



LODDON VALLEY RAMBLERS' NEWSLETTER January to April 2022

A Merry Christmas and a Healthy New Year to all our members.

Our AGM made us hope again, but at the moment we seem to be going two steps forward and one back and, as we were told a while back, the whole world needs to be vaccinated before we are safe.

However the report from our area chairman below makes me realise we are the lucky ones.

Christine Harvey
Chair

Report from Area AGM 7th November 2021

What is remarkable for our Ramblers community is how resilient we have been in face of the challenges of lockdown and then our return to actual walking, our responses to safety on walks to avoid infecting each other, and our ability to communicate mostly in the form of virtual meetings. While our position has not been ideal, the voluntary spirit has largely won through and kept our normal activities going as well as could be expected. Right from the start I wish to congratulate Ramblers Walk Leaders. While walking with friends has continued, Walk Leaders are more than that. They are representatives of Ramblers foremost, managing attendance largely through bookings often with a limit on numbers, fulfilling the requirements for recess, warmly welcoming walkers to each walk with a description of the walk and safety advice. Their success can be seen in the profuse thanks they receive at the end, not obligatory but thoroughly earned. I know that we now have fewer leaders than before the Covid pandemic, leading to gaps in walking programmes. Recently, as restrictions have been somewhat relaxed, so many leaders have responded to lead exciting and inspiring walks. Many groups have cut down on printed programmes through the pandemic, publishing group walks on group websites, and even further afield. Our usual practice of entertaining visits of walkers from other groups shows that, overall, there are still large numbers of walks from which to choose, even if

there are gaps within each group's programme. I feel that we should push the value of voluntarily representing Ramblers and being recognised for that as we move to recruit new walk leaders and welcome back some of those who have stopped. I know that Ramblers' requirements for providing written risk assessments is controversial among many walk leaders, leading to some resigning. I have raised this matter with Head Office, so they are aware of the strength of feeling, and I will continue to represent opinions as long as I am Chair of the Area.

I next wish to report on the activity of the Area Committee, which has continued to meet over the last year, with one face to face meeting. Our Area is very fortunate to have such a group of committed and thoughtful leaders, highly articulate and willing to do their best for the benefit of all of our ramblers. In particular, the contributions of our Secretary, including behind the scenes, are central to keeping all of our work going. Thank you very much. The core of our activity is the programme of groups' walks, supplemented by residential holidays, in many cases. I would like to see members joining the holidays outside their normal group from time to time, just as we welcome them on our weekly walks. Developing this practice across the Area would do much to broaden our interests and sense of community. In addition to walks issues, the Area Committee has discussed matters of dilapidated footpaths, stiles and gates, ramblers and cyclists using the same footpaths safely, and solar power farms. It is part of the role of Ramblers to conserve and improve the network of footpaths previous generations have left us with. Ramblers finances are well managed locally through the Area Committee. How much we appreciate our Area and Group treasurers for their quiet and meticulous way they keep our funds in order. We can certainly trust them. Publicity activities have rather taken a back seat during the pandemic but are ready to spring into action again as we open up. Many thanks to our publicity officer

for keeping an eye open to possibilities to let people know what we have been doing.

John Oversby

Chairman of Berkshire Area

New members

Welcome to: Anthony B, Jo H, Pamela S, Richard C, Arunvir M, Caroline M, Claire C, Michael P, Ruth W, Cally L, Helen K, Fiona U, David M, Roydon C, Guy G, Vanessa S.

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. 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.

Very occasionally it is necessary to add a walk or cancel one or change the meeting place arrangements, and we notify all our mailing list members when that happens. Please join our mailing list. We'll only write to you when necessary, won't send out weekly or monthly emails and won't share your address with anyone else. Sign up here: <http://eepurl.com/XGC4P> or unsubscribe from the link in any of our occasional messages. The signup link is also on the News page of our website. 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.

Refunds

In general our policy is that, for trips and events, deposits and payments are not refundable.

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".

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

- ★ **BARN DANCE Friday 4th March 2022**
Further details and flyer nearer the time.
 - ★ **Copy date for next newsletter Friday 1st April**
 - ★ **HOPE COVE WEEKEND 22-25 April**
Fully booked. Why not consider organising a holiday for 2023?
 - ★ **MAY FAYRE Monday 9th May**
Further details nearer the time.
 - ★ **LAKES (HF Derwent Bank) 17-24 June**
Fully booked. Why not consider organising a holiday for 2023?
 - ★ **SUMMER SOCIAL Saturday 9th July**
Details to follow.
 - ★ **YORKSHIRE DALES WEEKEND 23-26 September**
Fully booked. Why not consider organising a holiday for 2023?
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Footpaths

2021 in retrospect

Despite the ongoing Covid issues, our work on maintaining and improving the footpath network has continued at a good level this year. We replaced 9 stiles with gates across the Borough in 2021. These were located in Arborfield (2 gates), Finchampstead (4 gates), Shinfield (2 gates) and Wargrave. The gates have been purchased with the

Ramblers' own funds, and with funds Shinfield and Finchampstead Parish Councils. We are grateful the latter funds and for the cooperation of the landowners concerned in respect of these gates. We have also removed redundant stiles in Wargrave and Arborfield, widening a footbridge near the latter.

