

Sussex Rambler



ramblers
at the heart of walking

September 2021

**The on-line newsletter for members
of Sussex Ramblers**

Contents

Eton's New Town	Page 3
Wealdway 40	Page 4
Ted White Obituary	Page 5
Help Needed	Page 6
1066 Country Walk	Page 6
Now Open	Page 7
Walking	Page 7
Path Problems	Page 8

Philip Buckell

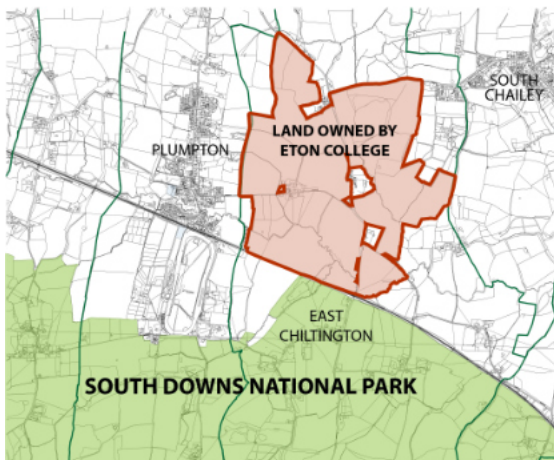
Health problems and the recent receipt of some acrimonious criticism from a handful of members over the unfortunate error regarding the distribution of the August copy of 'Sussex Rambler' have seen Philip stand down from his post as Communications Officer for Sussex Area. We are sorry to see him go and wish him all the best for the future.

I will keep the seat warm in the interim, but this does mean that we are actively seeking a replacement for the job, see the article later in this edition.

Lionel Pringle

The Threat of Eton's New Town

Many of you will be very familiar with the paths, bridleways and tiny narrow lanes that criss-cross through East Chiltington and connect to the villages of Plumpton, Wivelsfield Green and Chailey, the hamlet of Streat and to the South Downs Way beyond.



What you may not realise is that this beautiful and unspoilt corner of bygone Sussex is at threat of disappearing under tarmac and concrete if plans by Eton College to build a 3,000-house new town get the go ahead. The college – a charitable trust – owns a 500-acre site at East Chiltington right next to the South Downs National Park. It is currently rented out as working historic farmland. From Black Cap on the South Downs Way, you look down on the land in the near foreground – at the moment a glorious patchwork of fields and woodland.

It is home to many protected animal species including bats, Great Crested Newts, the Hazel Dormouse and 22 red-listed bird species as well as rare butterflies, bees and moths. The Bevern Stream, a tributary of the River Ouse, runs through the land and is a prolific spawning ground to a nationally-significant sea trout population. There are ancient trees and hedgerows too, fields of sunflowers and wild flowers. But very little in the way of infrastructure – only 150 houses in the whole parish, with no mains gas or sewerage and no main roads.

As well as destroying precious habitats and eco systems, this loss of green space would destroy the landscape of the South Downs forever and devastate nearby villages which would be engulfed by this urban sprawl. The additional water run-off from 3,000 dwellings would compromise the Bevern, which already regularly floods, as well as the Ouse. The proposed scheme could also see 3.5 million more car journeys a year in the area, on country lanes which are already choked by traffic at peak times, generated by 6,000 more residents and an estimated 4,200 extra vehicles.



'Don't Urbanise the Downs' is an action group with over 4,500 members from across Sussex and beyond which is fighting these plans, which it says will not support local housing need and is unnecessary. Lewes District Council has just completed an 'Issues & Options' Public Consultation, which will inform its next local plan and which asked people to comment on



The landscape under threat

the possibility of a 'new settlement in the Low Weald' - in other words the new town put forward by Eton.

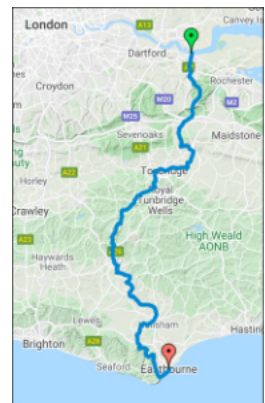
If you feel strongly about this threat to the countryside, which will undermine the South Downs National Park status as one of only 16 International Dark Skies Reserves, then do sign up as a supporter.

For more information and to join, go to www.donturbanisethedowns.com

Jane Lawrence

Wealdway 40

The Wealdway runs for 82 miles north-south across Kent and Sussex from Gravesend to Eastbourne. It crosses not just the fine scenery of the High and Low Wealds but also the North Downs, the South Downs and the Greensand Ridge. The High Weald is arguably the finest walking country in the South East with its characteristic sandstone outcrops and perhaps the best preserved mediaeval landscape in northern Europe. A mixture of small farms, arable fields, pasture and woodland cut by steep-sided ghylls makes every walk a delight, marred only slightly in winter by the glorious Wealden mud. The ancient timbered buildings, especially the eponymous Wealden Hall House, add much to the landscape, as do the furnace and hammer ponds that are relics of the Tudor iron industry.



