

Stile

Journal of the Ramblers
Hertfordshire & North Middlesex Area

Issue 66 December 2024



Walks Fest Report

Digswell 2024 review

Footpath Work

how to report problems

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About **Stile**

Stile is the journal of the Hertfordshire and North Middlesex Area of the Ramblers.

Articles printed in this publication do not necessarily represent the views of the Area or the Ramblers.

Moving home?

Please **do not write to the Editor**. Just inform Central Office via **www.ramblers.org.uk** using the link in the Members Area, or write to:

The Ramblers, 13 Dirty Lane, London SE1 9PA

Say which Group you wish to belong to: you'll receive the right Group/Area news.

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Editorial

Four good people

This year marks the 40th anniversary of this Area. Our achievements have been numerous—some celebrated, some less so but no less important. Often it is the self-effacing but dedicated who make the most important contributions.

Among them are four people from our Area who deserve acknowledgement.

Former IT expert **Frank Warnock**, now on the Editorial Team, has a talent for noticing what no one else does. A few months ago he pointed out that the Joomla and PHP systems used by our Area website were no longer being supported and the site was therefore not secure. Updated versions of Joomla and PHP have been installed.

Noreen Dawes, Area Treasurer, earlier this year became suspicious of a request for payment apparently from the Area Chair—but realised in time that it was an attempt at online fraud. The Area's money was kept safe, and much embarrassment avoided.

A Footpaths Subcommittee meeting last spring revealed that hardworking

FP Secretary **Colin Knight** had

secured a new path along the Rickmansworth/Croxley Green boundary—having first applied for it

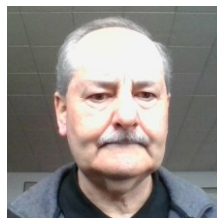
over 19 years ago. His persistence means Rickmansworth FP72 should soon be on the Definitive Map, our Area online RoW mapping and OS maps.

Chris Beney, active for many years in the Ramblers, still works tirelessly for the rights of way cause. According to a recent Open Spaces Society press release he has recently inspired, and mainly authored, an OSS guide to *Removing and Improving Path Paraphernalia*. An original idea: even footpaths can have too much of a good thing (or bad thing for that matter).

All four (and there are many others) have earned the Area's recognition and lasting gratitude.

Right people, right place, right time.

Justin Lumley

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As a member of Herts and North Middlesex Area Ramblers, you will always receive *Walk* magazine (digital only this winter as a trial) and *Stile*.

You must **opt in** to receive email information. Preferences can be changed by registering or logging in at <https://www.ramblers.org.uk/>

Stile is also available in **PDF** form on our website (see below).

If you would prefer to receive *Stile* **by email** please contact the Area Membership Secretary at hnmmembership@btinternet.com

www.hnmramblers.org.uk

Area news

Restoring Enfield Chase*Des Garrahan*

The London Loop's section 17 is a 14 km (6.7 miles) stretch that winds its way from Cockfosters to Enfield. On the way you pass through Enfield Chase, once an area of ancient woodland that was mentioned in the Domesday Book as being able to support over 4,000 pigs. Over the centuries the land has been the site of royal hunts and seen a great many struggles over various enclosures. Indeed, nearby Crews Hill is named for the Crew family who fought long and hard but were evicted from their home in the mid-18th century.

Today, Enfield Council, Thames21, the Friends of Enfield Chase and many other organisations have teamed up to reforest and rewild Enfield Chase. So far, 134,200 trees have been planted and many wetlands created to increase local biodiversity, control and quality and levels of water flowing into local brooks and rivers, like the close by Salmons Brook, and to create a special place for visitors, walkers and the community to enjoy.

The Enfield Chase Woodland Restoration Project will see another 51 hectares of publicly accessible woodland created, extending the green space to 130 hectares and improving accessibility to the east of the borough. The project will enhance the 80 hectares of woodland and 3.3 km of new footpaths that have already been created in previous phases of the project.

It will include natural flood management features, footpaths and signage and will contribute to the council's ambition to plant 1 million trees and create a greener Enfield for everyone to enjoy. The project will be funded by £500,000 from the Greater London Authority's Green and Resilient Spaces Fund, with additional funding from the Forestry Commission and other sources.

Importantly, the woodland will help to combat the effects of climate change in Enfield. Trees absorb carbon dioxide which means they can help to stop rising temperatures, keep soil moist and reduce the risk of flooding to homes



A few of over 134,000 new trees in Enfield Chase. Photo by Andrew Lack, Enfield Society

and the surrounding area and enhance the walking experience on this section of the London Loop.

This article first appeared in South East Walker (September 2024 issue) and is reproduced by kind permission of the author and editor.

New: Salmons Brook Trail

The Salmons Brook Trail is a new 11.4 mile route for walkers, entirely within Enfield borough, from Hadley Wood

station to Meridian Water station, where it links up with its established companion, the Pymmes Brook Trail.

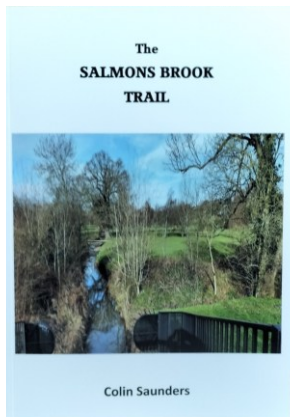
It has been devised by

Colin Saunders in consultation with Enfield Council, The Enfield Society and PymmesBrookERS (a volunteer group that looks after the Pymmes and Salmons Brooks), and naturally follows as closely as possible Salmons Brook, a tributary of Pymmes. The trail is well served by public transport, passing or linked to Gordon Hill, Enfield Chase and other stations.

A new guide to the trail has been published by Footline Press. It contains step-by-step route instructions, sketch maps, photos and a detailed commentary on the many interesting and historic places you pass.

www.footlinepress.co.uk

£10 plus p&p, of which £5 goes to Pymmes BrookERS.



Hertfordshire and North London Walks Fest 2024

A review by Roger Bangs, member of the organising subcommittee

The annual Walks Fest was held on Saturday 12 October based at the Village Hall Digswell. The day started dry but dull with a chance of rain in the early afternoon.

A total of 138 people (up from 103 last year) joined one of the seven walks on offer varying in length from 3.5 to 13.5 miles. It was another successful and enjoyable day for all, mainly members but also 36 non-members. A pleasing aspect on my walk was having at least three members who had not joined a Ramblers walk before.

When the Walks Fest (Area Walks

Day) started around 10 years ago the idea was to have a sociable event where all Area members could meet socially, but also develop an understanding of the role of Area and its relationship with Central Office. This might encourage more members to participate in a range of objectives and activities within the Ramblers.

I walked with a group of 18 people on a walk of 7.5 miles, viewing the Mimram valley, woodland and open spaces. We started and finished in dry weather but had some heavy rain for 20 minutes after our lunch break. Being



Start of the Welwyn Garden City Centenary Walk, led by Gabriela Lovelace, at 13.5 miles the longest walk of the day. Photo by Al Maceachern

wet, members were keen to get back to the hall where they knew a cream tea was being arranged. So our group were back early to the hall and I had broken the rule of not getting back too early. But we were welcomed into the hall where tea with scones, cream and jam were provided.

Special thanks must go to Claire, Patricia, Dan, Elise and Justin, who ensured the hall was prepared and refreshments available for all. Thanks also to Al, our Area Secretary, who had a major role in organising a successful event, particularly ensuring all members, not just regular walkers, were invited to the event; he also helped wash and dry afterwards.

So we need to think about future events. Should the format alter in any

way? Finishing the walks with the cream tea is enjoyable and appreciated. The social aspect of meeting a range of members in a village hall is good, but trying to have all walks finishing at the same time and catering for around 100 people can be difficult. Having a range of different walks and lengths is a good feature catering for all. But we still need to consider how we develop members' interest in managing the Ramblers organisation and improving access information about the countryside.

