

East Surrey Walkers AGM 2019 **REPORTS**

CHAIR'S REPORT

Another year has passed and I am now over half way through my tenure as Chair. When I took over as Chair, one of my aspirations was to be involved in creating a Walks Library as an archive of walks that could be used both by walk leaders to help in their own planning, but also by members of ESW who prefer to walk on their own.

I'm thrilled to say that this dream is now a reality and Adam W with technical help from Brian S has collated a large number of walks supplied to him by various walk leaders. Please do look on our website and use these walks, it is a tremendous resource and is the result of many hours of hard work by other members of our group.

There are now over 100 walk available in the Library, which can be accessed on our website by clicking on the "Our Walks" tab in the menu bar and selecting "Walks Library" from the dropdown menu .

I find some statistics are interesting, and the number of walkers on various walks is one of those statistics. The total number of walkers on the various walks over the past year are as follows:

Wednesday linear walks:	277
Wednesday short walks:	1237
Weekend short walks:	726
Weekend long walks:	554
Ambles:	367
Fast Fitness Walks:	470
Other walks:	797

From this we can see that the Wednesday short walks continue to be our most popular event, but the numbers on the Ambles and Fast Fitness walks show that there is a real demand for these events. And our 'other walks' – are also gaining in popularity.

The group does live and die by its volunteers, and this year your Committee decided that it wanted to thank the Walk Leaders by treating them to a cream tea. Nearly 50 of our leaders attended and they all seemed very pleased to have their contribution recognised.

This was so successful that we have decided to have another event next year to recognise the contribution of all of our footpath volunteers. Are you aware that we have not only the well-known Ken's Krew, but also Footpath Secretaries, footpath checkers, volunteer footpath wardens and also members who participate in Surrey County Council's biannual survey of footpaths?

And while on the subject of footpaths, we all know that Surrey County Council's Highways Department (which has responsibility for footpaths) has suffered severe cutbacks in the last few years and as a result of this our footpaths are becoming much more overgrown.

The Committee is proposing to create a vegetation clearance team to work in parallel with Ken's Krew. The new team will only be involved in clearing encroaching vegetation from footpaths with

hand tools rather than power tools. We envisage the team operating from May-September, being the time when vegetation is most prolific, and running twice a month.

A request would go out to all membership as to who would be interested in doing this so that there would be a core of volunteers available, but then also mention would be made in our regular noticeboards asking for other members who might be available on an ad hoc basis, to join for a specific task. If this goes well, we would also invite members to submit details of paths near them that need this type of clearance work.

And of course members of this new team would be invited to the cream tea for footpath volunteers next year – what's not to like?

Mention has been made at previous AGM's about the possible availability of First Aid Courses for members. Please be aware that the Ramblers are now providing these courses free of charge – if you are interested, do go to their website to find out about this and book yourself on a course. If you want to know more about them, please speak to Helen McD who attended one and said it was excellent.

The use of technology is going to become increasingly important in every walk of life, including our walking lives. The Walks Library is one example of this, and we have also been running courses on smart phone navigation. We are willing to run more of these courses, and if you are interested, please contact either myself or Helen W.

Another example of technology is the What3Words app – more information on this is in my most recent Chair's Chatter. It is an app that provides much more detailed location finding than a grid reference, and in case of emergency it could save lives as it will enable emergency services to find you more quickly than before.

Finally, you will be aware from my Chair's Chatter that we now have 494 members and have won the Surrey Area recruitment cup with an overall increase of 40 members during the past year. The Cup will be presented at the Surrey Area AGM in February, and I would encourage as many of you as possible to attend. There will be a choice of five walks before the meeting, and as usual lunch and cakes will be available as well.

It has been a good year, and we look forward to another one as well.

Judy Brua - Chair

TREASURER'S REPORT

This report is at the end of my first year as the elected Treasurer. Firstly, I would like to thank Keith Towers for his work this year as Independent Examiner. Due to a filing deadline for our financial return to National RA, between us we completed and signed off the accounts in the first fortnight of October, before we were both away with the Group in the Cotswolds.

