



Kent Ramblers

Issue 8: May 2026

# Kent Footpath Volunteer

An occasional newsletter for our volunteers engaged in looking after Kent's public rights of way network

## Introduction

At the risk of sounding like a broken record, I apologise once again for the time that has elapsed between successive issues of this newsletter.

As some readers will be aware, the Ramblers has been in the throes of a governance review for the last couple of years. The proposals that emerged from a large number of meetings were, in my view, very detrimental to sound decision making and effective democracy in the Ramblers and I have spent a lot of time analysing their deficiencies and attempting to see them rectified.

The final version of the proposals, still highly unsatisfactory in my view, were put to a meeting of General Council in April and failed to secure the level of support necessary for their adoption. I sincerely hope that this will be the end of the matter because the whole business has been a phenomenal distraction from getting on with the things that our members and the walking public really care about – especially public rights of way work. I look forward to being able to focus on these things, including more frequent issues of this newsletter.

RP

## Solar Arrays Coordinator

We are all aware of the threats to our public rights of way network posed by a flood of planning applications for large solar arrays in Kent, and indeed elsewhere. A particular problem is the fairly haphazard nature of these applications – we all understand the need for renewable energy but its provision needs to be in the right place, balanced against other land use (not least food production) and distributed so that the disadvantages are minimised and shared evenly. To ensure a consistent approach and help take a strategic view, Area Council has appointed Paddy Herlihy, already known to you as one of our Local Footpath Officers, as our Solar Arrays Coordinator. If you have a solar array application on your patch, Paddy will be pleased to advise you.

## Meeting for Footpath Volunteers in Lenham: 18 June 2026

Our next full-day meeting for footpath volunteers will be held as usual in Lenham Community Centre on Thursday 18 June 2026. The programme is yet to be finalised but below is a list of topics from which the final selection is likely to be made, depending on availability of speakers. These meetings are a great opportunity to meet and chat with other footpath volunteers. Everyone interested is welcome, even if not yet signed up to a volunteer role, but **booking is essential** to enable us to provide lunch. Please book by emailing [prow.seminars@kentramblers.org.uk](mailto:prow.seminars@kentramblers.org.uk) with your name and any dietary requirements by Thursday 11 June.

You can ask any question you like at the Open Forum session but you are more likely to get a useful answer if you let us know beforehand what you are going to ask.

Possible topics:

- Hugh Craddock is well known for his applications to have the definitive map modified to add unrecorded routes and to “upgrade” footpaths to bridleways and byways. He is also a case officer for the Open Spaces Society. He will be telling us about his activities.
- Goodbye and Hello: we shall have the benefit of being addressed by both the retiring head of the KCC Public Rights of Way Team, Graham Rusling, and his successor, Colin Finch.
- Bromley Update: Paddy Collyer, Bromley's Public Rights of Way officer, will tell us about current issues in this often forgotten corner of our Area (despite the fact that so many of our members live there)
- Mark Robson will talk about his work as an Ordnance Survey surveyor in East Kent
- Interpreting Planning Consents
- Section 106 Funding
- Scrutinising Planning Applications

- Back to Basics: if time permits we may remind you of the basic principles of a key topic, perhaps the rules for claiming a right of way on the strength of prolonged public use
- Updates: Volunteer Recruitment: Guidebook Publication: Parish Map Refurbishments: Lost Ways
- Open Forum

We open with refreshments at 9:30, start formal business at 10:00, break for a free lunch and finish at 15:00. Refreshments will not be provided at mid-morning and afternoon breaks so please bring a drink with you.

## Ramblers' Paths Forum: 4 May 2026

Central Office staff host this online forum for all matters relating to footpath work and issue invitations to everyone interested in the Volunteer Newsletter that goes out to every volunteer registered in their database. Although there are over 300 footpath volunteers in Kent alone, the forum usually attracts around 80 to 100 participants from across Great Britain.

If you are not getting invitations to these events but wish you were, please let me know.

You can view a recording of the forum event here:

### [Ramblers](#)

However it is 90 minutes long and, unless you are especially interested in the installation of accessible path furniture, you may find all the information you need in the following summary.

