



White Cliffs Ramblers Newsletter – February 2021

Resuming Organised Group Walks

At last, something to look forward to, hopefully!

Following the Government's announcement of the plans to ease lockdown restrictions we are anticipating that we will be able to resume group walks from the end of March. It seems that at first these walks will be required to follow 'the rule of six'. Inevitably this will mean that we will have to continue to have booking arrangements in place. Several Committee members have already offered to lead a walk when we are able to. However, before finalising any arrangements we will wait for detailed guidance from Ramblers head office.

In the meantime, if you have an idea for a walk that you might lead or have any suggestions as to how we might organise a walks programme over the coming months, please contact Anne or Tony (Walks Co-ordinators):

anne.hickey1@gmail.com or at.bristow@gmail.com

This should also mean that the White Cliffs Walking Festival could take place later this year. The organising committee are keeping this under review and will be meeting in early April to plan the next steps.

Margaret Lubbock

Margaret continues to remain in our thoughts, and as the pandemic restrictions are lifted it is hoped that we can join together both to commemorate her substantial contributions to this Group, but also to share memories of her. When we can do so, we plan to hold a memorial walk or series of walks if numbers are still restricted. We also intend to compile a photo album that we can present to her daughter and son, Rosemary and Roderick. Other ideas for remembering Margaret include installing a gate or erecting a bench in her name. Once we have been able to develop these ideas further, we may seek donations towards the cost of these.

Protecting our footpaths

The Ramblers play an important role in protecting our network of local footpaths. To fulfil this role, we rely on volunteers to keep an eye on what is happening to our footpaths. At a local level this work is undertaken by Parish Footpath Observers (PFOs) and Local Footpath Officers (LFOs). We have several vacancies for both roles.

PFOs should walk all the footpaths in their allocated area at least once a year and identify and report on any problems. As the name suggests, the area covered by a PFO corresponds to that of a Parish Council, although the role has no official connection with any activities undertaken by Parish Councils. Support for our PFOs is provided via our Group Footpaths Officer – Richard Frith. We currently have vacancies for the following parishes: Acrise; Capel – le – Ferne; Eastry; Eythorne; Hawkinge; Lydden; Newington; Paddlesworth; Tilmanstone; Walmer and Whitfield. If you are interested in becoming the PFO for one of these parishes, please contact Richard at rjfrith@btinternet.com.

In England and Wales The Ramblers has a statutory right to be consulted about proposed changes or effects on public rights of way. Therefore, it is the role of the LFO to scrutinise, and when appropriate to comment on proposals to divert, extinguish or create paths and advise PFOs when necessary. Most LFOs, but not all, normally covers a group of parishes. Support for this work is provided via Roger King (Sector Co-ordinator), and when conditions permit there are regular network meetings for LFOs.

Due to work commitments one of our LFOs is no longer able to give as much time to this role. Therefore, we are looking for volunteers to take over the responsibility for 1 or more of the following parishes: Eythorne; Guston;

Langdon; Nonington, River; St. Margaret's at Cliffe; Shepherdswell with Coldred; Sutton; Temple Ewell; and Whitfield. If you would like to know more, please get in touch with Roger King at: roger.ramblers89@outlook.com

White Cliffs Inland Border Facility (IBF) – impact on the North Downs Way

At an Extraordinary Meeting of Dover District Council (DDC) held on 9th February 2021, Councillors voted in favour of welcoming the construction of an Inland Border Facility at a 37-hectare site in Guston. In doing so the councillors had received several officer reports outlining far more detail concerning this development than had previously been made public. It was evident that this detail had come via briefings conducted with key stakeholders by the Department of Transport. It was also evident that the proposals were still work in progress and are only being firmed up now.

The Ramblers has not been one of these stakeholders, therefore we have been reliant on information from other sources. Our initial response was to deplore both the lack of meaningful consultation and the lack of detail especially in respect of the impact on the North Downs Way (NDW). Our initial concerns will be reported in the next issue of South East Walker. However, by the time that this reaches you, some, but not all, of our concerns may have been addressed.

During the contributions from councillors, the impact that this development might have on the NDW was only mentioned twice. The first was to reference the Local Land Allocations Plan (adopted in 2015) which seeks to have the NDW realigned along the original direct south/north route of the Roman Road, if and when the site is restored post 2025. This proposal also envisages a new bridleway bridge being constructed across the A2 and slip-roads of the A2 / A256 interchange. The second contribution acknowledged both the national and international importance of this trail, forming as it does part of the Via Francigena pilgrimage route between Canterbury and Rome.

Observations

Historically the NDW did indeed follow the Roman Road in a north-south direction. However, following the construction of the Honeywood interchange (A2 / A256) the route of the NDW was diverted by means of footpaths ER55A and ER60A. Whilst the possibility exists of restoring the NDW to its original route behind the present B&Q building and by means of a crossing over the A2, there must be serious reservations as to the viability of this. At this point in time, it seems that this is more of an aspiration than a certain reality and would require a number of significant factors to be in place, including the required funding and the site no longer being needed as an IBF.

