

# ESSEX AREA UPDATE



[www.ramblers.org.uk](http://www.ramblers.org.uk)

[www.essexarearamblers.co.uk](http://www.essexarearamblers.co.uk)

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE RAMBLERS' ASSOCIATION — ESSEX AREA

VOLUME 4, ISSUE 5

September 2006

## REFLECTIONS – DAVID CULLINGTON SURVEYS THE LAST FEW MONTHS

It has been a fairly hectic year at Area with two major events, the BBC Essex "Walk for Life" and the 21<sup>st</sup> Anniversary rally, plus the usual work of course. Coming together they created a work overload, but somehow we have coped.

The BBC Essex "Walk for Life" was not only excellent publicity for Essex RA, but raised our profile at the BBC and was a good exercise in working together with other organizations. I'm sure it gave our Secretary a few headaches, but he was pleased at the end result, although it did take most of the Area officer's attention for 3 or 4 months.

All this rather overshadowed the Rally, and I was grateful to Len for writing the letter to members for me while I was trying to get information and write the Anniversary booklet, but even something as straightforward as a letter caused some controversy. I suppose that was inevitable when you are sending to every member of Essex Area. One or two seemed to find it "censorious", but the main criticism was "was it needed at that expense?" We wanted to reach all the membership of Essex Area and

were not confident of all Groups ability to achieve this. We know that at least one Group did not distribute the old Essex Rambler to all its members, some had no walk on the day of the Rally, and I know of at least one Group that had no mention of the Rally in their programme.

A direct letter was the only way, and it had some very positive results. I don't know how many members may have come to the Rally because of it, but our Secretary had several hundred requests for EAU Email version, and I obtained some up to date membership information to send to Central Office.

Now the Rally itself, I know it didn't suit everyone, how could it? We have so many diverse opinions over how things should be done in the RA that whatever approach was taken, somebody would not agree with it. I had to bear in mind that Area officers have to work with ECC officials on an almost day to day basis, and had to consider whether anything useful would be achieved by upsetting the boss. To give some a short-term 'feel good' factor may have been more harmful in the medium and long term and it is what is ultimately achieved that is important.

Something that may be far more

effective for us is the 'Rights of Way Improvement Plan' questionnaire mentioned in my speech. Whether or not it has anything to do with our style at the Rally, we may never know, but my latest information is that Essex CC have agreed to mail the questionnaire to all Essex members. If every member returns it, that is likely to have far more impact than any petition from us because it is their questionnaire. So go to it, and encourage as many other members as you can to do the same. It is worth knowing that all rights of way users like horse riders, trail bikers and even 4WD users can have an input, so it is important that walkers' interests are strongly represented.

So, after that....., Did we get the Rally right? -- NO! Did we get it wrong? -- NO!

It just depends on your point of view. At Area we just did what we thought was best for RA interests, and you can't ask more of volunteers than that! If you want a change come on Area Committee and put your point of view. One thing I can guarantee is that not everyone will agree with you!

Enjoy the rest of the summer.  
**David Cullington.**

### Inside this issue:

Access, Footpaths & UYP	2
That questionnaire!	3
E100, FEAST, Centenary Walk	4 & 5
Saving Lives	6
Our members write...	7
Coastal Access Campaign & Diary dates	8

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

[talkingwalking@aol.com](mailto:talkingwalking@aol.com)

Contact:

*Len Banister*

*41 Gordon Avenue, London E4 9QT*

*Phone: 020 8527 8158*

## ACCESSING ACCESS

Here are the instructions to access Access, Essex County Council's Rights of Way Team's brilliant online newsletter:

It's under the website [www.essexcc.gov.uk](http://www.essexcc.gov.uk) - click on travelling, then click on public rights of way, click on access essex, click on newsletters, then click on the new spring edition.

## BUT NOT ALL IS WELL AS JOHN DOBINSON DEMONSTRATES:

I was interested to read your article in Update about the rally and meeting with Cllr Bass at County Hall Chelmsford writes Frank, one of our members.

