue Gatenby and her team, supported by a mix of music prepared by Nick Johnson. We are investigating a Hog Roast for next year, to give the burger flippers a rest.

The Pyrenees trip organised by John Ginty was very successful, with a great selection of walks and an excellent hotel. Our weekend breaks are always popular and Linda Ashwell has organised a weekend in Kingcombe Centre, Dorset for Autumn 2019 and we have asked her to give a short presentation at the AGM in November, describing the accommodation and facilities. If you are interested in organising or helping to organise a weekend, please contact a member of the committee and we can provide assistance and support.

Our Walks Programme continues to be the backbone of our activities, in providing a selection of walks throughout the week. Nick Johnson provides excellent direction to over 50 leaders and you may have noticed a new feature of Easy walks, at a slightly slower pace, marked with 👣 suggested by Sue Gatenby, and proving popular. We have recently changed the presentation of walks in the Newsletter and with the skill of Martin Labram and Graham Croucher, developed a procedure so a Walk Leader can load walks formatted directly for the Newsletter and Ramblers Walks Finder. If you are interested in leading walks, Nick always needs new leaders and you can enjoy the subsidised Walk Leaders' Dinner and Dance in January.

It is important to keep footpaths accessible to all, and a team lead by Ray Sharp is currently replacing some awkward stiles in Hurst Parish. Steve Vale as Footpath Officer has just got permission from Wokingham Borough Council to replace some stiles in Barkham. Just contact the committee if you want to help fix a gate. If you find a stile that is particularly difficult, Ray's team may be able to replace it with a kissing gate, if we are able to identify the landowner.

We are always looking for different social activities and suggestions are always welcome. A Riverboat Shuffle on the Thames is being investigated for next summer... just watch this space.

David Moffett

Chairman

New members

Welcome to: Anushka H, Rhona S, Peter and Jennifer N, William D, John R, Susan W.

Email

You are receiving this communication as a member of Loddon Valley group and you have previously asked to be kept informed of the Ramblers work by post. If you no longer wish to receive communications like this please update your mailing preferences at www.ramblers.org.uk/my-account.

We maintain a list of the email addresses of our members. This is used to inform them about last-minute changes to walks, additional walks and events, or unusual weather conditions. We will keep your details confidential and won't share them with anyone else. If you haven't yet done so please visit the *Latest News* page on the website www.lvra.org.uk and send us your email address via the link. This is required even if you supplied an email address when you joined Ramblers, since no permission for us to use it was given then.

Email derekalansmith@virginmedia.com to be removed from the list, or send an alert to everyone on it. You should also contact him if you would prefer to receive your newsletter by email.

Walking partnerships

Loddon Valley are proud to be affiliated to the Walking Partnership. Help support our group by booking your walking holidays with Ramblers Walking Holidays, Chapters Experience Holidays, Adagio or Load off your back and nominate Loddon Valley Ramblers when booking to ensure we receive vital funds through the walking partnership. See www.thewalkingpartnership.org.uk for details.

Facebook

Loddon Valley Ramblers Facebook page is now available for news of walks, weekends etc. Follow www.facebook.com/groups/623821047752746/ to access it, or search Facebook for "Loddon Valley Ramblers".

First Aid

First Aid courses are frequently arranged with St John Ambulance. These 3-hour courses have been tailored for Ramblers and cover CPR and how to deal with chest pains, choking, severe bleeding, sprains and strains, bites and stings, foreign objects, asthma etc. After attending the course you will get an Essential First Aid Certificate which is valid for **three** years.

The courses are being subsidised and the cost to the individual is £15. If, however, you are a current Loddon Valley walk leader there will be no charge.

To book a place please contact David Turner (turnerd2@btinternet.com, 0118 977 4184).

Those of you who have been on a previous course should remember that the certificate you received is valid for only **three** years, so contact David to arrange a refresher.

Forthcoming events

★ **LULWORTH COVE WEEKEND 28th September**
Fully booked.

★ **LODDON VALLEY RAMBLERS AGM**
7.30pm on Wednesday 31st October at Barkham Village Hall, Church Lane (off Barkham Street), Barkham RG40 4PL. There will not be a speaker this year.