In these circumstances we need to focus on the immediate future of the NDW both during the construction and operational phases of the IBF. At no time during the debate at the Council meeting, nor in the accompanying Officers' reports was any mention made of the NDW being kept open at all times. Given the short timescale for developing this site, it is strongly suspected that there will be an application for a temporary closure of that section of the NDW that falls within the site.

Having said this, a number of our other concerns may be addressed. Within one of the reports considered by DDC it was suggested that: *The diversion would start from where the NDW currently crosses the A2 on Dover Road, for it to pass through the landscaped area on the eastern side of the Site, then run beneath the southern access road (proposed Fastrack / BRT route), before re-joining its current alignment on Roman Road.*

Whilst this seems to recognise the need for a safe crossing for pedestrians, we do not believe that an underpass would be the most ideal solution. Rather, we would suggest that a pedestrian controlled crossing would be preferable.

Accompanying the Council reports was a drawing drafted by an engineering and construction consultancy firm. According to the drawing's legend it is proposed that the diverted section of the NDW be constructed of hoggin. Properly constructed and compacted, this material provides a good walking surface and should be able to withstand light traffic without serious rutting. In this event this would meet our concern that any diverted route should be properly surfaced.

The construction of a bund (mound) along the eastern perimeter of the site, with appropriate planting on either side of the diverted NDW could, I would suggest, enhance the experience for walkers.

In the meantime, we are monitoring what is happening on the site and have established a rota for regular visits. John Pye is co-ordinating our efforts, so if you have anything to report please contact him at: johnrpye@icloud.com

Hangman's Lane – Ripple (Footpath EE451)

Following a submission by the British Horse Society, Kent County Council (KCC) decided that sufficient historical evidence had been presented to alter the status of this route from a footpath to a bridleway. As a Group, and several individual members have objected to this change. Over the years this section of path has become enclosed by trees and hedgerows. To accommodate a bridleway these would need to be cleared resulting in a loss of amenity and wildlife habitat.

There is a further concern that as the footpath crosses the Dover to Deal railway line (with a stile on either side of the tracks), this may prompt Network Rail to seek an order to close the path. A final decision on the proposed upgrading to a bridleway will be taken by the Planning Inspectorate after consideration of the various objections.

To keep up to date with proposed changes to the local footpath network read Roger King's monthly summary on the WCR website at: [White Cliffs Ramblers: Footpaths](#)

Kent Ramblers AGM

This year's AGM was held online via Zoom at the beginning of February. During the meeting there were three presentations, one from Colin Wild who has taken over the 'Lost Ways' project. Ian Wild gave a short update on the progress of the English Coast Path in Kent. Finally, Pablo Gonzalez from Ramblers Walking Holidays (RWH) outlined something of the holidays that this company hoped to be offering, both at home and abroad. For more details see

[Ramblers Walking Holidays \(ramblersholidays.co.uk\)](http://ramblersholidays.co.uk)

If you do book a holiday with RWH remember to mention that you are a White Cliffs member, we receive a small contribution to Group funds for every holiday booked.

The following were elected to serve as Area Officers:

Robert Campbell – Area Chairman

Robert Peel – Area Secretary

Hilary Adams – Area Treasurer

Colin Sefton and Tony Bristow – Vice Chairmen

Les Preston – Individual members representative.

Wootton Environment Protection Group (WEGP)

This group aims to safeguard the environment of Wootton and the surrounding countryside as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty which lies within our area and which we sometimes walk in. In particular, they are at present campaigning to appeal against a decision to allow development and to increase the number of operating days at Lydden Circuit. If you may be interested in supporting them, please see their Facebook page or visit their crowdfunding page at <https://www.crowdfunder.co.uk/wootton-environmental-campaign>.

Pam Woodcock

We are sorry to learn recently of Pam's death. Pam sometimes walked with us and took part in some Group holidays, so some members may remember her. Her family have asked us to let people know of her passing.

A face to the name...White Cliffs Ramblers Committee 2020 - 2021



**Tony Bristow – Acting
Chairman & Joint Walks
Co-ordinator**



**Anne Bristow – Joint Walks
Co-ordinator**



John Shale – Group Treasurer



Gavin Trevelyan – Web Editor

**Helena Trevelyan – Group
Secretary**



**Lee Pickup – Press & Publicity
Officer**



**Andrew Swarbrick – Group
Membership Secretary**



**John Pye – Assistant
Chairman / Social media
Co-ordinator**



**Richard Frith – Group
Footpaths Officer**



**Margaret Milsted – Williamson
– Committee Member**

**Rosie Hall – Committee
Member**