If you have ideas for the future please let us know—a good village hall for future use, preferably with good kitchen facilities and car parking and accessible by public transport? Al, Area Secretary, can be contacted at: hnmsecretary@gmail.com

Search and rescue in the rolling Hertfordshire landscape

Claire Wainwright

When I think about search and rescue, it's mountainous terrain and wild seascapes that come to mind. Or that was the case until I heard about Midshires Search and Rescue, which provides just such a service in Hertfordshire and Bedfordshire.

Midshires, which has on call 50+ professionally trained volunteers, is part of the UK's Lowland Rescue service. Alongside Mountain Rescue,

Cave Rescue, the RNLI and the Volunteer Coastguard, they provide specialist help for the Emergency Services when anyone is in need of finding or rescuing—including missing hikers. They are called out by the Police, other blue light services and County Emergency Planning Officers, and also assist in civil emergencies such as flooding. If anyone would like to offer support to this this valuable service, they have an Amazon wishlist on their website:

www.midshires.org.uk/supportus

Photo courtesy of Midshires Search and Rescue



Memorial bench to David Allard installed

Ian Thomas

Royston Group has installed a bench at Therfield in memory of David Allard. It sits on Mill Green at the end of Mill Lane and within just a few feet of the Icknield Way, appropriate given his role in creating this long distance route. The site has wonderful views north and east. David was well known in Therfield and the locals were very



The CRoW team install the bench.

Photo by Steven Thain

(Continued on page 8)



Royston Ramblers at the David Allard memorial bench in Therfield on 9 November. Photo by a passer-by using Belinda Brown's camera.

helpful in getting our plans approved. The bench was installed and the plaque added by the Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) team in September and October. A short ramble around the village outskirts, ending at the bench,

took place on 9 November so our Group could remember David. We were joined by his family and some villagers to celebrate together David's extraordinary life and take lunch at the Fox and Duck.

Helping Herts: the Great Big Walk, 2024

Justin Lumley

On 28 September, and for the third year running, the Friends of the Hertfordshire Way led a set of walks taking in parts of the Hertfordshire Way. According to Helping Herts, a record of over £80,000 (passing the original target) was raised for the 12 or so children's charities under its umbrella.

Among the leaders was your Editor, taking on a circular walk of 13 miles from Hertford. The route had to be altered in at least three places because of recent flooding, but was no less pleasant for that. Help from John Pickett, a local expert, was much appreciated and enabled the party to avoid a dangerous road crossing.

Helping Herts reported a 'wonderful mix' of participants with a wide age range and from several sources—Helping Herts itself, the individual charities, companies and individual supporters. There was no proof wanting of the appreciation shown for Friends of the Hertfordshire Way and its leaders.



Setting off from the 'stag' war memorial in Hertford. Photo by 'Ahseia Q'

Footpath work

Reporting faults

In June we published a brief guide to reporting footpath problems. Anne Conchie tells us more, and explains the numbers we sometimes see on posts and roundels.



For years I have been one of the Ramblers Footpath Secretaries covering most parishes in Hertfordshire (sadly not all, so more needed). I also report to Herts CC through their system of Parish Surveyors. The task is much the same, to do any maintenance one can manage, such as judicious cutting back of foliage and to report what else needs attention—fallen trees, broken gates or missing waymark signs.

I have recently been on several North Herts Group walks. Fellow walkers have asked about the numbers on waymarks and roadside green signposts and how to report a fault.

So, it seems there is a need for explanations and here goes. I need to tell you how Hertfordshire Rights of Way (RoW) system is organised and how to navigate the Herts CC website. Every Hertfordshire RoW has a name in the form 'Graveley 006'. The name is from the parish and the boundaries are shown on OS paper maps though not on all digital maps. This happens to be a footpath (FP) and is often referred to as just 'Graveley 6' (see photos above) but at times you need all three digits.

If you have seen a QR code on a roadside post, this can be used to get an

overlay to Google Maps, not as good as an OS map but it highlights paths. Better still is the map on the Herts CC website at:

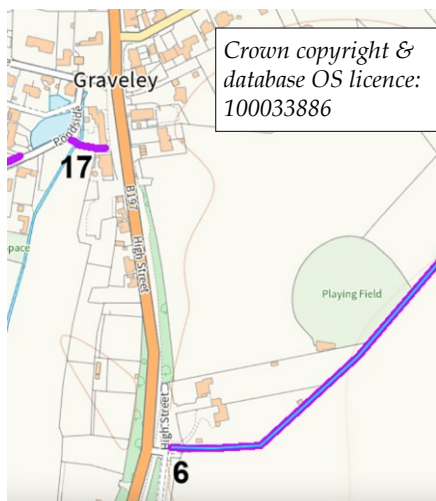
<https://tinyurl.com/mw965kpw>.

To find it without this link search for the Herts CC website to get the home page. Search for 'rights of way'. My computer offered a menu including 'definitive map'. Select that and then 'GIS map'. This gives you a map that seems useless until you enlarge it and swipe to get the right area; when lots of purple lines appear, they are the footpaths. Bridleways are in green, Restricted Byways in red and BOATs in yellow.

On the next page is the map for Graveley 6. Click on a RoW line and you get details; numbers are at both ends. These are the numbers (without the parish name) that I mentioned earlier.

To report a fault, you need the RoW name, a grid reference or other navigation aid and ideally a digital photo or two—a close-up of the problem and something to help someone locate the right spot. You need to navigate the Herts CC website to <https://tinyurl.com/yjy7ed65> but this

is how to find it. Search for hertfordshire.gov.uk and on the Herts CC website, you should see squares for options. Select *Report a road, pavement or footpath problem*, then *Report a fault*, then



Rights of Way. You get a form to fill in and a chance to pinpoint the right spot on a map. This is when you want the proper name with three digits so the location map will work. If you register to the site they should report on progress.

You could report faults by letter or phone with a grid reference or the magic three words (<https://what3words.com>) but they much prefer you to do it online. I urge you to report problems either this way or via the Area FP Secretaries (see page 39). Herts CC can only tackle problems they know about. Even if every FP Secretary and every Parish Surveyor checks twice a year, you might be there some months before the next check. Please don't just say 'Someone should do something about it' but help someone who could do something.

How to lobby your MP for better access to nature

Al Maceachern

In the run-up to the general election this year the Ramblers called on all political parties to commit to an Access to Nature Bill which would break down barriers to the outdoors. Ramblers members were encouraged to contact their local election candidates asking them to support the idea of the new bill.

The Ramblers campaign team has been contacting MPs directly in the months since the election but we can all help by writing to our own local MPs. With more than half of the 650 MPs elected this year being new to Parliament, and nine new MPs in Hertfordshire, it's a good time to build links between

ourselves and our elected representatives.

According to Paddy Tipping, former MP and a vice-president of the Ramblers, PMs want to be seen to listen to constituents' concerns and if they receive several letters on one topic are likely to take an interest. His recommendations when writing to MPs:

- keep it simple and short (no longer than the equivalent of one A4 sheet)
- pick out two or three points and stress the health value of walking in nature
- the more you can personalise and speak for yourself the better
- don't be anxious about it or afraid to 'make the ask'

You could split your letter into four parts:



*Stag Walkers with Hitchin MP Alistair Strathern on a pre-election walk around Ickleford.
Photo by Chris McCrave (using Thomas Ashley's camera)*

1) Introduce yourself; explain that you live in the MP's constituency and say why walking is important to you, e.g. the benefits to your health.

2) Explain the problem; mention local examples, e.g. unrecorded paths which could be lost if not registered by 2031 (particularly relevant in Hertfordshire, where more than 400 Definitive Map Modification Orders are pending), or cite statistics.

3) Outline the solution; explain that a new Access to Nature Bill could help tackle these problems and others by creating new opportunities for people to connect with nature, e.g. through expanding the freedom to roam, creating new urban green routes or removing the 2031 deadline to register unrecorded historic paths (a deadline which puts a lot of pressure on local authorities and could be repealed at no financial cost).

4) Specify the action you want them to take: to pledge to support an Access to Nature Bill and to write to the Secretary

of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, Steve Reed MP, to ask him to reaffirm Government's commitment to introducing an access to nature white paper (made in October 2023 when in opposition).

NB. It's important to contact all MPs, not just the Government.

