

# RAMBLING ON AND ON AND ON.....

THE HISTORY, LIFE AND TIMES OF THE WEST ESSEX GROUP  
OF THE RAMBLERS' ASSOCIATION, 1970 – 2010

By ERIC BARKER

## INTRODUCTION

Observe the title which may be interpreted in two different ways:- the description of what the group has accomplished during its first 40 years and the writings of the above whose efforts have failed to maintain the interest of readers. My aim is to concentrate on the former, minimise the latter and in that connection, the committee has emphasised that the account is not to be about my personal story. I respect that concern. However, human nature being what it is, if an incident worth relating has occurred when I have been present, the description may mention "the author". The word "I" will not be used again.

This being composed in three instalments, the second and concluding sections will accompany the programme and WEP, for the months of August to November, 2010 and December 2010 to March 2011, respectively. Acknowledgements will be listed at the end of the narrative.

On the basis that although what follows cannot possibly satisfy everyone all the time, hopefully it will please the majority of members some of the time.....

## 40 YEARS AGO

1970, the commencement of a new decade following the "Swinging Sixties", year of a General Election. The Conservative Party regained power, Edward Heath became Prime Minister and "The Common Market" was a political phrase. Elsewhere, the Glastonbury Festival started, John Mills secured an Oscar award for his part in the film "Ryan's Daughter". Dana won the Eurovision Song Contest for Ireland singing "All Kinds of Everything" when that event was eagerly awaited on a colour television set still somewhat grainy. In sport, Henry Cooper remained undisputed British Heavyweight Boxing champion, while Tony Jacklin won the United States Open Golf Championship. Unfortunately, England failed to retain the football World Cup in Mexico and the apartheid situation prevented the South African cricket team from travelling to England to pit their considerable skills in the Test Match arena.

However, another eye-catching issue captured the attention of the country, involving the forthcoming conversion of the money system. Pockets, purses and wallets of the population contained a mixture of decimal coins and sterling notes, the new 50p coin for instance being in parallel use with the brown-coloured ten shilling note. Together with the sixpence and half-crown, these three words would soon disappear from every day language, decimal currency being introduced in its entirety in the middle of February, 1971.

## IN THE BEGINNING

One wonders whether any of those events concerned one Ken Knowles in a letter typed to Fred Matthews on 9<sup>th</sup> March, 1970 from an address in Woodford Green, bidding Fred in no uncertain terms, quote:- "would you please come here at about 8 pm on Monday next 16<sup>th</sup> March 1970?" The letter included the Ramblers' Association's need to form a local group, N.W.London and the Roding was suggested. Nominations were required for the jobs of Chairman, Treasurer, Secretary and Committee. R.A. members would be notified from Head Office, Ken had written to those addresses he knew. There were others and all were welcome to attend. Mention was made of the necessity to clear paths and commence waymarking and signposting. A public meeting had been arranged at the Woodford Parish Church Memorial Hall, South Woodford for Thursday, 30<sup>th</sup> April in the evening. The last sentence quote:- "I hope you share my enthusiasm to be actively engaged in it", would surely leave Fred in no doubt as to the writer's intentions.....

Who was Ken Knowles? Under what circumstances did he know Fred? A visit to his house, a turning off the High Road opposite the Horse and Well public house in February, 2009 proved fruitless:- nobody answered the door! A random call by the author at a bungalow opposite with a car on the forecourt produced a result. Yes, the person knew Ken, in fact by coincidence she used to live next door! He had passed away about five years previously. No, there was no particular knowledge regarding any family. He had a son but his whereabouts were unknown. However, a casual conversation soon afterwards

on a group walk with a senior member of both the West Essex and local HF. Groups revealed Ken had left the latter organisation some time before 1970. Was that his motivation in wishing to start a new group.....?

Whatever the circumstances, the public meeting took place on the said date, although one current member who was present noted in his diary that it was held at the South Woodford library opposite the church. (He also mentioned the weather as being unsettled.) Thank you, Roger! The meeting was chaired by William Addison in his capacity of Friends of Epping Forest. V. Moorcroft and C. Hall attended as representatives of the Ramblers' Association R.A. South. Those present were invited to record their name, address and telephone number on sheets of A4 ruled paper, with an indication in the end column of current R.A. membership or otherwise. The 114 present were almost equally divided between each category. Current active members Roger Gibbs, Joan Hampton, John and Pat Juchau and Ann Sansom were listed together with Vic Warren, now an honorary member. Eric Cropper and Harold Lawrence also attended and became long-standing active members but have since sadly passed away. Many appeared to have travelled long distances, perhaps paying the fare by using the mixture of sterling money and decimal currency as mentioned....

So it came to pass that on 16<sup>th</sup> September, 1970, the Southern Area of the Ramblers' Association prepared an agenda for a meeting at the Buckhurst Hill Community Association on Wednesday, 14<sup>th</sup> October, 1970 for the inaugural setting up of the group to be called "West Essex". A news letter prepared by Freddie Matthews accompanied the above. Each are reproduced. Note the minimum subscription of 4 shillings per annum, 20p in new money! The telephone number beside the details in the news letter is that of Ken Knowles. The group was already active, survey rambles and footpath clearances having been implemented since the public meeting. It appears evident that use was made of the Central Line between Epping and Ongar.

Barclays Bank Limited were appointed bankers on the same day, 14<sup>th</sup> October 1970. A document shows K. R. Knowles, Chairman, H. F. Matthews, Secretary and Mary Kathleen Thorne, Treasurer, as appointed officers with each of their signatures appended.

Eric Cropper, Harold Lawrence and Mr. J. Redshaw became committee members with Mr. P. Gould as auditor. All appointments were made on a caretaker basis until the first Annual General Meeting to be held in the spring of 1971.

The West Essex group was up and running.....

THE RAMBLERS' ASSOCIATION  
(SOUTHERN AREA)  
Proposed WEST ESSEX GROUP

*The INAUGURAL MEETING will be held at 8 p.m. on WEDNESDAY, 14<sup>th</sup> October, 1970, at Buckhurst Hill Community Association, Bedford House, Westbury Road, Buckhurst Hill, Essex.*

'Glen View'  
London Road  
Abridge, Essex

FREDDIE MATTHEWS

*Secretary to ad hoc Committee*

01 849 3350

16<sup>th</sup> September 1970.

A G E N D A

1. To Agree the Constitution.
2. To appoint Officers, Committee and Auditor.
3. Treasurer's Report.
4. Programme for 1971.
5. Any other business.

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*Westbury Road crosses Palmerston Road which runs from opposite St. John's Church, High Road, to Buckhurst Hill Underground Station.*

WEST ESSEX GROUP RAMBLERS' ASSOCIATION

NEWS LETTER

*This is to welcome members who have joined the Group, particularly those who have included donations with their subscriptions and to announce our programme for the remainder of the year. Also to give details of our activities to prospective members and advise them that our minimum subscription is 4/- per annum to the Group, but they must be members of the R.A.*

*We have so far carried out clearances on the second Sunday of the month in the Lambourne/Abridge area. We now propose in addition, to carry out a survey/ramble on the third Sunday. The details are:-*

*Sunday 20<sup>th</sup> September. Survey/Ramble – Abridge/Passingford bridge.  
Meet Blue Boar, Abridge, 10.30 a.m.*

*Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> October. Footpath Clearance. For details ring  
504 9832*

*Sunday 18<sup>th</sup> October. Survey/Ramble – Abridge/Stapleford.  
Meet Blue Boar, Abridge 10.30 a.m.  
(Bus from Debden L.T. dep. 10.12 a.m.)  
Return from Ongar Station.*

*Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> November. Footpath Clearance. For details ring  
504 9832*

*Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> November. Survey/Ramble – Epping/Ongar  
Meet Epping Station 10.30 a.m.*

*Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> December. Footpath Clearance. For details ring  
504 9832*

INAUGURAL MEETING

*A meeting to inaugurate our West Essex Group is to be held on Wednesday, 14<sup>th</sup> October, 1970, at 8 p.m. at Buckhurst Hill Community Association, Bedford House, Westbury Road, Buckhurst Hill, Essex.*

*Nominations for Officers and Committee are required and should be seconded.*

*We hope you will be able to attend some of the above events and also the Inaugural Meeting at which we would welcome your comments and any suggestions for the 1971 programme.*

*FREDDIE MATTHEWS*

*Secretary to ad hoc Committee*

*'Glen View'  
London Road,  
Abridge, Essex  
01 849 3350*

*16<sup>th</sup> September 1970*

## EARLY YEARS

Fred issued the group's first newsletter in January, 1971, summing up the impressive enthusiasm of those involved during eight days of footpath clearance work in the countryside on the second Sunday of each month since April, 1970. The goodwill of the landowners concerned had been appreciated. Similar programmes for the first half of 1971 would again be under the direction of Ken Knowles. Surveys and rambles would take place on the third and fourth Sundays respectively. Each survey/ramble would cover approximately 12 miles quote: '10.30 a.m. – 5 p.m., packed lunch, stout shoes etc.' Grange Hill, Epping, North Weald and Ongar were the destinations for the surveys, Abridge to Ongar, Nazeing to Theydon Bois and Epping to Ongar would be the routes for the rambles led in turn by H. F. Matthews, J. Redshaw and J. Stuart.

The first Annual General Meeting of the group took place on Wednesday, 17th March, 1971 at Bedford House, Buckhurst Hill. Fred's report as secretary acknowledged chairman Ken Knowles' footpath clearance work with his volunteers, Feathered Lane in the parish of Lambourne was noted as a prime example of improvement. Membership totalled just over 60. The aforementioned Vic Moorcroft, R.A. Southern Area Secretary, addressed the meeting.

Twelve months later, an undated report from Fred began quote:- "Welcome 1972 (programme up to the end of June overleaf)". Essex County had responded to a questionnaire resulting in the replacement of two footbridges in the West Essex area. The County Council had introduced a waymarking system of painted arrows on trees. It was hoped the group would benefit from this shortly. A Mr. Horne from the County Council, would be attending the Community Centre at Buckhurst Hill on Wednesday, 16<sup>th</sup> February, 72 to give a talk on footpath matters. The annual General Meeting would be held at the same venue on Wednesday, 22<sup>nd</sup> March. Members were urged to ensure a full attendance for these two meetings. The half-year programme listed six Saturday dates allocated for footpath clearance. Six half-day Sunday afternoon rambles and a similar number of all-day outings noted in chronological order to enable members to mark up their diaries. These would start at Abridge (Blue Boar), Epping (station), North Weald and Ongar (Budworth Hall Car Park.) That for Sunday, 30<sup>th</sup> January would be a joint walk with the Holiday Fellowship.

It was regretted at the A.G.M. that Mrs. Thorne had to stand down as Treasurer after only a very short time in office. However, the group was fortunate that John Standon had taken over.

A group footpath week took place in September, 1972. Fred subsequently typed some notes with the information that about 40 ramblers had attended on the route of the forthcoming M11 Motorway (he felt sad regarding the ultimate loss of a walking area). A similar number had rambled on the following afternoon. The Wednesday evening slide show was well supported. On Saturday, 16/9, a footpath clearance day had taken place in the vicinity of Ongar. 80 people had arrived for the Ongar Walks Day, the longest distance proving the most popular. (this event would be staged annually for many years.) Fred drew attention to quote:- "the quaint single track branch line (now wonderfully reprieved)" being the Epping to Ongar Central Line service which led directly to footpaths at the latter village.

Len Alcott's leadership on the first day became an early indication of the versatility of a member who would serve the group in so many areas for the next 23 years.

THE RAMBLERS' ASSOCIATION

WEST ESSEX FOOTPATH WEEK – 9<sup>TH</sup> – 17<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER

We invite YOU to join in the following:-

SATURDAY  
9<sup>th</sup> SEPTEMBER                      *Last chance to view the route of the M11 in peace. An afternoon walk with the Holiday Fellowship Eastern Section, from the entrance to Ashton Playing Fields, High Road, Woodford Bridge to Abridge. 2.30 p.m. Leader Len Alcott.*

SUNDAY  
10<sup>th</sup> SEPTEMBER                      *Afternoon walk round Abridge. Meet outside the Blue Boar 2.15 p.m. Leader Fred Matthews, distance 7 miles.*

WEDNESDAY  
13<sup>th</sup> SEPTEMBER                      *WEST ESSEX FOOTPATH EVENING*  
*For anyone who likes a country walk, film slides on local and other footpaths. Also a talk on general footpath matters plus discussions etc. Speakers include David Sharp of the Ramblers' Association.*  
*8 p.m. at the Hall, Bedford House, Westbury Road, (Off Palmerston Road, Buckhurst Hill, 5 minutes from the L.T. station.)*

SUNDAY  
17<sup>th</sup> SEPTEMBER                      *WEST ESSEX DAY – THE ONGAR WALKS DAY*  
*The day for all walkers and friends to visit Ongar. We have recently published a footpath guide 'Walking with the West Essex' and five of these are round walks from Ongar. The distances of these walks are 6 ½, 10 ½, 12, 12 and 14 ½ miles and we will be providing leaders to accompany you on the walks from Budworth Hall Car Park, Ongar, Starting at 10.30 a.m. for the longer walks and 2 p.m. for the 6 ½ mile walk. If you would like further details of these walks, copies of the guide are available at branches of Smiths and other local bookshops at 25p. On completion of the walks we hope to have a short get together around 5 p.m.*  
*THE WALKING EVENT OF THE YEAR*

*Looking forward to seeing you during West Essex Footpath Week.*

*Something for everyone who walks, be it a stroll after lunch or an all day country outing.*

*Fred Matthews  
Hon. Secretary West Essex Group  
Glen View.  
London Road,  
ABRIDGE,  
Essex.*

August 1972

The second year of accounts were meticulously hand-prepared by the Hon. Auditor. The turnover is naturally modest compared to the present day activities but the group remained small in numbers. The annual subscription totalling £10.60 equates to 53 members at the rate of 20p (4/- in old money!)

THE WEST ESSEX GROUP OF THE RAMBLERS ASSOCIATION (SOUTHERN AREA)							
Income and Expenditure Account							
for the year ended 30th September 1972							
1971	Expenditure			1971	Income		
£	£	p	£	£	p	£	p
5	Stationery	30	12			Annual Subscriptions	10 60
4	Postages	60				Donations Received:-	
1	Hire of Rooms	90	-			- Edith May Trust	50.00
3	Purchase of Tools	-	-	14	5	- Others	4.35
						Grant - R.A. (Southern Area)	- -
13							
	Surplus of Income	1.80					
18	over Expenditure	63.15					
£31		£64.95	£31				64.95
Balance Sheet as at 30th September 1972							
£	Liabilities			£	Assets		
£	£	p	£	£	p	£	p
	Capital Account			21	Cash at Bank		
	Balance as at 1.10.71			17.49	Cash in Hand		
18	Add Surplus 1971/1972			63.15	1.80		
				80.64			
3	Sundry Creditor			3.24			
£21				£83.88	£21	£83.88	
<p>This is to certify that the above accounts are in accordance with the books, bank statements and vouchers as presented to me.</p> <p>9.1.73</p> <p>P.M. Gould Hon. Auditor</p>							

A newsletter from Fred dated 8<sup>th</sup> March, 1973 mentioned a "Welcome to Spring in West Essex" day, arranged for Sunday, 29<sup>th</sup> April, 73 on similar lines to that of the previous September. The afternoon would finish for all groups at Budworth Hall, Ongar for tea.

A separate earlier sheet lists dates from end January to end May, 73, a mixture of surveys and rambles at weekends. In addition, on Easter Monday, 23<sup>rd</sup> April, Gerald Zierler would lead a walk from

Theydon Bois station and Thursday, 2<sup>nd</sup> May, the "Blue Boar", Abridge was the starting point for an evening ramble with Fred in charge.

A Footpath and Countryside week took place in September, 73 to encourage members of the public to participate in local walks on 9 consecutive days. This was entitled "At Home in West Essex". Two walks were available on day 1, Saturday, 8<sup>th</sup>:- an all-day ramble from Waltham Abbey led by Fred and an afternoon stroll from the Napier Arms, South Woodford under the leadership of Harold Lawrence. Similarly on day 2, Mrs. D. Baker was the leader from Grange Hill while Fred organised a p.m. outing from Abridge. On the following 6 days, rambles started from North Weald, Ongar, Loughton, Theydon Bois, Epping and Harlow led by Rosemary Pegrum, Mrs. D. Baker, Fred, John Standon and Rosemary Pegrum and Fred again respectively. The final day, Sunday, 16<sup>th</sup> September, Ongar was the meeting place for Ongar Walks Day again. Three years on from its formation, the group's activities were gradually expanding .....

However, during 1974 significant changes took place in administration and organisation. Ken Knowles desired to stand down as Chairman, Len Alcott became a member of the committee and in November of that year a 4-monthly programme was introduced, organised by Gerald Zierler. The latter was appointed Chairman and in addition became Rambles Secretary. Fred's annual report for 1974/75 acknowledged the work carried out by Ken Knowles in helping to form the group and was pleased to note that Gerald Zierler was assisted in his new role by being able to call on over 20 walk leaders. This enabled rambles to take place on a mid-week basis as well as on Saturdays and Sundays.

The report included many different aspects of the group:- A coach outing took place during the summer of 1974 to the South Downs, organised by Reg Adsett on behalf of the Hassocks Field Path Society. This included a visit to Clayton Mills. (The 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary took place on 5<sup>th</sup> July, 1998, the final annual ramble led by Reg, again visiting "Jill Windmill". (The South Downs has become the location of the first coach ramble each year on Easter Monday in recent times.)

Peter Harding's work as Publicity Officer involved his contacting local libraries. Together with a visit on a ramble by Tony Parker, footpath secretary of the R.A. Southern Area and Les Wilson of the Evening News, the comments of the former and an article in the paper had resulted in the group becoming more widely known.

R.A. subscriptions had to be raised to £2 single and £2.50 joint. Film shows of the South Downs Way and Pennine Way had been enjoyed and footpath clearances and bridge building continued. The entire walk from Pepper's Green was now open, together with the green lane from Coleman's farm near Toothill.

Map reading rambles had proved popular and a number of exhibitions had been held. Len Alcott was thanked for his poster work in that connection, as were members who took part on the assembling and manning on the day. Parish walks were becoming a feature of the area, with either parish councils or local amenity societies. These covered Lambourne, Theydon Bois, Epping and Stapleford Abbots.

Fred felt it had been an excellent year .....

Val Weatherley contacted the author regarding an item which had appeared in the Essex Area Update. Ann McLaren, a member of the Chelmer and Blackwater group, was requesting information relating to the early years of Area. He was able to forward some programmes detailing the different routes traversed during the Essex "100", an annual 100 mile event, comprising 9 consecutive days of linear walking across that county's countryside. Could Ann reciprocate by providing the author with recollections of her walking experiences with the West Essex group? The following article records an interesting description of a particular year.

Group members who participated in the above event over the years will recall Ann, married to Norman Skinner before his sad passing, as a then active member. The "100" became a prominent feature in the summer programme of all groups from 1986 until 2007, together with a mini half-day ramble of about 45 miles organised by Ann in the latter years.