The cash balance held by the Group as at 30th September 2019 was £12,238.29. Of this £9,655 was payments received in advance for the Sidmouth holiday, so that our effective cash balance was £2,583.29. Dealing with the different funds in turn:

General Fund

We received Group Funding on the basis of our membership number of £553.37 as well as advertising income of £400 from HF Holidays Ltd and Ramblers Worldwide Holidays Ltd for advertising in our programmes. We also received £170 from Ramblers Worldwide Holidays Ltd by way of rebates from members of our group booking holidays with them. I would remind members that, if they book

holidays with Ramblers Worldwide Holidays Ltd, to sign up on booking for the Walking Partnership and register their membership of the group so that we can receive a rebate.

A large amount of our expenditure is our volunteer expenses, either for Ken's Krew members or other volunteers. Some people kindly donate their expenses to the Kissing Gates Fund. Our total expenditure for volunteers including these donations was £629.29, compared to £504.80 in 2017/18.

We spent £154.80 on a new group banner to use at publicity events.

Looking forward we submitted a budget to National RA for considerably increased Group funding for 2019/20 of £2,000. Much of this was to fund the purchase of kissing gates (see under Kissing Gates Fund below) as well as an increased allowance for volunteer expenses.

Kissing Gates Fund

This Fund is to enable kissing gates to be acquired to replace stiles in our area, following Surrey County Council expenditure cutbacks. During the year 3 new gates were purchased at a cost of £1,079.31 for installation at Broadham Green and at Lingfield. Given the need for kissing gates in our area and the resource of Ken's Krew to install them, consideration has been given as to how further funds could be raised. A raffle was held at the Barbeque in August which raised £297.01. In addition, the Committee agreed to the profit from the Barbeque of £258.03 being put into the Fund. Volunteer donations totalled £275.09 and donations £27.50 were raised at the Cream Tea.

As a consequence, the total amount in the Fund at the year-end was £1,278.99 which would enable 3 further gates to be purchased. In addition, in our funding application to National RA for the current year we have applied for funds for 4 more gates, which has I am pleased to say been agreed. The committee continues to consider ways of raising further funds.

Social Funds

The aim of our Social Funds is to even out surpluses and deficits on our social activities during the year. During the year the Funds have been reduced to £514.32, which acts as a cushion to pay deposits on future events; also, to cover either future events that show a deficit or lost deposits on events that are cancelled.

Holiday Funds

These arise from holidays and week-ends away that are organised by the group. Any surplus which arises on a holiday from discounts given by the holiday company are generally refunded to the participants either by a direct reduction for everybody or by means of a prize draw during the holiday. The accumulated surplus carried forward has been considerably reduced over the year to £39.26

Ken's Krew

A cash float is maintained by the organiser, Barbara Bulman, in order to re-imburse the travel expenses of the volunteers. This is topped up as necessary from the General Fund.

Payments to the Group for Holidays and Social Events

I would like to thank Group members for paying for holidays and social events either by online banking or paying at their bank branch. As I mentioned last year we are now charged by Unity Trust Bank (who look after all the banking arrangements for the RA) for any cash or cheques that we bank. The way that members have accepted this has minimised charges being incurred.

Robert Coupland - Treasurer

MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY'S REPORT

Membership at 30th Sept 2018 = 454

30th Sept 2019 = 494

Overall increase of 40 = 8.1%

New Members = 63

Transferees from other groups = 13

Volunteers – 21% of our group = 103 members (includes 93 Leaders and other multi skilled members ie undertake more than 1 role

Mailing List

444 members receiving NB's etc (includes single and joint members. 50 have no email

Overall membership fees now contribute approx. £1983 per year to The Ramblers - so good to see HO have increased our budget this year.

Leaders and Potential members

88 welcome letters have been sent out using email addresses supplied by Leaders.
45 have joined.

Long term members

The following have been members for over 40 years

Joining date

28/12/1976	Mr Ian Falkner
17/02/1977	Mr Stuart Pickford
17/02/1977	Mrs Alice Pickford
12/12/1979	Mrs Margaret Wales

Pauline Guy - Membership Secretary

WALKS COORDINATOR'S REPORT

East Surrey Walkers has increased its walks and walkers yet again! In the 12 months to the end of September we had 4458 walkers on 355 walks. This compares with 4318 walkers on 346 walks in the previous 12 months. On average we have 12.6 walkers on each walk.