Regarding the question of County resources put towards footpaths, you may be interested to read the following email received from the County in response to a footpath report I sent to them on 24th May:

*EMAIL from ECC – John Dobinson 4th July 2006*

"I refer to your letter of the 24th May 2006, which has been forwarded to me from Chris Brown. I would advise you that that Footpaths Officer has now retired, and at present he has not been replaced. I am therefore covering the Footpath Officer's work in addition to my own. I am afraid that all I can do at the moment is to note your report, and follow it up when resources permit.

John Dobinson, Chelmsford Highway Maintenance Manager.  
01245 240090 [john.dobinson@essexcc.gov.uk](mailto:john.dobinson@essexcc.gov.uk) "

It would appear that the ECC isn't replacing their Footpath Officers when they retire!

Best Wishes **Frank**

## FOOTPATH OPEN

14 enforcement notices have been issued concerning ploughing and cropping.

We have recently had a major victory over the Southend Pier footpath which has been reinstated with the award, to the RA, of £1800 in costs.

## USE YOUR PATHS CHALLENGE UPDATE

What a magnificent start to the **Use Your Paths Challenge!** In less than 5 months there have been:

- 9732 grid squares completed - all recorded rights of way walked and any problems reported
- 13325 grid squares reported as having no recorded rights of way
- More than 740 people taking part.

Now, as we move into late summer and early autumn, it's time to step up our walking for the Challenge - to see just how many squares we can complete before the winter.

Understandably, we are expecting the months of December and January to be relatively quiet, but they don't have to be. Every completed square helps towards our target of 100% by September 2007.

**Don't forget there are a number of ways you can report completed grid squares** - online at [www.useyourpaths.info](http://www.useyourpaths.info), on the 'hotline' 020 7339 8554, or by post to the 'Use Your Paths Challenge' at our normal address. In this edition of Footpath Campaigner there is a tear-off slip as well.

So far we've had fairly good coverage across England and Wales, but there are still a few areas looking a bit bare. It would be great to have a real smattering of green across our progress map, so if you're in one of the currently 'untouched' areas why not get out there and give it a go? You can check progress (constantly updated) on the **UYP website**.

## MAGS HOBBY OF MERSEA WRITES:

I think we should be encouraging those of our members who live in Essex to complete the questionnaire on ROWIP (via EAU?) - it is available until the end of September - it was advertised in Essex Matters and one can also ring for a copy.

If they don't get loads of responses, it will probably convince them that nobody cares about the paths anyway!

**Sec: We have negotiated via Katie Haines of Essex County Council to have all our members mailed direct with a questionnaire and a reply-paid envelope.**

**Please make absolutely sure that you fill in and return the petition as soon as possible.**

*About that*

*ECC*

*questionnaire...*

## GUIDANCE ON THE WALKING QUESTIONNAIRE FOR THE ESSEX RIGHTS OF WAY IMPROVEMENT PLAN

*It is not my intention to tell you how to fill in the questionnaire, my object is to make a few points and indicate things you might like to put in but do not see them mentioned.*

The questionnaire is pages 3 to 14, once you have discarded the card cover. Most of it is simple questions where you can say where and how you like to walk.

Section 3 [pages 7-10] asks where you like to walk. On page 8 you can tick all the problems you encounter and below that you can describe three things that you would improve about the rights of way. You are not limited to the things listed previously.

You can tick 'road crossings' which is listed. You can also mention legal action: enforcement and prosecution for cross field ploughing and cropping; legal action necessary to sort out many "permanent obstructions" unusable for years; or legal action to the backlog of claims and errors in the definitive map.

Section 4, Meeting Your Needs, asks what stops you from walking more frequently in Essex. You can tick all your favourite problems. It then asks for views on how scarce resources should be prioritised. Be careful here as you could tick the odd expensive one that could take all the resources! This is a personal note in which I give my own views for you to consider and/or ignore! I am safe in saying that RA policy is not to approve permissive paths as they can disappear overnight, but I will not be popular amongst cyclists, horse-riders and others, if I say beware of multi-user paths and investment in bridleways and byways. You can get miles of footpath for a short length of byway or bridleway. Those users argue that there are more footpaths, but then, there are more walkers! Ploughing and cropping is not listed [except presumably included under maintenance], *BUT* on page 12 there is a box for further comments.