### **My memories of West Essex from 1975**

*I have been asked to put down in writing what I can remember about West Essex from 1975 when I was a member. In those far off days I was a young mum living in Doddinghurst. 1975 was a long forgotten age before the computer had come into every day use and Ramblers Association members who joined under the Rucksack Logo paid their money and got a membership card. This enabled them to walk free of charge*

*with any group they chose and become a full member of as many groups as they saw fit. Because of my free time and other work-based commitments I chose just two groups – West Essex a walking Area I grew up in and still to this day love to walk in and Brentwood in whose catchment Area I was currently living. Life was fairly simple I had every Wednesday off from Brentwood Teacher Training College and could fit in necessary studies in the evening after my children had gone to sleep. So once a fortnight I drove over to places like Abridge, Passingford Bridge, Waltham Abbey or Epping Forest for an all day walk.*

*West Essex in those days held a midweek walk every week but alternated the days between Wednesdays and Thursdays week and week about. This enabled people to attend on the days when they were free. How I enjoyed my walks, most of the time over very rough fields, through broken stiles and round rotten bridges. A footpath sign was in many places unheard of and yellow arrows a symbol quite alien to Essex Countryside. If you were leading you had a job as you had no confirmation of where the path left the road and there were no previously walked smooth paths as were beginning to come in, in nearby Kent. My most favourite leader was Len Alcott. He never minded a challenge and the old 2 ½ inch blue maps were certainly that. If we ended up on the wrong side of the brook or river because of their failings he would laugh and then encourage us to either wade through or climb along and over hastily constructed home made bridges that no health and safety officer would give field room to today. Laughter was common as was the need for plasters. But we had fun!*

*Walking then was a challenge, blocked footpaths and getting lost often meant I was late collecting my girls after school from their long suffering Grandparent. But it was great. I am sorry computers later limited members to full membership of just one Group. Progress comes with a price so they say. However the good thing is Ramblers exists two Logos later in a very highly polished form but I do not think today's ramblers could have more fun and more of a challenge than we achieved in the mid 1970s.*

The minutes of a committee meeting held at the beginning of March, 1976, indicated that 63 walks from 23 starting places in Essex under the guidance of 20 leaders had taken place. Twentytwo short walks had been organised in addition. The period covered was unclear but even over 12 months the figures were impressive. Also noted:- 500 programmes consisting of 4 pages each could possibly be produced for £5! Volunteers were requested to help deliver these.

At the Annual General Meeting 12 months later, it was suggested that car rambles would start from Epping station due to the poor rail service which terminated at Ongar, with the idea that passengers offer a sum of 1p per mile as a contribution towards the cost of petrol. During the summer of that year, Patricia Norris led a group walk for the partially sighted. Nine had attended. In just over a year membership had increased dramatically from 239 to 361.

### A NEW ERA.

1978 heralded a year of significant activity and change within the group. Connie Dewey had produced the programmes using a stencil and duplicator. Although Phyllis Govey had made enquiries at a school to become involved in the latter task, this had proved unsuccessful. She therefore took on the duty herself. Some programmes were then delivered by hand to help defray the cost of postage.

At the Annual General Meeting, Gerald Zierler resigned as Chairman and Ramblers Secretary. Brian Anderson became acting-Chairman, while the latter office was filled by Len Alcott, a position he would occupy for the next 17 years. Peter Gould stood down as Auditor having left the district. Bill Govey, husband of Phyllis, became programme editor having been elected a member of the committee. He too would serve the group in a variety of different ways. Membership passed the 400 mark.

A protest meeting took place in connection with the construction of the M25 Motorway. Jean Jefcote of the West London R.A. group invited West Essex members to attend. Five of the group lent their support and a rally raised £200.

1978 marked the establishment of the Centenary Walk, a celebration of the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the passing of the Epping Forest Act of 1878. Promoted by the Corporation of London, the Act restored lost lands to the public and secured its future as a public open space. Together with the Friends of Epping Forest, a large number of group members have supported the event, walked annually since 1985. Always held on the third or fourth Sunday in September, the route of approximately 15 miles extends from Capel Road, near Manor Park station (the southern extremity of the forest) to Epping. Open to all interested in

the preservation of the area, verderers of the forest accompany those attending explaining the features along the way. Accessible points and times for joining and leaving are listed for the benefit of one's fitness and interest.

Harry Bitten led the walk from 1985 until 2005. His wife, Peggy, would attempt to record numbers (over 100 during the day on some occasions). Harry was another member who carried out much work for many years, as Countryside Officer until the Millennium. Mike Whiteley, Group Secretary, took over the role as leader in 2006. The event has been supported on occasions by the local Members of Parliament and very regularly until his demise in 2004, by Lord Murray of Epping Forest. Perhaps better known as Len Murray, General Secretary of the T.U.C., he completed the whole distance many times.

A short walk to Epping station takes one to the start of the Essex Way, an 81 mile route across the county to Harwich. Thus a route of nearly 100 miles extends from London E12 to the coast ready for a crossing by sea for the commencement of a continental adventure .....

At the turn of 1979 the group's walks were mentioned on Radio London. A donation was sent and acknowledged by the R.A. for an appeal relating to the Swanley section of the M25 Motorway in Kent. (Was this an objection to the route, or for the safe-guarding of the surrounding area?) At the Annual General Meeting it was decided that future walks programmes would include a full list of committee members; the following were elected:-

Chairman:	JOHN STANDON.	Secretary:	FRED MATTHEWS
Treasurer:	ALAN BRUNSDEN	Rambles Secretary:	LEN ALCOTT
Membership Secretary:	JOHN STANDON	Countryside:	PATRICIA NORRIS
Publicity:	PETER HARDING		
Committee:	BILL GOVEY (Programme and printing)		
	HAROLD LAWRENCE (Coach Outings), HENRY PRITCHETT (Projects)		
	RICHARD BENWELL (Auditor) STEVE BASON (Entertainments) and PAUL CROSLAND		

A social took place during the year. The Standons and the Goveys provided the refreshments assisted by the committee. Ida Webster was the caller for the dancing. A profit of £17 had resulted.

At a further meeting the subject of a third London airport had been noted, Willingale being the site in mind! The R.A. held a meeting on the August Bank Holiday Saturday regarding this. Patricia Norris contacted the Association passing on the view of general opposition. She was requested to make a formal objection to the proposal of the construction of a 9-hole golf course on Chingford Plain..... She thanked the committee for the receipt of a telegram on the occasion of her wedding. (A sign of the times 30 years ago!) and on Saturday, 15<sup>th</sup> June led a 20 mile ramble from Loughton station – a busy person.

The first committee meeting in the new decade set the cost for the annual coach ramble to Sussex later in the year at £3 per member. This event would take place in the Pulborough area. The Annual General Meeting in March, 1980 resulted in the committee remaining unchanged. Phyllis Govey became an additional member. There had been a surplus of £15 from the coach outing during the previous year. At 380, membership had decreased slightly.

Later meetings revealed a waiting list for the forthcoming coach ramble. Over 120 tickets had been sold for a social evening held at Theydon Bois Village Hall resulting in a profit of just over £37. This event, on Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> April celebrated the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the month in which the public meeting had been held to form an R.A. group. During the summer, a donation of £5 was forwarded to assist the campaign against the development of Stansted Airport and a letter of protest sent regarding the proposed closure of the Epping to Ongar rail line. (A reprieve was subsequently granted a few months later, but Blake Hall station closed in the autumn of 1981.)

A rummage through some torn papers stuck together at the end of an exercise book containing Fred's hand-written minutes of Annual General Meeting and committee meetings of the time, revealed a particular A4 sheet listing members' names who attended the A.G.M. on 9<sup>th</sup> March 1981. (37 in total.) The reverse side was obviously part of a four month programme of walks, and Fred had used the blank side at the above meeting. Identified with the aid of a perpetual calendar, as being that for 1980, and re-typed for clarity, the original document is a valuable asset for the archives and a prime example of what members received nearly 30 years ago. Interestingly, only the barest of detail for many of the outings were available.

(Not until the programme for April to July, 1993 when a walk code representing distance and pace did the general layout and format change.)

Some observations are nevertheless interesting with an eclectic mix of destinations and leaders. A meeting in June of that year agreed the length of walks to be between 10 and 12 miles unless otherwise stated.

10 Sun	10.00	Epping Stn with cars to HERTFORD HEATH	Fred Matthews
	10.20	Ongar Stn with cars to BEAUCHAMP RODING CHURCH Lunch at White Roding	Paul Crosland
13 Wed	11.0	TILLINGHAM CHURCH for Blackwater Estuary walk With afternoon bathing	Richard Benwell
16 Sat	10.30	CHINGFORD STN	Len Alcott
17 Sun	9.45	Epping Stn with cars to SAFFRON WALDEN A 14 mile walk via Radwinter	Peter Harding
	10.37	BRENTWOOD STN	Jack Chadwick
20 Wed	10.00	Epping Stn with cars to DANE END	Fred Matthews
23 Sat	10.00	EPPING STN	Joan Hampton
24 Sun	10.30	HERTFORD NORTH STN. A 12 mile walk via Woodall Park and Socombe Park. Dry lunch	Arthur Jacobs
25 Mon	10.00	Theydon Bois Stn with cars to ONGAR BHCP	Fred Matthews
28 Thu	10.00	Epping Stn with cars to SPELLBROOK area. Joint HF.	Les Wincott
30 Sat	9.45	Epping Stn with cars to BUNTINGFORD	Steve Boson
31 Sun	10.30	ONGAR WALKS DAY BHCP 4 Full Day & 2 ½ Day Walks	
	10.00-2.00	EPPING STN. Joint with the Epping Society	George Pomphilon
<u>SEPTEMBER</u>			
3 Wed	10.30	EPPING BLCP. Joint with HF	Bill Govey
6 Sat	10.00	Epping Stn with cars to SAWBRIDGEWORTH Town Car Pk	Don Goodwin
7 Sun	10.20	Ongar Stn with cars to BIRD'S GREEN. Lunch at The Star, Good Easter	Paul Crosland
	11.00	TOWER HILL STN. A walk along London's river	Gerald Zierler
11 Thu	10.15	Epping Stn with cars to BEAUCHAMP RODING	Frank Fuller
13 Sat	10.30	ROXWELL, Car Park	George Farmer
14 Sun	10.15	THEYDON BOIS STN. A 15 ½ mile walk with lunch At Havering	Robert Calder
	2.30	ABRIDGE Blue Boar	Richard Benwell
17 Wed	10.00	Epping Stn with Cars to RICKLING GREEN Lunch at Manuden	Fred Matthews
20 Sat	2.30	STAPLEFORD ABBOTTS, Post Office YHA WEEKEND AT ALFRISTON (see notes)	Fred Matthews
21 Sun	10.30	EPPING STN. Lunch at Bumbles Green	Dick Mountford
	10.35	CHORLEY WOOD (10.03 from Baker St Stn)	Rosemary Thwaites
25 Thu	10.30	LEYTON LT STN for a River Lea walk, finishing At Chingford. Joint with HF	Harry Pritchett
27 Sat	10.30	EPPING STN Dry Lunch	Bill Govey
28 Sun	10.15	NORTH WEALD STN. Lunch at Moreton	Dennis Lloyd
	10.30	EPPING STN for CLEARANCE PARTY	
	10.00-2.00	EPPING STN. Joint with The Epping Society	George Pomphilon
<u>OCTOBER</u>			
1 Wed	10.30	Theydon Bois Stn with cars to PASSINGFORD BRIDGE	John Phipps
4 Sat	10.30	EPPING BLCP. Dry Lunch	Bill Govey
5 Sun	10.30	Epping Stn with cars to WIDFORD CHURCH	Fred Matthews
	2.30	ABRIDGE, Blue Boar	Dick Mountford
9 Thu	10.30	CHINGFORD, Royal Forest Hotel. 5 ponds & 5 hills	Fred Matthews
	8.00	BEDFORD HOUSE Audio/Visual Evening	

Abbreviations must have been listed somewhere:- Ongar BHPC. (Budworth Hall Car Park) and Epping BLC.P. (Bakers Lane Car Park) Most meeting places relate to stations. However, in the absence of grid references, it was necessary perhaps to telephone the leader, via the membership Secretary, to ascertain the exact location in respect of country car parks, the ramble dated Saturday, 13<sup>th</sup> September being an example. Happily, one leader is still a very active walker today. The gradual development and detail of individual walks which members enjoy today was still a long way off. How many members entered the water on the afternoon of 13<sup>th</sup> August one wonders? Brrr.....

With these 8 weeks of a typical walks programme for members to reflect, most routes of which still feature with a particular emphasis on the "last Sunday of the month between 10 and 2", it would seem an appropriate moment to close the first part of the group's affairs .....

(TO BE CONTINUED)

Eric Barker continues the history, life and times of the West Essex R.A. group entitled RAMBLING ON AND ON AND ON.....as it celebrates 40 years during 2010. The final paragraph of the first instalment invited members to reflect on a particular ramble listed at the end of the August and September 1980 programme. It is an appropriate opportunity to expand further on details of an event which has taken place continuously for 38 years, and to salute the longevity of one of the leaders.

#### THE LAST SUNDAY OF THE MONTH

Ted Ellis wrote a letter to the Chairman of the Epping Society in November, 2001, on behalf of himself and his wife, Mavis, copy to the author in his capacity of Assistant Rambles Secretary at that time. Having led the walks since October 1981, he wished to give 12 months notice with his final outing being that in November of the following year, a completion of 21 years. (His knees were becoming less reliable over the distance of 10 to 12 miles!)

So it came to pass that this final ramble, his 280<sup>th</sup> with the Society and 236<sup>th</sup> as leader, took place on 24<sup>th</sup> November, 2002. Despite a rather dismal day, typical of the time of year, with low cloud and rain in the air, 59 walkers turned out, just short of the record of 64, to complete 8 miles within the time. The usual 20 minutes stop for drinks only, took place on this occasion at the Kings Head, North Weald. Len Banister, then Publicity Officer, had featured Ted and Mavis in His Walk of the Month series, with a write-up of their accomplishments being published in the local paper beforehand.

Having been greatly assisted and supported by many members, the author surprised the above during the drinks break with a presentation of suitable gifts and cards, a fitting conclusion to two dedicated organisers, leader and back-marker. Ted continued to lead short half-day walks for a short time subsequently.

George Pamphilon, the leader listed on page 10 of the narrative, had led the first Epping Society walk in August, 1972, Ted being his successor. However, it has not been possible to ascertain when the outings first appeared in the group programme, although they were listed in that for August to November, 1978.

The outings are currently led by a small pool of leaders and although the wording and description may have changed over the years, they continue to provide ramblers with the opportunity of a walk taken at a brisk pace with an early p.m. finish. Long may they continue.....

With the group ever expanding, the date is occasionally altered to accommodate other events. However, Rambles Secretaries and their assistants have been ever grateful for being able to fill a particular Sunday date automatically.

The Epping Society itself continues to maintain an interest in the development of the area, the monthly walks being just part of their activities.

#### FURTHER INTO THE 80's

After a short term in office, Alan Brunson resigned as Treasurer at the 1981 A.G.M. Richard Benwell was elected, his position as Auditor being filled by Frank Fuller. Already a leader, the latter became another enthusiastic member who would continue to serve in different areas for many years.

Over the Easter period of that year, a section of the Harcamlow Way was walked with 8 group members out of 11 completing the full route. Although 87 tickets had been sold for a social event, a loss of just over £4 had resulted on this occasion. The minutes of a committee meeting in November, 1981 revealed there was quote "enough paper and stencils to last 4 to 5 years, but not so many envelopes (possibly 2 years)".

Bill Govey and his helpers were thanked for their bridge building work at the A.G.M. in 1982, 42 bridges/stiles having been constructed during the previous year. A motion was carried by a large majority that no dogs would be allowed on rambles. Ticket sales for a forthcoming social at Theydon Bois Village Hall were disappointing as many members did not relish the prospect of walking home late at night from bus stops..... The cost of coach outings was fixed at £4.50 for the coming season. North Weald Parish Council had invited the group to appoint 2 representatives to attend their meetings. Eric Cropper expressed interest, he and Fred would attend. The Essex Way would be satisfactorily diverted, as a bypass was in the construction stage at High Ongar.

The position of Treasurer continued to be something of a hot seat as Richard Benwell declined to stand for re-election at the 1983 A.G.M. after just 2 years in office. Reg Rocket became his successor. Peter Spence was elected to committee, taking over the responsibilities of Publicity Officer from Peter Harding. He would serve the group in many capacities in the years to come, still being involved in working parties repairing paths, way-marks and stiles at present. The above meeting observed that footpath problems were taking up ever increasing time. Richard Benwell had visited the landowner with a copy of the relative definitive map regarding a particular problem in White Roding to discuss the situation. The dumping of rubbish and the need for a signpost in Epping Upland was similarly investigated. The group had responded to a notice from R. A. Head Office about concerns relating to the possibility of a military firing range at Luddesdown in Kent and a donation of £5 was forwarded. The Epping Forest Conservation Centre expressed gratitude for the group's assistance in staging an exhibition at their Open Day.

Significant changes in the group's future took place towards the end of 1983. At a committee meeting in November, John Standon wished to stand down as Chairman due to uncertain health, although he was willing to continue as Membership Secretary. Harry Bitten was co-opted as Countryside Officer. Sadly, John passed away suddenly over the Christmas period while on a walking holiday in the West Country. Peter Spence became Acting Chairman at the first meeting of 1984 with Phyllis Govey taking over the position of Membership Secretary. By a strange coincidence, Harry Bitten and Phyllis would continue to serve in their respective offices for the next 16 years until the end of the 1990's. The former was already involved in a countryside role with The Friends of Epping Forest. A letter in the archives reveals a particular problem concerning access to the Grange Farm Centre, north of Chigwell, with a special emphasis on the use of a footpath being a link between that village and Loughton.

1984 heralded a further change to the committee, Reg Rocket being unable to continue as Treasurer due to ill health. Gladys Williams was co-opted as his successor. Peter Spence organized publicity for the group's activities; 80 programmes were made available for distribution to libraries. Ann Sansom organized a Y.H.A. weekend at which two group members attended. A supper night at Theydon Bois Village Hall resulted in a profit of £13.50, 61 tickets having been sold. Ann Kidd was welcomed on to the committee during the year. She replaced Joyce Langley as Entertainments Officer. Fred had received correspondence from R. A. Head Office, the group being requested to consider ways in which the Association's Golden Jubilee anniversary might be celebrated in 1985. By contrast Essex Area was in the process of formation. Each of the above would prove to be pivotal. Both would intertwine during the next two years.

1985 became a busy year in many other directions. A publicity effort resulted in 97 enquiries, 17 members joining. Although reckoned to be a low percentage (?) the committee would persevere. Much discussion at that year's A.G.M. centred on the need to vigorously reject a proposition for Stansted becoming the third London airport. Members were urgently invited to express their opposition in writing. In the spring, a map-reading course attracted an attendance of 17. Meetings with Epping Forest District Council were still ongoing regarding the Grange Farm Centre. It was noted that ink was needed for the Gestetner!

Paul Crosland had completed footpath surveys at Magdalen Laver and part of Epping Upland. A Y.H.A. weekend had attracted 8 members. A plaque in memory of John Standon was finally erected on the Ladderstile. This stile, situated near the farm of the same name, provided access to Warren Wood from the High Road, south-west of Epping, adjacent to the point where the newly-opened M25 Motorway disappeared into a tunnel beneath the nearby cricket ground. The minutes of the last meeting in 1985 record interesting reading nearly 24 years on. It noted there was a need for a signpost at the path by the house at the rear of the Travellers Friend P.H. in Epping Long Green. Bill Govey had observed that the western end of this path required particular clearance, an area which has continued to cause many problems. As recently as 1<sup>st</sup> September 2009, a path was cleared in the area, part of the working party's brief under the direction of Frank Holzman (details in the relevant WEP, refer).

Returning to the 50<sup>th</sup> year of the Ramblers' Association's formation, this landmark would be celebrated nationally and the county of Essex and the West Essex group featured prominently. A linear walk through the counties of England took place. The group's participation covered two days from Blackmore to Epping through to Broxbourne, Hertfordshire, related further overleaf. Bill and Phyllis Govey acting as backmarkers. This round England walk triggered further enthusiasm, for towards the end of that year a County Walks Week meeting was suggested in which the group expressed interest. A decision

having been reached, the Essex 100 mile walk was created in 1986 (Already mentioned on page 7 of the story). Many group members would participate during the next 21 years, some completing the whole 9-day linear route, others walking on separate days. As an early Essex Area event, it captured further the interest, enthusiasm and organisation of Fred, together with like-minded committee members of other groups in the county. However, although featuring prominently in the West Essex programme, the annual "100" has just been part of the history for half its existence. Suffice to record the event became an enjoyable way of meeting members of other county groups .....