Looking at our walks programme; as usual we have the weekend walks – one long and one short, plus the ever popular Wednesday short walk. Ambles are now in their sixth year and they continue to provide an important option for new walkers and those whose fitness has declined. At the other end of the energy scale the Fast Fitness Workout Walks still are very popular with increased numbers from last year. Our Thursday or Friday walks have embedded very nicely as we now have one every week and sometimes on both days. These are 'anything goes' – a variety of lengths and the ones that end at a pub are very popular.

In the 2018 - 2019 winter quarters the Linear walks group has done more sections of the London Loop followed by five walks on the London Countryway. Then they reverted to their 1 Degrees North walk to finish in Petersfield. The remainder of the summer season was taken up with the North Downs Way, starting from Dover and getting as far as Kits Coty. They will be doing the Grand Union Canal walk from Hemel Hempstead in the shorter days of winter.

How has all this been achieved? The answer is very simple; our wonderful team of leaders. If we didn't have such a dedicated group of volunteers, then East Surrey Walkers would not have such a fantastic walks programme with practically a walk every day. We owe all of them a HUGE 'thank you', a BIG round of applause please!

From October 2018 to 2019 we have gained nine new leaders; six of which are leading regularly and three that are very new and hope to be leading soon. However, we always need more to come forward and lead. I ask everyone who does not already do so to lead a walk in 2020. We will give you all the support you need. We will have two new Leader Training Courses in 2020, on Saturday 4th of April and Wednesday 26th of August, look out for the email when bookings become available. We also can offer a buddy service with an experienced leader who can help you with

picking your walk, doing a recky and whatever else you need. So please take your turn so that ESW can continue having a great walks programme.

Finally, as some of you may know we as committee members leave our post after three years whereas the "Officer" roles don't have a time scale as such. This explains why Nigel has been our Walks Administrator for five years now which is brilliant! I always check in with him and ask him if he is still happy to continue being my right hand man as he has gone way beyond his commitment to the club as I see it and he says "absolutely, I love doing it"

I know Nigel is not with us today as he is looking behind the scenes at a tour of the Royal Albert Hall which obviously came first - but we can forgive him for that one. However, I want to say a huge THANK YOU for all his continuous great work over all the years he has been in the post. Another BIG round of applause please.

ESW Walks Data

July to September 2019 (Q3)

	Walks	Walkers	Q3 2019 Averages	Q3 2018 Averages
Wednesday Linear Walks	6	75	12.5	13.2
Wednesday Short Circular Walks	13	285	21.9	22.8
Weekend Short Circular Walks	12	155	12.9	10.5
All Short Circular Walks	25	440	17.6	16.9
Weekend Long Circular Walks	8	90	11.3	11.6
Ambles	14	85	6.1	6.5
FFWW	17	157	9.2	7.8
Other Walks	16	122	7.6	8.4
All Walks	86	969	11.3	11.2

April - June 2019 (Q2)

	Walks	Walkers	Q2 2019 Averages	Q2 2018 Averages
Wednesday Linear Walks	6	70	11.7	16.2
Wednesday Short Circular Walks	13	291	22.4	22.7
Weekend Short Circular Walks	15	195	13	13.9
All Short Circular Walks	28	486	17.4	18.0
Weekend Long Circular Walks	11	139	12.6	11.7
Ambles	13	92	7.1	5.5
FFWW	13	69	5.3	7.67.9
Other Walks	19	255	13.4	9.1
All Walks	90	1111	12.3	11.7

January - March 2019 (Q1)

	Walks	Walkers	Q1 2019 Averages	Q1 2018 Averages
Wednesday Linear Walks	6	71	11.8	13.2
Wednesday Short Circular Walks	13	337	25.9	27.0
Weekend Short Circular Walks	13	184	14.2	13.6
All Short Circular Walks	26	521	20.0	20.9
Weekend Long Circular Walks	13	200	15.4	15.2
Ambles	13	118	9.1	8.3
FFWW	15	151	10.1	7.9
Other Walks	20	250	12.5	11.3
All Walks	93	1311	14.1	13.8