There you can go on about your favourite subject, be it ploughing, cropping, road crossings or whatever *AND* you can continue on a separate sheet of paper [it does say ONE!].

**The main thing is to get the questionnaire and fill it in.** It does not mention where you would like additional paths, but we did that as an Area two years ago, as soon as they mentioned 'Improvements'!

If you need a questionnaire it is available from Katie Haines on 01245 437647

e-mail: [katie.haines@essexcc.gov.uk](mailto:katie.haines@essexcc.gov.uk)

**Forms to be returned to ECC by 30th September 2006**

**John Dowding**, Essex Area Footpath Secretary

## THE ESSEX HUNDRED (E100) RUNS FROM SATURDAY 2ND TO SUNDAY 10TH OF SEPTEMBER

### **Details are in your Group programmes and in the July issue of EAU**

The '*Hundred*' was devised as a means of surveying the paths of Essex.....  
**Kevin Ascott** explains more:

#### **Twenty years of surveying**

One of the declared aims of the Essex Hundred walks was that they presented an opportunity to open up the paths of Essex. It is to the credit of Essex Area Ramblers' that this worthwhile motive has never seriously faltered over all these years.

A pattern of surveying soon emerged where the designated leader would walk out the proposed route some months before the event with a few friends and arrive at an agreed solution. It was usually my task to tally up the missing or damaged furniture and cross path failures for each day and they were then sent in to Essex County Council for attention. Probably the provision of so many missing, yet vital, bridges strikes me as our greatest achievement. Walking out of Thaxted up to Copthall Lane and crossing the well-used bridge over the deep ditch, I never fail to recall that Fred was advised by the Highway Authority that the Essex Hundred was, "Asking for furniture to be put in that would seldom be used again after the event". How wrong that was proved to be!

So far as I remember, there was only one year when the leaders were left wholly to their own devices and no serious surveying was carried out. We then very nearly came unstuck, because a leader broke a leg and hadn't walked the route out with the back-marker either! John Ingram knew the paths out of Havering and I then led the afternoon. Since there were often around a hundred people turning up in those days and after that "wake-up call", we resumed surveying again in earnest.

Some 1500 miles later, I am really delighted that the walk-out days are still regarded as a pleasurable outing in their own right, with leaders inviting a few friends to take part in what can often be an instructive ramble!

The recent change-over of dates for the Hundred has caused a little local difficulty. The time scale of the surveys is too short this year for Essex CC to deal with such items as missing fingerposts. However, they have kindly tasked an officer to look at dealing with the more serious things; such as the stile that collapsed under my weight and deposited me backwards into a bed of nettles from some height! Did I say anywhere that surveying is not without its risks?

We have been banging on for two decades at the lack of definition through crops and this year, at survey time, the cross field paths have been excellent. It now remains to be seen what the situation is after harvest. If the paths are put in again across bare arable fields, then we really will have cracked it.

In a perfect world, all walk leaders would report all path problems to their District Footpath Secretary after every outing. In the real world, we do know that one hundred miles through Essex have received a serious look over. Fingerposts buried deep in hedgerows or even missing altogether are noted and we are quite keen on getting old single plank bridges, still often to be found over deep ditches, upgraded, now that there are more people out there walking and at risk.

You will possibly have noticed when out walking that way-marking throughout the County is steadily improving.... Well it is in the parts of the County I frequent anyway. Essex Area Ramblers' have been paid what is serious money to us, to carry out the statutory path audits for the County Council. They deserve high praise for facing up to a higher percentage of fails by letting a user group do this task properly. Many other Counties do claim better results simply by not having such a thorough, independent survey. Better know the truth and work at it; as Essex CC is doing with their own 20% per year over five years, in the Districts.

The discovery of Definitive map anomalies and serious obstructions to paths does come out of such surveying but these things are not so easily resolved as putting furniture deficiencies to rights.

The majority of the 'Hundred' routes I have walked twice and have enjoyed every minute of them.