Three interesting linear walks were planned during 1985 featuring villages with unusual names, Len Alcott having produced possible routes for consideration. It is unclear from Fred's notes whether they were specifically organised with the R.A.'s 50<sup>th</sup> year landmark in mind. In ascending order of distance they are:-

Ugley to Nasty. Two villages situated between Stansted Mountfitchet/Rickling and Ware/Buntingford respectively. There is no indication, however, of the walk having taken place. Coincidentally a ramble is due to take place from Ugley on 1<sup>st</sup> July 2010!

Cold Christmas to Good Easter. This walk commences just east of Thundridge and finishes very close to the villages of Leaden Roding and Margaret Roding. Fred led the route on two days during 1986. Mike Whiteley devised a route in the same direction of some 40 miles as four circular walks, three outings taking place in 2007 with the final one led in September, 2008, postponed from March due to poor weather. No doubt many members will recall the walks. Interestingly, the first leg commenced on Good Friday ... Was it a good Easter and did it follow a cold Christmas ...!?

Messing to Mucking. The route, from an area near Kelvedon and Tiptree, progresses in a south-westerly direction to finish south of Stanford-le-Hope and is by far the longest of the three.

Len Alcott's diary of 1986 lists the following information:-

Fri, 28 <sup>th</sup> March	from Messing,	leader F. Matthews.	6 ramblers
Sat, 29 <sup>th</sup> March	from Heybridge,	leader R. Mills	17 ramblers
Sun, 30 <sup>th</sup> March	from E.Hanningfield,	leader N.Skinner	22 ramblers
Mon. 31 <sup>st</sup> March	from Thorndon Park,	leader B.Block	20 ramblers

The diaries record two walks on consecutive days in September, 1985 marked "Jubilee Walk". On Sunday, 15<sup>th</sup>, K. Ascott led 94 walkers from Blackmore. The following day there was an attendance of 61 from Epping BLCF. with L. Alcott as leader. There was no indication of the number of West Essex members who participated. Together with the Messing to Mucking outing, the numbers and leaders named appear consistent with the involvement of other groups in the county as already mentioned.

These diary entries provide an appropriate opportunity to introduce the writings of Len, a temporary digression from the 1980's.

#### THE DIARY OF A RAMBLES SECRETARY

The information above represents items gleaned from the second of three neatly-kept notebooks delivered for the archives by Corinna Penny, daughter of Len. One of the earliest leaders after the formation of the group, he recorded every mid-week, Saturday, Sunday and Bank Holiday ramble by day, date, starting place, leader and the number attending where known for almost 16 ½ years, the majority of his 17 year term in office. The first and last entries will surely revive venues and leaders for many members:-

Saturday,	3 <sup>rd</sup> March 1979	Brentwood Station	G. Farmer	
Sunday	4 <sup>th</sup> March 1979	Ongar Station	F. Matthews	15 attended
Thursday	8 <sup>th</sup> March 1979	Epping Station	F. Matthews	22 attended
Wednesday	26 <sup>th</sup> July 1995	Dane End	J. Edler (Joan)	
Saturday	29 <sup>th</sup> July 1995	Harlow Town Station	B. Speller	
Sunday	30 <sup>th</sup> July 1995	Elsenham Station	J. Pattenden	

Sadly, the last five months to December, 95 are headed but not ruled up, and recorded. Len resigned before the Annual General Meeting in the autumn and passed away before the end of that year.

## RETURN TO THE 80'S

Significant changes took place in the legislation of the local area with the abolition of the G.L.C. on 1<sup>st</sup> April 1986. A protest was made relating to boundary changes in Harlow. The Epping Forest Conservators would be taking over Warlies Park in Upshire and it was noted that Hainault Forest might be split between three local councils. There appeared to be much for Harry Bitten to keep an eye on. In the same month, an enquiry into the application of dog kennels in Sewardstone Road would be held.

Tickets for a supper evening on 12<sup>th</sup> April were priced at £2. A visit to the East Anglian Museum at Stowmarket took place on 16<sup>th</sup> July. A full coach load of supporters made the journey under the leadership of Len Alcott. The Forbidden Britain Campaign was launched. Planning controls on farming and forestry would be looked at. There was an aim to double the membership of the R.A. over the next 10 years .....

Twentysix members attended the Annual General Meeting in March. Membership totalled 435. Footpath surveys had been completed in Moreton and Bobbingworth and work was proceeding in Willingale and Little Laver. Over 240 people had walked during the day on Sunday 1<sup>st</sup> September, 1985 the occasion of the Centenary Walk with Harry Bitten leading for the first time!! Eleven candidates enrolled for the map-reading course in the spring, 6 took part on the training walk. Capitation of £189.35 was agreed after exchange of letters with the Area Treasurer.

A committee meeting later in the year revealed problems with the Gestetner, a hand machine being used as a replacement. Photographs of the plaque installed at the Ladder stile in memory of John Standon had been submitted to the South East Rambler magazine for publication, together with a list of the Group's activities. Unfortunately, the latter item was omitted.

At an early meeting in 1987, it had been noted that Frank Holzman had offered to assist Paul Crosland with footpath surveys in the Waltham Abbey area. A surprise party took place at Theydon Bois Village Hall in the middle of August to honour the 80<sup>th</sup> birthday of Don Goodwin. This event was organised by Bill and Phyllis Govey after a ramble lead by Len Alcott which attracted an attendance of 63. A regular leader into the early 1980's, Don was one of the founder members of the group.

Two particular members who both joined the group in the same year, 1988, would have a profound influence in due course, their commitment and enthusiasm benefitting the West Essex in totally contrasting ways. Each has recalled an incident during very early outings .....

**Feb. 1988**

### **THE WEST ESSEX GROUP OF THE RAMBLERS' ASSOCIATION.**

**SECRETARY:- Fred Matthews, Glen View, London Rd., Abridge, Essex. (Theydon Bois 3350).**

**MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY:- Phyllis Govey (Mrs), 35 Preston Rd., Leytonstone, e11 1NL**  
**(01 – 989 6851).**

***Welcome to the West Essex Group,***

***You will wish to know that most of our all-day walks start at about 10.00 – 10.30 and are about 10 – 12 miles and half-day walks, which start at 14.00 – 14.30, are of about 4 – 6 miles. We do have longer walks, but for these, distances are usually given in the programme. Generally, walks start from a station and return to the starting point for the benefit of members coming by car. Public Transport is scarce beyond Ongar, so on a number of walks we go by car from a station to a starting point further out in Essex. This gives us a wider range of walks and we are grateful to the car drivers who provide lifts to people coming by train and thus enable these walks to take place.***

***Stout shoes or boots and waterproofs should be brought and, on all-day walks, packed lunch should be carried. Where a 'dry lunch' is indicated in the programme, something to drink should also be carried. We usually stop near a 'pub' for lunch but not all 'pubs' provide food. When we do use 'pub' gardens for eating our own food, please do not take out thermos flasks, etc., as it is unfair to use the facilities of the 'pub' and not buy a drink, especially when we rely on the goodwill of the landlord for the use of such facilities.***

***As regards membership, if you decide that we offer the kind of walking that you like and that you wish to join The West Essex Group, please send your subscription and a completed MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION***

***form to the Ramblers' Association. We receive a grant from the Ramblers' Association in respect of members indicating a wish to join this Group by completing the slip below and sending it to Phyllis Govey Bearing in mind the work done on countryside conservation and footpath legislation, plus the size and variety of our programme and the Group's footpath maintenance activities, the R.A. subscription is a very modest one (for details, see enclosed Membership Application form).***

***Why not come out on one or two of our walks and then, when you find how enjoyable our walks are, join the Ramblers' Association and the Group.***

***Looking forward to meeting you.***

***Yours sincerely,***

***Fred Matthews.***

This composition represented the standard letter at that time, a synopsis of the group's rambles. A tear-off slip attached invited interested guests to become members, forwarding their details with the appropriate sum

Doreen Lodge was the recipient of one such letter in February, 1988, but is unable to recall whether it was handed to her by the leader of the day, or received a few days later by post.

After Harry Bitten stood down from the role of Countryside Officer at the Annual General Meeting in 1999, the post remained vacant for the following 12 months. Doreen then volunteered her services and remained for the next 5 years, putting in much time and effort at various meetings, examining plans in respect of local housing and the expansion of Stansted airport. Driving to group committee meetings from North Weald, she showed much patience towards Fred, collecting him from Abridge on many occasions after an illness resulted in his being unable to drive his own car. Visiting Fred at Glen view, she was able to take him on very short walks, keeping him in touch with local and group affairs.

A one time regular leader, Doreen does not currently attend group rambles very often, but remains in touch, while committed to keeping an eye on footpath problems, locally.

One wonders how many of these letters were handed out and posted with the results attained.

***I was a fairly new West Essex Rambler when I joined the Group (around 1988) for a walk in the Roding area. In those days the 'Working Party' had many improvements on their 'Waiting List' – Many of them to install bridges across ditches. At that time I was unaware of the hazards of climbing in and out of ditches so was quite surprised to see two rambles take a ladder from the roof of one of their cars and start walking in front of the leader, Frank Fuller. All was revealed when they came to the first ditch and placed the ladder conveniently for everyone to get across. They then left the ladder in a safe place so that on the return journey we were able to use it to re-cross the offending ditch. The rest of us complemented the owners of the ladder on their ingenuity and agreed that they had helped to make the walk more enjoyable.***

Yvonne Marshall it was who became one of the surprised party on this outing, a hilarious occasion surely, a unique situation in the history of thousands of rambles with the West Essex ....! Len Alcott's diary of 1988 reveals that on Thursday, 28<sup>th</sup> July., Frank Fuller was the leader from Aythorpe Roding. 16 attended. This would appear to be the walk which must have caused so much astonishment. The letter accompanying the incident cites Frank as being a favourite leader of Yvonne, a quote similarly endorsed by many members of a certain era.

The commitment of Yvonne involved converting the walks leaders' booking forms received from the Rambles Secretaries and Assistants of the time onto her computer, the first programme thus produced being that for August to November, 1997. Exactly 10 years later, the August to November 2007 programme became the final one typed at her residence, 31 issues.....

The aforementioned officers will recall a table in the back room, covered with an assortment of forms, hand-written notices and information, vital for the eventual understanding of a four-monthly programme put together in neat order. The hospitality of Yvonne's husband, John, an active member

himself in the 1990's when the once-a-week mid-week outing was upwards of 10 miles, contributed greatly to the cause.

Happily, Yvonne still walks regularly on the shorter rambles.

David Weekes succeeded Doreen Lodge as Countryside Officer at the beginning of 2006. Lesley Gillard took over the role of typing the walks programme for December 2007 to March 2008, with the format which is in current use.

Three coach rambles took place in 1988, the usual visit to Sussex at the end of June followed by an unspecified location with Bill Govey in charge in July. Ann Kidd was the leader for an outing to the North Downs at the beginning of October. A walk for the blind attracted 22 persons. The Annual General Meeting, formerly held in March, was convened for November in that year, the month in which it has remained since. The office of Chairman changed hands, Frank Holzman replacing Peter Spence after the latter's 5 year tenure. Having led his first walk for the group earlier in the year and assisted with footpath surveys 12 months before that, Frank's period as Chairman would span 19 years. The versatile nature of his roles over the next 20 years is a subject to be enlarged upon as the group's history progresses.

The committee for the final year of the 1980's consisted thus:-

Chairman:	FRANK HOLZMAN.	Secretary:	FRED MATTHEWS
Treasurer:	GLADYS WILLIAMS	Rambles Secretary:	LEN ALCOTT
Membership Secretary:	PHYLLIS GOVEY	Countryside:	HARRY BITTEN
Working Party:	BILL GOVEY	Coach Rambles:	ANN KIDD
Committee:	HAROLD LAWRENCE		

Derek Ford took charge of 17 people for a Y.H.A. Easter break holiday at the end of March, 1989. The late summer Bank Holiday saw Ann Kidd the leader of a 3-day coach ramble to the Usk Valley. The South Downs outing took place on 25<sup>th</sup> June and Len Alcott's diary indicates a mid-week Dawn Walk sometime in September, but date, time, venue, leader and numbers involved unfortunately unknown ...

The November 1989 to February, 1990 walks programme makes interesting reading 30 years on, the earliest complete one available in the archives. In a document of 4 sheets, 7 pages, neatly typed, the notes section included a suggestion that a car lift service might benefit certain members who were invited to contact Derek Ford if able to assist. Part of Frank Holzman's initial message as Chairman included quote:- "Come to the A.G.M. on the 15<sup>th</sup> November." Fred's annual report noted a successful year for the group with an increase in activity with regard to bridges, stiles and way-marking. A public enquiry was awaited on the subject of safer crossings over a major road in North Weald. Len Alcott welcomed 3 new names to his list of walks leaders:- Len Duffin, Bill Linnell and Peter Jacques.

Harry Bitten's countryside report dealt mainly with the threat of a scheme to develop Copped Hall and its estate into a leisure and heritage complex, a 250-bedroom hotel with hospitality and hosting facilities was a proposed package. Although a 10 to 15 year timescale might well be involved, many local relevant societies were currently urging the City of London to acquire the area, thus preventing an adverse effect on the environment of the surrounding countryside.

Phyllis Govey's report at the Annual General Meeting at the end of 1989 had included a reminder that members of other groups who wished to receive the West Essex programme into the 1990's were requested to forward £1 to her. 51 had taken advantage currently. Total membership stood at 613. Despite many who had assisted in hand-delivering programmes, the bill for postage during the year ending 30<sup>th</sup> September, 1989 had totalled £97 .....

David Samuel had answered a call to become Publicity Officer at the A.G.M. 12 months earlier, but Ted Ward became the incumbent as the decade of the 1990's beckoned. However, already a leader, David continued in that role regularly for nearly 20 years thereafter.

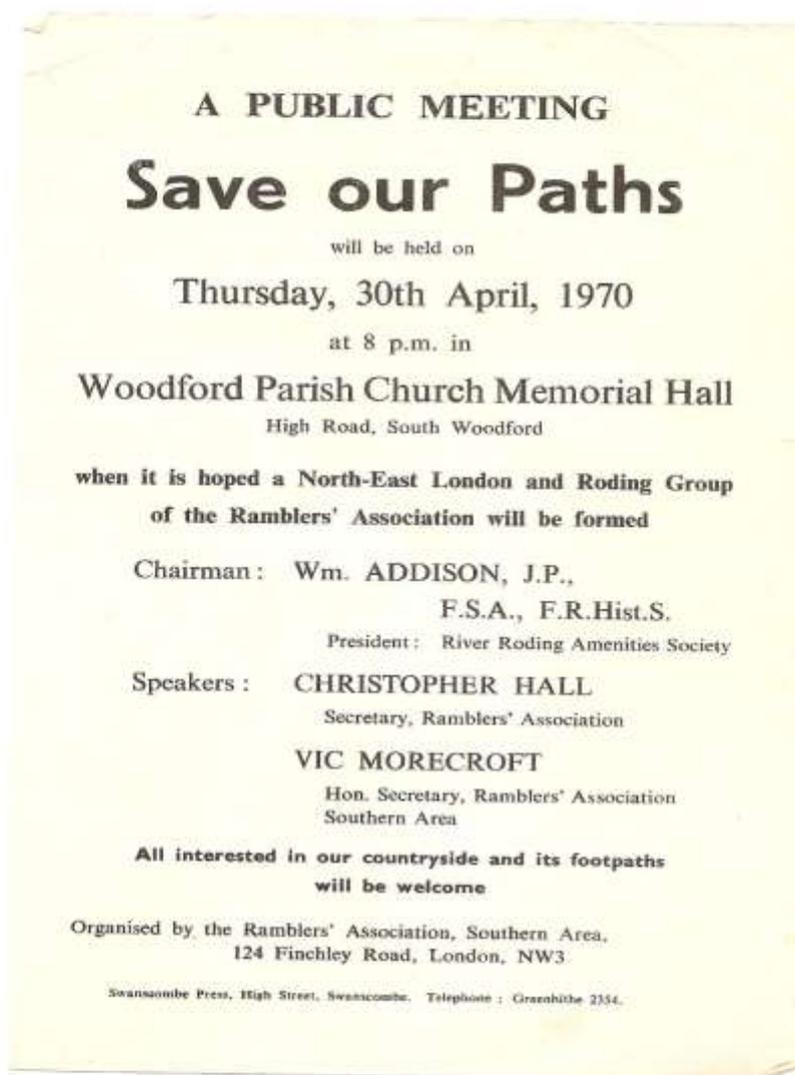
#### BOXING DAY RAMBLES

Interest has been expressed in the history of group walks on the above day. Len Alcott's notebooks reveal details from his very first year as Rambles Secretary. One J. Pinder led a half-day outing from the "Castle", Woodford Green and for the 2 years which followed, the 1980 ramble starting from the Whipps Cross area. The next year, the "Castle" was the meeting place again. Frances Staines had 10 in attendance, meeting at Theydon Bois in 1982, but no rambles took place for the next 3 years. The "Castle" became the

venue again in 1986 under the joint leadership of J. Watson and L. Qualiss(?). The final 3 years of the 1980's featured Chingford station as the meeting place with Corinna Penny (2) and Len Alcott in charge, 25 people attending the latter's walk in 1988.

Pinder, Watson and Quallis(?) do not appear as leaders at any other time of year. Corinna Penny led outings in other programmes occasionally. Frances Staines' first ramble as leader had, in fact, occurred 2 months earlier in 1982. A regular walker and stalwart supporter and leader for the group, she would continue in the latter role for some 20 years into the Millenium.

### **THE ULTIMATE AQUISION**



The author attended a group walk in the middle of March, 2010, which started at Hampstead Heath and struck up a casual conversation with a fellow Rambler during the lunch break in one of the cafes at Kenwood House. This person mentioned the first instalment of the history of the group, recently received, commenting on his own early participation. Names were exchanged:- Peter Harding was the person sitting opposite.

Had he any memorabilia, or would he be able to supply some recollections of those days of long ago? A deal was struck and meeting on a subsequent ramble, Peter revealed having located his copy of the original pamphlet received from the Ramblers' Association, inviting his presence at a Public Meeting to discuss the formation of a local group. Handed over, by arrangement before the commencement of an outing led by the author in May, the reproduction of this valuable document is the ultimate acquisition ....

In an accompanying letter, Peter mentions attending the wedding reception of Patricia Norris and Ron Andrews at Bedford House, Buckhurst Hill. Peter organised 2 Y.H.A. trips, one over the Easter holiday period in the Cotswolds, Duntisbourne Abbots, the other a weekend at Guestling, near Hastings.

The above chance encounter with its remarkable consequences appears the right moment to end the second instalment of the narrative. The "new look" of the 1990's will follow .....

The third instalment of the history, life and times of the West Essex R.A. group entitled RAMBLING ON AND ON AND ON .... BY Eric Barker introduces many innovations as the decade of the 1990's beckons and which continue to this day. The group would become ever more versatile in its efforts to encourage active participation in the attraction of the countryside.

#### THE ADOPT-A-PARISH SCHEME and "FINALLY FRANK."

The above scheme was introduced for discussion at the Annual General Meeting in November, 1989, with the object of conducting a survey of all rights-of-way in 21 parishes, which contained a total of about 1000 paths representing approximately 400 miles in the West Essex area. A meeting in May, 1990, revealed that Len Alcott had marked up every map for the relevant adopter. The results were entered into a computer by Gordon Ayres. Seven complete parishes had been surveyed to date.

A sub-committee was set up under the Chairmanship of Leslie Law with John Holness as Secretary. Alan Silwood, Harry Edler and Paul Crosland became members. The scheme required individuals or small groups to walk the paths adopted and to record problems by completing a survey form for each path. These forms were sent to the organiser of the group for onward transmission to the Parish Clerk of the District Councils Highways Department for action... A Rights-of-Way Act became a new law through an Act of Parliament during 1990. The group, therefore was already fulfilling an obligation by contacting members of the above department with footpath problems. Within six months of the setting up of the subcommittee, all 21 parishes had been adopted.

