

# LODDON VALLEY RAMBLERS' NEWSLETTER

## January to April 2020

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I start with some sad news. David Bounds, a former Footpath Secretary for the Group, died recently. He revised the excellent 'Rambling for Pleasure' Books. You can see his photo in the books and his legacy continues in our footpaths. We have included an obituary by Dave Ramm and comment from Kate Ashbrook.

If you couldn't make it to the Group's AGM on 30<sup>th</sup> October, I would like to give you the highlights from last year and plans for next year. There is more detail in the Minutes, to be found on our website.

Walks continue to be well supported, with numbers increasing in all groups. On our walks please follow the leader, as the group can become stretched and walkers at the back split from the group. To encourage members to consider leading walks, we have arranged a leadership and navigation course, just see the enclosed flyer. The dedication of our Leaders is recognised at the Leaders' Dinner in January.

The group installed 14 gates in the year, to improve access for all to the countryside and are now planning for next year. If you know a difficult stile for replacing with a gate, then please phone Steve Vale on the Contact Details.

After the success of last year's Barn Dance, we have booked the same band & hall on March 20<sup>th</sup> but we will have to limit numbers because it was a squeeze for some dances, so sign up quick with the flyer.

Our walking weekends are always popular and the spring visit to the Yorkshire Dales was sold out in days. So please return the flyer for Selworthy in Somerset, if you want to go in October.

The coach walks are returning next summer, taking us to a different area, with a choice of walks ending in a destination and time to explore.

Unfortunately, our Madeira trip was cancelled, due to lack of numbers, so we are offering a week to Bellevaux, in the French Alps, for those that missed the trip last year.

It is 25 years since the Group was formed, so we will be celebrating with a dinner & dance on October 2<sup>nd</sup> – a date for your diary.

Please remember the Chairman's Mince Pie Walk on 22<sup>nd</sup> December and enjoy a festive drink.

*David Moffett*  
Chairman

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### David Bounds 1932 - 2019

It might be difficult to believe it now, but when the East Berkshire Ramblers was formed in the early 1970s many of the paths in the local countryside simply did not exist on the ground. Sure, they had been put on the map in the 1950s, but many were overgrown and could not be used - even if you could find them. In fact Berkshire CC considered that they should be extinguished as they were no longer needed for public use!

To start with members did not walk, they worked - to clear and open the paths. That's when I first met David. He used to come on his bike, so after a hard day's cutting and clearing, building stiles or a bridge, I would offer him and his bike a lift home.

It then became obvious that everyone should be invited to try these new paths so the Chairman, Peter Nevell, arranged for the Maidenhead Advertiser to publish the first of the circular walks and after they had accumulated he put 12 of them together and the first 'Rambling for Pleasure' guidebook appeared in 1957, price 30p.

I took over the maps from Peter Walker and, when Peter died in 1988, David the text. That was to continue up until 2015 and included three new areas: Kennet Valley, the Chilterns and going into Hampshire with the Three Castles Path, plus all the multiple revisions of the different titles - with the most recent being 'Along the Thames', now in its seventh edition.

David was a wordsmith. His clear directions were constantly praised by those we would meet and who could resist those lovely, tempting introductions that he was able to provide at the start of every ramble? And for those arriving after 60 miles at Winchester Cathedral - how's this for a finale:

*This masterpiece of medieval masonry was moulded together in various architectural styles during the 450 years from 1079. King Henry III was baptised here, Richard the Lion Heart was crowned here, Queen Mary I was crowned here, Jane Austen and Izaak Walton were buried here. Truly a treasure house of English history.*

Footpath worker, author, historian - oh yes, and for many years Footpath Secretary for the Loddon Valley Group.

*Dave Ramm*

David was a really dedicated member of the Ramblers and did so much for us; he put his heart and soul into it. His lovely books are just one memorial to him. I know he carried out most of the roles in the Loddon Group, and could be depended on for his commitment to the cause.

We could do with many more people like David!

*Kate Ashbrook*

*Chair, Ramblers GB and general secretary of the Open Spaces Society*

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### **New members**

*Welcome to:* Chris and David C, Deborah and Ernest B, Peter W, Oliver W, James B, Khadija B, Mrs Barbara R, Andrew R.

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### **Email**

You are receiving this communication because we believe that it would be of interest to you 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 let us know. You can email [ramblers@ramblers.org.uk](mailto:ramblers@ramblers.org.uk), change your preferences online at [ramblers.org.uk/myaccount](http://ramblers.org.uk/myaccount) or call (0)20 3961 3300. 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](http://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](mailto: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.

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### **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](http://www.thewalkingpartnership.org.uk) for details.