AND DON'T FORGET 'FEAST'  
(FRIENDS IN ESSEX ANNUAL SUMMER TREK)

which is running from Saturday 12th to Sunday 20th August

Details are also in the July issue of EAU

*Loads a'  
Great  
Walks*

## EPHING FOREST – THE CENTENARY WALK

In 1978 the Conservators of Epping Forest published a slim 12-page volume describing a Centenary Walk. The pamphlet costing 15p and written by Fred Matthews & Harry Bitten, described a walk they had devised to celebrate the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the passing of the Epping Forest Act of 1878.

This Act was the culmination of conflict which arose from many attempts to enclose the Forest and service the rapid expansion of London. Luckily for the East Londoner and Essex walkers, people like the commoner Thomas Willingale and the wealthy Buxtons fought a hard battle which led to the eventually successful intervention of the Corporation of the City of London.

The 16 mile walk, which starts in Manor Park, Newham, and meanders its way over Forest land to the Bell Common in Epping, was first led by Harry Bitten. Harry has led the walk, sponsored jointly by the Friends of Epping Forest and the Ramblers, on each anniversary since and has developed a characteristically idiosyncratic approach.

Starting from near Manor Park station, there are usually over a hundred walkers, a number which ebbs and flows as the day progresses – indeed, one of the joys of the outing is the fact that people can dip in where and for as long as they like.

There are recognised stops like the County Hotel on Oak Hill where coffee and biscuits are traditionally provided by the management and the Robin Hood pub where lunch is taken, but along the way there may be variations from the defined walk so that it is never the same. Every now and then the crowd will stop whilst the leader, one of the Verderers, or a Ranger enlightens them on some matter of interest.

No doubt Harry will still be on the walk but there will be a change of leadership this year. Mike Whiteley, the new Secretary of the West Essex group, will be taking on the baton for the first time. ***If you would like to really get to know one of the major assets of Essex, this is the outing for you:***

### EPHING FOREST CENTENARY WALK - 24 SEPTEMBER 2006

- 9.00am** This year's Centenary Walk starts at the junction of Forest Drive and Capel Road near Manor Park Station at 9.00am
- 9.45am** and should reach the Green Man Roundabout, Leytonstone around 9.45am.
- 10.45am** We expect to arrive at the County Hotel, Oak Hill at 10.45am
- 12 noon** and the Warren Pond Car Park, Chingford at mid-day.
- 1.15-2.00pm** Lunch will be taken at the Robin Hood PH from 1.15 pm to 2.00 pm.
- 5.30pm** We expect to arrive at Bell Common, Epping at about 5.30pm.

***The walk can be joined or left at any point and the approximate timings above are intended to help those who do not want to complete the whole 15 miles of the walk.***

### AT LEAST ONE PETITION WHICH IS AVAILABLE

There was an error in the address we gave you for the CPRE's petition about the East of England Plan in the last issue. The correct address is:

<http://www.cpre.org.uk/campaigns/planning/sustainable-communities/east-england-plan-petition.asp>

## DEREK KEEBLE TALKS OF A 32 YEAR-OLD CONVERSION:

**First Aid Training.**

I was pleased to take on the organisation of *First Aid* training for Essex Area. I came to the Ramblers Association in 1974 as a result of a Brentwood Group member dying on a walk. His widow told me of the benefits of rambling and how despite everything that had happened to her, how she loved the organisation. I wondered then how other ramblers felt on that fateful day. What if anything could they have done to help"?

*Now I know.* We all have a responsibility to do what we can to save life if we find ourselves in such a situation. 'That is official' I was told it on the course. If you are the first on the scene of an accident, trained or not, it is your sole responsibility to take charge. If you have been trained you know what to do. This knowing is a great weight off my mind.

The current life-saving course does not involve either blame or bandages! Just five easy steps: You assess the situation. Make the area safe. Assess all casualties and give/get emergency aid. Get help. And then, deal with the aftermath.

Our trainer made it as simple as ABC to make sure oxygen can get to the vital organs. He even gave us a simple way of remembering airway; breathing; and circulation. If we keep all that going our fellow being has a chance of still being alive when help arrives.