Inevitably, changes in personnel have taken place. However, despite vacancies occurring from time to time in different parishes, the scheme continues to prosper and for over 20 years vigilant reports from individual adopters assist in bringing to attention problems encountered.

Frank Holzman took over the task of Coordinator after the sad and sudden passing away of John Holness in May, 2002. Towards the end of the 1990s, Frank's notes as Chairman included a report in detail of the group's Working Party with the repairing and upgrading of footpaths. The working party met on the second Tuesday in every month in conjunction, until recently, with Epping Forest Country Care. These reports have become the concluding notes with the introduction of the WEP in April, 2002 under the heading of "Finally Frank". Some Thursdays are given over to "small jobs" and many members have displayed their talents and energy in sometimes inclement weather conditions. Those who are adopters and lead walks, occasionally use the opportunity to check their particular parish patch.

The programme for 1990 contained the usual mix of regular rambles with one of the notes section welcoming 4 new leaders:- Brenda Oakey, Derek Davies, Dennis Douglas and Bill Caldwell. The latter's initial outing took place in October from the Lee Valley Car Park, Waltham Abbey. Each would lead regularly for many years following. Paul Crosland was in charge for a Family Walks Day, a morning and afternoon outing from Budworth Hall Car Park, Ongar in June. Derek Ford organised a 4-day Easter break in Derbyshire. Two 3-day trips took place in May and August to Pulborough and Winchester respectively. Ann Kidd was the organiser/leader on each occasion.

On the social scene, a 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary country dance/supper took place at Theydon Bois village Hall on Saturday, 7<sup>th</sup> April. John Ingram was the M.C. Exactly 5 months later, Derek and Brenda Ford organised a quiz evening/ploughman's supper at the same venue. Bill and Phyllis Govey provided the catering with assistance from other members. 86 attended the former function which was deemed an outstanding success.

#### John Ingram

*When dad took early retirement in 1981 he said that all he wanted to do was walk and walk and walk, and so he did!! He was one of the founder members of Brentwood Ramblers but he also led for four other groups, namely Chelmer and Blackwater, Chelmsford, Ilford and of course West Essex. He would walk six days a week and he and mum went on walking holidays at least six times a year with all the various groups.*

*He kept meticulous diaries of every step he took and where he took it, keeping a running total of the mileage and in which district he was at the time, all in grid references and graphs. He also encouraged others to keep a Boot diary which many still do to this day. His most active year was 1990 when he logged 2569 miles and as if that wasn't enough, in his spare time he was a Caller at various Barn dances and many a happy evening was spent at Theydon Bois Village Hall with Dad leading West Essex members a merry dance (so to speak!) Sadly he died suddenly in 1996 whilst walking out a walk for one of his groups. We always said he would die with his boots on but perhaps not that soon. He is still sadly missed and his name is often brought up on many walk even now.*

The above, a tribute from one of his daughters, Dianne, and included in a letter for the archives, is self-explanatory. Ilford is the C.H.A. group of that area.

Dianne is currently an active member and Co-Chairman of the Brentwood Ramblers. She led walks for the West Essex group for some years from 1998 and very occasionally still attends outings.

#### THE CHRISTMAS LUNCH, 1990 ONWARDS

This event took place for the first time in 1990 at the "Dukes Head", Hatfield Broad Oak following a short morning ramble. The "Crown", Broxbourne and the "White Hart", Abridge were the venues for the next 2 years. From 1993 and for 5 years thereafter the "Maltsters Arms", Willingale, hosted some 80 members before closing its doors as a restaurant in 1999. The group "went local" for the following 5 years at the County Hotel, Oak Hill, South Woodford (twice), the Roebuck Hotel in Buckhurst Hill and Gilwell Scout Centre also on two occasions. During the second visit to Gilwell, in 2003, a presentation took place for Fred Matthews whose 80<sup>th</sup> birthday had occurred earlier in the year. The "Golden Fleece" Manor Park, opened its doors to the group in 2004. This location was particularly familiar to participants gathering for the start of the annual Centenary Walk each September in Capel Road nearby. The social room of Hornchurch Football Club provided the facilities in 2005 since when the Waltham Forest College in Walthamstow has acted as host. Festive Fare has varied greatly over the years. However, the college with its willing and professionally enthusiastic staff has genuinely welcomed the group in pleasant surroundings with the bar conveniently placed.....

Group members with one exception have led the walks beforehand. On the occasion of the visit to the football club at Hornchurch, actually located in nearby Upminster, Ron Lockhart was the person in charge. An opportunity is thus provided to recognise the one leader who has "guested" for the group consistently. Leading since 1997, Mill Green and Navestock Side in particular have featured in his list of walks on a regular basis.

Three members have attended every one of the 20 lunches to date:- Joan Edler, Yvonne Marshall and Joyce Norman.

Shortly before that first Christmas lunch the Annual General Meeting was held at the Hermon Hill Methodist Church, Wanstead. Gerald Bateman succeeded Gladys Williams as Treasurer who wished to stand down. Brenda Oakey became Minutes Secretary.

#### BOXING DAY OUTINGS IN THE 1990's

Chingford station continued to be the meeting place with Corinna Penny leading for the first four years. In 1991 and 1993 over 40 people attended. Paul Phipps and Jenny Rodwell organised a car pick-up at Theydon Bois station in 1994 for a meal at the "Black Bull", Fyfield, after which an afternoon ramble commenced at 2 pm. Paul was currently a diligent member of the Working Party. Jenny still walks with the group from time to time. Corinna returned to lead in 1995 from Chingford station. Originally advertised as the Ramblers' Association Christmas Walks Week, a change of wording to Ramblers Festival of Winter Walks celebrated the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of that organisation.

Francis Staines led the final four years of the decade, an eight mile event each time from Loughton station. In 1999, the Festival of Winter Walks was extended to include Millenium celebrations on Saturday 1<sup>st</sup> and Sunday 2<sup>nd</sup> January, 2000, dates which have remained since.

The notes section of an early programme in 1991 prepared by Frank Holzman included a heading:- Formation of a New Group. A meeting of the Essex Area Committee indicated the suggestion of another group to be organised, based on the London Boroughs of Redbridge and Waltham Forest with an existing member of the West Essex group to act as Secretary to the new one. Comments and applications were invited. The current membership totalled 625 and increased to 680 by September.

Derek Ford organised an Easter trip to Hartington, Derbyshire and a month later Jeff Maitland led a weekend at Bakewell in the same county. Ann Kidd was in charge for a coach outing to the Chilterns, Ivinghoe Beacon and the Grand Union canal, and was the leader and organiser for long weekends to Rogate in West Sussex and Sparsholt College in Hampshire in May and August, respectively.

Socially John Ingram was the caller again at a Barn Dance in April. On Friday, 11<sup>th</sup> October, following a morning walk from Theydon Bois station led by Bill Govey at which 68 people were present, a lunch followed in celebration for three of the senior members of the group, Bill himself (80), and Arthur Glidden and Len Masters, a year younger. Both events were held at the Village Hall in Theydon Bois. (Eighteen years later, another trio would celebrate similarly at Upshire, albeit at the age of three score years and ten.....)

Five weeks earlier, Arthur had been one of 10 members who had completed the Essex "100", the oldest on the walk. Fred Matthews' 1991 Annual Report noted quote:- "It shows that walking is good for you." Twentyeight members had been involved as adopters. Harry Bitten's Countryside report noted that plans had been submitted to build nearly 300 houses on the Royal Ordnance factory site at Waltham Abbey. Len Alcott's Rambles Secretary report indicated an average weekly attendance of 33 for the mid-week outings for the 12 months up to the end of September, 1991.

8.12.1991

THE THAMES WALK

DAY 1	Thames Barrier to Vauxhall	13 miles
DAY 2	Putney to Kingston	13 miles
DAY 3	Kingston to Chertsey	11 miles
DAY 4	Chertsey to Windsor	11 miles
DAY 5	Windsor to Marlow	13.5 miles
DAY 6	Marlow to Shiplake	12 miles
DAY 7	Shiplake to Goring	15.5 miles
DAY 8	Goring to Dorchester	12 miles
DAY 9	Dorchester to Oxford	18 miles
DAY10	Oxford to Newbridge	13 miles
DAY 11	Newbridge to Lechlade	15 miles
DAY 12	Lechlade to Cricklade	10 miles
DAY 13	Cricklade to Source	12 miles
	Total -	169 miles

NB (1) We are not walking the section from Vauxhall to Putney (5.5 miles) since this departs from the river for a considerable length. Purists may wish to walk it themselves!

(2) Convenient bus/train transport to London up to Goring. Thereafter, transport to be organised and dependent on numbers.

(3) Day 2 – 8.2.1992

BRENDA OAKEY  
Tel: 0992 586910

With the virtual completion of the Thames Walk as a new "National Trail", members were invited to gather at the Thames Barrier for the commencement of an historic journey of some 175 miles finishing at the Thames Head Spring in the foothills of the Cotswolds. This first leg, which attracted an attendance of 46 and walked on Sunday, 8<sup>th</sup> December, 1991, was the first of 11 stages during the next 18 months with the final approximate distance of 30 miles being completed at the end of October, 1993 with a weekend away. The indicated stages distributed by Brenda Oakey, the organiser and leader together with Frank Holzman, would eventually differ slightly from Dorchester onwards.

Over 13 years later, the route was repeated in 13 stages from 11<sup>th</sup> March, 2007 plus a long weekend away again, based on that occasion at Swindon from 10<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> October 2008, to complete the walk. On this latter occasion, leading each stage was undertaken by various members. A committed task, with long journeys involved, leaders surveyed and walked the route in different ways, one member sleeping in his car overnight and completing the particular mileage the following day.....!

Other members went to extraordinary lengths to complete the whole route, unable to participate on the particular day allocated. Using the two-car trick, hazards were encountered on one occasion due to flooded fields but, undeterred, admirable determination was shown. Ken and Brenda Chadwick walked every stage on each occasion nearly 17 years apart..... and have supplied the route for the archives.

The 1991 Annual General Meeting resulted in further significant changes to the committee. Harry Edler became a dedicated Treasurer and, serving for the next 15 years, would prepare and present the groups' accounts in a concise way at meetings. John Holness joined the long-serving Harold Lawrence as a committee member. Already much involved with the Adopt-a-Parish Scheme, John's immense contribution to the group would include that of Footpath Secretary in due course.

In 1992, a one-off five-monthly programme covering March to July was posted to accommodate the distribution of the Essex Rambler. The pattern of three four-monthly programmes, each year, August to November, December to March and April to July became finally established.

A small party of seven walked a 23 mile south/north route through Thetford Forest from an area near Lackford organised by Harry Bitten at the end of April. A month later 93 attended and enjoyed a Barn Dance at Theydon Bois Village Hall. With membership of nearly 800, capitation received from Area totalled £567.40 for 1992. A repeat map reading and compass course took place in the autumn after a successful venture in a private house 12 months earlier. Frank Holzman and Ann Kidd instructed a full attendance in two theoretical evenings followed by a Sunday outing for practical work. Peter Spence replaced Ann in due course and the event remained popular for many years resulting in some members eventually becoming leaders. As an experiment, the Annual General Meeting was held in Theydon Bois on a Saturday afternoon at the end of November preceded by a morning walk, a system that was adopted for some time afterwards.

The year became significant for the setting up of a new group in the area, the geographical boundaries of the Boroughs of Redbridge and Waltham Forest forming the Redbridge group. A public meeting was held in August, 14 people attended an inaugural walk and, with the assistance of some current West Essex group members who seconded themselves to the new group, the Redbridge Ramblers gradually became established. A close liaison remains to this day as current programmes show.

Copped Hall Estate finally became acquired by the City of London Corporation being therefore totally open for public access, Len Alcott formally welcomed four new leaders at the beginning of 1993:- Cyril Scanes, Fred Banks, Joan Edler and Harold Markham. The remarkable consistent leadership of the first named over many years will be enlarged upon in due course. The latter had taken over the office of Coach Rambles Organiser, Ann Kidd having transferred her energies to the newly-formed Redbridge Ramblers. Indeed she organised a coach ramble combining the two groups over the August Bank Holiday, a three-day event based in the county of Dorset. (This was the first of similar outings which have taken place regularly since, different members of each group being responsible for setting up locations, far and wide.) Joan's

role would include within a few years, leading (with others), what would at that time be known as “ambles”, the forerunner of the regular short mid-week walks enjoyed at present.

In response to members’ requests, a system of walk codes was introduced in the programme for April to July, 1993, ie:-

A – 12 to 14 miles.

B – 10 to 12 miles.

C – 8 to 10 miles.

D – 6 to 8 miles

E – 4 to 6 miles.

1 – brisk pace.

2 – medium pace.

3 – leisurely pace.

4 – slow pace.

The above would remain in force for many years, the descriptions becoming more detailed in recent programmes.

Fred’s Annual Report for 1993 noted membership had exceeded 800.

Early the following year, much of the notes section paid tribute to the sad passing away of Bill Govey in August 1993. A detailed history of his life reflected the working party team under his direction. In due course, a plaque appeared alongside that of John Standon at the Ladder stile and later a seat was constructed in his memory near Warren Wood. Meeting and marrying Phyllis during wartime service in the 1940’s, they originally walked the countryside on their own, joining the West Essex group during the second year of its formation. An annual “Bill Govey Walk” took place for a few years thereafter and members crossing a good stile or bridge would be heard to comment:- “Bill Govey’s been here!”

The above thus ended a 20 year association, an influential person carrying out many varied tasks. Meanwhile, within a few months another member would equally impress in time with organising standards conducted in a style of his own. The last ramble listed in the December 1993 to March 1994 programme took place on Thursday, 31<sup>st</sup> of the latter month, a B 2 outing meeting at the car park at Coggeshall. In charge:- John Francis. Apart from leading on innumerable occasions since, his arranging ability of regular coach rambles would take the groups’ activities to new levels. A précis of the holidays organised by John in distant parts of England will be recorded as the narrative develops.

Following the successful conclusion of the Thames Walk, the Ridgeway Long Distance Walk was organised by Brenda Oakey, an approximate 85 mile route walked in 7 stages commencing in April, 1994. A long weekend away nearly 12 months later completed the exercise. The 21<sup>st</sup> outing with the Hassocks Field Society took place in July, Harold Markham being the coach organiser on this occasion. Ann Kidd took charge of a joint Redbridge Ramblers/West Essex group 3-day coach ramble to Dorset. An attendance of nearly 50 accompanied Frank Fuller, as he led a morning walk on 3<sup>rd</sup> August from Theydon Bois, after which a “full house” celebrated his 80<sup>th</sup> birthday at the Village Hall. Jack Sargent, a regular active member then, led a coach ramble to Dunwich in Suffolk in September, a popular venue to which the group has returned many times since.

The Chairman’s message later in the year brought notice of the formation of a new group in the Harlow area which was officially launched early in the following year. Named the Stort Valley group it became the thirteenth of its type in Essex and the three hundred and eighty first in the country at that time. Membership of the West Essex group totalled 930. Frank Holzman and Ann Kidd were the tutors for a Map and Compass course in October. Applications were over subscribed, 25 being the limit due to lack of space at the meeting place ..... During the year, Gordon Ayres had wondered if there would be a demand for short (3 to 4 mile) ambles. The response was good. Fred Matthews led the first, from the “Blue Boar”, Abridge on 5<sup>th</sup> December, with Len Alcott and John Holness following similarly from different meeting places before the end of the year. These were coded F4 in the programme. By good fortune, an extension



John Ingram was again the caller for a Barn Dance in March, Harold Markham took charge of a three day walking event at Bognor Regis and six nights/five days for a similar trip to the Lake District in May and September, respectively. Following the interest of members with the Map and Compass Course in October, 1994 a similar evening took place in the autumn of 1995. Gordon Ayres was Frank Holzman's fellow tutor with assistance from Peter Spence and Bill Linnell. The last named became a member, with others as previously mentioned, who seconded themselves to the Redbridge Ramblers on their formation. Already a West Essex group leader, he continued to carry on in that capacity for both groups for many years, in addition to being a one-time auditor for the West Essex group accounts. As with some other senior members, Bill has concentrated on the shorter walks in recent times and, meeting the author on one such occasion, passed the following article for the archives which appears below:-

#### My best ever walk with the Ramblers

It was during one of the winters around 1990 when Frank Fuller was in the West Essex programme to lead a walk from Albury in Hertfordshire. There had been a heavy fall of snow several days before the day of the walk, but on the day, roads were reported to be clear, so I set off hoping not to be disappointed.

When I arrived at Albury, or more precisely Clapgate, Frank was there and waiting to see who turned up. At 10.30 there were six of us, including Frank and he told us the kind of walk we could have in the wintry conditions. All fields, footpaths and bridleways were covered with snow, it was bitterly cold and everywhere looked grey. It was the kind of day that Charles Dickens would have considered suitable to cast his heroine out of the house into the merciless world.

Frank said that if we did a walk he would aim to be back by 2 p.m. in case the weather closed down, so the pace would be brisk which should keep us warm.

I remember the gentle ascent from the valley bottom on a snow covered footpath with a hedge to our right, then moving up through tall trees. The pace was not fast enough to make us breathless, but it left no time to follow our progress on a pathfinder map, so I am unable to recall where we went. During the whole walk we saw no one else, no birds, no animals, wild or domestic, we seemed alone in a grey and white world.

Frank changed the general direction of the walk with a turn to the left shortly before stopping for a fifteen minute break so the walk must have been anti-clockwise. We ate our sandwiches sheltered by a red brick wall, presumably stables or another kind of outhouse, all thoroughly enjoying the experience, but ready to start again before we became cold. Exactly where we stopped I don't know and have never been able to locate it.

After our short break we resumed our walk at the same brisk pace but easier as it was mainly downhill back to the River Ash, where we arrived at 1.50 p.m.

Frank Fuller was a quiet, slightly built man and a brilliant walk leader. It was only at his funeral that we found out that during the war he had served as a lieutenant in the Royal Navy, sailing in minesweepers. No wonder he was such a brilliant navigator.

Bill has not been able to provide an accurate date from his records. A research of Len Alcott's diaries has revealed an outing dated Wednesday, 22<sup>nd</sup> March, 1995, a walk graded C2. The interest in Frank's leadership is evident from the above. His walks were always well supported.

Further to the response for ambles, more history was made with the inclusion of evening F grade outings, the first three of which took place in the summer of 1995 as listed:-

Monday, 7 <sup>th</sup> August.	1900 hours.	The "Owl", High Beech, Walk with pub supper. Don and Irene Poynter
Friday, 18 <sup>th</sup> August.	1900 hours.	The "White Hart", Moreton, Walk with pub supper. Don and Irene Poynter
Monday, 21 <sup>st</sup> August	1930 hours.	The "Royal Oak", Stapleford Abbots, Evening walk, Cyril Scanes

Although similar walks were not organised on a regular basis for some years, the seeds were sown for future reference, with a gradual increase of events during the summer months since the coming of the new Millennium. Current programmes indicate this.

The 1995 Annual General Meeting, held at the Methodist Church, Hermon Hill, Wanstead, on the afternoon of 18<sup>th</sup> November, after a morning walk led by Harry Bitten, resulted in significant changes. Len Alcott wished to stand down from the position of Rambles Secretary after 17 years in office. Len Duffin succeeded him. John Francis became Assistant Rambles Secretary with Len Alcott and these headings appeared in the December 1995 to March, 1996 programme which had been prepared some weeks before. In a tribute, Frank Holzman's Chairman's message concluded thus:- "Len will continue to lead walks and attend Committee meetings where his work of experience about paths is invaluable." Under the heading of "Bill Govey's Seat", Frank then indicated that a seat in his honour had been installed at the corner of Griffin Wood near the Ladderstile. A donation to the group from Paul Crosland, a one-time committee member, was used for its purchase. A memorial walk had taken place from Willingale at the end of August.