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### **Facebook**

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

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### **First Aid**

The following First Aid course has been arranged with St John Ambulance for 2020:

- Evening course at the St John Ambulance Centre, Church Road, Woodley RG5 4QN (6:30pm to 9:30pm) on Wednesday 11<sup>th</sup> March.

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](mailto: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.

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### **Advice on Insects, and ticks in particular**

Insects on walks at best are an irritation, but can also be carriers of deadly diseases, even in the UK. Scottish midges can make a walk in the glens very unpleasant, but a tick bite can lead to Lyme Disease and other dangerous infections. The Ramblers' website gives some sensible advice at <http://www.ramblers.org.uk/advice/safety/insects.aspx>, with a helpful link to the Lyme Disease Society. There is also a good fact sheet at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/tick-bite-risks-and-prevention-of-lyme-disease>.

The basic advice is to be vigilant, starting with prevention by assessing how likely you are to encounter insects on a particular walk and protecting yourself by covering up appropriately

and/or using insect repellent. Then after a walk, check yourself (and any pets) for ticks, carefully remove any you find and if you show any symptoms seek medical advice.

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#### Forthcoming events

- ★ **LEADERS' DINNER Fri 10<sup>th</sup> January 2020**
- ★ **BARN DANCE Fri 20<sup>th</sup> March 2020**  
See the flyer at the end of this newsletter.
- ★ **Copy date for next newsletter Fri 27<sup>th</sup> March**
- ★ **LEADER AND NAVIGATION EVENT Sat 18<sup>th</sup> April**  
See the flyer at the end of this newsletter.
- ★ **YORKSHIRE DALES WEEKEND 24-27<sup>th</sup> April**  
Fully booked.
- ★ **MAY FAYRE Fri 8<sup>th</sup> May**
- ★ **BELLEVAUX HOLIDAY 10-17<sup>th</sup> June**  
See the flyer at the end of this newsletter.
- ★ **SUMMER SOCIAL Sat 11<sup>th</sup> July**  
The flyer will appear in the next newsletter.
- ★ **LVR's 25<sup>th</sup> ANNIVERSARY DINNER**  
**Fri 2<sup>nd</sup> October.** The flyer will appear in the next newsletter.
- ★ **SELWORTHY WEEKEND 16-19<sup>th</sup> October**  
See the flyer at the end of this newsletter.

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#### Footpaths

##### 2019 IN RETROSPECT...

**Gates and more gates:** from April to November 2019, volunteers from our group have installed no fewer than 14 new gates across the Borough, replacing stiles and making access to the footpath network easier for all. The new gates are located in Hurst (6 gates), Swallowfield (3 gates), Barkham (3 gates), Arborfield, and Wokingham Town. They have been purchased with the Ramblers' own funds, and with funds from St Nicholas Hurst Parish Council, Barkham Parish Council, Swallowfield Parish Council, and the Borough Council.

In addition, our volunteers have replaced a stile near Swallowfield Church with a staggered barrier, have helped with path resurfacing at Riseley and in Shinfield, and undertaken a footbridge replacement in Shinfield.

None of this could be done without the sterling work of Ray Sharp, who project manages all the installations tirelessly, and of a substantial number volunteers drawn from our membership, whose enthusiasm to help seems to know no bounds, and to whom huge gratitude is due.

**Wokingham Borough Council's new 10-year Rights of Way Improvement Plan:** our team of parish

Footpath Wardens put a lot of hard work into the group's response to Wokingham Borough Council's consultation on its new 2020 to 2030 Rights of Way Improvement Plan. Their efforts aim to ensure that, when the final version is published in February next year, the Plan will include virtually all of the changes and new routes that we want to see put in place. Putting them in the Plan does not necessarily mean they will happen, of course, but at least gives us a firm base to work from in seeking to create new rights of way.

**Good relationships with the local council:** Wokingham Borough Council continues to take its rights of way responsibilities seriously. Around 75% of the footpath problems we reported this year were rectified in good time. The Council has now decided that its Rights of Way Manager will also head up the Greenways project, and is strengthening its team with another Rights of Way Officer. The Council will also, at long last, update its definitive rights of way statement and map next year. This will not, of itself, create any new rights of way, but it will ensure that the changes to rights of way made over the past 10 years and more are properly documented and mapped.

**Success on crop problems:** One area where we have had success in 2019 is in tackling the problem of farmers allowing crops to grow over the line of footpaths. Following instances in previous years, we sought to target areas where they were likely to recur in 2019, and I am pleased to say that this has paid off, and paths have by-and-large been left clear this year. Wokingham Borough Council's enforcement procedures have helped with this.