We were told that May is **Lyme Disease Awareness Month** – there is more information here: <https://lymediseaseuk.com/take-part-in-our-be-tick-aware-campaign-2026/>

We were given a **Paths Team structure** update:

- Head of Programmes – Becky Birrane
- Programmes Manager – Sophie Redmond (previously Reindorp)
- Legal Casework Manager – Matt Hall
- Programme Lead, Path Improvement – Helen Bates
- Programme Lead , Path Protection – Vacant
- Programme Support Officer – Toby Edwards (temp contract, two days per week)

The **Safety on Path Activities** project has stalled a little due to lack of staff resources but will make progress soon.

Eugene Suggett, recently retired as Central Office's most experienced expert in public

rights of way matters, gave an update on the **Roxlena case**. This dispute has been working its way through the courts for a while. Put very simply, it concerns an application to have paths added to the definitive map on the strength of the paths having been enjoyed by the public for over 20 years without interruption. The point in dispute is whether a period during which the public were legally prohibited from using the paths during an outbreak of foot and mouth disease constituted an interruption for this purpose. The outcome it seems is that it would not. I may address this matter in more detail at the Lenham meeting if there is time.

**Disabled Ramblers** gave a presentation explaining the challenges of making public rights of way conveniently usable by people using mobility scooters and wheelchairs. There are many aspects to getting this right, in terms of both surfacing the path appropriately and making furniture, especially latches on gates, easy to use.

RP

## Accessing South Sheppey

With the opening of the King Charles III England Coast Path, there has been a focus on 3 issues to try to improve access to this:-

1. Direct access to Eastchurch from The Swale / South Sheppey;
2. A potential "Lost Way" from Eastchurch to the Isle of Harty;
3. A closed Public Footpath over the railway at Kingsferry

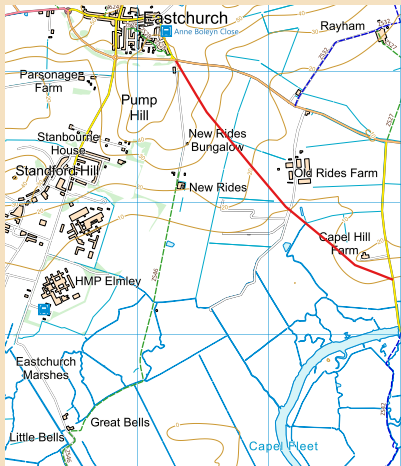
The location of these has been added to the map below.



### 1. Access to Eastchurch from The Swale / South Sheppey

There is a very frustrating footpath ZS46 that leads north from the KCIIIECP towards Eastchurch, but ends at New Rides – and unfortunately evidence has not been found to make a claim to extend this to the road at Eastchurch.

In view of this, Ian Wild has for a number of years worked on trying to persuade the



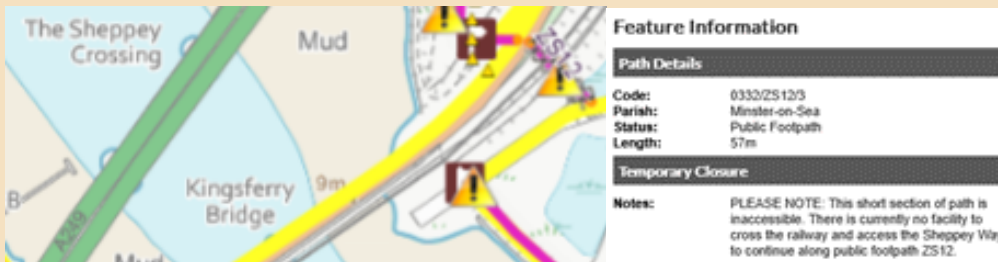
RSPB to allow public access over their land from Little Bells to the prisons, with discussions on this ongoing.