★ **RAMBLERS BERKSHIRE AREA AGM**
2pm on Saturday 17th November at Morton Village Hall.

★ **LEADERS' DINNER Friday 18th January 2019**

★ **DOVEDALE WEEKEND 5th-8th April 2019**
See enclosed flyer.

★ **BELLEVAUX HOLIDAY 12th-19th June 2019**
See enclosed flyer.

★ **KINGCOMBE WEEKEND 13th-16th Sep 2019**

★ **MADEIRA HOLIDAY September 2020**

Footpaths

I attended the Mid and West Berks Local Access Forum as an observer in May. Issues affecting walking and access in Wokingham included the Council's proposal to mow roadside verges where they were likely to be used by walkers to connect footpaths (for example along the A327 between the Magpie & Parrot and Greensward Lane). This has the potential to make walking routes more pleasant and less dangerous. The Council has asked me to help identify sites where such mowing will be beneficial, so if you are aware of one please let me know.

The Forum also discussed and agreed a new policy relating to Planning Applications for Housing, Roads, Minerals & Waste sites and other industrial sites. This says that The Forum will consider the following when commenting on plans.

"That the development:

i. does not adversely affect existing public rights of way or other public open spaces in the area;
ii. offers equivalent, or improved, diversion of existing public right of way affected by the development;
iii. Provides increased and / or improved off-road access to the existing public rights of way network in the area, and to existing and new facilities, open spaces and the countryside;
iv. Provides increased and/or improved off-road access for as many different user groups as possible, that is, pedestrians, cyclists, equestrians and disabled users;
v. Provides paths which are definitive, rather than permissive, and are therefore added to the definitive map and statement;
vi. Conforms to the British Standard BS 5709:2018 '*Gaps, Gates and Stiles'* and DEFRA's guidance *Good practical guidance for Local Authorities on compliance with the Equalities Act 2010*."

Loddon Valley Ramblers will, I think, generally take a similar approach when making comments.

The advent of the growing season has, as usual, led to a number of problems of crops such as oil seed rape being allowed to overgrow footpaths, especially in Grazeley and Hurst. It is frustrating that some of the farmers are repeat offenders, year after year, and that the local authority is perhaps less keen than it should be to take enforcement action. We will keep up the pressure.

On a more optimistic note, we have installed four new gates in Hurst over the summer to replace stiles. These gates both improve access and are more durable than stiles. Thanks are due to David

Moffett, Ray Sharp and all those who have volunteered to help with the installations.

I am also pleased to say that, following completion of Phase 1 of the Winnersh relief road, the nearby rights of way have been fully restored – a hopeful precedent for the many new roads and developments under way or planned in Wokingham.

After many years as footpath warden for Earley, Don Palmer will stand down from the role in September. The LVR Committee have placed on record their appreciation of his work. The Committee also agreed that (since I live in Earley) I would take over from Don from September.

Unfortunately, we are still looking for a volunteer to take on the role of Footpath Warden for Finchampstead East. The role is not onerous, but plays a key role in ensuring that the footpath network is open, well-maintained and accessible. If you are interested in taking on this role, or simply want to know more about what is entailed, please contact me via the number or email address shown inside the front cover of this newsletter.

Finally, I shall be organising a meeting of all the Footpath Wardens in the autumn. If there are any issues which you think should be on our agenda, please let me know.

Happy walking

Steve Vale

Abingworth Trip 13th - 16th May 2018

41 apprehensive Ramblers signed up for this weekend in the South Downs. The walks were led by Gerry Cooper, John Ledger, Lynda Ledger and Richard Hatton; a brief description of the walks is described in the paragraphs below.

