

Essex Area Update

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Important

- Secretaries are asked to check that we have their correct address.
- Ask people who would like to receive **EAU** by email to send their address to **talkingwalking@aol.com**
- Encourage people to write to their MP about the Non-Motorised User Crossing Programme (see page 2)
- **Send material for inclusion in EAU by 15th of each month**

10TH ANNIVERSARY OF FRIENDS GROUP.

On Thursday 27 May 2004 members and guests of the Friends Group R.A. Essex celebrated their 10th Anniversary. This was not just the group's Anniversary but also the Anniversary of the birth of Friends Groups in Essex and nationally.

The event started at Noursey Wood, Billericay with a 3½ mile walk following the route of the group's inaugural event, organised and led by three of the founder members. The half-way break in Lakeside Meadows, Billericay allowed the walkers to indulge themselves with Bucks Fizz, a wonderful Anniversary Cake served by members and the drinking of a toast to their Founders.

At the completion of the walk the group adjourned to The White Horse Public House, Ramsden Heath, where an excellent repast was enjoyed by all, in an atmosphere of great joy and much laughter.

There were 68 walkers who completed the walk and a total 90 members and guests took part in the celebration at various times of the day.

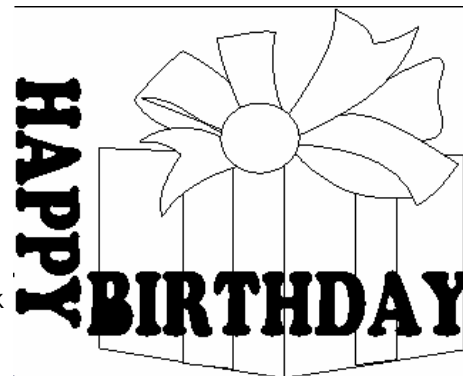
Among those who attended were **Ann Skinner-Mclaren**, whose vision brought about the formation of the Group and **Bill Dove**, the Group's senior member, a youthful 89 years of age and still walking.

Membership of the Group is in excess of 200 Members and growing steadily. The Friends Group holds 3 to 4 walks per week and the current average number of walkers is 31 per walk.

The group, together with sister groups, **Lea Valley** and **East Essex Friends**, continue to uphold the aims of the Friends, by providing several walks per week for those R.A. members who are unable to walk the longer distances or who do not have the inclination or the time to do so. As the name of the groups suggests, many close friendships have been forged and happily, marriages have resulted from meetings within the groups.

The Friends Group continues to grow from strength to strength and new members are always welcome.

Any enquiries regarding membership or programme, can be made through Carole Bartlett, Membership Secretary on 01245 420887



ANNUAL CONFERENCE SUCCESS Our Delegates to the RA National Conference were successful in getting the following motion passed:

This General Council calls on the government to take such action as is necessary under Section 3 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 to amend the definition of 'open country' contained in Section 1 (2) of the Act to include a reference to coastal land as defined in section 3 (3); and calls on staff to prepare and implement a campaign with this action as its desired outcome

Adrian's Update

More time was allocated to **informal debate** and discussion by limiting the number of motions at this year's **Conference**. We were presented with the conclusions of the Charity Commission review visit and the Volunteer Structure Review, and the timetable for implementation. Groups and Areas will now be consulted on the national EC proposals. **40 representatives of younger persons groups** attended to learn more of the RA's campaigning activities. The Essex younger persons group was offered help by the Metropolitan Walkers, London.

At our own **EC** meeting in May, concern was expressed about attendances on this year's **Essex 100** on learning that the average turnout had dropped to 28.

Given that it is now a legal requirement, the EC has now authorised the Treasurer to transfer funds to **Unity Trust Bank**. **Note that the date for the AGM has been changed to Saturday 12 February 2005 at 09.30.**

The new **Countryside Code** is due to be published by the Countryside Agency on **12 July**.

Please remember to let me have details of any events your Group would like to advertise and I will ensure that they are included in our next issue

Dates

19 to 25 June Footpaths Week
 31 July– 8 Aug FEAST 2004
 15 Aug—Southend-on-Sea Challenge Walk
 28 Aug St Peter's in a Day
 29 Aug-5 Sept Autumn Walk
 18-26 Sept Welcome to Walking Week
 22 Sept European Car Free Day
 26 Dec-1 Jan 05 Festival of Winter walks
 12 Feb—AGM, 9.30

Forestry Commission

Dedication—the first woods near Essex to have access granted in perpetuity by the Commission will be Kingswood & Clowes Wood in Kent. The dedication will come into operation in about 6 months time.

Walking Facts

& Figures part 4 **Walking is the best choice for regular, healthy exercise. Unlike most other forms of exercise:**

- Walking is free and requires no special equipment or training
- Almost everyone is capable of walking
- You can walk almost anywhere
- Walking is safe and low-impact, with a low risk of injuries and accidents
- Walking for health can be combined easily with walking for other reasons: walking to work, school or shops; visiting a place of interest; walking the dog
- You can enjoy a variety of surroundings as you walk in different places and different seasons
- You don't need to concentrate on the walking itself, leaving you free to enjoy your surroundings, chat to companions or just relax.

The Non-Motorised User Crossings Improvement Programme

has stalled due to the withdrawal of promised funding when 1100 improvements are required. You are asked to write to your MP and:

- ◆Express your disappointment at the cut in the Highways Agency's budget. This shows a lack of commitment to achieving safe crossings for vulnerable users.
 - ◆Ask where the original £250m allocated for the programme has gone.
 - ◆ Explain that Route Management Strategies are not the right place to consider crossing improvements. The schemes in the NMU programme should be properly costed and timetabled and monitored through the programme itself.
 - ◆ Call for action now on this issue. This is the Government's opportunity to challenge decades of blinkered 'car is king' thinking, and to do something of great value for millions of walkers, cyclists and horse riders.
- > If possible, include specific examples of dangerous crossings in your area.**

Secretaries—

please send in information which would be of interest to other groups

RECRUITMENT LEAFLETS

Phone or e-mail Len Banister if you would like a supply of the new recruitment leaflets (which include the reduced individual and family categories).

020 8527 8158

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