## 2. A potential “Lost Way” from Eastchurch to the Isle of Harty.

This is a path broadly along the route as shown on the red line on the map above. After investigation, I am pleased to advise that KCC have concluded that it is reasonable to allege that a right of way on foot subsists along the claimed route and will therefore make an Order to record the route at footpath status on the Definitive Map of Public Rights of Way. The order to record the footpath is due to be advertised next week, with

the 6 week period for representations or objections starting next Friday (22nd May), ending on the 3rd July. If representations are received (which is extremely likely!), then the case will be submitted to the Planning Inspectorate for decision; if no representations are received, then the order will be confirmed, and the route will become a legally recorded public footpath.

## 3. A closed Public Footpath over the railway at Kingsferry



The short section of ZS12 over the railway has been inaccessible ever since the original Kingsferry Bridge was built. After this was highlighted to Kent Ramblers by someone walking the KCIIIICP, we have as an interim measure persuaded KCC to add the statement above to their online PRoW map. We will work with South Eastern Railways (formerly Network Rail) to try to persuade them to reinstate this path, given that it crosses a non-mainline railway (but this will not be easy!).

Colin Sefton

## Public Inquiry in Bobbing

An unusual hobby it may be, but some of us like to pop along to any public inquiries held in Kent. Most recently Margarethe, Alan Smith and I went to an inquiry into an

application by Network Rail to divert a path away from a level crossing and under a nearby bridge instead. It was a bit of a shambles because the objectors, for whose benefit the inquiry was being held, didn't turn up until lunchtime, forcing us to spend the early part of the afternoon going again over ground already covered in the morning. As a result it all went on too long and some of us went home early (well it was freezing in the village hall and the insistence of counsel for Network Rail on speaking with his back to the audience made hearing the proceedings a struggle).

We, Kent Ramblers, were not amongst the objectors and were satisfied that action was needed to deal with a very dangerous crossing. The diversion order was in due course confirmed by the Inspector.

It is worth stressing for those not familiar with these things that an opposed diversion order has to be referred to the Planning Inspectorate even if there is only one objector. There will then be a formal Public Inquiry, a less formal Hearing or an exchange of documents. Our LFOs often object to unsatisfactory diversions on behalf of the Ramblers in the hope of persuading the landowner to come up with a better arrangement. If this does not happen, the LFO **must** obtain approval from the Area Management Team (via their Sector Coordinator and the Area Footpath Secretary) if they wish to persist with their objection and trigger referral to the Planning Inspectorate.

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## New Walking Guides

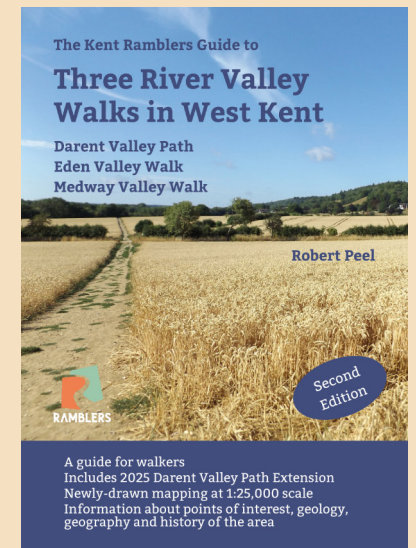
We have published a second edition of our guide to Three River Valley Walks in West Kent: Darent Valley Path, Eden Valley Walk and Medway Valley Walk. Copies will be on sale at the forthcoming meeting in Lenham at the bargain price of £5 each (cash only). All profits support our work.

I am now hoping to make progress with a second edition of our guide to the Kent Coast Path: Part 1 Camber to Ramsgate. I would really appreciate some help checking the drafts, particularly the route directions. If you are likely to be walking any part of the route in an anti-clockwise direction in the next few weeks and are willing to help out, do please get in touch with me on [books@kentramblers.org.uk](mailto:books@kentramblers.org.uk).

RP

## Parish Footpath Maps

One of the ways we are using profits from the sale of walking guides is to refurbish some of the many parish footpath maps to be found adorning village



greens or lurking in bus shelters around the county. So far this year we have tackled those on the village green at Badlesmere and opposite the pub at Godden Green.

Crockenhill is next on the list with Sutton by Dover to follow in June. In the main we only pay for new map panels, glazing and seals so the original frame needs to be reusable or the parish willing to fund a new frame. Here are some before and after photographs.

RP



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