Sadly, Len Alcott passed away in hospital three days after the Annual General Meeting. Thus John Francis "carried the baton" as Len Duffin's assistant immediately. They had inherited a difficult situation regarding leaders, particularly on Saturdays. (Page 4 of the WEP issue of August 2010, refers.) Len Duffin had been a regular walker with the group since the late 1980's, John's tenure was just commencing. Twentyfive years after its formation, the group faced a challenge in 1996 .....

An Open Day took place on Saturday, 16<sup>th</sup> March, 1996 at Budworth Hall, Ongar with again an exhibition featuring the many activities of the group. A computer displayed pictures and photographs, members having been invited to contact Ted Ward (Publicity) or John Holness (Adopt-a-Parish Officer) beforehand with items of interest. Phyllis Govey organised tea and cakes for visitors. This became an annual event in the calendar for the rest of the decade, drawing attention to the benefits and rewards of organised walking in the Essex countryside. One person visited the venue during the day with subsequent results .....

#### HOW I CAME TO JOIN WEST ESSEX R.A.

I was finishing work at the end of April 1996 and wondering what I was going to be doing with my days. In March of that year there was an advertisement in the local paper for an Open Day for West Essex Ramblers. This was to be held in Budworth Hall, Ongar.

Being a keen walker, I went along to see what was on offer. I was impressed at the organisation of the day, the extremely friendly people who explained how the group worked, so I joined West Essex there and then.

As soon as my employment ended I went on my first walk on 9<sup>th</sup> May, 1996. This was a 12 mile walk led by Rodney Sell, starting from High Ongar Bridge. I thoroughly enjoyed this day. Everyone was very welcoming. From this day, I have walked most weeks and been on several holidays with the group.

In a handwritten note for the archives reproduced above, Audrey Carson was that person. Although not becoming a committee member or officer at any time, she has been a regular supporter of the walks, a versatile leader, using her computer skills on the WEP and assisting, like many others, in the catering side of the social events. The last few words relate to holidays. Audrey has travelled far and wide,

home and away and is one of half-a-dozen or so members who keep a diary of their mileage..... How many others are there who have joined, with advantage, at an Open Day?

Rodney Sell was a regular leader at that time before eventually emigrating to New Zealand. He became remembered by walkers of a certain era with his knowledge of the service tree, one of which is located adjacent to the cul-de-sac road off Fairmead Bottom..

Harold Markham repeated a three day booking at Bognor Regis for the May Bank Holiday weekend. Under his direction, six days were spent at Patterdale in the Lake District at the end of July and a long weekend took place in Bournemouth in mid-October. Jack Sargent also arranged a coach ramble to Bournemouth and the New Forest for the Spring Bank Holiday weekend. Brenda Oakey organised the Peddars Way and North Norfolk Coast Path. This event was walked in three stages in 1996 and completed with a weekend away in May, 1997.

Peter Spence was elected Assistant Secretary to Fred Matthews at the 1996 Annual General Meeting, Administration was increasing. The December 96 to March 97 programme included particular events for 1997 as listed. This enabled members to make diary notes in advance. Booking slips were included where applicable, to be posted to John Francis or Harry Edler as appropriate:-

**WEST ESSEX  
SOCIAL, HOLIDAY, and PROVISIONAL LONG DISTANCE WALKS PROGRAMME  
JANUARY 1997 – OCTOBER 1997**

<b>1. Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> February</b>	<b>Quiz Evening</b>
<b>2. Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> March</b>	<b>Open Day</b>
<b>3. Easter, 28<sup>th</sup> March – 31<sup>st</sup> March</b>	<b>Youth Hostelling with Derek Ford in The Peak District</b>
<b>4. Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> April</b>	<b>Barn Dance</b>
<b>5. Sunday 20<sup>th</sup> April</b>	<b>1<sup>st</sup> Leg South Downs Way</b>
<b>6. Saturday 3<sup>rd</sup> May – Monday 5<sup>th</sup> May</b>	<b>Bognor Weekend</b>
<b>7. Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> May – Monday 12<sup>th</sup> May</b>	<b>Completion of North Norfolk Coastal Path Walk</b>
<b>8. Sunday 18<sup>th</sup> May</b>	<b>National Footpaths' Day</b>
<b>9. Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> June &amp; Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> June</b>	<b>South Downs Way Weekend Stages 2 and 3</b>
<b>10. Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> June/Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> June</b>	<b>Midsummer Day Night Walk</b>
<b>11. Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> July</b>	<b>Annual South Downs Coach Outing</b>
<b>12. Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> September and Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> September</b>	<b>South Downs Way Weekend Stages 4 and 5</b>
<b>13. Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> October and Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> October</b>	<b>South Downs Way Weekend Final stages</b>
<b>14. Monday 27<sup>th</sup> October to Sunday 2<sup>nd</sup> November</b>	<b>Lake District Holiday Led by Harold Markham</b>

Mike and Joyce Whiteley took over the mantle of the quiz evening with a ploughman's supper organised by Phyllis Govey. The former couple would become very active in the group after their respective retirements. Mike as Membership Secretary and latterly general Secretary. Each has led, and continues to lead walks of different types with distinction and enthusiasm. Their regular annual quiz evenings reveal a Mastermind touch and have greatly added to the social scene.

The group returned to Budworth Hall for the Open Day after the successful location of the previous year. Tickets were available from Phyllis Govey for the Barn Dance at the usual venue of Theydon Bois Village Hall. John Francis assisted Harold Markham with the South Downs Way and the Bognor weekend. Derek Ford led the Midsummer Day Night Walk, meeting at Epping station with cars for Fiddlers Hamlet for

a 22.45 hours start. There was a reminder to bring a torch, warm clothing and food and drink. This was a joint B2 outing with the Redbridge group. A lift home was guaranteed .....

### ARTHUR THORNE

The programme for the first Saturday of 1997, January 4<sup>th</sup>, included an interesting initial outing, quote "10.30. Theydon Bois (on green by Avenue of Trees). Joint with Friends of Wansfell College. Arthur Thorne. F3." The walk was repeated on the same day in June and November. In October, Arthur led on the first Tuesday. Perusing future programmes, the fixed date of "the first Tuesday of the Month" will be recorded as the history progresses. Walkers who attended the June 2009 ramble were invited to accompany Arthur and his wife, Joyce, to one of the local hostelrys for a celebration drink on the completion of 20 years of leading from the same place each month, a remarkable record, parallel to that of Ted Ellis' "last Sunday of the month." However, by contrast, those who attended formed a category who wished to walk at a slower, social pace for a variety of reasons. Joyce has been a careful backmarker. Sadly, neither Arthur nor Joyce has enjoyed good health during this celebration year, but the date has been honoured each month up to and including October with the exception of September to complete 21 years, the abbreviated location being defined in recent times as Theydon Bois AoT.

Len Duffin and John Francis became concerned at the lack of leaders for Saturday rambles, at least one date in each month from August, 1997 until the end of the year bearing a "No Leader" sign. Unfortunately, this trend continued for the first half of 1998.

The Annual General Meeting in November 1997 marked the retirement of Fred Matthews as Secretary having served in that capacity since the meeting to form the group in October 1970. He was welcomed back to the committee after an absence due to his suffering a mild stroke earlier in the year. Peter Spence had acted as Secretary and was proposed and seconded as Fred's successor. Fred spoke about the countryside improvement since the group's formation and thanked those who had assisted. Brenda Oakey also stood down as Minutes Secretary.

Phyllis Govey's report noted that there were 1006 members. Jaki Rowlands became social Secretary. She would serve into the new Millenium. After two or three abortive attempts, one of the highlights during her tenure was a visit to the Tower of London to witness the daily Ceremony of the Keys, after which the coach load of members were lavishly entertained with food and drink in the Yeomans "Mess!"

It became apparent early in 1998 that Len Duffin wished to start a new life, moving to an entirely different area and remarrying in the summer of that year. (page 3 of the August, 2010 edition of the WEP, refers.) John Francis became Rambles Secretary with sole responsibility for the organisation of leaders for mid-week rambles and on Bank Holidays. The author was invited to become Assistant Rambles Secretary with the similar brief for Saturdays and Sundays.

Meanwhile the Open Day took place in March at a different venue, many members convening at Christ Church, Wanstead, setting out the usual display of the group's activities. On Easter Monday 13<sup>th</sup> April, Dianne Ingram led a memorial walk, a figure-of-eight ramble from the North Country Park Visitors Centre at Thorndon in a tribute to her father, John. (pages 20 and 21 of the narrative refer.)

### JOHN FRANCIS

With a settled situation in place relating to obtaining leaders for three days each week, it creates an ideal opportunity to record the huge work load undertaken by the above over many years. Taking over the responsibility in the same year, 1998, for the organisation of UK holidays, John has forwarded details thus:-

He had first attended the visit to Bognor in 1994, a 2-night stay during the early May Bank Holiday weekend organised by Harold Markham. In September, 1995, he took charge of his first holiday for the

group staying at Seaford to complete the final two stages of the Vanguard Way. Assisting Harold in 1996 and 1997, he took control of the three weekends away, walking the South Downs Way in the latter year. The first two were based at Seaford, the third at Bournemouth.

During 1999, 2000 and 2001, John arranged breaks on the Isle of Wight based at Shanklin and 2002 saw him combining with Frank Holzman and Frank's friend, Lionel, in the organisation of the Leland Trail in Somerset. He took responsibility for transport, accommodation and bookings while Frank covered the walking side. He was similarly responsible in the same year when members walked the Hangar Way led by Len Banister, staying at Havant. In September, 2003 arrangements were the same for a holiday on Dartmoor, Len in charge of the walking, John the accommodation etc.

Two years later, Sudbury, between Uttoxeter and Burton upon Trent, was the venue for an active holiday in Derbyshire, John and Joan Edler assisting Len on this occasion with the walking. 2006 found the group at Weymouth, Len the leader, John booking the hotel, transport etc. Swindon became the venue for his organisation of a long weekend which completed the Thames Path in October 2008.

John's details describe incidences relating to some of the above:- a coach breakdown, a member being rescued from a swimming pool, a coach driver escaping through a window to evade the amorous advances of another member, walkers experiencing a wonderful moon on a particularly long day a further member losing his umbrella in the wind and rain and sitting at the back of the coach in his underwear .....!!! (The anonymity of all those involved is protected ....)

His further responsibilities have included the booking of monthly mid-week coach rambles from April to October each year with coach companies. This is undertaken during the preceding autumn and winter months, while liaising with prospective leaders to form a balanced and attractive programme. Leading some of these himself, John also organises and leads combined weekend outings with the Redbridge Ramblers and, as each programme reveals, is in charge for other country and London walks, some with an historical aspect.

The final collating of the walks programme together with items for the WEP, is a further essential, three times each year following the last day deadline. Taking over from Len Alcott, he completes 15 years in office during the anniversary year, a long serving pivotal stalwart of the group .....

Brenda Oakey took charge of the organisation of the Cotswold Way, the first half being completed with a three night stay at Winchcombe at the end of September, 1998. Interested parties would provide their own transport to Gloucestershire and return. Frank Holzman and Lionel led the walk. Two members led their initial walk on the last Saturday of the August to November 1998 programme. Hatfield Broad Oak was the meeting place for an all day ramble with a pub stop, 28/11 the date, Val and Alan Weatherley the leaders. By an amazing uncontrived coincidence, they were in charge from the same area almost exactly 10 years later, Thursday, 27<sup>th</sup> November, 2008, a half-day ramble on that occasion. The additional programme information invited those attending the "opportunity to purchase Hatfield Broad Oak sausages." Regular imaginative leaders during the ensuing 12 years, each progressed into the new Millennium by putting much time and energy into many areas for the benefit of the group.

At the 1998 Annual General Meeting, Ted Ward relinquished the position of Publicity after nine successful years in office. With his wife, Jose, he had also assisted Phyllis Govey with the programme "stuffing" every four months for much of that time. Len Banister replaced Ted and would put into effect immediate individual ideas to that office. Tributes were paid at the meeting for the sad passing away of Harold Lawrence and Frank Fuller by Fred Matthews and John Francis, respectively. With an extensive knowledge of the docklands, canals and rivers of the East End of London, Harold once arrived at a blocked path and saw a notice "Slow men working". He remarked "Now we know why it is two months behind schedule." He had served as a committee member for 15 years. Frank led group walks for 20 years, from 1975 to 1995. Often attracting larger than usual numbers, his walks always served a purpose. Mention was

made of his popularity reiterating members' thoughts recorded on previous pages, together with his war service.

The Cotswold Way was concluded with a five day walking break in April, 1999 and a few days later the Open Day returned to Chingford, on this occasion at the Methodist Church Hall, facilities which would be available for the group's Annual General Meetings in future years. Jaki Rowlands organised a Barn Dance with a fish and chips supper at Theydon Bois Village Hall in May. The penultimate outing in July featured a linear walk to the Tower of London from Mile End station which included a visit to the Ragged School Museum. This was led by Stan Barratt, another member who took charge of many similar outings with his extensive knowledge of London. Coach rambles took place each month from May until October. That for August, Wednesday 11<sup>th</sup>, from Radwinter near the Essex/Cambridgeshire border, would focus on an extraordinary phenomenon not witnessed for a very long time:- A total eclipse of the sun experienced about 11.15 with a chilly feeling in the air as the sky darkened for a short while .....

The above occurrence forms the ideal opportunity to bring this instalment to a close, the fourth and final one of which will bring the group's history etc. Up to date. The new Millenium would immediately herald sudden and unexpected changes to the committee. Ingenuity would soon be required to deal with the Foot and Mouth outbreak. The bar would be raised to its highest level with the provision of a second mid week ramble. Eventually, the group would set foot (literally) in Europe ..... The WEP would offer a new social dimension for the West Essex.

(Note:- The author is pleased to acknowledge the correct spelling of one of the joint leaders for the Boxing Day ramble in 1986, page 18 refers. A conversation with a senior member on an outing and a subsequent letter from Joy Watson, the other leader on the day, reveals the name:- LEN QUARRESS. Now in his mid 80's, he lives in Dorset and enjoys strolls by the sea).

The fourth and concluding instalment of the history, life and times of the West Essex R.A. group entitled RAMBLING ON AND ON AND ON ..... by Eric Barker commences with the realisation of an ever expanding programme as the new Millenium approached. That for April to July, 1999, for example, covered 17 pages, the last six single sheets being reserved for booking slips in respect of coach rambles, social events and two long-distance outings. The latter embraced four further stages of the North Downs Way and a total of six legs for the walking of the whole of the Essex Way organised by the Redbridge Ramblers with whom the group had a close liaison as aforementioned. The Essex Way had already featured in the West Essex programme six years earlier, a 21<sup>st</sup> year celebration of its opening in 1972, an 81 mile route from Epping station to Harwich. (Members can observe a plaque at the entrance to the station.) Fred Matthews, together with members of other groups, including the Long Distance Walkers Association, had been responsible for the inauguration of the County's premier long-distance route.

The Open Day at Chingford, previously mentioned, was deemed an outstanding success. About 60 Membership Application Forms had been handed out. A morning walk on the following day had attracted an attendance of 75. After lunch, 45 people had congregated for a similar outing. The Walk for the Blind was re-introduced in September led by Peter Spence and the North Downs Way was completed the following month. In November, Jack Sargent accepted bookings for a week's walking holiday in the Algarve, Portugal. Six walks were available out of the eight days covered by the R.A.'s Festival of Winter Walking, from Sunday 26<sup>th</sup> December, 1999 to Sunday, 2<sup>nd</sup> January 2000, the period extended into the Millenium as previously noted. John Francis led the final walk of the 1990's, a six mile outing from Chingford station with a 20 minute stop for drinks only on 31/12. On New Year's Day, 2000, Frank Holzman was in charge of a ramble of similar distance from the same meeting place, a "Meridian Line" outing to celebrate the Millenium. An extensive notes section in the August to November, 1999 programme included a paragraph:- "Shorter Walks to Supplement our Traditional Programme". The group wished to develop a structured 4-6 mile walks programme to meet the needs of older members or those new to walking. Current walk leaders were invited to contact John Francis. There appeared much to anticipate as the decade of the "noughties" beckoned .....

Sadly, Phyllis Govey passed away early in January, 2000 having been taken ill during the Christmas period some two weeks before. In a tribute, John Holness mentioned her work for the original Working Party, providing cakes for the helpers and cooking jacket potatoes when a bonfire was used. She had been Membership Secretary for 11 years. During the early times, the Walks Programme was produced on a hand-operated Gestetner machine from a skin typed by Len Alcott, distribution being organised by Phyllis together with husband, Bill. Mike Whiteley became Membership Secretary.

Together with changes in personnel which had occurred at the Annual General Meeting a few weeks earlier, the Committee comprised the following ten members in 2000:-

Chairman:-	FRANK HOLZMAN	Secretary:-	PETER SPENCE
Treasurer:-	HARRY EDLER	Rambles Secretary:-	JOHN FRANCIS
Asst. Rambles Secretary:-	ERIC BARKER	Membership Secretary:-	MIKE WHITELEY
Footpath Secretary:-	JOHN HOLNESS	Publicity:-	LEN BANISTER
Social Secretary:-	JAKI ROWLANDS	Committee Member:-	FRED MATTHEWS

The Saxon Shore Way, a 160 mile linear route from Gravesend to Hastings was the long-distance path chosen for 2000 and 2001, seven stages being walked monthly from April to October during the former year. This was led by Tony and Gay O'Sullivan, two guest organisers. The response to a request for leaders to offer their services for shorter mid-week walks elicited an encouraging feedback:- Eleven such outings appearing in the programme covering the last month of 1999 and the first three in 2000.

A new leader made his services available on Sunday, 19<sup>th</sup> March, an approximate nine mile ramble from Stock. An opportunity to take "stock" of the immense contribution by John Juchau and Pat in the ensuing ten plus years will be recorded in due course.

An Open Day took place at the Church Rooms, adjacent to St. John's church, Epping at the end of April with the customary walk on the May Day Bank Holiday led by Frank Holzman. This would prove to be the final one of its kind. Fifteen members took part in a Millennium Walk from Benfleet station to the Kursaal, Southend in the middle of April organised by the same leader, this outing being part of a promotion by Essex Area to walk as much as possible of the County coastline between Tilbury and Harwich.

Six-figure grid references had featured in an inconsistent fashion for some years in the 1990s. These would appear regularly from the Millennium onwards with the addition of the relevant prefix of the Ordnance survey Landranger index number.

Alan and Val Weatherley followed the footsteps of John and Pat Juchau in further enhancing the versatility of the group's activities. Val agreed to take on the responsibility for obtaining members to lead the short mid-week walks. The group continues to benefit from the availability of four outings each week to this day. Arthur Thorne's short rambles on the first Tuesday of the month would soon appear regularly. Besides being listed under the heading of Committee and Officers as Mid Week Short Walks Secretary, Val would take on the role of Social Secretary after Jaki Rowands relinquished the position in the early months of 2002. At the same time in 2000, Alan became one of three new adopters, taking over the parish of Matching. Together with Harold Markham (Stapleford Tawney) and Gerry Michails (Waltham Abbey), all 21 parishes were thus in the care of an adopter. Alan and Val continue to assist each other in their respective roles and lead interesting combined rambles all-day, half-day and evenings.

At the beginning of September, an outing from the Travellers Friend, Epping Green, led by Peter Spence, was designated a Leader Training Walk for those who wished to develop leadership skills and at the end of October the now regular Map Reading Course took place organised by Peter and Frank Holzman. The final 15 days of December included 10 listed walks with the Festival of Winter Walks, bringing the first year of the Millennium to a memorable conclusion. It had been a time of further expansion.