To discuss the issue in person, Groups may wish to invite their local MP to join them on a walk (or just part of a walk – you may need to be flexible around the MP's schedule). It's good publicity for them, and for ourselves and our cause.

You can contact your MP via www.parliament.uk/get-involved/contact-an-mp-or-lord/contact-your-mp/ and www.writetothem.com/

Find out more about the case for an Access to Nature Bill at www.ramblers.org.uk/outdoors-unlocked

If you receive a reply, please tell the Ramblers campaigns team by emailing campaigns@ramblers.org.uk

Out and about

Icknield Way: Royston Ramblers' experience

Nick Everington

When Ian Thomas, our chairman, proposed walking the Icknield Way it seemed the right thing to do; we would be following in the footsteps of the late David Allard, founding member of the Royston Group and contributor to the official guide.

I volunteered to lead the walks with Ian acting as reserve leader. The plan was to complete the whole walk in seven rather than eight stages by merging the first three into two, as I don't believe it's worth getting out of bed for just 10 miles!

Prior discussion with group members revealed a keen interest from nearly 20, far in excess of predictions. Some had never walked the distances proposed and were anxious about keeping up. However, we ended up with a hard core of 16 (seven men and nine women); the majority completed all stages.

Some of the things we learnt and found worked well, that could be useful for other groups, are as follows:

- Try to gather a group who all walk at the same pace; so much easier to manage.
- Stick with the same people for all stages. We found it much better for group dynamics, with everyone getting on well. Homemade cakes shared at mid-morning breaks certainly helped morale.
- People like to be well led and organised but this requires much planning in advance. Don't

underestimate the time required; it takes hours and hours.

- We completed one stage per day, once a month, from April to October, with the dates reserved in diaries at the start.
- Organising the walks on our normal group walk days maximised attendance, whilst accepting that some normal walks had lower numbers.
- Limit group size to 16, the capacity of a large minibus, as greater numbers make leading, parking and transport far more difficult.
- Parking, as we all know, is a challenge with a combination of pubs, public car parks and recreation grounds used after requesting permission, where needed.
- Having led many linear walks in the past, I have found booking transport from the finish where you are parked to the start point is best, as it takes the pressure off having to be back for a certain time and saves shuttling cars.
- Getting minibus quotes for each walk is time consuming, with many bus companies far too expensive. So, if you find reliable transport at a reasonable cost, use it for as many stages as possible until you are out of their area.
- As leader, I paid for the minibus/taxis myself and collected cash from walkers on the day. Costs varied from £7 to £15 each per walk dependent on numbers. (More walkers—cheaper for everyone.)
- We set up a WhatsApp group to encourage as many walkers as possible to share lifts to the taxi pick up point and this worked well with car costs being shared.
- Walkers' details were taken including emergency contacts and mobiles, and a

Royston members at Knettishall Heath, end of the Icknield Way.
Photo by Vivienne Brown



register for each walk. Everyone was encouraged to carry the Ramblers 'In Case of Emergency' cards.

- No stages were reced in advance but, using the official guidebook, OS Maps and Google Earth, hazards were identified and a risk assessment completed and circulated in advance together with where/when to meet etc.

- We stuck to the official route, ignoring diversions, but I recommend checking the Icknield Way Association website for recent amendments. Most stages were longer than those listed in the official guide so I tried to estimate accurately in advance. We actually walked 117 miles rather than the official 110.

- I also recommend printing off street maps and plotting routes through towns, as OS maps aren't always clear.

- To reassure walkers I gave approximate break times, locations and distances in advance and tried to stick to these. We planned to walk at an average of 2.5 miles per hour and generally were at or a little above this on every stage. There were very few toilets en route but we all seemed to manage.

- There can be a tendency for more than one person to give directions, especially those with GPS. As a leader, you need to know where you are going all the time, be firm, lead with confidence, but be prepared to consult with others if necessary.

We all enjoyed the Icknield Way and are currently seeking members' views before planning further long-distance walks next year.

Herts CC: Countryside & Rights of Way Service

Mud and brambles: a countywide view

Lee Tyson, Operations Manager – Countryside Management, Countryside and Rights of Way

Rainfall

The winter of 2023-24 saw record rainfall across the county with 'effective rainfall', i.e. that which recharges the groundwater aquifer, in excess of 250% of the long term average. Great news for our embattled Chalk Streams, less good news for ground conditions across our Rights of Way network. The result of all this rain has been that ground water levels remain exceptionally high, and that additional rainfall events are likely to very quickly generate flooding from our watercourses and also the formation of overland flows where rain falls on already saturated ground. We have endeavoured to keep on top of issues as they arise, repairing surfaces where damaged, with the addition of drainage interventions where possible, but even this is proving difficult with

ground conditions restricting access for staff and contractors. Moreover we have a number of routes which are recorded within the functional floodplain, as well as at least one along a river bed; these routes will inevitably become flooded and likely always have. That's just a case of natural seasonal processes and we aren't in a position to engineer our way out of this scenario even if we wanted to. If this winter turns out to be nearly as wet as last, readers could do worse than invest in a new pair of wellington boots!

Vegetation

Following a damp start to 2024 (see above) vegetation growth has also been exceptional this year. Our Access Officers, maintenance contractors and army of volunteers have been working hard to keep the network open and accessible. However, limited budgets mean that currently only 19% of the network receives annual proactive vegetation management (mowing and strimming). We prioritise those routes

Don't Lose Your Way

— want to get involved?

The Area website (see www.hnmramblers.org.uk/don-t-lose-your-way) explains what we are doing for the Don't Lose Your Way (DLYW) campaign in this Area. The object is to **register legally all rights of way by 2031 so they aren't lost.**

Rights of Way: Restoring the Record

by Bucks and Wadey (2nd edition) takes the mystery out of the process and tells you everything you need to know.

You can borrow a copy for up to two months from: **rambler130roger@gmail.com**

To get a copy to own, register as a DLYW volunteer by contacting:

hnmdontloseyourway@gmail.com

which are most used, perform utility functions such as routes to school or provide connections to the wider network or promoted routes. Other routes are cleared on a more ad hoc basis as and when this needs doing and as finances allow. We have just completed this year’s pre-programmed cutting schedule and come to the end of

our current contracts, so we have been putting together a procurement exercise to re-tender these for the next five years. This exercise brings with it some uncertainty: re-tendering, whilst essential, may see rates increase at a time when financial restraint is very much a necessity for local authorities.

Become a Local Footpath Secretary!

YOU could make a real contribution to the Ramblers’ work.

If you can:

- walk your local paths regularly,
 - report any problems to the Rights of Way Service at County Hall or the relevant London Borough and
 - react to any proposed path orders (but these are rare)
- then **your help is needed** to keep our rights of way open and in good order. You’ll get maps and comprehensive guidance.

Local Footpath Secretaries are currently needed in:

Hexton	Bayford	Bramfield
Enfield LB	Brickendon Liberty	Albury
Bishop’s Stortford	High Wych	Thorley
Sawbridgeworth	Little Berkhamsted	Lilley
Anstey	Ashwell	Offley
Aldenham	St Paul’s Walden	King’s Walden
Tring Rural	Tring Town	Bygrave
Barkway	Barley	Nuthampstead
Royston	Eastwick & Gilston	Great Munden
Hunsdon	Thundridge	Little Munden
Widford	Hertford	Standon
Berkhamsted	Ware Town	Bovingdon

BUT... *wherever* you live or walk, your District or Borough Footpath Secretary would like to hear from you. Do get in touch — see pages 38-39 for contacts, or email: **mark.westley@ntlworld.com**

Herts CC: Definitive Map and Commons cases activity

Information supplied by **Richard Cuthbert**, Team Leader Definitive Map & Enforcement, Herts CC Countryside & Rights of Way Service

