

LODDON VALLEY RAMBLERS' NEWSLETTER

May to August 2020

The Committee held a virtual meeting on 25th March to discuss the Newsletter and Forthcoming Events. It was decided that it was impractical to print a Newsletter at this time. The newsletter below will be loaded onto our website and be sent by global email to members. If you know a member who doesn't have internet access or email then please phone them to keep them informed of the Group activities. If you are able to and are close enough then please print a copy and post through their letterbox.

Many thanks

The Government has suspended group activities, to limit the spread of coronavirus, so we are restricted to walking with members of our household. We have had some lovely spring weather, so I hope you are able to enjoy our wonderful footpath network, near your home.

Nick Johnson and his Walk Leaders had already compiled a Walks Programme for April – September. So Nick is ready to release an emergency programme as soon as restrictions are lifted.

The Barn Dance and Walking Weekend to Ilkley were cancelled and you should have received a full refund. If your refund has not arrived in your account, then please contact our Treasurer Alan Drabble and he will look into it. I know that we were all disappointed that we have had to take these actions. The Ilkley weekend has been postponed to 23rd – 26th April 2021 and places held for those that had signed up this year.

We will arrange another Barn Dance as soon as it is practical.

Easyjet have cancelled all flights from Gatwick, but Barbara says the hotel in Bellevaux is hoping to welcome the group in June, so she is keeping the holiday under review.

We have decided to cancel the Summer Social (11th July) and Coach Walk (25th July). We have held over our booking at Barkham Hall & field for next year and I know that Graham Stagg is looking forward to planning a Coach Walk when possible again.

The autumn weekend to Selworthy will be reviewed as Committee Meetings will continue to be held on a virtual basis and members will be

informed. We had started to arrange our 25-Year Celebration for 2nd October. The plan is to arrange a short and long walk to arrive at a site where a stile has been removed and a Commemoration gate installed. Then in the evening, a Dinner and Dance will be held at East Berkshire Golf Club. Tickets will be available for all members to attend, and again, we will keep you informed.

Our AGM is scheduled for 5th November and I hope to lead a Mince Pie Walk on 20th December. A Leaders' Dinner and Dance will be planned for January 2021.

Within this Newsletter, Steve Vale has prepared some advice to record ancient and lost footpaths, which you can do on your computer at home. Nigel Kempton has written a fascinating description of 'A Spring Walk from Sonning Eye - The Walk that might have been'. So I hope you can enjoy these articles.

Our previous Chairman, Graham Smith set a precedent for holding a term of office of 3 years and I think it is appropriate to keep to that, to ensure a change of blood and new ideas. So I will resign my position at the 2020 AGM. Derek Smith has given me immense support as Secretary and he intends to resign at that time. Alan Drabble has recently advised the Committee that he will also resign, after providing excellent service as Treasurer. So we are looking for members to come forward to fill these positions. If you are interested, then please discuss with any member of Committee.

We have a strong walking Group to get through these difficult times and we are planning our walks and social events to celebrate beating this virus.

David Moffett

Chairman

New members

Welcome to: Mrs Paula M, Mrs Sinead R, Miss Ruth B, Marc W, Gerry and Judith F, Mike W and Maria Y, Mrs Gill E.

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, change your preferences online at 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 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.

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.

Forthcoming events

- ★ **BELLEVAUX HOLIDAY 10-17th June**
Under review.
- ★ **Copy date for next newsletter Fri 17th July**
- ★ **LVR's 25th-ANNIVERSARY WALK AND DINNER**
Fri 2nd October. The flyer will appear in the next newsletter.
- ★ **SELWORTHY WEEKEND 16-19th October**
Fully booked.
- ★ **LODDON VALLEY RAMBLERS AGM**
7.30pm on Thursday 5th November at Finchampstead Memorial Hall, The Village, Finchampstead RG40 4JU.
- ★ **RAMBLERS BERKSHIRE AREA AGM**
2pm on Saturday 7th November at Seeby Hall, St.Michael's Pastoral Centre, Lower Church Road, Sandhurst, GU47 8HN.
- ★ **LEADERS' DINNER January 2021**
- ★ **YORKSHIRE DALES WEEKEND 23-25th April 2021**
Based in Ilkley & walking in the Yorkshire Dales; organised by Graham Smith.
- ★ **BOURTON ON THE WATER Autumn 2021**
- ★ **HOPE COVE WEEKEND -- Spring 2022**

Footpaths

LOST PATHS

Please see my article below on the search for lost paths.

THE RAIN CAME DOWN AND THE FLOODS CAME UP

With the winter we've had, it's not surprising that some paths in Wokingham Borough have not only been very muddy, but under water.

It has been difficult to distinguish between flooding that is to be expected in a very rainy season and flooding that shows there is a real drainage problem requiring remedial action. But I am aware of two clear examples of the latter, in Shinfield and Finchampstead. Whilst I have reported these to the appropriate officers at Wokingham Borough Council, their response could not be described as rapid. I will continue to chase up the Council until the problems are resolved.

In the meantime, if anyone is aware of any other flooding problems on rights of way in the Borough which suggest an underlying problem and are not just the result of record rainfall, please let me know.