#### BOXING DAY OUTINGS IN THE "NOUGHTIES"

Francis Staines led the Millennium walk, a half-day outing from the Nature Reserve Car Park, Chigwell. Frank Holzman was in charge for the next two occasions from Epping Green. John Juchau became the leader for the following four years, 2003-06, the venues being the Nature Reserve again, Vauxhall station, Ray Park Car Park, Snakes Lane, Woodford and Abridge, respectively. These were well supported, between 30 and 40 walkers assembling on each occasion. Frank returned to lead in 2007 (Bumbles Green) and 2008 (Chingford station). Ann Leddra rounded off the decade leading over new ground from the road bridge near Epping station to Tawney Common and return, with the opportunity to imbibe for a short while at the "Mole Trap".

The Saxon Shore Way was due to be completed during 2001, six legs being walked on one Sunday each month from April to October, August excepted. Seven provisional mid-week coach outing dates were advertised covering the same months. Regular guest leader, Ron Lockhart, of the Greenway Group, invited members to contact him for details of the Green London Way, traversed on one outing each month from January to March. The above formed the preliminary notes in the programme for December 2000 – March 2001. However, all careful planning fell into disarray with the onset of the sudden Foot and Mouth outbreak, the first for nearly 40 years. This caused havoc throughout the country with many restrictions imposed on roads, over fields and in forests.

Outings for a total of five months were affected commencing with Ted Ellis' Epping Society walk on Sunday, 25<sup>th</sup> February. Eight out of 18 ramble dates were cancelled in March, the remaining locations being adjudged available at that time. Among the casualties, one walk did take place, the route being slightly amended. A member was able to lead a 70<sup>th</sup> birthday ramble in early May, an out and back walk from Hawkey Hall, Woodford Green, to the Foresters Arms, Loughton. Members were invited to join the outing at certain times and locations in a similar way to the Centenary Walk. During the morning coffee break at

High Beach, the appointed back marked informed the leader 70 had attended! A remarkable coincidence indicating the enthusiasm of the group to turn out whenever possible during a difficult situation.

The following programme forwarded in early July included a note from Frank Holzman dated 15<sup>th</sup> June with information that, acting on government advice, Essex county Council had announced the re-opening of all public rights of way in the county on 22<sup>nd</sup> June. It was suggested a degree of caution should still be exercised. This programme, August to November, 2001 was happily adhered to in its entirety. The group, therefore, could consider itself extremely fortunate in comparison with many other areas of the country. The coach rambles to Dunwich (August), Suffolk Sea Walls (September) and Wendover (24<sup>th</sup> October) went ahead as scheduled. Having led his initial walk 19 months previously, John Juchau, with Pat, was in charge for the first time for the latter outing. They have continued to bring the mid-week coach walking season to a close consistently since. The Hanger Way, a 21 mile route over the Hampshire Downs was rescheduled from its original long weekend in May to the last two days of September with an overnight stay at Havant. The difficulties surmounted showed the resilience of the group in the best possible way .....

Membership numbers stood at 1060 at the end of 2001. The role of Countryside Officer had remained unfilled for a short time. Doreen Lodge became the incumbent at the Annual General Meeting.

Having produced a dummy copy to the committee, Len Banister, Publicity Officer at that time, supervised the first issue of the WEP., posted to members with the 'April to July 2002 walks programme with John Francis as editor. The production was continued by Len on his computer for the next three years since when Audrey Carson has taken over. John remains the editor. The WEP., now in its ninth year, has been the medium for the social side of the group and the focus for many varied articles. Members have aired their views on many subjects as it continues to make interesting reading.

Most of the back page of issue no. one was devoted to the West Essex Working Party under the heading of ".....and finally FRANK" as previously mentioned. However, the first article on the front page "Frank's Plea Answered" introduced two members who had agreed to serve on committee in addition to Fred Matthews. John and Pat Juchau had put their names forward and attended their first meeting in March, 2002. The seeds were thus sown for a vast and versatile contribution to the group's benefit which would quickly emerge. Ramble dates in May included two longer than usual walks led by Len Banister. Both of 17 miles, the first started locally at Highams Park Lake, the second at Cobham, Kent. A further outing of 19 miles from Rickling Green took place in June. Len has continued with similar rambles since which have attracted a core of members who enjoy an extra challenge .....

The Saxon Shore Way took place during 2002, rescheduled from the previous year due to the Foot and Mouth outbreak, the 17<sup>th</sup> and final stage completing the route in mid-October. Members were saddened and shocked by the sudden passing away of John Holness at the end of May.

Further changes to the committee took place at the 2002 Annual General Meeting. Len Banister relinquished the office of Publicity to create a new venture:- Outreach Officer. John and Pat Juchau took over Len's Publicity role. Jaki Rowland stood down as Social Secretary due to family reasons.

Len requested help in the fresh approach to the R.A.'s aims of highlighting the benefits of walking to include those with physical or learning difficulties. In March 2003 and for the next 4 ½ years he organised approximately 50 walks for Asian women with attendance averaging 15 per outing. One of the two coach trips financed by the group attracted 57 people. The same month above marked the final "Walk of the Month". Len had commenced this three years earlier, featuring a leader with his or her walk each month. A questionnaire forwarded invited each person to complete and return same with a background to their other interests and previous working life. Together with an appropriate photograph, these were sent to various local papers and served to draw attention to the group and its activities. A total of 41 leaders were involved, a B2 walk led by Derek Davies from Galleywood Common, near Chelmsford on 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2000 being the initial one. The final outing, a morning ramble on 27<sup>th</sup> March, 2003 from Jack's Hill featured Alan Silwood.

The Greensand Ridge Walk, a 40 mile linear route bisecting the county of Bedfordshire, was the weekend coach ramble selected for 2003, walked during four summer Sundays. Frank Holzman led a John Holness Memorial Walk along the David Livingstone Trail from Ongar at the end of April, those attending having first visited a memorial-created garden in Love Lane. Len Banister's long distance outing featured the whole of the 28 mile Stort Valley Way commencing at 9 a.m. from Epping Green at the end of July,. A near 12 hour hike was anticipated ..... During the same week, a "Juchau Summer Jaunt" was arranged for the monthly mid-week coach outing. Great Saling, situated north-west of Rayne, was the venue for a morning walk, followed by a visit to the Hall Garden in the village. Further coach rambles with a theme would become a regular part of the group's outings in the future.

Unfortunately, after many years, a popular parking place became out of bounds for ramblers during 2003. Disturbances had occurred at Upshire Village Hall. Walkers had not been involved, but in future bookings would only be accepted for specific events at the hall. Hence, locations for this regular walking area have since changed with parking in a side road or near the grass verge adjacent to the Good Intent hostelry.

Two evening social events took place towards the end of the year. Diminishing Whist in early November and a Jazz Band Ball (mid-December) with contrasting results. The former, organised by the author with grateful help beforehand and on the day itself, was unfortunately not well supported. A repeat at a different location in two of the three following years had a similar lack of response, although on all three occasions the event went ahead. (One can but try.) However, the Jazz Band Ball, a joint venture on that occasion with the Redbridge Ramblers, was particularly well received. Val Weatherley, with a team, was responsible for a large turnout of members and friends who enjoyed an outstanding evening. This popular event, attracting over 100 people at Theydon Bois has continued since and brings the curtain down on the social activities as Christmas and the New Year approach. A few days before, a presentation was accorded to Fred Matthews at the Christmas lunch, held at Gilwell Park, Chingford, for his 80<sup>th</sup> birthday which had occurred some six months previously.

The 26<sup>th</sup> December 2003 to 1<sup>st</sup> January 2004 were the dates listed for the annual Ramblers' Association's Festival of Winter Walking. An ordinary-looking outing on Saturday, 27/12 invited interested parties to meet at Vauxhall station, exit 6, for a D3 bridges and buildings walk with historical commentary, finishing at Tower Hill station with a lunch break at the Festival Hall. As well as being published in the R.A's Walk magazine, details appeared on the internet for the first time and the Evening Standard picked up the information. Result:- an overwhelming number of people attended and the back-marker of the day had to give up counting at 120 ..... Probably another 20 plus a dog were caught up in the procession crossing Vauxhall Bridge, quite an unforgettable start for the first walk led by Pat Juchau, a vivid contrast to that of John's initial outing as leader in the quiet Essex countryside at Stock in the spring of 1990. A letter for the archives from Pat lists over 30 such London walks since, with a limit of 20 attendees imposed for safety and control. The above location was repeated 12 months on, since when evening ghost walks have provided the text each December, a few days before Christmas. Early booking has been essential with a waiting list quickly following. Much reading and library research takes place before each outing with similar conditions required for the popular Princess Diana Memorial Walk led by John on five occasions since 2001 which Pat has helped to research.

Another leader introduced walks with an historical theme, a few weeks after the winter walk described above. With his own enthusiastic style, often quoting dates and nearly always without recourse to notes, Denis Galvin it was who led the first of these for the group in early February, 2004, when a walk (in the footsteps of Marie Lloyd) drew a large contingent to Liverpool Street station. Being well supported since, he leads regularly for other groups and societies. Historical walks of all descriptions have been an ever increasing part of the walking programme, being particularly appreciated during the winter months as an alternative to sometimes heavy going over ploughed fields.

The December, 2003 publication featured a "Protest" heading for the first time, concern being raised in connection with the possible expansion of Stansted airport. The Ramblers' Association had joined two pressure groups campaigning for a less environmentally damaging aviation industry. At local level, the group would be keeping a close watch on impending developments, with adopters of parishes likely to be affected being particularly vigilant. Currently, plans appear to have been shelved, but no doubt an eye will be on the lookout for any potential changes in direction likely to interfere with the surrounding countryside.

While continuing to be involved with disadvantaged groups, Len Banister had stood down as Outreach Officer at the end of 2003. At the same time, Roger Gibbs became Footpath Officer. This important work had been unfilled following the sad passing away of John Holness eighteen months previously. Roger would contribute a huge input for the next 6 ½ years, dedicating himself in the task of looking into many queries raised by adopters, leaders and other members contacting him with path problems. Relinquishing the post in the middle of 2010, he continues to serve as a committee member, remaining available to impart much knowledge to his successor.

The Greensand Way, from Haslemere in Surrey to Hamstreet Kent was the long distance route selected for 2004 and 2005, 118 miles being traversed on seven Sundays and four Sundays each year, respectively. A team of leaders organised different stages. Frank Holzman was in charge for the walking of the Gloucestershire Way. This took place over two long weekends in May and September, 2004, staying at Lydney in the Forest of Dean.

#### WEST ESSEX GOES FOREIGN

During 2003, John Juchau had suggested to the committee the group might consider a short holiday abroad. With the idea given the go-ahead, a five-day visit to the Rhine Valley was organised., a walks programme with local sightseeing for the following summer. A letter from John for the archives includes details of each succeeding descriptive visit with unforgettable vistas and different grades of walking, an annual event eagerly awaited by a regular band of enthusiastic members. The popularity is proved by the filling of all vacancies within a few days of the booking form included at the end of the relevant walk programme many months beforehand. These have to be posted; personal visits and handovers are not allowed and a strict order of receipt is maintained. John and Pat's outstanding work and attention is further indicated by the waiting list for vacancies created for each holiday. Listed from the initial idea:-

June 2004	48 in the group to The Rhine Valley
November 2005	40 in the group to Malta and Gozo, 5 days on each island
September 2006	33 in the group to Northern Spain
May 2007	39 in the group to Croatia
May 2008	40 in the group to Crete
May 2009	50 in the group to Turkey
February 2010	40 in the group to Lanzarote

The final two sentences of the letter quote:- "someone in the group remarked 'join West Essex and see the world'! Well, possibly not quite, but, who knows where these trusty boots might travel in the years to come? Watch this space' "A P.S. states John's organisation of U.K. group holidays in the Mendips (June 2006) and Lake District (September 2009). Apart from acting as a leader on some 190 occasions (and counting), since March, 2000, and Pat's regular historical outings in London, already documented, they put in much time and thought as Publicity Officers. Members on their mailing list are invited to distribute posters each month to a variety of shops, libraries etc. Each one highlighting four or five of the group's walks. The West Essex website is listed, for further information, together with John and Pat's telephone number which combines to advertise the group's aims – a busy pair for the benefit of the Ramblers' Association in general and the West Essex group in particular.

The activities of the Working Party and Adopt-a-Parish scheme were rewarded in March, 2004 by the Ramblers' Association with a Footpath Work Awards 2003 certificate. The group had been encouraged to enter by the manager of the Epping Forest Countrycare. It was chosen as one of the twenty successful groups throughout the country, a fitting tribute to the dedication of the adopters and working party members over many years. Frank Holzman acknowledged each person involved with the statistics of waymark posts, finger posts, stiles, bridges and kissing gates created and path clearances completed. The value of the work had been calculated at over £46,000.

During 2004, three sub-committees were set up for walks, footpath and countryside in order to widen the involvement of members. A distinction between committee members, elected annually, and officers was set out. Val Weatherley took on the office of Mid-week Short Walks Secretary. Four walks were now offered each week with additional evening outings arranged during the summer months. Membership totalled just over 1000 towards the end of 2004. This figure was around 100 fewer than at the beginning of the year. Only one parish out of 26 within the group's area had no adopter. The group constitution was challenged with the aim of committee members required to stand down after three years in office. Correspondence between two members featured in the WEP's of the period, stating different views.

On the active front, Len Banister's long distance venture in September took the group south of the River Thames for the Tunbridge Wells Circular Walk of 27 ½ miles. A party of five completed the route with little trouble. The traversing of The Green London Way commenced in December 2004, a 92 mile circular outing through the London Boroughs. Stages took place monthly during the winter with completion a year later.

The group gained further prestige for a walk led by John and Pat Juchau on New Year's day 2005, being voted the Best Urban Walk by the Independent newspaper. The seven mile route, from East Finchley station to Marble Arch incorporating the greener side of London, represented one of the outings of the Festival of Winter Walks and attracted an attendance of 37. Over the next Bank Holiday weekend, a total of 160 walkers participated during the Easter period of four days, 69 being the attendance for an afternoon outing from Chigwell Row church. One of the many evening walks in the programme included a later than usual start at 19.45 hours. John Francis leading the group from Bury Road Car Park, Chingford, to the "Owl". A midsummer day/evening outing, attendees were reminded to bring a torch for the return journey.

A long weekend took place at the beginning of July walking the Belmont 30, a circular route of that distance around the South Lincolnshire Wolds. The group stayed at a Youth Hostel near the town of Louth, Joyce Whiteley being in charge of arrangements. The Gloucestershire Way was completed in August and early the following month Len Banister's long distance walk for 2005 involved a circular outing of 18 miles around Great Waltham, a cluster of pretty villages north of Chelmsford. Earlier in the year, he had given up his work on the WEP publication, having taken on the office of Essex Area R.A. Secretary.

Hazel Davies led a C2 outing from Nursery Road Car Park, Loughton, on 21<sup>st</sup> December with a difference. This first time walk took the group to the home of her daughter in Lippits Hil, for the lunchtime break. There, mince pies and mulled wine were served by husband, George and family. Those attending were invited to make a donation to the Woodland Trust in which the family were closely involved. Just over £72 was collected on the day. This popular walk has continued annually since, a few days before Christmas and is always well-supported. Weather conditions have naturally varied. On at least one occasion it has been possible to sit outside, looking at an extensive garden. Other days have seen attendees comfortably seated in front of a log fire, casting minds back to traditional Festive Season times of the past ..... Replete and satisfied, the p.m. return journey to the starting point takes on a different aspect. Each year, total donations have increased.

Val Weatherley agreed to take over the position of Social Secretary during the year, having effectively organised such engagements for some time. The 2005 Annual General Meeting towards the end

of November resulted in more changes than usual to the committee and officers, notwithstanding the constitutional challenge regarding the maximum term of office having been rejected. Mike Whiteley became Secretary after a vote, defeating a certain member decked out in the club colours of the football team of his support and choice ..... Mike replaced Peter Spence and continued in the role of Membership Secretary for a few months into 2006. The author stood down after 7 ½ years as Assistant Rambles Secretary, having negotiated a smooth change over with Ray Latham, ably assisted by Jan. Doreen Lodge retired after five years of dedicated work as Countryside Officer. David Weekes replaced Doreen, wishing to put something back into the group having, with Pam, enjoyed regular walking for many years since retirement. A new office was created, that of Web Site Officer:- Harry Hawkins would be instrumental in advancing the group's "on-line" facilities. Peter Spence had been Secretary for eight years, a regular walks leader and organiser of the annual walk for the Blind. He currently continues to be active as a member of the Working Party and small jobs team.

During the year, a lady from New York State wrote a letter, thanking the West Essex group and Redbridge Ramblers for their company, leadership and car rides during a three month stay. Mentioning places walked, she appreciated a few hours of enjoyment which helped, quote:- "maintain my equilibrium during a rather difficult time", while visiting an aging Mother in Chigwell. This tribute emphasised the way in which walking groups could be of assistance, enabling someone to reap the benefit of a different outdoor pursuit for a few hours.

For 2006, eight Sundays from April to November were allocated to walk the High Weald Landscape Trail, a 90 mile route from Horsham to Rye. A team of leaders organised each stage. The latter town was approached from a different direction, being the finishing place for the 1066 Country Walk, this being a joint venture with the Redbridge Ramblers, 31 miles traversed from Pevensey Castle on two summer Saturdays. The Green London Way continued during the winter months.

The April to July, 2006 programme included the West Essex website which had gone live in December, 2005. Harry Hawkins explained the benefits in an article. Val Weatherley composed a column in the WEP inviting members to complete an application form to join the Stop Stansted Expansion. The detriment to the countryside, covered by the building of a second runway at the airport, was set out. A Ramblers "Use Your Paths Week" was highlighted by two walks in the summer drawing attention to the poor responsibility of Essex county Council in their attitude to rights of way.

Two walks within eight days in April provided members with an appreciation of local railway history, flora and fauna. John Francis was joined by Prof. Edgar Brown in a detailed examination of a proposed extension to the railway line from Chingford to High Beach in 1878. "Day Return to High Beach." Brian Ecott was invited by John Juchau to impart knowledge of plants and animals in a "Nature Walk." The latter guest would feature in future programmes.

Keith Wenden replaced Mike Whiteley as Membership Secretary during the summer leaving the latter able to concentrate fully on the affairs of group Secretary. The former, with Cynthia, expressed interest in introducing Family Walks to the varied programme and to that end led the first outing towards the end of September, 2006, an approximate four mile circular walk at a leisurely pace from Chingford station. This proved worthwhile, 41 being present including 13 children of different ages. The walks have been repeated since with varied numbers.

During the same month, the traversing of the London Loop commenced, a 140 mile route completely within the M25 Motorway. The length of each stage would be about 11 miles, programmed for the last Saturday in the month embracing the next year.

Harry Edler had expressed a wish to stand down as Treasurer earlier in 2006 and was thanked wholeheartedly at the November Annual General Meeting for 15 years service which had also been preceded by two years as Auditor. He would serve for three more years as a committee member, a total of 20 years in three different capacities ..... David Goodwin was elected in the Treasurer's role. A new system

of coach journey refunds was immediately put in place, consequential to David's appointment. These would be forwarded in November each year in future. At the same time, Frank Holzman gave 12 months notice that 2007 would be his final year as Chairman.

The aforementioned Thames Path became the linear long distance route on Sundays during 2007, the first leg starting on 11/3. The final walk in the April to July 2007 programme featured Len Banister's longest invitation to date:- a linear outing along the New River from Hertford East station to Finsbury (nearest station the Angel), distance:- 30 miles, length of journey:- 10 ½ hours approximately. Attendees were reminded to carry adequate refreshments.

Three outings, each with a different theme or purpose, were included in the following programme:- Audrey Carson and Jenny Knox were the joint leaders in the month of August from the car park opposite the "Camelot", Lambourne End, for a half-day ramble after which a picnic took place in Hainault Forest nearby. Pimms became the speciality on the drinks menu, helping down a variety of sandwiches, cake and fruit salad prepared well beforehand by many willing assistants. An annual event since, about the same date, the last three years have included a rounders match with many members showing outstanding and unexpected prowess and agility, both with the bat and in the (bumpy) outfield. A tent has added a professional air to the proceedings .....