Date	Case	Reference	Type	Stage
09/01/2024	St Mary's School, Cheshunt – Appropriation	BRX37	Creation	Agreement
11/04/2024	Stapleford BR14 DIV	STA89	DIV	LEMO
02/05/2024	Middle Green, Pirton, Voluntary Registration	VGA058	Village Green	Amend Register
08/05/2024	Offley 39 Upgrade	NH313	MOD	Make Order Decision
23/05/2024	Tring Town Bridleway 71	DAC157	Creation	LEMO
02/07/2024	Radlett Cricket Club – Appeal response to PINS	HTM221	MOD	Inquiry/Hearing/Reps
19/07/2024	Hoddesdon Park Wood – Inquiry	BRX54	MOD	Inquiry/Hearing/Reps
14/08/2024	Hertford FP88 – Diversion	EH483	MOD	LEMO
14/08/2024	Radio Nursery, Colney Heath – FP67 – Creation	STA164	Creation	LEMO
14/08/2024	Batchworth 30 Bridleway Dedication	BR110	DED	LEMO
14/08/2024	Cheshunt FP29 – Diversion	BRX62	MOD	LEMO
15/08/2024	Aldenham Village Green	VGA062	Village Green	Registered
09/09/2024	Doebridge Farm to Sandon 23	NH162	MOD	Make Order Decision
09/09/2024	Drovers Path Sandon	NH326	MOD	No Order Decision
02/10/2024	St Stephen FP14 DIV	STA187	TCPA	Make Order Decision
02/10/2024	St Stephen BR85 DIV	STA187	TCPA	Make Order Decision
02/10/2024	EH433 Much Hadham 10 & 11 DIV	EH433	DIV	Make Order Decision
04/10/2024	Ridge 8 temporary diversion	HTM223	TCPA	Make Order Decision

Glossary to table above

DIV: diversion

EXT: extinguishment

LEMO: legal event modification order

MOD: modification

PINS: Planning Inspectorate

Reps: representations

TCPA: Town and Country Planning Act

Hertfordshire and North Middlesex Ramblers**Annual General Meeting****Saturday 25 January 2025 at 1.30 pm**

Village Hall, Woolmer Green, Knebworth SG3 6XA.

Off the B197, between Welwyn and Knebworth (TL253185). Large car park. Bus 300 or 301.

Guest speakers: **Richard Cuthbert**, Team Leader Definitive Map & Enforcement, Herts CC Countryside & Rights of Way Service and a **Ramblers Trustee**—TBC.There will be a **walk** starting at **10 am**. For details please contact David Lauder on 07762 884104 or visit the Area website (see page 3).**Lunch 12.30—1.30:** Please bring a packed lunch and (if you wish) snacks to share.**AGM papers**All the papers for the AGM are in this issue of *Stile* (see pages 17 to 34), with the exception of minutes of the last AGM. These can be found on the Area website (see page 3) along with a copy of the other papers.**Advance voting**

For those unable to attend, we are keeping the option of voting in advance. The Area Chair will act as your proxy and vote on your behalf in the manner you requested.

Please complete the online proxy form at <https://tinyurl.com/3cvp7chv> by **Saturday 18 January 2025**. If you don't have internet access, please fill in the paper form (pages 19-20) and return to the Secretary by the same date. **Please complete the form online if at all possible**. Any forms received after the deadline will be deemed invalid.

Please submit any matters arising from the previous year's meeting, and questions on any reports in advance, on the proxy form. Questions/comments submitted will be read out and answered at the meeting.

All members who have an email address registered on the central Ramblers system will be emailed two weeks before the AGM, with links to the minutes, papers and proxy voting form. If you have NOT already registered your email address, please provide it to the Ramblers by calling 020 3961 3232 or emailing:

support@ramblers.zendesk.com

Nominations for Area officer and committee posts

We warmly welcome nominations from members to stand on Area Council. All officers and committee members stand down each year, and although we have indicated where existing volunteers are willing to stand for re-election, please put yourself forward if you'd like to get involved. A list of positions is available on the Agenda.

Voting will take place at the meeting, in a block vote for those posts with only one nominee. Contested posts will require further voting.

Agenda and nominations

1. Welcome by the Chair
2. Apologies for absence (sent in advance to HNMSecretary@gmail.com or via the Proxy Form)
3. Approval of minutes of the 2024 AGM (on the Area website)
4. Matters arising
5. Consideration of officers' reports (comments and questions sent in advance)

- Chair
- Treasurer
- Membership Secretary
- Area Footpath Secretary

6. Approval of Treasurer's annual report and statement of accounts

7. Appointment of independent examiner for the accounts

8. Questions and observations on Group reports

9. Election of officers and committee members — current officers willing to stand for re-election are indicated with '(name)'

- Chair (Claire Wainwright)
- Vice-Chair
- Secretary (Al Maceachern)

- Treasurer (Noreen Dawes)
 - Footpath Secretary (Mark Westley)
 - Publicity Secretary/Media Contact
 - Membership Secretary (Dave Ashby)
 - Assistant Membership Secretary
 - Minutes Secretary (Justin Lumley)
 - Countryside Secretary (Roger Bangs)
 - *Stile* Editor (Justin Lumley)
11. Election of Individual Members (5 max.)
 12. Note of Group Representatives and representatives of affiliated groups
 13. Nomination of representatives to General Council, 5 April 2025: Al Maceachern and Elise Cornwell-Groves
 14. Any other business (sent in advance)
 15. Trustee update and questions
 16. Guest speaker: Richard Cuthbert, Team Leader Definitive Map & Enforcement, Herts CC Countryside & Rights of Way Service

We are looking for an

Assistant Area Membership Secretary

to provide support for Dave Ashby

and an

Area Publicity & Media Contact

to take over from Claire Wainwright

If you would like to join Area Council and are interested in either of these fulfilling roles, please contact:

Dave at hnmembership@btinternet.com or

Claire at HNMChair@gmail.com for further details about each role.

Ramblers Herts & North Middlesex Area AGM

Proxy Form

Please read the papers and explanatory notes in this issue of *Stile* before voting.

Complete the form **online** at: <https://tinyurl.com/3cvp7chv>

If you **don't have internet access**, please complete this **paper form** and send to:

The Ramblers HNM Area Secretary
66 Chaucer Way
Hitchin
Herts SG4 0NX

Forms **must arrive** by: **Saturday 18 January 2025**

I,(name)

with membership number

being a member of the Ramblers within the Area of Hertfordshire & North Middlesex and entitled to vote at the Area annual general meeting hereby appoint the chair of the meeting as my proxy to vote on my behalf. I request such proxy to vote in the manner indicated below.

Signed:

Date:

- Apologies for absence: Will you attend the meeting? Yes No
- **Please vote individually for each item, placing an 'X' in the appropriate box.** An absence of a response will be deemed an abstention.

<i>Agenda item</i>	<i>Details</i>	<i>For</i>	<i>Against</i>	<i>Abstain</i>
3	Approval of minutes of 2024 AGM			
6	Approval of the Area Treasurer's annual report and statement of accounts			
13	Nomination of representatives to General Council, 5 April 2025: Al Maceachern and Elise Cornwell-Groves			

On a **separate sheet**, please **add anything** you wish to say on the following:

- Matters arising
- Questions or comments for the Treasurer or other officers
- Questions to the Trustee
- Questions to guest speaker Richard Cuthbert
- Nomination for officer post or committee member position (self-nomination)
- Nomination for Individual Members (self-nomination) - **NOT** Area Representatives of Groups
- Nomination of Representative to General Council (5 April 2025) - self-nomination; please provide a statement outlining the reasons why this person should be selected
- Any other business (AOB)

Chair's report

Claire Wainwright

2025 is the Ramblers' 90th anniversary year. Ninety years of developing and protecting our path network and bringing people together to enjoy the great outdoors. Its start was radical — a mass trespass was not for softies in the polite British society of the 1930s. It is heartening then to see how our organisation is rallying to make itself relevant to the issues of our own day.

Among the outcomes that the Ramblers expects to see from its new strategy is improved participation of communities that have the least access and most barriers to the outdoors. Initiatives are already taking place in larger cities such as Liverpool, and Plymouth, and community outreach activities abound.

Living in beautiful west Hertfordshire as I do, with culture and wealth in obvious supply, it is easy to think they must be talking about somewhere else — some far-off place. But one look at the government's Indices of Multiple Deprivation for the town where I live — this leafy, historic place with fabulous schools, multiple museums and theatres, and loads of independent and thriving shops, tells a different story. Nestled among the affluent are some of the most deprived neighbourhoods in the UK.

