

Essex Area Update

Volume 3 Issue 3

July 2005

News from Area — Area Council, Monday 4th July

The newsletter of the Ramblers' Association Essex Area — email version.

Your friends and colleagues can get this version simply by emailing:

talkingwalking@aol.com

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London Bubble presents...

Secretarial savvy

A week or so ago packages containing the papers for the next meeting of the Area Council went winging their way out to the delegates. If everyone turned up, an Area Council meeting would comprise over 50 people. Each Group is allocated two representatives in addition to anyone who happens to be an elected Area Officer.

We've made the point before that the Council is *the* Governing Body of the Area and **David Cullington**, our Chair, is insistent that Area should become more responsive to the needs of members.

The next agenda contains all kinds of items ranging from the best way to set up an Area website to making a cash gift to the RA legal fund (£4000) from our work with the Council on Footpath Audits. We will also be discussing the best way of launching a car-free walks programme and whether or not to buy a computer to make our work more effective.

Central to our deliberations will be the way in which we can make our work more relevant to you, *the ordinary member*.

Most of our members don't walk with Groups and rarely take any part in our activities. Of course this generalisation is true of most other membership organisations – the bulk of National Trust or RSPB members take no active part in their organisations – but we would like the Ramblers to be different.

That doesn't mean that we want you to suddenly start walking with Groups – if this happened on any scale it would be disastrous. What we are after is the kind of activity which will result in the greater benefit for all walkers.

We want all walkers to become active in terms of reporting footpath problems, writing into the RA, volunteering to do small tasks for their Group, lobbying councillors or MPs,

collecting information about good pub stops or places to park or good walks to follow etc.

A good example is supplied in this edition by **John Dowding's** brief history of membership. John is one of Essex's most influential members. He heads up the powerful team of Group Footpath Secretaries and negotiates tirelessly for the improvement of our Rights of Way network. John never goes on Group walks and hasn't done as long as people can remember.

We also want you, the average member, to influence the way that the Area works. Don't wait for your Group's AGM, make sure that your representative on the Area Council knows your views now. If you don't know who your representative is, get a full list by e-mail from essexare Rambler@aol.com

Area Directory

Following the publication of the Area Directory in April, there have been a large number of corrections, amendments and updates. It is not intended to republish the whole directory until next year but if you would like any parts of it, or the whole lot, just email essexare Rambler@aol.com

John Barnard, the Area Countryside Secretary, tells us that he hasn't received any 'phone calls for a long time because the wrong number was given out – the correct version is **01206 210609**.

RA Chair echoes Essex Area's plea for New Faces

In a long letter circulated to all Group secretaries **Brian Reader** explains the new structure of the RA and calls on Areas to "...encourage a very much wider set of candidates to stand for election". He goes on to point out that, "... the RA does need new faces and new ideas on the Board of Trustees from time to time This is in our best interests to prevent us becoming stale.

It is for this reason that a six-year maximum time limit (2 X 3-year terms) on period of office was voted into place at General Council in Nottingham. So there will be many more opportunities for new candidates to be successfully elected. This could be an exciting chance for members to be at the heart of the action in the RA - and it is very enjoyable (most of the time!).

There must be many good candidates active in Areas and Groups who would relish the chance to help the RA at the highest level."

To celebrate
their 30th
Anniversary

*The South
East Essex
Group of
Ramblers*

have organised a

**Half Marathon
Walk around
Rochford
OPEN TO ALL
WALKERS**

News from the Groups — *South East Essex*

Half Marathon Walk Around Rochford

On SUNDAY 14th AUGUST 2005

starting from Southend Leisure & Tennis Centre (free parking)

Entry fee £3 including cold drinks at the manned checkpoints
And hot drinks and refreshments at
Southend Leisure Centre at the end of the walk.

All entrants who successfully complete the route will
receive a commemorative certificate

Application forms available from J Law 01702 525860

Come & Join Us

John Dowding, Footpaths Secretary, gets a bit Personal

I realised recently when people at an EC meeting were querying why the constitution allowed for independent members on the EC that the point made was that everyone was in a group.

This started me thinking, as I had never been a normal group member. I have sat in on committees of new groups after they have been formed, but that is all.

The fact that all members are now allocated to a group, hides the fact that a good number prefer to be lone members, but as such do have a few seats available on the Area Council for them to be active at Area level.

It then occurred to me that things were quite different way back when I started. I also realised that then, I had no idea of how the RA worked. I therefore went to Central Office to look at some of the old Southern Area papers to see what went on. I had the odd surprise! Initially I joined in my cycling days.

To put you in the picture, while I was away doing National Service in 1952, a cycling club was formed in Burnham; when I was demobbed I joined and, as I was the oldest, I was made Chairman! I joined the RA as I did a lot of off road cycling, had some problems on green lanes and I offered to help as a District Correspondent. This was how the RA was fed information on what was going on in the countryside. They collected press cuttings and tried to act on them.

In Southern England everything tended to happen in London. Initially the RA had been formed from rambling clubs, that had then formed into local federations which in the early days went national, with the organisation broken down into a very few Areas. We were in Southern Area, consisting of sixteen counties, from Dorset to Norfolk.