NEW RIGHTS OF WAY IMPROVEMENT PLAN

At the time of writing I am eagerly awaiting the publication of the final version of Wokingham Borough Council's new 10-year Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP) for the period 2020 to 2030. This is now due before the end of April.

We have been extensively consulted over the content of the new Plan, as a result of which there will be around 40 suggestions for new and improved rights of way listed in an appendix to it. I am expecting these to be divided into two groups, with one group being accorded higher priority than the other.

I am aware that the previous ROWIP (covering 2010 to 2020) also had an appendix containing around 40 suggestions for new and improved rights of way and that, in the event, very few of these were implemented.

I am anxious that history should not repeat itself, and as soon as the new Plan is published, I intend to start a few campaigns to get some of the high priority suggestions turned into reality as quickly as possible. With luck, that will create momentum for action on the others.

THE CORONA VIRUS

As I write this, the situation is evolving apace, particularly in relation to self-isolation and social distancing. All Ramblers activities have been suspended, including LVR's group walks, so many regular walkers are debarred from their usual walking activities during (at least) the early part of this summer.

To my mind, that could put an onus on the rest of us (who are still able and permitted to do so) to get out and walk the network on our own, in order to ensure that paths do not become inordinately overgrown and "disappear" – albeit that we might need to keep two metres apart from anyone we happen to meet and have a hand-sanitising stop every mile or so.

Happy walking (virus permitting)

Steve Vale

Lost paths in Wokingham Borough?

LVR members may have run across details of the national Ramblers *Don't Lose Your Way* campaign to rediscover lost paths and restore them as public rights of way, in the media or in the last edition of *Walk* magazine.

The Ramblers is calling on its members (and the public) to join the search to find and map thousands of miles of lost historic paths across England and Wales, with the launch of a new *Don't Lose Your Way* online mapping site in February 2020.

An estimated 10,000 miles of historic paths – the equivalent of the distance from London to Sydney – are thought to be missing from the map in England and Wales. These historic paths are a vital part of our heritage, describing how people have travelled over the centuries. But they need to be identified and claimed before 2026, otherwise, under current UK legislation, they risk being lost forever.

Identifying the lost rights of way is the first step and the Ramblers is looking to build a movement of 'citizen geographers' to help find all these missing rights of way before it's too late.

Joining the search

At this stage, identifying the missing rights of way is the key task.

Walkers, historians and map enthusiasts can log-on to the mapping website (<https://dontloseyourway.ramblers.org.uk>) to help find, map and save all the rights of way that have gone missing from the map. This site features a

mapping tool which divides the maps of England and Wales into 154,000 one-kilometre squares, which users can select to compare historic and current maps of the area side-by-side. You can select a square, do a quick 'spot the difference', mark on any missing paths and click submit. It takes just a few minutes to check a square.

It is important to note that this initiative is about recovering historic paths which have existed in the past and have either fallen into disuse or are still being used but are not shown as rights of way on the definitive maps. (Some 'missing' paths are still in use, but others have become overgrown and unusable - what they all have in common is that they did not make it onto the official definitive maps that councils were required to draw up in the 1950s.) The lost paths exercise should be distinguished from seeking to claim new rights of way, based on current and recent use (a number of claims of this type are addressed in the new Wokingham Borough Rights of Way Improvement Plan for 2020 to 2030).

Many of these lost rights of way could make useful additions to the existing network, creating new circular walking routes or connecting people more easily to local green spaces, nature and the countryside. The mapping project will give the Ramblers a true picture of the number of paths missing from the map, enabling them to prioritise those which should be researched and applied for before the deadline. The Ramblers are not looking to put every lost path back on the map but focus on those that add real value to the network. This includes resolving dead ends, completing circular routes, creating better connections and providing routes in areas which lack off-road walking opportunities.

The next steps

Finding and mapping the paths will be only the first step. Once all the lost rights of way are mapped, the Ramblers will be recruiting people to join a team of dedicated volunteers, researching historic evidence and submitting applications to local authorities before the 2026 deadline, to get them restored to the map. (The Ramblers is also calling on the Government to extend the deadline for registering historic paths by at least five years.)

Lost Paths in Wokingham?

It is likely that, because of its geography and history, Wokingham Borough will have fewer lost paths

than some other areas. But we should not assume that there aren't any.

I am already aware of potential missing historic paths in Barkham, Wokingham and Winnersh, and it would be invaluable if LVR members could use the mapping tool and their knowledge of their local area to check for more.

If you do find any, and submit them via the mapping tool, please inform me that you have done so. Both LVR and Berkshire Area Ramblers need to keep tabs on potential routes that can be applied for, so that we can lobby for them when priorities are being set.

At Area level, a Berkshire Lost Path Project (BLoPP) has been established to help with the process of researching and recording lost paths in Berkshire and seeing whether any can be added to the Definitive Map. This is a small group of seven people, coordinated by Heather Brown from the Windsor group. I will ensure that this group is kept updated on any lost paths we find and submit in Wokingham Borough.