And that's what makes the Ramblers' new strategy feel highly relevant to me and points the way as to how we can help locally. We are in the fortunate position of being able to pinpoint the neighbourhoods right across our Area where we can help make the most impact and bring more people to the joys of rambling. We have started to do that in our planning for the Hertfordshire and North London Walks Fest, and I can see some of our Groups making big efforts to reach out to the communities in their own neighbourhoods to offer

walks and companionship in the great outdoors.

Anyone can join a Ramblers walk anywhere in the country for free for their first few walks.

So we have what we need to make that first step. I see too that the Ramblers have made special provision for some groups as part of its charitable purposes including 12 months' free membership for refugees, asylum seekers and carers acting as guides.

If you are well connected in communities where local people could benefit from walking with us, please do let me know: HNMChair@gmail.com

As well as our 90th birthday, 2025 marks several other milestones including 75 years of the National Parks and Access to Countryside Act and 25 years of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act. The Ramblers are wanting to celebrate by sharing stories and pictures from across the decades. If you have anything to share, again please let me know: HNMChair@gmail.com

Many of you will have seen that the winter edition of *Walk* was a digital one, saving 17 tonnes of paper. This was sent to all members for whom the Ramblers have an email address, hence a renewed effort to get more members to provide their details for the future. If you have not done so yet, please do update your membership record with your email address.

I would like to end by thanking all our volunteers across all our local Groups for your outstanding efforts in making our organisation the brilliant one it is, and all our members for your continuing support.



RAMBLERS ASSOCIATION — HERTFORDSHIRE AND NORTH MIDDLESEX AREA
STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 SEPTEMBER 2024

	2024 £	2023 £	Notes
Income			
Central Office: Area	8,183.92	6,599.91	1
Central Office: Group	2,355.68	2,284.94	1
Donations	<u>130.00</u>	<u>70.00</u>	1
	10,669.60	8,954.85	
Expenditure			
Transfer to Local Groups	2,355.68	2,284.94	2
Stile Magazine	7,028.71	6,568.91	3
Don't Lose Your Way Project	0.00	81.78	4
Footpaths and Countryside Protection	33.00	30.00	5
Meetings incl AGM/Zoom	305.88	217.13	6
Mailchimp	43.08	318.78	7
Admin	0.00	74.70	8
Advertising	37.00	0.00	9
Subscriptions	45.00	45.00	10
Walks Fest	<u>116.59</u>	<u>274.92</u>	11
	9,964.94	9,896.16	
Surplus/(Deficit)	704.66	-941.31	12
Balance Sheet at year end			
Funds at start	5,889.10	6,830.41	
Surplus/Deficit for the year	<u>704.66</u>	<u>-941.31</u>	
Funds at end of year	6,593.76	5,889.10	
Analysis of bank balance			
Area funds carried forward	5,868.01	5,293.25	
Ring fenced funds:			
Herts Weekend Walkers	407.53	277.53	13
Don't Lose Your Way	<u>318.22</u>	<u>318.22</u>	4
Bank balance at year end	6,593.76	5,889.10	

Treasurer's report

Noreen Dawes

Thank you to all the Group Treasurers for their work throughout the year and for responding promptly to Area request for information. Thank you also to Claire Hillier for her work as independent examiner of the accounts.

The 2024 annual accounts are set out in the table opposite with comparison to the previous year. Meetings continue to take place online. The following notes highlight relevant points against the lines of the accounts.

1. This represents the funding from Central Office for both Area and the Groups. Central Office use a simple formula to decide how much each Group and Area receive based on number of members, with an option to request more funds for specific activities. Donations of £130.00 is RWH Travel on behalf of Herts Weekend Walkers
2. Transfers to Groups is slightly higher. Some Groups opted to use their reserves built up over the pandemic and not take their annual allowance.
3. We continue to publish *Stile* during the year, costs have risen by 7% due in part to rise in the cost of postage.
4. Don't Lose Your Way costs. This area of work is now being funded separately. There was no cost incurred in the current year, so the balance is carried forward.
5. One meeting of the Footpaths

Committee was held in person.

6. Area meetings were held via Zoom, cost is £155.88. Hire of hall for AGM is £100 and we have paid a deposit of £50 for 2025 meeting.
7. We continue to use Mailchimp and Facebook for the circulation of newsletters and member publicity. The Mailchimp account was put on pause to reduce costs.
8. There was no cost this year, last year was Committee travel expenses.
9. Advertising. We printed a range of flyers to advertise the Area and Groups.
10. The cost of membership of the Open Spaces Society.
11. The Area Walks Fest took place in September 2023 and this year in October. The costs include hall hire and flyers.
12. We had a surplus of £704.66 during the year.
13. This figure represents funds held for Herts Weekend Walkers. They received a donation from Ramble Worldwide of £130 during the year.

See also the Area and Group main accounts: comparison on page 25.

Report of independent examiner

Having carried out procedures in accordance with the Area and Group independent guidelines, I consider the Hertfordshire and North Middlesex Area Accounts to have been properly prepared and give a true and fair view of the Area's finances for the year ended 30 September 2024.

Claire Hillier Date: 30 October 2024

Membership Secretary's report

Dave Ashby and Patricia Segui

Area membership seems to have settled above the 3,000 level for the first time. New membership has increased somewhat above 2023 rates, at approx. 50-60 joiners a month, despite the poor November and December numbers (fig 1). This resulted in 750+ 'Welcome' emails sent.

The leaver rates have increased pro rata as expected but not by so much as to create a regular monthly decrease (fig 1).

By far the biggest membership increase has been provided by transfers -in from the closure of the North West London Group. This has produced most of the growth for the Area, as can be seen in the 'Un-assigned' increase in

table 1 (and the blips for October, March and April in fig 1). The 'Area-wide' Groups, Stag Walkers and Herts Weekend Walkers, are the only ones to have shown any significant growth, with the 'geographic' groups bearing losses incurred early in the year (table 1 and fig 1).

Disappointingly, the level of volunteers has reduced in a number of the large Groups, which has brought down the overall rate to below the national average of 16% (table 1).

The Area's rate for members 'reachable by email' shows a small increase at 81% (about 89% if joint membership is included). However, those accepting all Ramblers digital communications remain low and falling, at 52%. There is a sizeable 14% of our membership that can only be reliably

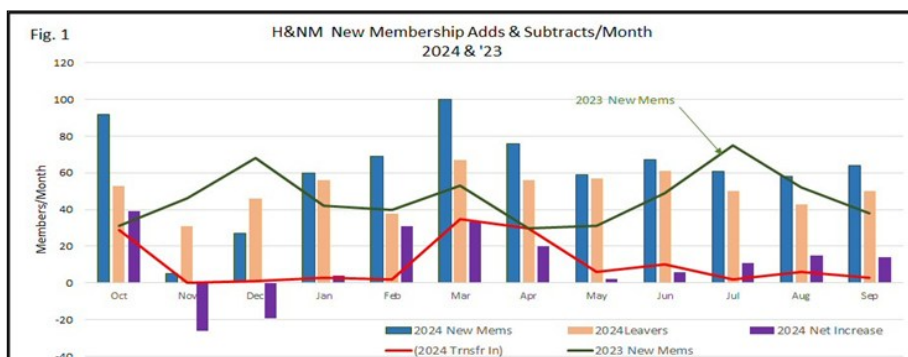


Table 1. H&NM Net Membership Changes 2022-2024, & Volunteer Levels (Sep 2023-24)

Group	West Herts	East Herts	North Herts	NLondon & SHerts	Royston	Watford 3 Rivers	Finchley & Hornsey	Herts Weekend	Stag Walkers	Un-assigned	Total H&NM
Sep/2022	465	265	437	486	149	306	410	179	127	156	2980
Sep/2023	443	258	438	520	139	308	397	163	142	182	2990
Sep/2024	421	235	422	521	130	312	376	174	164	275	3030
Net Change Sept 2022-23	-22	-7	1	34	-10	2	-13	-16	15	26	10
% Change Sept 2022-23	-4.7	-2.6	0.2	7.0	-6.7	0.7	-3.2	-8.9	11.8	16.7	0.3
Net Change Sept-2023-24	-22.0	-23.0	-16.0	1.0	-9.0	4.0	-21.0	11.0	22.0	93.0	40.0
% Change Sept-2023-24	-4.7	-8.7	-3.7	0.2	-6.0	1.3	-5.1	6.1	17.3	59.6	1.3
% Registered Volunteers 2023	8.8	7.4	16.0	11.3	20.9	14.6	9.8	19.6	23.9	3.8	12.5
% Registered Volunteers 2024	9.7	8.5	14.2	11.9	26.2	11.9	8.8	19.5	23.8	1.8	12.2

reached by post (e.g. mailed *Stile*).
Age and gender profiles remain largely unchanged.
Affiliated groups have increased to 9,

due to the Friends of the Hertfordshire Way rejoining.
All data sourced from Ramblers Insight Hub.