Approaching Abingworth Hall along an ancient sunken drovers road which is now the B2139, we passed a new featureless modern housing estate built on the site of a derelict mushroom farm. What is left of this mushroom farm is still in operation on the opposite side of the road; the mention of this mushroom farm on our doorstep excited some of our ageing free spirited members! Abingworth Hall is a comfortable 25-bedroom country house; it has eight acres of gardens and a large lake, which is stocked with mean looking carp. The original house burnt down and was rebuilt in 1910; it was later owned by Sir Oswald Mosley, grandfather of the 1930s Fascist leader of the same name. Strolling up to the top of the southern yew tree lined lawn reveals magnificent views of the South Downs - a taster of things to come. Thakeham, a picturesque old chocolate box village lies half a mile to the north and consists of a single road which is home to many fine old cottages and buildings, including the old White Lion coaching Inn, a traditional and friendly pub that over the weekend was frequented by some of our more serious beer Cicerones.

Friday Walk

Friday's short 3 mile and 5 mile afternoon 'warm up walks' took us north from HF Abingworth Hall to Thakeham Village (pop. 1816 in 2011) then south past the White Lion Public House (good!) then the Church of St Mary and onwards towards Warminghurst and the 13th Century (sandstone) Church of the Holy Sepulchre. Turning due south to Park Barn we then travelled West to Little Thakeham, a Grade 1 Listed Country House before closing our loop back at HF Abingworth. A great introduction to the area at a comforting yet rewarding pace. Later that afternoon tea and cream cakes were served up in the conservatory.

Saturday - Short Walk

On Saturday's 7.5 mile short walk we started at Kithurst Hill a ridge approximately 2 miles South West of Storrington where the popular South Downs CP was filling up with a gaggle of walkers, runners and cyclists. Walking due west and following a gentle grade, spectacular views of Arundel Castle were soon available for the spiritually gifted before the early morning mist slowly lifted to reveal a warm and sunny day. After a few miles we descended the ridge and turned South onto a 'path' that had been recently shared with a fleet of John Deere tractors; this path now resembled a bubbling mass of chalk coloured magma which we slithered our way along and eventually found some solid ground to shake off our newly acquired 4 inch platform soles! At this stage our chivalrous leader was called upon to rescue a young maiden who was in distress; this young lady was leading a walk the previous week and got lost! Not being one to accept defeat lightly she came out again to find out where she had gone wrong, but alas she found herself in the same predicament: lost. After a brief map consultation with our leader her situation was resolved and off she went embarrassingly on her intended route. In appreciation of a possible improvement in recent weather, farmers were out tilling the fields and ground spraying, something not practicable in the

preceding months. We stopped for photos at Amberley dew pond, a man-made cattle watering hole, before lunch at The Burgh where we were treated to an overhead display of light aircraft, gliders and an ominous sounding 'drone'. Continuing via Wexham Down, Lee Farm and Chantry Hill, most of us by then flagging under the unexpected April heat, the return sight of our car park proved the equal of an oasis in a desert. Big congratulations to frequent Ryanair flyer Ellen Holmes and 'Tiger Roll' who jointly won the '2018 Gerry Cooper Abingworth Hall Grand National sweepstake' yielding a significant (tax free) cash prize.

Saturday - Medium Walk

We set off at 10 o'clock from the Washington village CP with a drying breeze and a promise of sunshine later. On Chanctonbury Hill we climbed the late Iron Age dykes to the ridge path and stopped to look at the restored dew pond built in the 1870s. Chanctonbury Ring was clear of mist and we had fair views to the north over Wiston and south towards Worthing. The Ring, so much damaged in the storm of 1987, has been replanted and is now covered with young trees - mainly beech. We then headed east along the South Downs Way to pick up the Monarch's Way (a poor quality path) towards Cissbury Ring, where we had lunch and admired the lovely all-round views. On a fine sunny afternoon, we returned north past Findon and up a quiet stretch of down land to reach our transport via the South Downs Way

Saturday - Long walk

On the Saturday, Lynda Ledger and Richard Hatton led 12 walkers on the 14.5 mile long walk, with around 1,500 of ascent, covering both part of the South Downs Way and the Monarch's Way. Starting at a car park just off the A24, the route headed east on the SDW, then west from just above Steyning Bowl in to the village of Findon with a chance for a refreshing drink at the Village House Inn. We kept walking on the Monarch's Way past Findon Place and the attractive church of St. John the Baptist which dates back to Norman times before crossing the A280 to see the route ahead disappearing over the rolling downs. At Michelgrove we then went north towards the SDW ridge with Harlow Hill on our right before completing our walk with the sun behind us on the ridge for the last 3 miles. The weather was good with panoramas of views throughout day. With the hill forts of the Chanctonbury and Cissbury Rings and enclosures and tumuli there was always a sense of moving through ancient countryside.