In 1972 Meopham and District Footpaths Group proposed the idea of a long-distance path from the Thames to the English Channel. The group designed the first section from Gravesend to Tonbridge. Tunbridge Wells Ramblers member, the late Geoff King, then volunteered to take on the task of establishing the remainder of the route, aided by a steering group. Nine years later, on 27 September 1981, the finished route – including hundreds of stiles, waymarks and reinstated neglected paths – was opened by the late Lord Derek Barber of Tewkesbury, then Chairman of the Countryside Commission. Five hundred walkers and representatives of walking organisations from seventeen European



countries attended the opening ceremony at Camp Hill in Ashdown Forest.

As a significant part of the Wealdway also runs through East Sussex, Sussex Area has agreed to do its part to celebrate the anniversary by replacing the waymark discs and associated posts across Ashdown Forest. East Sussex Rights of Way team have agreed to provide the timber for the posts, Sussex



Area is supplying the discs and Sussex Area members the labour to install the new posts.

To celebrate the fortieth anniversary of the opening of the Wealdway, Kent Area are organising a series of walks along the length of the path throughout September. Details of the walks can be found at [this location](#). A couple of these walks are also a part of this year's [High Weald Walking Festival](#), which runs from 11th – 19th September.

Ted White - A Tribute

Very sadly, our colleague Ted passed away at the end of July, following a fall at his home. He was in his 90th year. A member of Ramblers and the Open Spaces Society, Ted was a tenacious campaigner for rights of way and the bane of landowners, Highway Authorities and Government Inspectors.

I knew Ted since 2001 when I first became an Area Footpath Secretary. He lived in Hurstpierpoint and was a Local Footpath Secretary for multiple parishes in both East and West Sussex. He was a great help and support to me as and never criticised my lack of experience or knowledge. Despite a career (or maybe because of) in banking he had no interest in IT, and would hand-write long letters of objection to unnecessary diversion proposals or planning applications and dutifully post them. It must have taken him ages. And he would trek out to join me on site visits, both in his allocated parishes and others further away in his capacity as an Open Spaces Local Correspondent. We sat through four public inquiries together, including my second ever in Rotherfield where his combative approach to the applicant and their legal team alarmed me to the point of nudging him under the table. However, his disarming apologies to me never failed to make me laugh, as he would always laugh at himself.

Ted's local achievements included claiming Bullfinch Lane in Hurstpierpoint and the Droveaway in Albourne. In East Sussex he won Streat 34 and 35 at Streat Place, and of course he helped oppose or re-negotiate many diversion proposals across both counties. He also worked with the Monday Group in West Sussex, building stiles etc for installation on local paths.

Ted's other passion was tennis which he continued to play into his eighties. If we were out on site visits or public inquiries he would often hurry away afterwards as he had a match booked. I believe he also helped manage his club, doubtless all in longhand as well.

Ted's passing leaves a void in Sussex Ramblers that will be hard to fill. Volunteers of his calibre are hard to find and he will be sorely missed. Our condolences go to his wife Eileen and family.

Malcolm McDonnell with input from Les Campbell

We Do Need Your Help!

In common with a lot of charitable organisations that are run at grass roots level by volunteers, we have, for a number of years, been struggling to convince members that being a part of the Sussex Area administration team is a worthwhile and fulfilling task to undertake. It has to be presumed that as people have actually decided to join the Ramblers in the first place they must have some interest in rights of way, the countryside, wildlife and all the other factors that make rambling an enjoyable pastime. How much more satisfying would it be therefore to actually have some sort of input into ensuring that all the things that we may take for granted are still there for our grandchildren to enjoy in the coming decades. None of the tasks that we ask people to take on are particularly onerous, and should they ever incline that way there is always a team of experienced folk around to help out with a wealth of experience.

For some people the posts that we need to fill may well be an extension of the sort of job that they did whilst a part of the 'world of work', so it occasionally means that a new incumbent may well bring something different to the role, this is never a bad thing.

Currently the posts that we would like to see volunteers coming forward to fill are those of Secretary, West Sussex Footpath Officer, Communications Officer and Minutes Secretary. If you are even the slightest bit interested please get in touch with our Chairman, Roger Abel chairman@sussexramblers.org.uk or myself secretary@sussexramblers.org.uk and we will be too pleased to provide further information and point you in the right direction.