Area and Group main accounts: comparison

Compiled by Noreen Dawes

	Area	W Herts	E Herts	N Herts	NL&SH	Royston	W&3R	F&H	Stag W
Membership June 2024		430	249	412	488	133	298	371	124
MAIN	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
Income									
From Area/CO	8,183.92	529.30	0.00	511.12	0.00	229.33	395.98	469.71	220.24
Donations	130.00	310.00	900.00					300.00	80.00
Publications				89.50					
	8,313.92	839.30	900.00	600.62	0.00	229.33	395.98	769.71	300.24
Expenditure									
Newsletter/ Publicity	7,065.71	171.96	10.00	183.18	229.63	324.00			94.20
Mailchimp	43.08								
Walks Programme				105.04		30.64		243.45	
Walks Related	116.59	134.46	84.99	95.94	36.00	124.19	87.80	54.50	
Publications				182.97					
Campaigns	33.00								
Training		649.28					15.00		
Practical Work			721.49						
Meetings incl. AGM	305.88	588.27	35.00	66.89		94.25		135.04	
Admin				23.23					
Other	45.00			10.25		387.60			135.77
	7,609.26	1,543.97	851.48	667.50	265.63	960.68	102.80	432.99	320.97
Surplus/ Deficit	704.66	-704.67	48.52	-66.88	-265.63	-731.35	293.18	336.72	-20.73
Closing bank Main	6,593.76	1,529.85	691.79	1,854.65	653.09	175.85	430.98	1,583.18	184.18
Reserves %	87	99	81	278	246	18	419	366	57
Self Funded									
Income		23,297.65		23,091.00	24,947.71	1,238.00			1,565.99
Expenditure		22,802.99		22,800.18	24,369.35	827.90			1,399.79
Closing Bank Balance		3,649.18		1,753.52	3,865.78	739.55			183.87

Area Footpath Secretary's report

Mark Westley

All 10 district and borough councils in Hertfordshire had drafted their Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIPs) by the time the general election took place last July. The change of government has not yet made itself felt in these plans but the changes that the Labour Party promised for the whole planning system should have some effect in due course. What would undoubtedly make a difference would be funding but, at the time of writing, the new Chancellor of the Exchequer has just presented a Budget which makes it clear that money is going to be tight.

In early 2024, a BBC investigation found that councils had 32,000 blocked or deliberately obstructed rights of way to contend with. The BBC pointed out that maintaining public paths is a statutory duty, but Ramblers' research has shown that many of the public do not know how to report issues or whom they should contact. Every member of our Area can help to raise the profile of rights of way by reporting problems, preferably online using the highways fault reporting systems employed by Herts CC and the London boroughs.

From May 2024, the Ramblers website underwent significant changes. Over a few months, much of the technical support which had hitherto only been available to registered volunteers has been moved to public-facing pages where anyone can tap into our accumulated knowledge and experience. The free information covers not only topics useful to footpath workers but also resources for walk leaders and other volunteers.

Many of the ways recorded as byways open to all traffic (BOATs) are subject to permanent traffic regulation orders (PTROs) to control what vehicles can

use them and, in some cases, in what season. These PTROs have to be reviewed occasionally, and so Herts CC carried out a review last autumn. You may find that, in due course, some of the existing restrictions on use of BOATs by vehicles are varied or revoked.

Another BBC investigation in August revealed that surveying authorities, who are responsible for keeping the Definitive Maps up to date, have a backlog of 8,000 applications to process for saving lost paths. Hertfordshire featured high in the list of those authorities with the largest backlogs. The size of the backlog depends not only on how quickly applications are dealt with but also on how often new applications arrive. Hertfordshire has a small number of active researchers who have long experience of finding worthwhile cases to pursue.

One of the largest planning applications hanging over Hertfordshire for years now has been the proposed Strategic Rail Freight Interchange (SRFI) at Radlett. This, and the associated country park, are still subject to a judicial review. Phil Escritt continues to hold a watching brief, but we have agreed what paths should be provided if the scheme is finally approved.

The multitude of changes around Tyttenhanger which were confirmed in 2017 are now recorded on the online versions of the Definitive Map. OS maps also now show these changes except for a couple of minor omissions.

We are still seeking to recruit local Footpath Secretaries for parishes in all parts of our Area. Contact any local Ramblers officer if you can take on a parish or could assist one of our experienced Footpath Secretaries who wishes to shed part of his or her load.

Group reports 2024

East Herts*John Milton*

East Herts has continued to provide an extensive range of walks throughout the year, usually twice a week. They have encapsulated the full extent of the beauty and charm of the East Herts area and have, on the odd occasion, stepped out of the area to provide new adventures. Our Group rarely attracts large numbers of people on our walks but we receive regular commendations from walkers who enjoy the relaxed and personal atmosphere that a small-group walk renders.

One of the most satisfying tasks we undertook this year was to install a bench in memory of Chris Pagan, who

sadly died last year and was a founder member of East Herts Ramblers. A staunch supporter of walkers' rights, Chris knew our walking area better than most and led many walks right up to a few months before he died at the age of 90. His memorial bench can be found in one of his favourite places, on the crest of the hill heading out of Latchford towards Standon (OS ref TL 39403 30863). A beautiful spot for a picnic and quiet reflection.

Finchley & Hornsey*Justin Lumley*

Thanks to our small but enterprising team of leaders, Finchley & Hornsey has enjoyed a walk almost every Sunday this year. A few active and/or



East Herts: June walk in Bramfield Woods. Photo by Sarah Lea



A hardy Finchley & Hornsey contingent at the summit of Moel Hebog, Snowdonia, in June. Photo by a passer-by using Julia Haynes' camera

loyal members have been unwell; we wish them all a speedy recovery. The walk experience has been enriched by a leader with impressive historical knowledge, and another who can preserve the memory with fine videos. Arrangements for lifts to remote start points are down to a fine art.

Three trips took place instead of the usual two: Chichester, Beddgelert (Snowdonia) and Minehead. All benefited from people with local expertise, as well as members' hospitality and social organising skills.

Another leaders' first aid course took place in late November, and the usual Solstice walks and Christmas lunch are

fixed for December.

The present committee is ready for another year's service, with one change: Vivien Mallindine stood down as Membership Secretary after 27 years' unbroken service, to be replaced by Liz Rowsell. No praise would be too high for Vivien's patient work and dedication over a period of great changes. We thank her most warmly and trust she can now take life easier.

Herts Weekend Walkers

Jacky McMahon

Now in our 11th year, Herts Weekend Walkers continues to be a thriving Group walking throughout Hertfordshire, usually on Saturday

afternoons. In fact, we can claim to have walked in every postcode in the district of Hertfordshire. This year we have offered 52 walks, totalling 368 miles. Our walks have ranged from 4 to 11 miles, averaging around 7 miles and often finish at a nearby pub so we can enjoy some social time together. We currently have 167 members and have welcomed 23 new walkers to our Group. We are a dog-friendly Group and have several regular four-legged walkers.

In addition to our Saturday walks, we organise regular weekends away. This year has seen members of the group explore the coastline around Torquay and the heights of Pen Y Fan in the Brecon Beacons. Further trips are being planned for 2025.