Sunday - Short Walk

Following a further excellent breakfast, the starting point for Sunday's 7.8 mile short walk was at Washington, a 15-minute drive south east from Abingworth Hall. The walk started with a 400-foot climb up Chanctonbury Hill (known for claimed extra-terrestrial activity) to Chanctonbury dew pond (circa 1740) and adjacent Iron Age Fort of 'Chanctonbury Ring' where tall beech trees form the circumference of the ring. Continuing along the South Downs Way we turned west at the memorial stone to local farmers Walter and Mollie Longmead, who were passionate about this area of West Sussex. At 'No Mans Land' we enjoyed superb views of Worthing (or was it Shoreham by Sea?) before, at nearly half distance, our walk leader sensed impending rain. A quick calculation by 1G Smartphone and slide rule confirmed the worst and a unanimous decision was taken to fore-shorten the walk by 1.5 miles. Then on past primroses and awakening hedgerows to possibly the highlight of the walking day. Reminiscent of something off 'You've Been Framed', 'Four dogs and a Cattle Grid' involves your beloved pets negotiating the 10-foot long mix of steel tubes and adjacent gaps. Although no dogs actually completed the endeavour, all four were safely extricated by respective owners, neither of whom however seemed to fully appreciate the LVR collective sense of humour. As predicted, rain started as we approached the car park on our return. An enjoyable day for all. But maybe not the dogs.

Sunday - Medium Walk

On the Sunday, again Lynda Ledger and Richard Hatton took the lead for 16 walkers on an 11.5 mile walk which took in parts of the South Downs Way and the West Sussex Literary Trail together with 3 miles by the River Arun and its meadowlands. Starting at a car park on the SDW the route headed west passing Springhead Hill, Rackham Hill and Amberley Hill before dropping down to Amberley Station, crossing the Arun to the west bank and following the path on the river's edge. Arriving at South Stoke and viewing St. Leonard's Church, which dates back to Saxon times and is recorded in the Doomsday Book, we then crossed the Gurkha Bridge, reconstructed in 2009, before continuing south for lunch at Burpham with views across to

Arundel Castle and Cathedral. In the afternoon we had the steepest climb of the day out of Wepham with vistas back across the valley before a gradual ascent past the rounded wood of Norfolk Clump and back to the ridge.

Monday - Walk

With most of the party heading home, nine of us set out west from our hotel along the ridge to Hurston Warren, on the dry heath land, home of West Sussex Golf Club. It was then revealed that some walking poles had been left more than half a mile back at Hurston. Two energetic souls set off to search and the poles were soon found but one of the seekers got slightly lost and had to be guided back. Mobiles are sometimes really useful! After the 30-minute interlude we all set off across Nutbourne Common and on to West Chiltington village, where we admired their lovely preserved smock mill before crossing the still very muddy farmland to the commercial mushroom complex in Thakeham. We returned to the HF hotel at 1 o'clock. Some of us had a picnic lunch by the pond and reflected on the excellent weekend we had enjoyed. We all had a wonderful weekend with great food, good accommodation and friendly company; the walks were well planned and organised by our three leaders.

Gerry, John, Lynda and Richard

Pyrenees Holiday June 2018

Finally, the 24th June had arrived and with it the time of our departure for 5 days of walking in the Valle de Tena and Ordesa National Park.

In customary fashion, Harris Coaches collected us from Broad Street, after first stopping at Woodley library, and then took us to Stansted. Our flight on Ryanair to Zaragoza was without mishap. At Zaragoza we were met by Hike Pyrenees who transferred us by three people-carriers to the Hotel Tierra de Biescas, ninety minutes north of Zaragoza in the pre-Pyrenees. It was there that we began to realise what a treat we were in for. The weather was glorious and Biescas is set amongst steep fir covered hills, with the village bisected by a river. The 4-star hotel even had a swimming pool, of which much use was made.