October to December 2018 (Q4)

	Walks	Walkers	Q4 2018 Averages	Q4 2017 Averages
Wednesday Linear Walks	6	61	10.2	13.3
Wednesday Short Circular Walks	12	324	27	28.2
Weekend Short Circular Walks	12	192	16	11.6
All Short Circular Walks	24	516	21.5	20.2
Weekend Long Circular Walks	13	125	9.6	11.8
Ambles	13	72	5.5	7.1
FFWW	14	123	8.8	10.5
Other walks	16	170	10.6	11.3
All walks	86	1067	12.4	13.4

Helen Whiteley - Waks Coordinator

PUBLICITY OFFICER'S REPORT

I took on the role of Publicity Officer for ESW last November, after Mike Osborn had moved away and was unable to continue with the role. Unsure of my responsibilities, I sought help from Keith Chesson, our previous Publicity Officer, and the most important thing I took from my chat with him was the significance of establishing a Brand Identity that people would instantly recognize. He had already put that in motion by creating our current Boots Logo, and over the past year I have been building on that, using the Logo whenever possible and starting articles with the strapline - These boots are made for walking ...and

My publicity efforts on the Website, Noticeboard and Facebook have included:

- Wishing all ESW members a very Merry Christmas and Happy New Year from The Committee by way of an E-card.
- Promoting the Festival of Winter Walks, which was a campaign by the Ramblers to encourage member-walking groups to arrange a walk every day during the period 21 December – 6 January.
- Reviewing the very successful New Year Lunch at Aggies, highlighting the event to all members – the photos showed what a good time we all had.
- Reviewing ESW holidays.

Another good source of publicity is by means of posters – which have been put up in various venues. If any of you are able to help by distributing a few to your local library, supermarket, doctor's surgery, sports club etc, then I would be most grateful – many hands make light work.

I was pleased to have the opportunity to publicise some of the great work that is done by Ken's Krew.

- On Monday 22 July, the Kissing Gate at Broadham Green was officially dedicated to the memory of Alan Wales and opened by his widow, Margaret. Tony Pearson kindly wrote an article on this event and it was sent to the Parish Magazine Editors of the four closest areas, in the hope that they would include it as an item of local interest. It was also included in the South East Walkers September publication, which comes with the Quarterly Ramblers Walk magazine. I hope you all saw it!
- The footpath between Tilburstow Hill Road and Wychcroft House had become heavily overgrown and was almost impassable, so it was a good opportunity to let the residents of Godstone know that Ken's Krew had done amazing work in clearing the path, so they could enjoy walking along it again.

Over the year I have established a good relationship with the Editors of local Parish Magazines and each month I send an article promoting the health/social side of joining East Surrey Walkers, and listing upcoming walks appropriate to the area. These articles have been very well received and we are almost always included in their publications. If anyone has details of any magazine in their area, which is not on my list, please let me know. Since last year, 97 new people have joined us on a walk and 45 of them became members, and – until proved otherwise – I think I'll take credit that at least some of that number heard of us from their local Parish Magazine!!

The aim of Publicity is to make the public aware of our Group and whilst I know that publicising ESW on our website, Social Media, and in the Parish Magazines are all great ways of getting our message across, the very best way is for us all to talk about our own experiences within ESW and to tell everyone we meet just what they are missing!! Remember, we can **all** be ambassadors for ESW.

Pamela Cunniffe - Publicity Officer

FOOTPATH SECRETARIES' REPORT

It is worth reminding ourselves of the first objective of The Ramblers:

The provision and protection of footpaths and other ways over which the public have a right of way or access on foot, including the prevention of obstruction of public rights of way.

So the question is **Are we as Ramblers members and as a Ramblers Group devoting enough resources to achieve the above objective?** We know that Surrey County Council are not doing enough, even though they have a duty under statute *to assert and protect the rights of the public to the*

use and enjoyment of paths in their area. So, if we as walkers want to continue to enjoy walking in the local countryside, we are going to need more volunteers to improve the current state of the path network. This can be both a rewarding and enjoyable role so please contact a Local Footpath Secretary if you can find the time to help.