By complete contrast, a Runway Ramble was organised at Hatfield Forest a month later, with the group joining the National Trust and Stop Stansted Expansion campaign, drawing attention to the severe impact the building of a second runway at the airport would have on the forest. Val and Alan Weatherley were the leaders responsible for the group's involvement. A route for the five mile walk from the National Trust was available on the day, being well marshalled for the benefit of the large number who attended.

This was immediately followed by six walks during Public Transport Walks' Week, each group outing commencing from a different tube station, B.R. station or the D.L.R. network. These were well supported, the first, a Sunday afternoon outing from Chingford attracted 36 people. The last, on the following Saturday was a joint venture with the Redbridge Ramblers, commencing at 11 a.m. with one fewer meeting at the Bank of England outside the Royal Exchange.

The 2007 Annual General Meeting held in its usual month of November, marked the retirement of Frank Holzman after 19 years in the role of Chairman. The relevant available WEP which had accompanied the December 2007 to March 2008 walks programme featured a front-page tribute by John Francis. In addition to "Finally Frank," detailing footpath and other work carried out on seven days from the end of May to the end of September. "A letter from Frank" described his original suggestion of the Adopt-a-Parish scheme 18 years previously and its subsequent development. In a further paragraph Frank included the early happenings of the Working Party ie:- quote, "Bill (Govey) would for example build a stile in his workshop which I believe was in his cellar. He would then take it to pieces so that it could be transported in someone's car to wherever it was needed. At the work site it would be re-assembled and set in place, while Phyllis (Govey) and others would be roasting potatoes in a fire." His article concluded with his intention to carry on with the work as above.

Richard Iles was elected Chairman. He and Judy had been members and leaders for many years, with the latter a member of the newly-formed Social sub-committee. Their joint roles would be of essential value in the coming months.

Thanks were accorded to Yvonne Marshall for the production of the Walks Programme on her word processor for over ten years. Lesley Gillard had volunteered her services, the programme overlapping 2007 into 2008 being her initial one on a different format.

The business of the Annual General Meeting during the evening included a surprise accolade for a quartet of members, an award of a Certificate of Achievement for lasting contribution. This was presented and signed by Kate Ashbrook, an executive at the Ramblers' Association Head Office and the invited guest

speaker. Frank Holzman, who had vacated the Chair about an hour earlier and Harry Edler, 12 months after stepping down as long-serving Treasurer, were the first two recipients. Fred Matthews, co-founder of the group with 27 years outstanding service as the initial Secretary was awarded the certificate in his absence. (the author was an astounded recipient of the fourth one!)

The 2008 walks programme included an initial series of summer Sunday afternoons organised and led by Alison Moore, visiting churches of renown and the windmill at Aythorpe Roding. Following the conclusion of each, homemade tea and cakes were available, the one stipulation being the requirement of a telephone call to Alison the evening before, confirming attendance. These were joint ventures with the Redbridge Ramblers. General notes in the programme also included the availability of the above facilities for members on an individual basis.

Walk codes were revised during the year, five separate categories being introduced. These ranged from Easy Access (EA) TO Strenuous (S).

A Saturday a.m. ramble on 14<sup>th</sup> June commenced from the "Royal Oak", Stapleford Abbots, "Morning walk in fields, woods and parks" led by Cyril Scanes. Organised to finish before 1 p.m. around 20 people gathered on a slight rise nearby to witness the traditional fly-past at the conclusion of the Trooping of the Colour a few miles away. "You must lay this on again" someone suggested before those attending dispersed for the rest of the day. Alas, a few hours later, tragedy struck:- Cyril collapsed and passed away, having spent part of the afternoon in his garden. He had been a leader for 15 years. Soon after his initial one, his name had become a permanent fixture on the second Saturday in the even months, ie:- February, April, etc. This made it an easier task for a succession of Rambles Secretaries and assistants attempting to fill 17 or 18 days in each four-monthly programme. However, to the consternation of the author (and himself no less), Cyril telephoned on one occasion to cancel his June date:- one of his daughters was getting married ..... With a slight adjustment to the list, he led on the third Saturday instead!! A hard-working clearer of paths as an adopter for Stapleford Abbots, he is still missed to this day.

The Forest Festival took place on Sunday, 7<sup>th</sup> September in 2008 with a difference. This had been held annually for many years in September, taking place on Chingford Plain with the exception of 2005 when the west side of Centre Road, Wanstead Flats was the venue. This provided the opportunity for the general public to meet group members face to face. Peter Spence was originally in charge, but soon after their appointment as Publicity and Recruitment Officers, John and Pat Juchau spent long hours at the West Essex Ramblers' Association group stand. It was necessary to undertake much preliminary planning to advertise the group's aims, with many pamphlets available for distribution with the ultimate object of encouraging an increase in membership. On this occasion, in addition to the pre-Festival walk through the immediate area, three further outings were arranged in connection with the Festival introduction to Rambling series. These were led on 12<sup>th</sup>, 14<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> September by John Francis, Mike Whiteley and Cynthia/Keith Wenden, respectively.

A further initial date appeared on the walking calendar in 2008, a "Christmas Morning Meander", a four mile outing from the Roding Valley Nature Reserve car park, Chigwell. A 10 a.m. start, the leader, John Juchau, assured those interested "You'll be back around Noon." Eight attended with John and Pat.

During the year, David Weekes in his role as Countryside Officer drew members attention to the Stop Stansted Expansion campaign. A meeting was held at the United Reform Church, Chingford, on 3<sup>rd</sup> October to raise awareness of the outcome of a recent public enquiry with an explanation of future action, should the plan to expand the airport succeed. The well-attended gathering of group members added to the numbers of other kindred bodies to hear the report by the Chairman of the campaign Team.

David also reported the rejection by Epping Forest District Council to an application to build over 100 homes to the north of Grange Farm, Chigwell. The Planning Inspectorate had appealed, however.

Ken Hoy, Chairman of the Friends of Epping Forest, was the guest speaker at the 2008 Annual General Meeting and during the proceedings presented Yvonne Marshall with a Certificate of Achievement. Yvonne was recognised for her typing of the walks programme, the role from which she had recently retired.

### FRED

The year 2009 opened on a sad note with the passing away of Fred Matthews on New Year's Day, in hospital after a short illness. He was 85 years old. His funeral service, two weeks later, took place at Lambourne Church and he was laid to rest beside his wife, in the churchyard. Many West Essex group members were present, together with colleagues and friends from other R.A. walking groups in the county, after which a reception took place at Abridge Village Hall.

A two page tribute to his immense contribution, with others, in the creation of footpaths in Essex appeared in a subsequent WEP. Written by John Francis. Moving to Abridge in 1953 upon his marriage to Kathleen, they both walked on their own for many years. In 1970, Fred joined an afternoon walk from Buckhurst Hill to Abridge in connection with a National Footpath Week organised by the R.A. This was abandoned before the finish due to the state of the footpaths, hence his eventual response to the letter from Ken Knowles in April of that year to assist in the public meeting and subsequent formation of the West Essex group.

Taking early retirement from the Civil Service in 1972, he commenced writing and publication. His first book "Walking with West Essex", describing countryside around Epping, Ongar and the Roding Valley cost 25p. This was soon followed by "More Walks with the West Essex" at a price of 45p and included sketch maps by Harry Bitten. Seven similarly titled publications with Harry, catered for the growing number of car users. Further books included "The Three Forests Way", a 60 mile route linking the forests of Epping, Hainault and Hatfield, the Epping Forest Centenary Walk (1978), the "Essex Way" (1972) from Epping to Harwich, 82 miles (extended from Dedham), the "Harcamlow Way", Harlow to Cambridge and return via Saffron Walden (1980) and "St. Peter's Way", a 45 mile walk from Ongar to the Chapel at Bradwell.

In 1986, the "Essex 100" commenced, an annual 100 mile linear Area event over nine consecutive days which criss-crossed the County countryside for the next 21 years. Many paths had to be checked beforehand with Fred co-ordinating a committee consisting of members of other groups until his health declined towards the end of the 1990's.

Fred was involved with Frank Holzman and Len Alcott in the establishment of the Adopt-a-Parish scheme in 1990 and assisted the local Working Parties in footpath clearances etc. Chairing a Roads Working Party, a great achievement resulted in the building of extra pedestrian bridges over the A120 and A130 roads after a campaign at County Hall. The article concluded with a paragraph about his work in the Colonial Office. Apparently due to accompany the Queen on a tour to an African Colony, he was moved to a new department, missed the experience and the "gong" that would have gone with the job .....

Would it be correct to call Fred the "Wainwright" of Essex?" In parallel circumstances with "AW", he wrote books. However, whereas the latter investigated routes completely on his own, Fred opened up many paths accompanied by fellow enthusiasts. Their outlook on the Great Outdoors, though, appeared similar. Both spent working lives in the public sector, Fred a civil servant, A.W. Borough Treasurer at Kendal Town Hall, Cumbria, but while the latter retired at 60, and spent his weekends and holidays travelling and photographing for his books, Fred took early retirement. Despite differences in some respects, the principle still applies. A final comparison:- although not appearing on Desert Island Discs, Fred used Essex Radio to good effect .....



This photograph, dated 5<sup>th</sup> August, 2001, was taken outside Canuden Village Hall after the conclusion of the Essex "100" of that year. Fred is pictured with Colin Jacob of the Brentwood Group. Some one (Colin himself?) would have collected him from Abridge so that he could join in the celebrations and witness the distribution of certificates to those who had completed all nine days of the event. Until he was unable to drive, Fred supported each day's walk, parking his car at strategic points and walk towards the oncoming participants, over 100 on each weekend at its peak popularity, and pass on words of encouragement.

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The Capital Ring was the local circular route on the agenda for 2009. Commencing at Beckton on 28<sup>th</sup> February, Reg Clarke became the sole leader during eight sections walked on Saturdays, a total distance of 75 miles. The 65 mile Oxfordshire Way was the long distance path chosen for six Sundays from May until October. A different leader took charge for each stage.

The Forest Festival on 6<sup>th</sup> September with the pre-Festival walk was again followed by 2 further outings entitled "Welcome to Walking", designed to encourage new recruits to join the group. First-time members joining the Ramblers' Association were offered a 20% reduction on the normal annual subscription. These rambles took place on 9<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> September led by Val/Alan Weatherley and Mike Whiteley, respectively.

Essex Area was formed in 1984, with county groups organising 25<sup>th</sup> year celebrations. The West Essex hosted a weekend of walks on 19<sup>th</sup>/20<sup>th</sup> September which were also dedicated to the memory of Fred. The afternoon outing on the first day was led by John Francis, with Mike Whiteley in charge of the annual Centenary Walk on 20/9.

Three "Old Boys" each celebrated his 70<sup>th</sup> birthday by leading a five mile morning ramble from the "Good Intent", Upshire on 19<sup>th</sup> November and, with their respective wives, hosted a party for around 50 members at the hostelry afterwards. In order of seniority, Alan Weatherley, George Davies and Len Banister made a speech and then "cut the cake" with due ceremony.

John Juchau's second venture, leading on 25/12 entitled "Christmas Morning around Abridge" attracted 10 plus John and Pat. Due to weather conditions, one couple could not pass their car drive so a round dozen around Abridge failed to materialise. A portent of falling temperature which would arrive during the next few days, as a new decade and the group's 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary beckoned .....

Congratulations were accorded to Len Banister on his election to the R.A. Board of Trustees, the first West Essex group member and County member to have achieved that distinction. He was currently serving as Essex Area Council Secretary.

Frank Holzman accepted the honour of President during the November 2009 Annual General Meeting. This Friday evening occasion was enlivened by the guest speaker, Tom Franklin, Chief Executive of the Ramblers' Association. He had those attending up and down from their seats like yo-yos, answering

questions about their reasons for walking and what made them join the R.A. He was obviously impressed with the aims and work carried out by the group, as both the Chairman and Secretary received complimentary words of congratulations by email in due course.

### 2010 – A RAMBLING REVIEW AND THE SOCIAL SCENE

Despite The prevailing cold spell, an attendance of nearly 50 gathered outside Loughton station for the traditional afternoon amble on New Year's Day, part of the Festival of Winter Walks. However, three outings involving lengthy journeys by car into the countryside were cancelled almost immediately afterwards due to heavy falls of snow. In the middle of the month, 10 hardy souls braved the elements for the first historical ramble of the year round Leyton, walking with extreme care on icy pavements, a route which included passing Leyton Orient Football Club. A fortnight later, the annual outing to Cheshunt and return took place from Waltham Abbey, the landlord of the hostelry driving to the meeting area beforehand to take orders for meals, a custom going back well before the Millenium. It happened to be this veteran leader's birthday on this occasion with the usual rendering of "H.B.2.U. (Abbrev.!) being sung during the afternoon tea break.

The popular historical Princess of Wales Memorial Walk and the Lea Valley bird-watching amble the day following during February, featured three leaders who had attended the public meeting in April, 1970 to discuss the formation of the group. The last week of the month saw the group venturing abroad for the 7<sup>th</sup> consecutive year, Lanzarote being the destination at an earlier time of year than usual. Meanwhile, an option for those staying at home included another historical walk from Liverpool Street station, a change from prevalent muddy conditions underfoot.

Parts of three "Ways" were walked during March, the Green London, Harcamlow and Flitch, the second and third necessitating longer county journeys to Newport and Little Dunmow respectively. A new outing featured the Waltham Forest Boundary Walk, a 24 mile circular route from Chingford station via Walthamstow, Leytonstone and Leyton over varied terrain. The walk, in two equal parts, took place on consecutive Saturdays.

Easter occurred in such a way that the programme provided walks on 11 out of the first 14 days in April. A varied choice offered outings as diverse as the easy first Tuesday of the month ramble, to a 12 mile Thames walk from Kew to Hampton Court on Easter Saturday. A small party of eight met on a dull day at Kelvedon Hatch on Good Friday following old Pilgrims routes. Easter Sunday's annual Primrose Walk and the traditional Easter Monday coach ramble to Sussex, on this occasion from Beachy Head to Wilmington, were well supported. The walk on 14/4 linked London Art Galleries. Limited to 20 places, it was led by one of the year's new leaders. An outing from Mile End station encouraged a large attendance featuring a visit to the recently opened cafe overlooking the 2012 Olympic Park. The last day of the April programme became the first of seven mid-week coach rambles taking place each month until the end of October. A popular and regular part of the walking calendar, each is carefully surveyed beforehand by a team of leaders organised many months previously in conjunction with the coach company. Many members base their other interest and holiday arrangements on the dates arranged.

The second Sunday in May provided members with a choice of two outings. The Suffolk Coast and Heaths Path was the long-distance coach route chosen for 2010 with the first stage taking place on 9/5. Seven members led these in June, July and August with the final leg completing the walk at Lowestoft on 3<sup>rd</sup> October. A tribute in the WEP shortly after thanked those involved for the completion of another successful journey. An alternative walk introduced another summer of tea and cake rambles. Repeated on Sunday afternoons in June, (twice), August and September, these circular outings were well supported and enjoyed, although the second June date clashed with one of the Football World Cup matches. A week later, a large party spent a long weekend walking the Avon Trail, 23 miles from Bristol to Bath, with accommodation near the first-named city. The Chelmsford Centenary Circle over a similar distance was traversed towards the end of the month, six people attending on what turned out to be the hottest day of

the year to date ..... Two days later, the “highest peak in Essex” featured another new leader, a circular outing from Arkesden.

A wet spell of weather in early June restricted numbers to four plus the leader on the first Tuesday of the month. Unusually, the following Tuesday also featured a walk, a coach outing to visit Rockingham Castle situated on the border of the counties of Leicestershire and Northamptonshire. A wet morning walk beforehand greeted the group again. Dry and warmer conditions then prevailed for the rest of the month which included two of the outings cancelled in January due to the dangerous driving situation. Two more “Ways”, a long walk from Collier’s Hatch incorporating parts of the Essex and Three Forests took place. Using these long-distance routes provides ideal opportunities for survey and check for blocked parts.

During the first days of July eight group members spent a weekend walking in Sussex, a self-catering venture starting at the Youth Hostel at Alfriston and again the WEP was the medium for thanks to the leader for excellent organisation. A Friday evening outing, “Walk to High Beach and Return by Train” featured a repeat historical account by a leader relating to a planned rail route from Chingford to High Beach in 1883. Walks around this time, (early July, not 1883 ...!) coincided with the hottest temperatures during 2010, just over 30 degrees centigrade contrasting exactly six months after the coldest January for 20 years, with the thermometer registering under 30 degrees fahrenheit. A morning ramble towards the end of the month from the car park opposite the Queen Elizabeth Hunting Lodge involved the third member of four, leading for the first time. The next day, the long walk of that week along another part of the Harcamlow Way was that originally featured on the programme in January again called off due to the heavy snowfalls.

A mid-week short walk in Mid-August from the Roding Valley Nature Reserve led by the fourth new name on the leaders’ list gave no initial indication of an interesting route through an area which, during the 1940’s, was the site of a Royal Air Force base. A note typed in 2003 headed “Looking Back – RAF. Chigwell” read out by one of the 40+ attending, described the last three months of a veteran group member when he was stationed there before demobilisation in the summer of 1949. A copy of this note, kindly forwarded to the author by request, is one of many items which will be carefully retained in the archives. (Coincidentally, but sadly, this member who finished his military service so close to home over 60 years ago passed away earlier in the summer.) The added highlight of this outing occurred on return to Buckhurst Hill where food was available at the Tavern near the station. Twelve of the party were well catered for in pleasant surroundings away from the main bar – an outstanding day with a difference. Seven days later, the annual Walk and Picnic outing was held in the Lambourne End area of Hainault Forest. Many members put much thought and diligent effort beforehand and on the day, into satisfying an attendance of around 40 with delicacies and a large range of drinks. An energetic game of rounders rounded (!) off another varied day ..... The Bank Holiday Monday linear outing from the stations at Debden to Theydon Bois attracted a large number, 65. The hostelry at Abridge, scene of the lunch break, became somewhat crowded; unfortunately the cafe nearby was closed.

Just over 30 attended the morning walk before the annual Forest Festival got into full flow on the first Sunday in September. Business was brisk at the West Essex Group R.A. stall on Chingford Plain with the Publicity and Recruitment Officers assisted by other members. A few days later, the ever popular outing from Hadleigh to Leigh involving the climb to Hadleigh Castle took place with the opportunity to sample fresh seafood for lunch at Old Leigh before the return journey. This is another day at the seaside which has appeared annually for many years. The Centenary Walk, described earlier in the narrative, took place on the third Sunday of the month, attracting the usual large numbers arriving and departing at different times during a long day. A week later a “Full House” of ramblers arrived at Sandown, the base for a five-day break on the Isle of Wight. Spending a few days there beforehand checking details, one person organised the entire holiday, from individual bookings to transport and hotel arrangements and finally leading the walks. With sunnier conditions than experienced on the mainland, a guest in a subsequent article described it as “a holiday to remember” in an appreciation.