I am so glad I have been trained. I would not have been, if all 12 places I organised had been fully booked. I would urge anyone who has any care for their fellow human beings to consider taking such training. *It makes you so much more able to do, as the law requires, what you can to save life.*

Save  
a Life

Remember Area will finance a member from each Group for  
FIRST AID TRAINING

Please send in names to **Ann McLaren** at [map20@btinternet.com](mailto:map20@btinternet.com).

When she has sufficient numbers she will negotiate dates with applicants.

## THE TESCO GREAT SOUTH WALK

The Great North *Walk* is a "sister" event to the Great North Run, the biggest half marathon in the world and has been staged at various venues in the North East since 1988. This year's event was staged at Darlington on July 23rd with over 3000 walkers enjoying great sunshine and a fun day – raising thousands of pounds for the British Heart Foundation and other charities.

*The Great South Walk* is a new initiative this year and is one of three walks – The Great North, Great South and Great Midlands Walk.

**The Great South Walk** takes place in Hatfield Forest, Hertfordshire on Saturday 2nd September 2006. Around 1000 walkers are expected and the walk starts and finishes at a specially prepared area of the Elgins Car Park field within the Hatfield Forest site. The route of 8 miles has flat terrain, will be well way-marked by distinctive "Great Walk" direction arrows and supported by route marshals at key points. There will be "walk leaders" for each "wave" of walkers.

The British Heart Foundation is the official charity for the Tesco Great South Walk and funds will be raised for them as part of the event.

Walking groups are invited to take part - all walkers will receive an exclusive event t-shirt, souvenir medal and goody bag for their efforts as well as a great day out for all the family. Entries for the event are currently being taken on line at [www.greatwalk.org](http://www.greatwalk.org).

For more details contact **Lynsey Attwood**

PR and Marketing Executive for *Nova International* - Who organise mass participation running and walking events such as the BUPA Great North Run and the Tesco Great North Walk

Direct dial Lynsey on 0191 2263238 Mobile: 07921582509

E-mail: [lynsey.attwood@nova-international.com](mailto:lynsey.attwood@nova-international.com)

## ANOTHER GEM FROM A GROUP PROGRAMME.

More and more Groups are developing a newsletter supplement to their programmes. This piece from the South East Essex production serves to emphasise the writing talent we have in the County:

This article was written by **Dorothy Cosh**. When you have read it you will appreciate why she is our Publicity Officer and not a Walks Secretary or Walk Leader. Thankfully there is plenty of room in our group and on the committee for people to make their contribution in their own inimitable style.

### RAMBLINGS - THE RELUCTANT WALKER

When I was growing up, I was led to believe that walking was one of those things you did to get you to the shops, round to the pub and maybe there was some involved with your job. So how I managed to marry a man who in his younger days enjoyed mountaineering, rock climbing, buzzing around the countryside on a Velloccete 500cc Venom motorcycle and walking for pleasure, only God in His infinite wisdom can answer that one.

When he retired he joined the Bad Boys and Girls walking group and informed me that when I retired I had a place in the group as well. "Oh really, what joy" I said. I don't actually remember asking for a place but hey, what the heck, it was very kind of them.

So a year later I retired, bought some suitable walking gear and a lovely pair of Brasher Boots in navy blue, which by the way cost me £80, and took my place in the group where I was welcomed by everyone.

Now I have to tell you that I don't have the greatest sense of balance, so when I am walking I don't get to see much of my surroundings because I am always looking at my feet, otherwise I will get a closer look at the ground than I care for. And when it comes to going over stiles, well, I still haven't got it right - I always manage to get my legs in a twist, and then some bright spark will remark "anyone good at undoing reef knots? "

Then there are those large four legged animals, horses and cows I believe they're called, unpredictable and inquisitive. I am very wary of them since I was charged and head butted by a pesky cow - I mean I don't even eat beef - unless of course she could sense my new boots were made of a relative. I gather a group of the guys around me, in these circumstances, and try not to make eye contact with them - the animals I mean, not the guys.