One of the ways in which East Surrey Walkers has been helping is through the Donate A Gate Scheme. We are one of 14 Ramblers Groups in Surrey now supporting the scheme, which was initiated through our Group. To date we have funded 10 kissing gates, including 4 this year and funds are available for another 5 gates when suitable sites have been identified and negotiated with landowners. All gate installations are done by Ken's Krew, if private contractors were to be used, it would at least double the cost.

Benedict Southworth resigned as a Local Footpath Secretary during the year, following which we have reorganised with the welcome addition of Steve Hanks and Ian Simm. Details are on our website of the parishes covered by each Local Footpath Secretary, please do contact them if you come across any path problems in the Tandridge district. This particularly applies to our Walks Leaders, who may well come across problems when walking out an intended route.

This past summer has been especially bad for overgrown vegetation on paths, with Surrey C.C. having reduced the number of vegetation clearance tasks allocated to commercial contractors. To prevent the situation getting even worse in 2020, we need more resources devoted to vegetation clearance by a team.

Finally a big thank you to our Volunteer Path Wardens, who have answered our calls to check problems and resolve them where possible. The semi-annual inspection of a random sample of paths under the auspices of Surrey C.C. has again been diligently undertaken by the Volunteer Inspectors. And for some of the larger parishes, we now have volunteers to check all the rights of way in their section of the parish. Without our volunteers the path network in this area would soon become far more difficult to use, thank you to you all!

Steve Hanks, Richard Mascal, Tony Pearson, Ian Simm
Local Footpath Secretaries

SOCIAL SECRETARY'S REPORT

Autumn Social 2018

This was my first event. It was held at St Peter's church hall, Limpsfield, on November 24th. The evening comprised a quiz and a live band 'Mockingbird'. The quiz was devised and run by my husband, Ian, who also provided knotty problems to untangle in the form of table quizzes. Everyone brought their own drinks, glasses and snacks, although there was also a table of glasses and water for thirsty dancers. The quiz was interspersed with music and a fish and chip supper delivered by 'Deep Blue' in Oxted. Pudding was an ice cream. More quizzing and music followed the supper and prizes were presented to the quiz victors. 73 people attended.

New Year Lunch 2019

This was held at St Agatha's Hall, Hurst Green, on January 20th. It followed very closely the format of my predecessor(s). The hall and tables were heavily decorated to look as festive as possible and prosecco (plus alternatives) was provided as the welcome drink. Lindsay Roberts took over from Wendy Taylor in catering the event and she provided delicious traditional roast turkey with all the trimmings, followed by Christmas Pudding. Vegetarians were catered for and a superb fruit salad provided a lighter option to the traditional pud. Teas/coffees and mints rounded off the meal. A New

Year mini-quiz on each table, devised by Ian, filled any gaps in conversation. Entertainment was provided for the second year by East Grinstead Ukuleles. They distributed Kazoos for the audience to join in with the songs. Unexpectedly, these little instruments require some skill to produce a sound so not a lot was heard from the audience!

80 places were booked, 78 attended. As you might imagine, this event is subsidised by ESW.

Annual Dinner 2019

This event was held at Westerham Golf Club on the evening of March 13th. Having enjoyed many Christmas events and Sunday lunches here, I thought that this would be a good venue for the Annual Dinner, especially as the soft furnishing and high ceiling provide a quiet atmosphere for conversation. A welcome drink was included in the price and open fires at each end of the room were a nice touch. However, the meal was slightly disappointing. 36 members attended. Numbers have been dropping for this event over recent years so it has been decided to save future Annual Dinners for significant anniversaries of ESW.

Cream Tea 2019

I held this in my garden. Ian and I had erected a small marquee in case of blistering heat or teeming rain and mowed a parking area in the adjoining field. In fact, the weather was kind to us. Walks preceded the event so all were keen for the delicious array of home-made cakes and scones provided. A huge 'thank you' to all those who baked for the day. It would be impossible to run this lovely event without you. A large water boiler ensured tea was ever-present and cold drinks were also available. 59 people attended.