Two walks for the West Essex 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary commenced the walks programme for the month of October, Saturday, 2<sup>nd</sup>. These took place from the Avenue of Trees, Theydon Bois, a six mile medium paced walk and one of a shorter distance of about four miles, led by two founder members of the group. Those who attended on an historic occasion (nearly 60), were almost equally divided between each ramble. Although muddy underfoot, the weather remained kind for these pre-celebration outings with a cross-section of veteran walkers mingling with those who had joined the group more recently. One senior member, although pleased to have taken part, confided to the author a decision to finally retire from active participation ..... Many regular ramblers stayed behind to prepare the local church hall for the proceedings to follow described under the Social Scene part of the history. Some members were up and about before sunrise the next day, making their way to the various coach pick-up points en route for the final leg of the Suffolk Coast Path. Two days later, a smaller than usual party assembled at the Avenue of Trees, Theydon Bois, for what may prove to be the final first Tuesday of the Month walk. To the delight of those present, the regular leader resumed his place at the head of the group with his wife back-marking after an absence of several months. A tribute appeared in the subsequent edition of the WEP written by a regular supporter, outlining their contribution to the group endorsed by the Chairman. (The couple had also attended the short walk and celebration lunch.) A linear London outing on the tenth day of the tenth month of the tenth year (!), a warm day, attracted 35 walkers, a combined ramble with the Epping Forest HF Group. While a close liaison has remained constant with the Redbridge Ramblers since the latter's formation, joint outings with the HF Group have been irregular in recent times. (A peruse through notebooks and programmes for the 1980's and 1990's reveal a close association with this kindred group, together with other County R.A. groups.) Ten days later, the final coach ramble of the year took the group to the usual area of the Chilterns. Six members had organised these ever popular outings to varied locations many months previously, some designed to accommodate those members not wishing to walk the whole length of the route. The leader of the last Wednesday of the October programme was surprised to be in charge of a party of 22 for a third walk from Theydon Bois of the month, a distance of around 5 ½ miles. During the coffee and comfort stop, it was noticed that the ladies outnumbered the gentlemen by 2 to 1. While not commented upon at the time, the heading for the walk did read:- "The Theydon Bois Walk (girls also welcome!) Conversation during that interval also revealed the combined ages of 3 of the 7 men totalled just over 240, with little between their years of birth. One, a current Wednesday, winter walker only has been a member for 32 years and regaled the party for a short time about Fred Matthews who he knew well and walked with on many occasions.

The initial outing in the November programme invited members to walk the first stage of the Chelmsford Centenary Circle with a linear route of about 10 miles from Galleywood to Broomfield, returning to the start by bus. This was for the benefit of those who did not wish to traverse the whole circle as half a dozen had earlier in the year. A circular leg of the Harcamlow Way took place on Thursday 11<sup>th</sup> November from Roydon station on an overcast day, during which the small group attending observed a Two Minutes Silence, remembering lives lost in conflicts throughout the world. A particular request from a member in 1998 before an all-day walk from Ongar is recalled, since when this mark of respect has been noted whenever the group's outings have coincided with 11/11 ..... During the last week of the month a further coincidence occurred. Both the Wednesday short ramble and the longer outing on the following day commenced at Matching Tye from the Village Hall and local hostelry, respectively. Although possibly unprecedented(?), a combined total of around 40 attended. The morning walk from Nursery Road Car Park, Loughton before the afternoon Annual General Meeting at Chingford, together with the circular outing from Epping station, joint with the Epping Society, took place with weather conditions gradually deteriorating.

21 walks were scheduled to take place during December but heavy falls of snow and freezing temperatures resulted in the first Saturday and following Wednesday outings to be called off. A brief thaw enabled the annual Mulled Wine and Mince Pies walk to take place, albeit in muddy conditions underfoot. Some 60 members gathered for the reception (and welcome log fire) by the leader's husband and daughter at the latter's abode once more, most having gathered at Nursery Road Car Park, Loughton for the 10 am start. The pot was filled to overflowing for the benefit of the Woodland Trust after which murky visibility and a persistent drizzle greeted the group for the return to Loughton with the temperature falling rapidly.

The joint walk with the Epping Society became a casualty of the second fall of snow. Held on the third Sunday of the month on this occasion, it was unfortunate that this senior and most regular of events of around 35 years should have been cancelled. True to the rule of those in charge, the leader of the day (one of a pool of seven during the other 11 outings of the year), made his way to the meeting place near Epping station, but no one had attempted the journey by the appointed hour. Members had a choice of an outing on every day of the Festival of Winter Walks from 25<sup>th</sup> December to 3<sup>rd</sup> January, 2011 with 10 leaders sharing responsibility from Christmas Day to New Year's Eve. Although not laying crisp and deep and even, and not falling during the period, remnants of snow continued to cause hazardous conditions with icy patches not always visible. On 25/12, a quartet, including the leaders, met at Abridge, with 11 joining the leader on Boxing Day, a morning outing again from Coopersale. The final three days of the year were well supported with numbers attending in the 20's. A celebration drink, Bailey's and sherry, were enjoyed before the commencement of the New Year's Eve outing at Tawney Common, kindly provided by the joint leaders and much appreciated by the party of 25. A slight accident occurred during the morning, one member failing to negotiate an icy patch, with more damage to wet clothing than physical self. (The author wishes to state that it was not a question of being under the influence of alcohol .....!! but took the opportunity of a kind gesture of the loan of a pair of gloves .....) Following the finish of the walk, more than 20 of the group repaired to the "Mole Trap" consuming a variety of food and drink served by friendly and accommodating staff. This social gathering brought to a conclusion the final event of over 230 walks held during the memorable 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary year of 2010 .....

A deliberate decision not to mention names in respect of leaders of the above cross-section walks has avoided repetition. Each will recognise his/her/joint individual outing in charge. Similarly, members will be aware of particular walks attended.

A breakdown of the 61 leaders during the year reveals an interesting spread of longevity, broken down into decades. The four outings led by newcomers to the leaders' list during 2010 have been mentioned above. Fourteen commenced their year in charge in the 1990's, one in the 1980's and one first led in 1978! (No records exist prior to that year but that particular person's recollection may go back further .....) The balance have commenced their leadership days since the Millennium. All approximately 280 names on the leaders' list have been located with their initial year. The author is willing to supply information upon request – the meeting place might take a little longer .....

The social scene commenced in mid February with the annual quiz night, questions being distributed on this occasion by John Francis as M.C. Aided by John and Pat Juchau, adjudicators/scorers, the usual close contest for prizes ensued. Thanks were accorded to the above, together with Val Weatherley for pre-evening organisation which included the provision of a choice of fish, fowl or vegetarian meals during the interval.

On return to Theydon Bois from the two walks, members who had pre-booked a place at the second of October Celebration Lunch made their way for a reception, joining those who had been busy during the morning preparing tables and cooking the hot lunch of their choice. Given an opportunity to display their culinary skills, the latter instituted a rota to maximise the smooth operation of the event. Second helpings were readily available. In addition, a variety of drinks were on hand, served with aplomb and aplenty by other members. Two informal toasts were proposed during the proceedings:- Len Banister took the floor in his capacity as a Trustee of the Ramblers' Association. He referred to the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of that organisation and drew a parallel between its formation after the original trespass in the Peak District and the similar foundation of the West Essex group inspired by Fred Matthews and Ken Knowles 35 years later. Glasses were raised in response. As Chairman of the West Essex R.A. group, Richard Iles carried forward the theme from Len in believing that the above founder members would have been satisfied by the progress made by the group and referred to the presence of six original members on an historic day. As an example of the continued success of the group, attention was drawn to the current efforts of the Working Party who had recently been given a "Volunteer of the Year" award from Essex County Council. His final pleasant duty was to thank his wife, Judy, for the outstanding success of the occasion together with her willing team. Again glasses were raised with alacrity. A list of the 90 attending

revealed a pleasant cross-section of the membership from the aforementioned half-a-dozen from 40 years ago, some senior who were not currently so active, to more recent arrivals. During the day, in a small room beyond, a display of the group's history created much interest, set up in the morning by a further set of volunteers under the direction of Sue Coulbeck. This consisted of photographs in various forms including newspaper and video with a large section on leaders past and present, together with programmes and other archive material received.

Five weeks later, a group of nearly 30 attended the first-ever concert performance of "Singing in the Rain" at the Royal Festival Hall. A social event with a difference, John Juchau was the organiser of an appreciative party.

Within a week in mid-December, three events drew the year's social activities to a close. On 10/12 the annual Jazz Band Christmas Ball was voted an outstanding success with over 100 members and friends insuring a reasonable profit for the group. Once again preliminary efforts by Val Weatherley and her committee had reaped the rewards of another enjoyable evening.

Two days after, a short walk in the forest preceded an attendance of over 50 people to the U.R.C. church, Chingford for carol singing followed by mince pies. Organised by Mike and Joyce Whiteley with John Rippin as accompanist, it was suggested during a short speech of welcome by the Chairman at the Christmas lunch a few days later, that a West Essex choir had added another chapter to its versatility.

The Waltham Forest College welcomed the group for the fifth successive year on the occasion of the 21<sup>st</sup> annual Christmas lunch on 16<sup>th</sup> December. Again the attendance of around 90 included a senior veterans table, with a cross-section of members, together with some who had booked for the first time. Unfortunately, due to a clash of dates, the former long-serving treasurer, Harry Edler and his wife Joan were unable to be present. Together with the absence of Joyce Norman, Yvonne Marshall became the one member to have attended all 21 lunches! This enjoyable function concluded another outstanding year of social events with the particular emphasis on the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations. With many of the group attending both lunches during 2010 and others booking either event in October and December, around 130 members enjoyed these two landmark occasions.

Tricia Moxey of the Essex Wildlife Trust was an interesting guest speaker at the 40<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting at the end of November. The larger than usual attendance of over 60 perhaps reflected the opportunity to view the photography and archive material displayed again, adjacent to the venue of the church hall in Chingford. Changes to the committee involved Peter Cozens replacing Roger Gibbs in the office of Epping Forest District Footpaths Secretary, effective from 1<sup>st</sup> July. Roger was thanked for his significant work and output in dealing with Rights of Way problems over a period of nearly seven years and agreed to serve as a committee member. Sue Coulbeck had become a like officer during the year with an immediate brief for part of the organisation of the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary year. Attention was drawn to the financial situation, with the lower capitation figures for the current approximate number of 880 members as at 30<sup>th</sup> September, 10. The cost of programme and WEP printing had risen dramatically during the past three years. As a sign of the availability of the internet, a motion was proposed and seconded asking quote:- "the committee to consider a policy which actively encouraged members to use it."

## A STATISTICAL SURVEY

A lengthy and extensive research using the three notebooks kept by Len Alcott during his tenure as Rambles Secretary (from November 1979 to November 1995), together with every walks programme available from November, 1989 to date, has revealed the extent by which the group's activity has grown decade by decade since its formation.

<u>YEAR</u>	<u>NO. OF WALKING DAYS</u>	<u>NO. OF LEADERS</u>
1980	165	40
1990	156	36
2000	203	61
2010	239	61
2009	238	66
2008	246	61

The 1980 and 1990 walking days are consistent with the Saturday and Sunday outings and alternate weeks of Wednesday and Thursday rambles. Fred was a prominent leader in 1980 with 45 walks and 10 years later still led on 27 occasions. Members responded to a request for extra leaders from John Francis during 1999 for the possible addition of a short mid-week walk and the result is reflected in the increase in both columns for the year 2000.

By 2010 the numbers would seem to have peaked in respect of walking days and leaders, with a comparison of the two previous years listed. Extra days organised during the Festival of Winter Walks and increase of mid-week and evening outings account for the higher number of walking days since the Millenium. However, the recent plea again from the Rambles Secretary for more leaders is borne out by that of just over 60 being the same number as 10 years ago.

A further analysis of leaders, conducted again by reference to the same sources as above, provides the following:-

1980 to 1995	Just over 160 leaders
1996 to date	Nearly 120 new leaders

The first line represents the era of Len Alcott, the second being the result of efforts made by John Francis, Len Duffin and subsequently two Assistant Rambles Secretaries and the short walk organiser. Other members would have led in the 1970's, e.g. Ken Knowles, but few papers exist for that period.

### THE GROUP FOUNDATION

A solid basis of a group surely depends on the substance of a committee and officers, leaders and members in general. Perhaps an analogy can be drawn with that of a theatre production:-

Elected and appointed throughout the years, the COMMITTEE and OFFICERS are the DIRECTORS taking ultimate responsibility in deciding the many aspects and destinations required. If some of the offices appear glamorous and hit the headlines, others are no less important, each one being essential for the provision of a varied and balanced walks programme.

Opening the envelope three times a year, initial concentration centres on the walks, the LEADERS representing the MAIN PLAYERS. The versatility of the outings provided are the result of much time, energy, thought, travel and general dedication behind the scenes. These can take place up to 8 months before the date itself, much more when coach rambles, long-distance paths and holidays in the U.K. and abroad are involved.

If the narrative has concentrated on the two sections above, the group could not survive without the remainder of MEMBERS, a huge SUPPORTING CAST. A large proportion consist of those who, though not active, are sympathetic with the aims and ideals of the Ramblers' Association. Many simply attend the social events, assisting before and during functions and serving on sub-committees. Others keep in touch by reading the walks programme and WEP and include a senior section, no longer active. Some are part of

a joint membership, wives of husbands who walk and vice versa. Capitation received depends on numbers based annually. All are vital for a thriving and expanding group. Those who are active attend outings for a variety of different reasons, social, health, reviving former friendships and acquaintances and forming new ones. For the more challenging aspect, a few fix an annual goal of mileage walked (one member was aiming for 1800 in 2010 .....) Many more are satisfied with a modest return after hip or knee replacements. At least one extended an active life a few years ago with the aid of a pacemaker. Then there are those who look forward for the chance to escape the burden of a private problem for a few hours, refreshed on return after the companionship offered in an open air environment. There is room for all .....

### THE FUTURE

Challenges to keep a committee busy many years hence will undoubtedly arise. These were met successfully, for example, during the Foot and Mouth outbreak in 2001. In retrospect, the group was fortunate in its geographical location bordering Outer London and Essex. Rambling was curtailed for a greater length of time in more agricultural areas. Similarly, the coldest start to a year for a quarter of a century in January, 2010, followed by the heaviest fall of snow in early December 11 months later since records began, could have interrupted travelling to and from the social activities prepared for the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Cancellation of walks were minimal compared with many areas, even in adjacent counties which were badly inconvenienced. The group enters its fifth decade in 2011 with the longstanding mix of a long distance footpath challenge, mid-week coach outings, a late spring holiday abroad, an early autumn break in the Peak District, together with the anticipation of mid-week and weekend rambles near and far.

2012 will be viewed with interest as the London Olympic Games take place on the group's doorstep. An early challenge may subsequently result to ensure paths closed and diverted are restored to their former alignment.

11<sup>th</sup> Dec – 17<sup>th</sup> Dec

2010 Walk Programme... Week 50

Date	Leaving time	Start Point Walk Details Lunch/Refreshment Other Information	Grid Ref ... ...Click for map OS map	Contact Leader	Grade Distance Pace
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[click here for advice on column content](#)

11 Sat Dec	10.30	Meet Fishers Green car park, Stubbins Hall Lane <b>Lee Valley walk</b> , Hopefully mud free.  Joint walk with Redbridge	<a href="#">TL 378032</a> L166 E174	Audrey and Jenny	Easy 5.5 miles
12 Sun Dec	<b>14.00</b>	Meet at Chingford URC, Buxton Road, E4 A 10min walk from Chingford Station <b>Epping Forest, Carol singing and Mince Pies.</b> Following a short walk in the forest, we will return to the Church at 4 pm for Christmas carols, accompanied by John Rippin, then we'll finish with mince pies.	TQ 388 946 L166 L177 E174	Joyce and Mike	Medium 3.5 miles
15 Wed Dec	<b>10.00</b>	Meet Nursery Road car park, Loughton <b>Hazel's "Woodland's Trust" Xmas Walk</b> a circular forest walk. Lunch stop. "Owl" PH. More Information in Printed Programme	TQ 417 963 L167 E174	Hazel	Medium 9 miles
16 Thu Dec	<b>10.00</b>	Meet near gates of Waltham Forest College, Forest Road, E17 <b>Christmas Lunch Walk around Walthamstow</b> <b>Historic amble around Walthamstow</b> You may attend the walk even if not having Christmas Lunch For Lunch see "Social Events" in index at top of this page	TQ 379899 L177 E174	John F	Leisurely 4.5 miles

What lies in store for the years following? How will the shape, design and distribution of the walks programme change by, say 2020, with the arrival of a Golden anniversary? With a growing proportion of computer-literate members, will it be available at the touch of a button? Already members of other groups can “surf the internet”, locate the West Essex walks and make their way to the start point and become guests for the day as shown above. What will be the size of the committee, half as large again at present compared with 10 years ago? “Early retirement” may be two obsolete words in the future, the economic situation demanding a longer working life. Obesity is apparently increasing and a detriment to health, but conversely, latest information suggests a larger proportion of the population will reach 100!!

The group is 40 years old and in another forty the half-way stage of the Twenty First Century will have arrived. For those able to retire and still be active in mind, body and spirit, the hope is of enough space for exercise and sufficient leaders to carry on the current standard of rambling. Will members be able to lead outings for school children, Asian women, blind people and other minority associations, serving local communities and the like, enhancing mental and physical well-being if health and safety becomes a bigger issue?

Whatever problematic situations develop in the years to come, it is surely the sincere wish that, with a strong and resilient committee, backed up by an enthusiastic membership, the West Essex group of the Ramblers’ Association will continue to keep RAMBLING ON AND ON AND ON .....

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

A Judgement has been necessary in deciding what items of memorabilia should be included in the narrative with the interest of the group’s history a deciding factor. Additionally, some papers were unsuitable for reproduction. Sincere thanks are hereby recorded to those members who responded to the request for anecdotes, memories and information received by letter, telephone calls, or during conversation on group outings. All have been acknowledged by similar methods. Much has been reproduced as written, some articles have been edited. Using the same principle as that adopted for the description of the walks during 2010, a summary of some items received is deemed more appropriate rather than listing a long column of names without comment. (There will be one exception.)

At the 2008 Christmas lunch, an appeal was put to those attending, via the Chairman, for the location of the first lunch 18 years previously. During the same evening, a telephone call received from a senior member gave details taken from that person’s 1990 diary! This information completed the list of venues as related previously. Another member enclosed a five-page A4 account, a copy headed “City of London Ramble,” commencing at the Royal Exchange on Sunday, 1<sup>st</sup> December 1974, with a detailed description of every street covered during the 8 ½ mile journey. A copy was no doubt distributed before the commencement of the outing. This document is the earliest of its kind.

Access to Fred’s hand-written minutes covering committee meetings and Annual General Meetings from the beginning up to March, 1987 contained in two exercise books totalling 300 pages provided compelling attention. Other memorabilia received with the three notebooks included the earliest walks programme, August to November, 1978. A senior member handed over similar programmes for the three years November, 1989 – November, 1992. The author has personally retained every programme since his first, December, 1992 – March, 1993. The above items, therefore, constitute an almost unbroken 40 years history record.

For easy future reference, a Photostat copy has been taken for the archives of the walks produced by the Secretary and Assistant of the time, which were hastily organised during the Foot and Mouth outbreak in 2001. An explanatory letter from the Chairman has also been copied. Similar copies exist in respect of full-page tributes paid to certain members on their sad passing away.

The leader of the short ramble preceding the 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary lunch used part of a route “More Walks with the West Essex”, a second guide written by Fred and published in September, 1973, cost 45p. Some copies were distributed to those attending, one is retained in the archives. An enthusiastic member has forwarded a news sheet for retention (and advisedly to relevant committee officers) entitled “Hands Off Wanstead Flats!” This details plans for the Metropolitan Police to site its Olympic operational centre on Wanstead Flats for about three months in 2012. (A head and shoulders view of the above person was seen by the author, captured on local television at a meeting at Forest Gate in early October, 2010.)

The above is just a description of a cross-section of documents received. These will be labelled in due course, to be available, if required, for any subsequent social occasion that may be arranged.

Apologies are offered in advance for any misinterpretation of events, glaring inaccuracies and outstanding omissions. Care, concern, commitment and consideration have been at the forefront in an attempt to chronicle the group’s history, decade by decade.

Many paths have been cleared, renovated, re-opened, walked and checked since that letter, dated 9<sup>th</sup> March 1970, was posted to Fred, quote:- “Would you please come here at about 8 p.m. on Monday next, 16<sup>th</sup> March, 1970? .....

Finally, a lasting personal tribute is reserved for Audrey Carson, interpreting the typing of four instalments on four different machines (Two electric, two portable!), used by the author from September, 2009 onwards. With patience and understanding expressed by both parties, the transfer to a word processor has created a neat result, pleasing to the eye .....

JANUARY 2011