**Overall:** The result is that, with a few notable exceptions (and in comparison with other areas), the footpath network in Wokingham Borough is generally well signposted, in good condition and trouble-free.

##### CHALLENGES FOR THE FUTURE...

**Yet more stile conversions are needed:** the group will continue with its drive to convert as many as we can, in pursuit of the aim of a stile-free borough, but the process of identifying stiles, obtaining landowner permission and securing the funding for gates is not easy. We have some provisional plans for 2020 in Hurst, Ruscombe and Remenham, but we are on the look-out for more possibilities. Please let me have any suggestions of more stiles that could be converted.

**The scale of development in Wokingham:** Loddon Valley Ramblers will need to continue to work hard to ensure that the footpath network is both protected and enhanced in the face of the large amounts of housing and road construction across the Borough. (In this context, it is worth noting that the pace of development may be slowing slightly, with a number of recent major planning applications rejected, including the East Reading Mass Transit scheme, a major housing development at Cutbush Lane (although this is now subject to an appeal), gravel extraction in Arborfield, and redevelopment at Ravenswood.) We will need to monitor planning applications and local/strategic plans with vigilance, not only to mount opposition to any development which damages the footpath network, but to make sure that opportunities to improve it are not missed.

**Active involvement:** To meet these challenges, I will continue to need the support of an effective team of parish Footpath Wardens. Up until recently we had a full team of 13 Wardens, although there is now a need for a replacement warden in Charvil. If anyone is interested in taking on the latter role (which is not arduous), please get in touch with me.

I hope that you will agree that 2019 has been a very positive year for Rights of Way, but there is always room to improve. I am always happy to receive any suggestions that could improve walkers' experiences in the Borough. Please get in touch at any time – you can find my contact details on the website or in this newsletter.

Happy walking  
*Steve Vale*

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### **Kingcombe weekend 14-16<sup>th</sup> September 2019**

Kingcombe is a nature reserve in West Dorset set in 450 acres of stunning landscapes. The centre offers a diverse programme of workshops, as well as guided walks and is ideally located as a residential base for exploring and for self-guided walking. Accommodation is based in several cottages and converted barns.

#### **Friday 13<sup>th</sup> September**

Unlucky for some but not for us! Our weekend started on a beautiful sunny day.

On our way to Kingcombe the first stop was for lunch at the Alice Lisle pub, near Ringwood, where we were met by local guide Ruth Crocker who led

us on a 5-mile walk through the beautiful western outskirts of the New Forest.

Travelling on to Kingcombe, Linda Ashwell had organised a pre-dinner drinks get-together at the centre's 'Beech Cottage', followed by a most excellent dinner in the main hall.

#### **Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> September**

Our first day started with an 8:30 breakfast followed by a 2-hour nature walk around the Kingcombe centre, guided by Steve Marsh, the manager from the Dorset Wildlife Trust who talked to us about "Get Dorset Buzzing", a project to get everyone to encourage more pollinators into their gardens.

Unfortunately due to the general decline in insects—yes, really—there were insufficient moths and insects in the overnight moth traps to warrant the group having a look and talk that morning.

On our nature walk some of the centre activities were highlighted, such as stream management to keep their meandering nature, in order to reduce erosion and encourage wildlife in the slow flowing water. Hedgerow and soil erosion management was also discussed and the need to cull badgers vs inoculating them was also a topic.

In the afternoon there was a 5-mile walk led by Graham Manning, the walks organiser for Dorset Ramblers.

After dinner, a trip to the 'Three Horseshoes' pub at Powerstock was organised, to see the sunset and enjoy a local beer on the terrace. We were not disappointed a beautiful sunset.

#### **Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> September**

Still no moths or insects in the overnight traps!

Today there was a choice of 2 walks leaving the centre after breakfast. A 6.5-mile led by Jill and 9-10-mile led by Carol, both local walk leaders. Keen individuals added a further 2 miles onto the 10-miler!

Following dinner we left for the Skittle Alley at the 'Chalk and Cheese' pub at Maiden Newton. Unfortunately on arrival we were told the pub and garden were being refurbished! So back to the centre for our own style of entertainment; good evening.

#### **Monday 16<sup>th</sup> September**

After breakfast it was time to say farewell to Kingcombe.

On our return journey a small group stopped off for a walk in Winchester, visiting the St Cross Hospice and Almshouse, where we were given our `dole' (the origin of the word dole today) in the porter's lodge. This is a small horn cup of ale and a piece of bread, a charitable donation given to all visitors by the porter!

After tea the `survivors' departed for home mid-afternoon.

A great weekend, and worth a visit to stay or attend courses at any time of the year; thank you to Linda Ashwell for organising it.

*Anushka Howell*