Because our party was twenty eight, Phil, the owner of Hike Pyrenees, allocated three guides to each day's programme of Easy, Medium and Hard Options. Phil briefed us each evening with a clear description of each and flexibly ensured that all had the walk the next day that suited them. He was ably supported by Hannah, David and Juanma who had good knowledge of flora, fauna and topography. They were all great fun to walk with and we quickly felt we had known them for ages.

The first day's walk was towards Punta Del Pacino (1965m). Each group walked different distances and ascents depending on individual preferences. Phil was able to point out a rare Lamagia Vulture that feeds on bone but which brings good luck. Orchids, gentians and roses abounded as the Spring was later than usual following colder weather and heavy rain.

Food at the hotel was good and the breakfasts ample as were the packed lunch fixings which we assembled ourselves. We had a mix of evening meals at the hotel and at local restaurants in Biescias plus a tapas meal in the old capital of the region, Jaca.

Our second day's walking involved driving to the French Pyrenees towards Lacs D'Ayous and Pic D'Ayous (2288m). The French side of the Pyrenees is more sheer than the Spanish and in the main, granite as compared with limestone and sandstone in Spain - something to do with the Spanish tectonic plate crashing into the larger Eurasian and subsequent glaciation. There were quite a few other walkers about, and during July and August that beautiful area becomes very crowded. Many of the slopes had snow and, surprisingly, some of the higher lakes were still choked with snow. For the Hard walk, it was the first of several traverses of snow patches - carefully does it and use a pole! For those on other walks, the scenery was just stunning with ascents manageable, plants abundant, peaks to view and thanks for not being on anything more difficult.

The area around the Rincon del Verde was the venue for day three. The walking was through woodland, high meadows and further peaks which revealed a delightful profusion of wild flowers - it is possible to see 7 different varieties of wild orchid on any walk and the occasional marmot. It was rumoured that a deer was spotted, as were Griffon and Egyptian vultures.

Following that day's walk, we enjoyed a winetasting lead by the redoubtable George. Some of our party displayed remarkable resilience in continuing their sampling until well past midnight. BBQ food was served that night but rain prevented us from eating outside.

It was perhaps as well that the next day, Thursday, was a rest day. Phil took us to nearby Sante Elena Church, which perches on the side of the valley atop a grotto and spring. Nearby were interesting Napoleonic and Civil War fortifications and even a Dolman. All of which he entertainingly explained. That evening in Jaca, he led us on a tour of the old Town and regaled us with tales of Aragon, the Reconquista and the origins of Spain. We concluded our 'rest' day in a Tapas bar amidst the fiesta to Santa Rosa and televised football, England v Belgium. The result of the latter pleased only one of our party.

On Friday it was back to business and the very beautiful Ordesa Valley. Once again, all abilities were catered for. The Hard option started with a 600m climb and then a long gallery walk and sloping valley bottom return, punctuated by several impressive waterfalls. Those of us not on this particular walk could just look up and imagine what our long distance walkers were tackling whilst we bathed our feet in the water below some of these waterfalls.

Saturday was our last walking day. The Short was tracking alongside the Rio Aguas Limpas, the river of clean water. The Medium option at Ibones de Anayat (2227m) and the Hard to the Pico Musales, appropriately named the Peak of Muscles (2653). That is two Ben Nevises and involved a 1350m climb in 4.8 miles. By the end, my legs were, in a word, 'knackered'.

Sunday, the day of our return, had come all too quickly and we, with some sadness, said farewell to Phil and his team, some of us expressing firm resolve to return.

A big 'Thank you' to John and Bobbi Ginty and to Hike Pyrenees. This was an excellent, safe and well organised week's walking holiday for a remarkably cost effective price

Ian and Marianne Murray

Ramblers Charity England & Wales No: 1093577 Scotland No: SC039799

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