I must admit I don't go walking every week and you can be sure my husband is quizzed as to what my excuse is now, and remarks like "unless she is out next week, we won't speak to her again". I know they don't mean it. They're far too nice. So I go walking with a great bunch of people and I am constantly asking "are we there yet? how much farther? is this a short cut?". But when the walk is over and we are all in the pub, and I have a small lager shandy in my hand, I think, I really enjoyed that!

***Oh please, who are you kidding!! HAPPY WALKING***

### THE POWER OF THE MEDIA:

Dear Sir,

I noticed in the August Update that someone was advertising two rucksacks for sale.

I also have two, of 15 and 25 litre capacity, in excellent condition, that are surplus to requirements and wondered whether they could be advertised in the next newsletter.

My phone number is: 01206 323197. **Lucy Marshall**

## COASTAL ACCESS CAMPAIGN — *plea from headquarters...*

Now that we have launched coastal access to the national press we need to win hearts and minds through the regional and local media. And there is no better time than now to make the arguments for a legal right to walk on the coast, as millions flock to the beach this summer.

Area Access Officers will also be contacted to raise awareness of the campaign locally. There are a number of things you can do:

- Organise a photo opportunity. You could choose a local site where there is no right to walk along the coast, or a beach where access is restricted, or a coastal path which is affected by coastal erosion.
- Take a journalist on a coastal walk so they can see how inland detours, coastal erosion and permissive access affect negatively the way people experience the coast and how a new legal right of access to coastal areas would bring improvements for the public.
- Ask your local paper to feature an opinion piece written by you. Len Banister can supply an outline.
- Write to your local paper in support of coastal access. Whether writing a press release or giving an interview we ask that you make these important points:
  - The Ramblers' Association is campaigning not just for its members or regular walkers, but for every citizen in the land to have a legal right to walk on the coast.
  - Contrary to popular belief, there is no general legal right of right to walk along the coast - including beaches and foreshore - in England. A child walking on a beach this summer may be technically trespassing.
  - An ICM poll commissioned by the RA found that 94 of the public want a legal right to walk along the coast, including beaches, foreshore and cliffs in England.
  - We want to achieve this right while respecting the rights of others. We won't be marching through anyone's garden and we will want proper protection for privacy and wildlife, as exists with the right to roam.
  - Use local examples of places where access to the coast can be improved to illustrate why we need a legal right of access.

*If the RA press office can help please let us know.*

## DIARY DATES

### 2006

12 to 20 Aug: FEAST  
16 Aug: Footpaths Committee 7.30pm  
2 to 10 Sept: Essex Hundred  
5 Sept: Countryside Secretaries 7.30pm  
16 to 24 Sept: Welcome to Walking Week  
17 Sept: National Walking day  
18 Sept: Area Council 7.30pm  
22 Sept: In town without My Car Day  
24 Sept: Epping Forest Centenary Walk  
9.0am - 5.30pm  
15 Nov: Footpaths Committee 7.30pm  
28 Nov: Executive Committee 7.30pm  
26 Dec - 2 Jan: Festival of Winter Walks

### 2007

15 Jan: Area Council 7.30pm  
30 Jan: Executive Committee 7.30pm  
3 Feb: Essex Area AGM  
30 Mar - 1 Apr: General Council - Reading University  
4 Apr: Footpaths Committee 7.30pm  
17 Apr: Executive Committee 7.30pm  
14 May: Area Council 7.30pm  
9 Jul: Executive Committee 7.30pm  
15 Aug: Footpaths Committee 7.30pm  
17 Sept: Area Council 7.30pm  
27 Nov: Executive Committee 7.30pm  
5 Dec: Footpaths Committee 7.30pm

### 2008

7 Jan: Area Council 7.30pm

**Please note:**

*All meetings are held at the Friends' Meeting House, Chelmsford unless stated otherwise.*

**CONTACTS: Len Banister, 41 Gordon Avenue, London E4 9QT**

**Phone: 020 8527 8158, Email : [talkingwalking@aol.com](mailto:talkingwalking@aol.com)**