In 1956, I was feeding in my press cuttings and occasionally was asked to go out and report

on a footpath problem. Later I offered to act as a footpath worker in Burnham UD, then I spread out to include the area between Maldon and Burnham.

That was the point of no return. I was hooked, and caught the bug. Southern Area had a footpath committee which met London. As I worked there I was able to attend, but few others were able to. The committee covered such a wide area, only by going to meetings did you find out what was going on. This has influenced how I work with the Essex FP Committee. I may send out a lot of bumf, but it avoids FP Secretaries working in the dark and feeling they are on their own.

It was on the Southern Area FP Committee that I met Jim King from Barking, who was responsible for Essex, and as groups were beginning to be formed, membership started to rise. We were able to recruit footpath secretaries for Essex district and we had local Essex meetings. We found when we got together that Essex CC was telling each of us that the money was being spent elsewhere. Our Essex Footpath Committee was able to show this up and also we had our own committee when Essex Area was formed out of Southern Area. In the footpath field we were already there!

Groups, however were something I knew little about, other than that there were a few, not near me, but I have now seen all the gaps filled so that now Essex Area has more groups than any other Area.

This is where the research at Central Office came in - to fill in the gaps in my knowledge. In 1951 Southern Area had only two groups, Croydon and one newly formed, NW London. Later a NE London group was formed, to become SW Essex. That later seems to have died out, but Colchester was formed in 1965. In 1967 Brentwood had a Footpath Committee,

but only became a group 1969. West Essex, under Fred Matthews, was formed in 1970. From that it all went mad in Essex.

Going through the old magazines, I found in the early 1950s reams of requests for evidence of the use of paths all over the home counties. These all came from a couple of hardy footpath workers, one still with us, Geoffrey Stevenson, and still active. They were doing all the work, saving the paths that would not otherwise be on the definitive map, that we now criticise for its faults.

If it were not for those London stalwarts, we would not have the paths we do. I think it is significant, that when you get further from London, into Suffolk, definitive paths are nowhere as thick on the ground as they are in Essex. There are parishes without a single path. Is this just because they did not get that far out that often enough to do the necessary work?

I was also very intrigued at one or two little items that I found. In 1958, there was a report that a footbridge had been replaced on a path between Gt Totham hill & the church. That was the one I was requested to cycle over and look at. In 1960 there was a report of the extinguishment of a coastal path at N Fambridge. That was my first experience of a public inquiry. Although I had my copy of a letter to ECC complaining of an impassable path, on cross-examination I had to admit I had not actually walked the correct line of the path which crossed a rill in the saltings. I was the only one to have stated that I had tried. The inspector decided that it was not required for public use. Exit NF Footpath 1.

The third reference I found was to my appointment to cover Burnham UD and **that started me off on footpath work, never to look back!.....JD**

News from the RA

Review of Led Walks

Over the coming months the RA will be conducting an external review of the RA programme of led walks.

Group walking accounts for a considerable proportion of RA activity at a local level and substantial resources in terms of volunteer time and expenses. The RA is well-known among walkers in general for this activity and it provides many opportunities for non-members to come into contact with the RA. In particular the RA needs to answer the following questions:

- Is current practice acceptable?
- What, if any, quality assurance standards need to be put in place to monitor and assess leader performance and safety?
- With regard to the RA's GB wide programme of led walks, are there any recommendations about safety, insurance, liability, training or accreditation that the RA needs to consider implementing?

The review will be on a random sample

basis and will be carried out by Bob Barton, a qualified International Mountain Guide. It will be impossible for Bob to visit every RA group, let alone participate in every walk. Instead he will sample a big enough range of walks to draw informed conclusions. Before taking part on a group walk Bob will contact the leader, explain who he is and what he is doing and ask for permission to come along for the walk. If permission is refused, he will not join the walk. He is particularly keen not to get in the way of the normal process of any walk he attends and does not want leaders to change their normal ways of operating for his benefit.

The focus of the report will be on the national systems and approaches and not on the strength or weaknesses of individual leaders. Individuals will not be identified when a particular occurrence is referred to in the report.

Nick Barrett writes, "I hope you all un-

derstand that it is important to get answers to the sorts of questions contained in the aims of the review. On the credit side, we want our programme of led walks to be of good quality and fun for those involved. On the debit side, failure to carry out such a review might, in time, be deemed as an act of negligence on the part of the RA and put the organisation at risk.

You can help by, please:

- Telling your walks leaders that this is happening. Help everyone to take the view that this is a useful and necessary project. Don't assume an outcome before it has taken place! If you or your leaders meet Bob, answer his questions and tell him what you think.

- If you have any thoughts, views or written information/material that you think would be useful to consider as part of this review, please send this to Fiona Syme, c/o Central Office.

fionas@london.ramblers.org.uk

Other news

Protection on the Road from UIA

On today's busy roads, it is important to know you have adequate motor cover. The Ramblers' Association works with UIA Insurance to offer members and their families quality cover at competitive prices. With UIA's principled approach, you can be sure of an honest service and fair assessment of claims.