We also ran our annual Challenge Day at the end of April where we led four different walks starting at different times from Weston. By linking together multiple walks, it gives the chance for longer walks. This year 18 members walked all four sections totalling 20 miles before many of us retired to the nearby pub to enjoy a well-earned dinner.

North Herts

Gabriela Lovelace

Another successful year for our Group. Our leaders continued to provide a varied and interesting programme with over 200 walks. Thank you to all leaders, and looking forward to recruiting new ones so we can keep producing interesting programmes.

The number of walkers has grown;

The 18 HWW members who walked all four loops on the Weston Challenge day in April. Photo by Andy Caisey





North Herts members on the Biggleswade Green Wheel walk. Photo by Gabriela Lovelace

especially popular are Wednesday and dog friendly walks. The few London walks we organised were very popular, with over 25 walkers. We often welcome walkers from other Groups.

The Norfolk holiday was very successful. One participant said: 'The programme was very good, of mixed landscapes with sea, beaches, extensive woodland, marsh, sea cliff and hill. The evenings' entertainment was a variety of game, dance and quiz. Despite Maggie's encouragement, her salsa lesson did prove the phrase "two left

feet" is not a myth for many of us.'

As well as keeping our website up to date, newsletters are produced to keep members informed of Group activities.

Membership stays stable; few losses, few gains, still vigorous, an active and viable Group.

The Stevenage Walking Festival was again supported by our Group, providing administration, helping with publicity and leading walks.

With Stag Walkers, we had a stand at the Hitchin Health and Wellbeing Day

organised by local Rotary Clubs, promoting walking and Ramblers.

We look forward to another successful year with plenty of interesting walks, social events and holidays.

North London & South Herts

Lucy Welch

During the year we ran 124 walks ranging from 3 to 14 miles in length including 12 walks on the London Countryway. We operate a rolling online programme and walks are also published on WhatsApp Group 'NLSH Walks' and a Group Facebook page. A new edition of the Group Walks Library with over 230 walks is available for walk leaders/group members to borrow, then lead and walk on their own or with friends.

Social events included a Christmas

lunch (preceded by the AGM), Spring dinner, Leader and Volunteer Tea Party as well as two coach trips to Cambridge and Chichester. In April Group members made a return visit to Barnet's twin town, Chaville, in France, for a weekend where they were well looked after by their hosts, visiting the Palace of Versailles, Saint Cloud Park and the Albert Kahn Museum. A holiday walking in Snowdonia and Anglesey was organised in October.

The Group ended the year with 522 members.

A big thank you to all the leaders and volunteers who have supported the Group during the year and we look forward to a successful 2025.

(Continued on page 32)



*A social walk led by North London & South Herts in Trent Park, 25 September.
Photo by Irene Nichols*



Royston Group members end a pleasant day in Henley-on-Thames in June. Photo by the coach driver using Lesley Abbiss' camera.

Royston

Ian Thomas

We introduced a monthly newsletter at the end of 2023 primarily to inform the membership of the following month's walk programme. It has become a useful tool to inform everyone of all our activities and plans.

Our regular Tuesday and Thursday walks continue to be popular and form the core of our offering with an average turnout of around 20 walkers enjoying rural walks in a range between 5 and 8 miles. There are also longer Sunday walks and shorter summer evening walks. Our annual Group coach trip this year went to Henley-on-Thames. The local Ramblers Group provided us with some excellent ideas for local walks and a great day was had by all.

In September 2023 we lost David Allard, one of our founders, at the age of 90. David also helped found the

Icknield Way Walkers Trail and the Hertfordshire Way. In his memory 17 of us have walked the entire Icknield Way this year in a series of seven long stages (see page 12). Plans are already being made to follow this up with a similar trek next year.

Stag Walkers

Dan and Elise Cornwell-Groves

2024 has been another successful year for Stag Walkers. Our membership numbers have continued to reach new heights – at time of writing we had over 170 members.

Our walks calendar has been very busy, with over 70 walks throughout Herts, Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, and beyond. Our long-distance walk this year has been the Hertfordshire Way, starting with a section from Hitchin to Whitwell in January, and the final stages should be completed in

Stag Walkers about to start the Hitchin Outer Orbital Path (HOOP) in July. Photo by Jessica Veith using Greg Readings' camera



2025. Our best-attended walk of the year was the Hitchin Outer Orbital Path (HOOP) in late July, where nearly 50 walkers necessitated splitting the group in two and following the circular route in opposite directions—otherwise we would have overwhelmed our pub stops!

We've had four weekends away: to visit the Peak District, Wye Valley, Lake District, and New Forest, and an upcoming weekend trip to Norfolk in November to hopefully spot some seal pups. Our social events have included board games, karaoke, kayaking, and a chilli festival, and we've promoted the

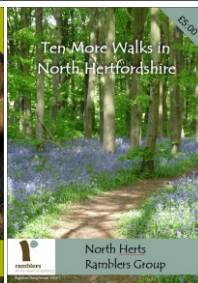
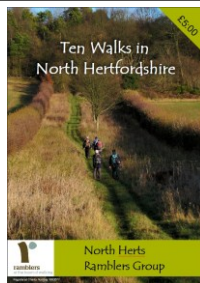
(Continued on page 34)

Walks in North Hertfordshire

Each of the NHRG-produced guides describes 10 walks of around 6 miles, chosen to show off some of the best parts of North Herts. A clear full colour OS map is provided for each walk.

Ways to buy:

- Pay by BACS: £5 plus £1 p&p per book to account The Ramblers Association (HF3), account no 20115700, sort code 60-83-01 and email tenwalks@nhrg.org.uk giving your name, address and choice of book(s) and confirming you have made your BACS payment
- Mail your request to Harold Stokes, 15 Whitney Drive, Stevenage SG1 4BE with a cheque for £6 payable to The Ramblers Association (HF3)
- Buy on any North Herts Ramblers Group walk for £4
- Buy at Countryside Ski and Climb, 118-120 High Street, Stevenage SG1 3DW; or David's Bookshop, Eastcheap, Letchworth Garden City SG6 3DE (01462 684 631)





Group with stalls at Hitchin EcoFest, Hitchin Health Day, Hitchin Youth Showcase, and the Banff Film Festivals in St Albans.

Watford & Three Rivers

Clare Bonnick

We have continued our regular Saturday full day walks every week and our half day midweek walks once or twice a month, together with some local evening walks in the summer months. We have been very pleased to welcome a couple of new leaders this year but, as always, would welcome new people to come forward and help spread the load for our regular leaders. To this end, we offer buddy support and navigation training. We are also looking into the provision of first aid training.

We enjoyed five days in Yorkshire in May this year, based in Ilkley, with a choice of a shorter and longer walk each day. The Group has also just returned from a long weekend based at Flatford

Mill in Suffolk. Next year's plans are for a long weekend in the South Downs and a longer trip to the Isle of Man in September.

We also enjoyed a Christmas lunch at the Coach and Horses, Rickmansworth, and are planning to return there this year.

Thanks as always to our leaders and our committee for all they do!

West Herts

Marion Adams

It has been a good year for WHR. Membership has been maintained and we have some enthusiastic new members. Walks are offered on Sundays and Tuesdays, with Ambles each month. This year we walked mainly in Herts and Bucks with some walks in London and a coach walk to Stratford upon Avon. We have had occasional pub lunches, a Christmas lunch and some walks with special interest. We have had two holidays this

year. The first was in the spring when we returned to Great Malvern, an area with lovely walking and an interesting history; the second to the HF house in Malham for more great walking in very different terrain in Yorkshire. We have a core of loyal walk leaders, expanded by a few new leaders this year. We provided First Aid training for

volunteers. Volunteers found it both interesting and relevant; we intend to refresh this in a couple of years' time. We generally take a walk to the Flamstead Scarecrow Festival in August; this year we decided to join in the fun and have a stall. It was an enjoyable day with an opportunity to fly the flag for Ramblers.