Happy hunting
Steve Vale

WHAT3WORDS

You may have noticed in recent walk descriptions that some entries contain references like "**w3w:three.english.words**". These link to a map showing a very precise location for the start of the walk. (If you click on the "**w3w:**" reference and are presented with a baffling grid of squares you should "zoom out" to see a map of the area around the code.)

The web site at <https://what3words.com> describes the system.

In brief, it divides the earth into 3-metre squares (the 6-digit grid reference we use defines the bottom left corner of a 100-metre square) and assigns each square a unique 3-word combination (e.g. **walk.boot.lace** - this is in Surrey), which is much easier to remember than the latitude and longitude, and much more precise than a postcode. If you makes a slight error with the words, e.g. **walking.boot.lace**, it should be obvious - the latter is in China. If you have a Smartphone you can use the *what3words* application to convert the 3 words into something you can use with any of the navigation app(s) on the phone. At the moment only a high-end Mercedes car has a SatNav which

understands this system, but the emergency services are increasingly making use of it.

Graham Croucher

A Spring Walk from Sonning Eye (12m moderate)

Sadly my walk on Tuesday 24th March was cancelled — such a lovely day too!

I thought I would share with you some of the things we would have seen if the walk had gone ahead.

We meet at the Pearson road cul-de-sac at Sonning Eye. There is a fine display of daffodils on the roadside as we are putting on our boots.

We set off through the back streets and alleys of Sonning Eye, past the French Horn and across the river. The Thames is split into three here with the Mill at Sonning theatre and occasional residence of George Clooney located on the islands.

On the Thames path to Reading we pass Sonning lock and the old tea room which used to sell delicious cakes but has now closed. On the river we are likely to see Great Crested Grebes which can dive for up to a minute, reappearing downstream. If you scan the far bank you may be lucky to see a flash of turquoise and orange as a kingfisher skims along the river. Next we cross the Horseshoe Bridge — a fine wooden structure used by cart horses to cross the Kennet before towing their barges back towards Newbury.

With Reading Bridge in sight we pass the Lido outdoor pool on our left and then cross Caversham lock. The path around the lock-keeper's house and across the weir is quite narrow — difficult if people are coming the other way (and impossible for social distancing!).

We pass the View Island nature reserve, looping round an inlet crowded with coots and moorhens. After going under Reading bridge we cross Christchurch playing field, the site of the Reading beer festival and continue through the streets of Caversham to the Prince of Wales pub. We climb some steep steps to Balmore Walk, a stretch of

open fields with views over Caversham, Reading and Tilehurst and with a few benches making it an ideal coffee stop.

Continuing North we pass through Hemdean Bottom, popular with dog walkers, and cross Gravel Hill road continuing on a path skirting the Emmer Green golf course. At Tanners lane we take a path through a field down a steep hill (slippery when wet) then turn into a gravel path with steep sides climbing back up the hill. On a pre-walk I came across a young deer which watched me briefly then dashed for the woods.

We take the road through Chalkhouse Green then a track to the rugby club. The clubhouse has seats if we need a breather. We follow Chalkhouse Green lane, an undulating track which can be quite muddy, pass the Rosehill Riding Stables and cross the Peppard road by the water tower. The next stop is All Saint's Church, which has some sheltered benches for our lunch stop.

Heading towards Dunsden Green we can cut through the courtyard of the Loddon brewery to avoid a section of road. We then take a path that goes through the garden of Chapman's farm (easy to miss) then an uphill path across a field, a section of road and a path to Bint's farm. Taking a track to the right we reach the brow of the hill with views of Sonning and the Thames.

Downhill now through fields and woods where deer are often seen until we reach the Henley road where we cross, passing the Flowing Spring PH into Spring Lane. After the hump bridge we take a left on a path passing allotments and returning to Sonning Eye.

After changing our boots there is the option to retire to the Mill at Sonning restaurant where you can enjoy a coffee or Prosecco by the riverside.

The walk was based on Walk 10 from '*Rambling for Pleasure around Reading*' with some extensions to avoid dangerous stretches of road walking.

Nigel Kempton

Loddon Valley Ramblers are complying with the instructions from Ramblers GB to suspend all volunteer activities from Wednesday 18th March 2020. This includes all our group led walks and also includes Walking for Health schemes, all training including walk leadership training, path maintenance working groups, coach trips and holidays, meetings, group and social events. All Ramblers activities must stop until further notice. This applies from Wednesday 18th March, to at least until 31st May, subject to further developments

In the event of a relaxation of the government guidelines, I will put together an emergency program of walks and then will work on producing a formal program for the following period with our walk leaders team.

I will communicate any such emergency programme and our plans for re-starting our formal program via our usual communication channels, i.e. Web Site, Email and Facebook posting. Please make sure you have asked Derek Smith to include you on our email distribution lists.

Keep safe everyone.

We hope you enjoy our walks. We need more volunteers to lead. We will help you plan your first walk and would love to welcome you to the team. Give me a call – I look forward to hearing from you.

Nick Johnson

0118 932 8758 nickjohnson@hotmail.co.uk



Ramblers Charity England & Wales No: 1093977 Scotland No: SC039799

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Choose any of our holidays and we'll contribute funds through **The Walking Partnership** to your group. Just tell us their name when you book.

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