Lionel Pringle

Revitalising the 1066 Country Walk

Unusually in these days of difficult to access Rights of Way a 30 mile path in East Sussex has been having a bit of a makeover.

The '1066 Country Walk', originally established in the early 1990s, is a relatively easy, low-level route through countryside that witnessed the Norman invasion. Starting at [Pevensey Castle](#) (though you can start in Rye), it passes [Herstmonceux Castle](#), the historic [1066 Battle Abbey and Battlefield](#), medieval [Winchelsea](#), ending in historic [Rye](#).



Much of the walk passes through the '[High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty](#)', a typical medieval landscape with rolling hills and valleys, atmospheric marshes, ancient woodland, historic towns, quaint villages, old churches, rustic farms, elegant estates, oast houses and windmills, and plenty of cosy pubs and cafés along the way.

Thanks to a grant of £160,000 secured from the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development by Rother District Council Cultural Development, the '1066 Country Walk' is undergoing a revamp and has new signage, information panels, benches and sculptures either in place or on the way.

The most significant part of this upgrade is what will eventually be a series of ten [sculptures](#) along the route, so far five of them have been installed. They have been created by local artist Keith Pettit

and are inspired by the Bayeux Tapestry and the heritage of 1066 Country. Probably the

most eye-catching of the five is the wooden henge with six carved monoliths, which has been planted out with new Hawthorn trees and represents the trees featured on the Bayeux Tapestry.

It is anticipated that by the end of the year all of the sculptures, information panels and benches will be in place. A guide to walking the '1066 Country Walk' can be found at [this location](#).



Now Open

Each month we highlight the work of our county councils in improving the rights of way network. The idea is to bring to your attention routes that were once difficult to use and which are now open. After all, there is not much point in the council's working on paths if they do not then get used! It is easy for paths to fall into a cycle where they are difficult to use, so no one uses them, so they become more overgrown and difficult to use, and so on. You can help break that cycle by using the routes which have been highlighted.

It has been decided that as this information is of interest to all walkers, Ramblers members or not, it should be readily available to more than just our members. As a result you will now find the current information available by clicking on the 'Now Open' tab on the [Sussex Rambler](#) website.

Do You Like to Walk Without a Leader?

The Ramblers has a web site at <https://www.ramblers.org.uk/go-walking/find-a-walk-or-route.aspx> which shows you hundreds of walks across Sussex. If you have not already done so, you need to register to get access to the site, go to <https://www.ramblers.org.uk/register.aspx> to do so. This site lets you choose routes by area, effort, distance, suitability, facilities and a number of other factors relevant to an enjoyable walking experience. Please check out Ramblers current Coronavirus advice before venturing out, go to <https://www.ramblers.org.uk/volunteer-zone/coronavirus.aspx>

Would You Like to Walk With a Group?

Almost every day Ramblers groups lead walks in Sussex. You can join them. Find led walks at <https://www.ramblers.org.uk/go-walking/find-a-walk-or-route.aspx> Non-members are welcome on many walks but are expected to join after coming on a few walks.

Whether you are walking alone, with a group or friends and family we strongly recommend reading the current guidelines at <https://www.ramblers.org.uk/volunteer->

[zone/coronavirus.aspx](#) which have been put together in line with the latest government guidance.

Always be considerate and be sensitive to rural communities if considering travelling further from home to walk. Make sure to follow the Countryside Code. <https://www.sussexramblers.org.uk/cc2021.pdf>

Path Problems - Don't Keep Them to Your Self

Should you find a path that has disappeared because of the growth of crops, or that there is some other issue with please let the council's rights of way team know about it. Please don't leave it to someone else! Report it. The more people report a problem the more likely it is to be fixed, take a picture if you can. An easy way to report a problem is by way of local authority websites:

West Sussex at <https://www.westsussex.gov.uk/land-waste-and-housing/public-paths-and-the-countryside/public-rights-of-way/report-a-problem-with-a-right-of-way/>

East Sussex at <https://row.eastsussex.gov.uk/standardmap.aspx> you will need to set up an account to report a problem.

Brighton and Hove at <https://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/report-problem-public-right-way>

BE AWARE: Local council's resources' are currently stretched and it is possible some staff may still be working from home. In this situation processing of problems with rights of way, footpaths and other matters could be limited.

About this Newsletter

We endeavour to put this newsletter out monthly at the beginning of each month, with the exception of January when the Annual Report takes its place. Please feel free to send in your contributions, anything of interest to walkers in Sussex, or generally is welcome. Send your contributions comms@sussexramblers.org.uk

Our Website

Remember our website at <https://www.sussexramblers.org.uk/> is a source for the most up to date information.