*West Herts members promoting Ramblers at the Flamstead Scarecrow Festival in August.
Photo by Clive Crowther*



Hertfordshire &
North Middlesex



Visit the Area Facebook page:

www.facebook.com/hnmramblers

To see updates from the Area and its nine Ramblers Groups, please 'like' and 'follow' the page

Law of the land

Aldenham reservoir perimeter path: the background

The December 2023 issue of Stile reported (page 14) the completion of a right of way right round Aldenham reservoir. John Cartledge describes the background and the campaign to establish a right of way. A more detailed account is available from john.cartledge@cantab.net

On 20 January 2023, confirmation by the Planning Inspectorate of the pithily-entitled *Hertfordshire County Council (Aldenham 95 & 96 and Elstree & Borehamwood 64 & 65) Modification Order 2017* marked the success of a 10-year battle by local ramblers to secure a right of way around the entire perimeter of Aldenham reservoir.

The reservoir lies on the southern edge of Hertfordshire, between Bushey and Elstree. Since the original publication in the 1950s of Herts CC's Definitive Map (and for long before that, in practice) there has been a public footpath around its northern and eastern sides, including the retaining dam. But the path along the western and southern sides had never had the same status.

The reservoir was built in the 1790s by damming a tributary of the River Colne to augment its flow when needed to compensate for water extracted near Rickmansworth to fill the Grand Junction canal. It ceased to serve this purpose long ago, but has always been a popular local amenity, used for boating, sailing, fishing and (at one time) swimming, as well as hosting a rich variety of flora and fauna. During World War II it was adapted to provide a standby source of drinking water in case any of the major reservoirs in West London were disabled by enemy action.

In 1974 Herts CC entered into a 41-year lease agreement to manage the reservoir as an adjunct to its adjacent

country park. During this period the council improved the perimeter path and installed information boards, but did not formally adopt the unregistered section. Meanwhile, the freehold was sold by British Waterways in 1992 to the first of a sequence of property companies which have tried to recover their outlay by seeking planning consent (so far unsuccessfully) for various development schemes on the surrounding land.

Concern that the change of ownership—and the forthcoming expiry in 2015 of the lease which, sadly, Herts CC declined to extend—might lead to closure of the unregistered section of the path led a group of local residents to apply in 2013 for its registration as a right of way. This application was initially turned down by Herts CC on the arcane legal grounds that public use of the path was 'by right' (i.e. permissive) rather than 'as of right'. The full argument is at:

<https://tinyurl.com/3u3n7wnn>

This ruling galvanised the applicants into action. A flood of objections claiming continuous uncontested use of the path for more than 20 years caused Herts CC to grant the application, leaving the owner as the sole continuing objector, this time on the grounds that the width of the path was incorrectly stated on the draft order. This was dismissed by the planning inspector, and after a further delay caused by a

Aldenham reservoir. Photo by Loz Pycock, CC BY-SA 2.0 via Wikimedia Commons



dispute over responsibility for maintaining a footbridge, the missing section of the path was added by order to the Definitive Map.

The order has an unusually lengthy title because the boundary between Aldenham and Elstree & Borehamwood parishes runs along the perimeter of the site. The path zig-zags across it, causing consecutive stretches to alternate between the two parishes.

During these legal wranglings, the owner erected gates across the path at both ends of the contested section, claiming a right to deny public access at night on safety grounds. But fortunately a deed had been entered into in 1938 under which the canal company, in return for a payment of £4,500 by Herts CC (which would equate to £255,000 today) undertook not to 'erect any building or other erection on the site'

without the council's consent, apart from those related to its existing uses. It also prevented the company from emptying the reservoir, except in an emergency. This deed had been inherited by the current owner who, when faced with the prospect of litigation, removed the gates.

Planning consent has now been given to the owner for the construction of an industrial park on nearby land, not part of the reservoir site, subject to the condition that £500,000 will be paid to a 'community interest company' which will be established to commission much-needed repairs to the dam and to manage the reservoir for an initial period of 25 years. So, happily, the whole perimeter path is now a right of way and, if all goes to plan, the future of the reservoir itself secured.

Area information

Area officers

Chair	Claire Wainwright	HNMChair@gmail.com
Secretary	Al Maceachern	HNMSecretary@gmail.com
Treasurer	Noreen Dawes	HNMTreasurer@gmail.com
Membership Secretary	Dave Ashby	hnmmembership@btinternet.com
Membership Assistant	Patricia Segui	hnmmembership@gmail.com
Area Footpath Secretary	Mark Westley	mark.westley@ntlworld.com
Countryside Access	Roger Bangs	rambler130roger@gmail.com
Media & Publicity	Claire Wainwright	hnmmediacomms@gmail.com
Minutes Secretary	Justin Lumley	justin@alpenstock.info
Independent Members	Frank Warnock	webmasterhnm@gmail.com
	Libby Martin	hnm dontloseyourway@gmail.com
	Mark Brumwell	markbrumwell@btopenworld.com
	Gemma Sweeney	sweeneygk@yahoo.co.uk

To contact the Area or a Group **by post** please write c/o: Ramblers Central Office, 13 Dirty Lane, London SE1 9PA marking 'Attention of [[Officer],Area/Group]'

Ramblers national website: www.ramblers.org.uk

Herts and North Middlesex Area: www.hnmramblers.org.uk

South East Walker: www.surreyramblers.org.uk/news/35-south-east-walker.html

Footpath problems (1) — see tinyurl.com/2j9kwbmj or contact the **local authority**:

Legal problems across Hertfordshire

Rights of Way Service
Hertfordshire County Council
0300 123 4047
row@hertfordshire.gov.uk

Maintenance or obstruction issues

(except Dacorum and Broxbourne):
tinyurl.com/6cud6m6s

Enfield Borough Council
Traffic and Transportation
020 8379 3565
highway.services@enfield.gov.uk
(RoW maintenance)
transportation@enfield.gov.uk
(other RoW issues)

Dacorum Borough Council
Clayton Rae
01442 228 356
clayton.rae@dacorum.gov.uk

Broxbourne Borough Council
Engineering and Surveying
01992 785 577
ess@broxbourne.gov.uk

Barnet Borough Council
Street Based Services
HighwaysCorrespondence@Barnet.gov.uk

Haringey Council
Frontline Business Support
020 8489 1335
frontline@haringey.gov.uk

Footpath problems (2) — contact one of the Footpath Secretaries:

North Herts District, Stevenage Borough
(Vacant)

Hertsmere Borough, Welwyn Hatfield Borough
Ian Hardy: ian.hardy@btinternet.com

East Herts District: Lesley Abbiss
lesley.abbiss@btinternet.com

Broxbourne Borough (Vacant)

St Albans City & District
Phil Escritt: phil.escritt@gmail.com

Dacorum Borough
John Rowe: johnm.rowe@talktalk.net

Three Rivers District, Watford Borough
Colin Knight: knightcolin74@gmail.com

Enfield
Vacant. *Temporary contact* — Libby Martin:
hnmdontloseyourway@gmail.com

Barnet
Libby Martin:
hnmdontloseyourway@gmail.com

Haringey
Chris Barker: chrisjbarker46@gmail.com

Group information

Summary information and published walks for all the Groups Area website: www.hnmramblers.org.uk Follow link 'Our Groups' to see location of each Group, types of walks and link to each Group website. Here are contacts for Groups in our Area. Almost all walks are listed on the Ramblers national website:

East Herts
John Milton
chair@easthertsramblers.co.uk
Facebook, Instagram: search East Herts Ramblers

Finchley & Hornsey
Vivien Mallindine
fhwalkers@gmail.com
www.ramblers.org.uk/finchley-hornsey

Herts Weekend Walkers
Jacky McMahon
contact@hertswalkers.org.uk
www.hertswalkers.org.uk
www.facebook.com/groups/hertswalkers
An informal 'Flexigroup' aimed at people in their 40s and 50s.

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Facebook: search Royston Ramblers

Stag Walkers
Al Maceachern
stagwalkers@gmail.com
www.stagwalkers.org.uk
www.facebook.com/groups/stagwalkers
A Group aimed at people in their 20s and 30s

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www.facebook.com/WatfordAnd3RiversRamblers

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Lynda Abbott
secretary.westhertsramblers@gmail.com
www.westhertsramblers.org.uk
www.facebook.com/groups/WestHertsRamblers



Danesbury Park



Marden Hill House



Panshanger Park