The gate in Wargrave, on Footpath 21 off Penny's Lane, was funded by a legacy from Derek Johnson, a long-standing member of this group who sadly passed away in 2020. Our group also helped install two memorial benches: on Footpath 21 in memory of Derek and on Remenham Footpath 6, in memory of David Bounds, Loddon Valley's first footpath officer.

Ray Sharp continues to do an excellent job in project managing all the installations, and volunteers drawn from our membership undertake the installation work. I am very grateful to all of them.

I am continuing to pursue the suggested new routes in Wokingham Borough Council's new 10-year Rights of Way Improvement Plan for 2020 to 2030. I'm afraid that there is no spectacular progress to report to date, but LVR has now submitted a claim of public footpath status for the section of Chestnut Avenue which runs from Northway to Bearwood Road, near the Wokingham/Winnersh border. It will be at least a year before we know whether this is successful.

In the course of the year, the Borough Council have been implementing their plans for a **second Greenway**, running from Arborfield Cross, via the Coombes and Woosehill to Cantley Park in Wokingham. This is now expected to be completed next August. More Greenways will follow, and there is a long-term plan for a Loddon long distance path.

Whilst there is still a large amount of new development in Wokingham, it can offer some benefits to the rights of way network. In 2021, the construction of new film studios in Cutbush Lane, Shinfield has seen an upgrade to the footpath running alongside the site, and, after a few problems, Shinfield Footpath 20 near Three Mile Cross has also seen a major upgrade.

Following on from our success in creating a suite of Earley walks for Earley Town Council's website in 2020, we have created a similar set of walks for Woodley Town Council this year, which are

accessible via the Woodley Town Council website. Thanks are due to Mary Bather, Keith Brill, Grant Kelly and Mike and Carol Evans.

Looking forward to 2022

The challenges for next year remain similar to last year:

- Continuing with stile conversions – we hope to carry out a number of conversions in Wokingham Without, as well as trying to get landowners who have refused permissions for conversions in the past to change their minds.
- Keeping up the pressure to make sure that as many as possible of the new routes set out in the 2020 to 2030 Rights of Way Improvement Plan become reality.
- Continuing to ensure that the footpath network is both protected and enhanced in the face of the large amounts of housing, road construction and other development across the Borough, for example in the areas south of Wokingham town and through the proposed solar farm at Barkham. In this context, members may have seen Wokingham Borough Council's recent consultation on its Revised Growth Strategy. The draft strategy makes all the right noises about protecting and enhancing walking provision, but we will need to work hard to make sure this is delivered as the strategy is implemented.
- Doing more work on path maintenance, with a gradual change of emphasis in our volunteer work from gate installation to path maintenance expected in the future.
- Assisting Wokingham Borough Council with the new definitive rights of way statements and map, which are due to be published in 2022.

I have kept up my involvement with the Ramblers' Lost Paths project, and, as a result, LVR will be helping the project determine the priority routes in Wokingham Borough for restoration to the definitive rights of way map before 2026.

I am always happy to receive any suggestions that could improve walkers' experiences. Please get in touch at any time – you can find my contact details on the LVR website.

Happy walking in 2022
Steve Vale

Walks and Events Programme January – April 2022

- Our walks are on the web site; see www.lvra.org.uk/Webpages/walks.html.
- Members and walkers are reminded that they attend walks in this programme at their own risk and that they are responsible for their own personal safety.
- We welcome children and young people under 18 on our walks but they must be accompanied by an adult who holds parental responsibility, such as a parent, legal guardian, carer, teacher or youth worker.
- Please make sure that you are fit enough to undertake the walk you intend to join. If you're unsure of your fitness level, try a short and easy walk first: it's much better to find a walk a little too slow and easy than to make yourself miserable and exhausted.
- Most Ramblers' walks are off-road in rural areas. Please have suitable footwear and clothing for the walk you intend to join, and bring some food and drink, even if the walk includes a pub or café break. Leaders may refuse to accept participants who in their opinion are inadequately equipped or unfit. When in doubt, contact the organisers or the walk leader in advance.
- For your own and others' safety please read and abide by any advice and guidelines issued by the organisers, and the instructions of the walk leader. Though walking is inherently one of the safest outdoor activities, no activity is completely without risk and it is your responsibility to behave sensibly and to minimise the potential for accidents.
- We occasionally have some easier walks in our programme; look for the .
- We occasionally have some joint walks with other Ramblers groups in our programme; look for the .
- We occasionally have some walks in our programme which are accessible by public transport; look for the .
- Walks which are shown as Strenuous in the Ramblers' Walk Finder are marked with . People in doubt about their fitness should contact the leader in advance.
- Please travel to the walk start in sufficient time to put on boots & waterproof clothing etc. We aim to start our walks promptly at the time in the programme.
- Although we may break near a pub we cannot guarantee it and they are often busy at lunchtime on Sundays. It is therefore advisable to bring a packed lunch on longer walks. Please do not park in pub car parks unless you are using the pub, or the walk instructions say you may, in which case the leader will have obtained permission.
- If you are a dog owner, please see our policy on [Dogs on Walks](#).
- If you're looking for a led walk in another area or on another day, try the [Ramblers' Walks Finder](#).

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

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

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