Cover includes, a 24 hour legal helpline, unlimited cover for factory fitted audio equipment, optional low cost breakdown cover, up to 90 days free cover in Europe and an option to spread payment by monthly direct debit. You can obtain a quote by calling UIA free on 0800 013 0064 quoting RAMG or buy on-line at: www.ramblersinsurance.co.uk to receive a 10% discount.

UIA (Insurance Services) Ltd. is registered under the Companies Act No. 2998952 and is a member of the Financial Ombudsman Service. The Ramblers' Association is an Introducer Appointed Representative of UIA (Insurance Services) Ltd. which is authorised and regulated by the Financial Services Authority.

Motor insurance is arranged by BDML Connect Limited which is authorised and regulated by the Financial Services Authority

Stop Stansted Expansion

SSE COMMUNITY CALENDAR - PHOTOS NEEDED FOR 2005 EDITION

Ken McDonald has already begun the hunt for photos for next year's Community Calendar, produced and sold by an army of volunteers in aid of Stop Stansted Expansion.

This year's calendar featured images from eight photographers and we'd very much like to hear from you if you have pictures which might be suitable for the 2006 edition. The deadline for submissions is 31st July 2005.

For details of what we're looking for see:

www.stopstanstedexpansion.com/calendar_2006.html
or contact Ken on 01279 813226

Join us on a journey that starts at dusk and finishes past your bedtime...

London Bubble presents: **The Crock of Gold**

Box Office: 020 7237 1663

Tickets: £12 (£8)

Group booking deal: **Buy 7 tickets, get the 8th free**

Monday 4th to Wednesday 6th July, at 9pm
Raphael Park, Romford

Tuesday 2nd to Saturday 6th August, 8.30pm
Valentines Park, Ilford

A tale of philosophers, gods and leprechauns. Magical outdoor theatre for all ages, in which the actors lead the audience on a journey around the park.

www.londonbubble.org.uk

**ESSEX AREA
RAMBLERS
CONTACTS:**

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41 Gordon Avenue
London E4 9QT

Phone: 020 8527 8158
Email: talkingwalking@aol.com



For larger details of this advertisement, please contact the secretary

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Secretary's Update

This year is the 21st anniversary of the formation of the Essex Area. The EC will discuss what, if anything, it would do to mark the occasion at its next meeting. If you have any bright ideas please send them in.

Applications to our adverts for help with Publicity and IT have been rather less than overwhelming. If you are under 40, you might like to consider one of these jobs and combine it with a working party which will be considering ways of relaunching the **Essex Walking Group (for 20s-40s)**

Programmes

Please send a copy of your latest programme to Len Banister. In this way we can ensure that interesting events and news features can be given Area-wide publicity.

AGM

We have now finalised arrangements for next year's AGM. It will be held in the Community Centre at Witham, hosted by the North West Essex Group. The guest speaker will be Andrew Chadwick who is the new Volunteer Development Manager of the RA. The meeting will start at 9.30 and will be followed (at about 12.00) by a short Area Council meeting (max 15 minutes) to confirm Area Appointments. In the afternoon there will be the usual programme of walks.

Annual Report and Financial Statements

If you wish to borrow a copy of either of these document, please contact me.

Use Your Paths Leaflet

I now have a supply of these which would be excellent to use for leafleting your local Councillors and/or MPs. Please order from me or direct from the RA. If you don't know who your local councillor is, log on to www.councillor.gov.uk

Finance

Chair, Dave Cullington raised the concerns of many Treasurers at the general Council by pointing out the complexity of the instruction booklet which was issued to them last year. It is now planned to simplify the guidelines.

Area Treasurer, Andy Sheff, is off to a national conference which is likely to be the precursor of a budgetary method of financing.

Group Secretaries may like to remind their members that about one tenth of our annual income comes from **legacies**. I can get the appropriate forms for you if you wish.

Diary Dates

- | | |
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| 18-24 June: Use Your Paths Week | 22 Sept: In Town without my Car Day, (part of WWW) |
| 26 June: Stop Stansted Expansion Ramble | 15 Oct: Ann McLarens's 30th Anniverasary walk |
| 4 July: Area Council Meeting | 18 Oct: Area Council |
| 20 July: Executive Committee Meeting | 6 Dec: Executive Committee |
| 13-20 Aug: Essex Area Short Linked, Circular Walks | 26 Dec-2 Jan: Festival of Winter Walks 2006 |
| 14 Aug: SE Essex 13 mile Challenge Walk | 9 Jan: Area Council |
| 3-11 Sept: Essex Hundred | 4 Feb: Essex Area AGM (followed by AC) Witham Community Centre |
| 12 Sept: Executive Committee | |
| 17-25 Sept: Welcome to Walking Week | |
| 18 Sept: National Walking Day, in conjunction with ITV | |

£4000 to legal fund

The Executive Committee is recommending to the next Area Council that a grant be made to the RA headquarters of £4000.

The money is part of that which has been 'earnt' by volunteers working on the annual statutory audit of Public Rights of Way. They will ask that the sum be ring fenced to finance prosecutions.

Saffron Trail

Area Council reps will be given a supply of books featuring the trail.

These can be sold to aid **Group** funds.