BBQ 2019

This was held on August 18th. The venue was, for the final time, Rosie's garden. The weather was forecasted to be fine but a deluge unleashed itself mid-morning hampering our preparations. Rosie, in her unflappable way, arranged (with the help of her brother-in-law, to whom many thanks) for gazebos to be 'popped up'. All that effort naturally ensured that the afternoon proved dry and fine. The team of helpers worked tirelessly in Rosie's kitchen to get all ready and Ian and Martin Davies cooked the sausages, burgers, and Rehanna's fantastic tandoori chicken which has now become the 'signature dish' of the event. Barbara Bulman set up and ran a very successful raffle to raise money for the Kissing Gate Fund.

Members provided a wonderful selection of beautiful salads and delicious desserts. Many thanks to them all. Judy gave a short talk about ESW matters and thanked Rosie for all her hospitality over the years and presented her with some wine. 63 people attended.

AGM 2019

Held at St Andrew's church hall, Limpsfield Chart, November 16th. Projected numbers approximately 40. A ploughman's lunch, tea and cakes provided.

I would like to acknowledge and thank all those who helped throughout the year. These include Sue Halsey, Barbara Bulman, Veronica Dessent, Pat Manning, Janet and Martin Davies, Rosie Blythe, Fran Edwards, and Mark Fulston, Pamela and Noel Cuniffe, Kate Roffey and to all those, who on the day, roll up their sleeves and help. Thank you again to all those who bring dishes to feed their fellow members. Many events would be impossible without you.

Also thanks to Pauline Guy, Helen McDonnell and Adam Wilson for their IT support.
Lastly, thanks to my husband, Ian, for his unfailing support

Provisional dates for the Social Diary 2020 are: New Year's lunch- Sun 19th Jan (definite date)

Cream Tea - 14th June
BBQ - 16th/23rd August
AGM - Oct31st/Nov 7th
Autumn Social - Sat 21st Nov (definite date)

Christine Scott – Social Secretary

KEN'S KREW REPORT

This past year has again seen a reduction in the work offered to us, and to the adjacent Ramblers groups, by SCC Rights of Way, partly due to our Countryside Assistant having suffered a few bouts of ill-health. We have taken to identifying works required, and passing the information to SCC, so effectively sourcing our own work. The cuts to the SCC RoW budget continue to bite hard, and reduce even further their ability to fund contractors, to complete routine clearances.

Surrey Area has successfully bid for funding from Ramblers CO, for brushcutter training for volunteers, and KK now has the benefit of four trained volunteers, who have been able to make an impressive impact of overgrown paths, far more effectively than we can manage with hand tools alone. We have also acquired an honorary team member, who is brushcutter trained, and on the Croydon team, but under-utilised, in part due to a serious health issue suffered by his team lead, earlier this year.

SCC are moving to rechargeable, battery operated cutters, from the more maintenance-heavy petrol ones. The investment will ensure there is a better chance of fit for purpose kit available for use.

KK has completed around 360 hours of volunteers working time this year. Well done team.

We continue to be blessed by having some hugely supportive landowners. One who said he'd got something better than the land drain pipes we planned to install, dug a trench and installed the length of large-bore land drain he supplied, and removed some cast iron supports to an old stile, that went down over a metre into the ground, and another one who routinely clears a bridleway adjacent to his business, and has replaced a bridge over a stream, and a stile, at his own expense. I tell them, I'd like to clone them.

Our Countryside Assistant and I have been visiting landowners, to discuss improvements we would like to make, and this seems to be working well. A distinct improvement to previous SCC practice of sending emails, without listening to landowners needs, or preferences, although there are still a few less than supportive landowners out there.

We have installed six kissing gates, four funded by ESW, and two by South Bank Ramblers, and two sleeper bridges, as well as multiple waymark posts, and returned miles of paths to safe, usable access.

We have received more positive publicity, and comment this year, than previously, especially in regard to the three gates we installed between the Haycutter PH, and Oxted Mill, but also from grateful walkers, of previously overgrown, and boggy paths. Much as we love our work, it is good to have the results recognised, and to know they are appreciated.

Barbara Bulman - Ken's Krew
