

Basingstoke Ramblers walking club

Basingstoke Ramblers started in 1965 when Roy Dilliway placed an advert in a local newspaper inviting any like minded walkers to join him on rambles. A few people responded and the club was formed. Over forty years later the club is still going strong and currently boasts about three hundred members. Of course not all members turn up for every walk but it's not unusual for thirty or so members to turn up for a walk on a Wednesday.

The club organizes three walks each week in the winter Saturday, Sunday and Wednesday and in the summer months a walk of say four or five miles on Tuesday evenings as well, so every one should find a time and distance that suits them. Most walks start within a forty minute drive of Basingstoke. The leader of the walk has already done the walk before and knows the way so you can just relax and enjoy the wonderful views and follow them.

Walking holidays both in the UK and abroad have been organized and the club has walked in Spain and France in the recent years and in the past, have walked farther a field so we get around a bit. Many club friends also do their own thing and I know that Hadrians Wall has been walked in recent years and various trips to Yorkshire and Devon, Cornwall and so on. You can't drive too far in one day of course but we have done various coast walks in a day, the Isle of Wight, Hengistbury Head (near Christchurch) and Swanage.

Some years we pick a long distance path to walk on a Sunday (within the south of England) and go by coach to the start of each section and get picked up at the end. This year we are walking "The Stour Valley Path" about sixty miles in all, in seven sections from March to October, roughly one section each month.

Of course you always get a few "fair weather" walkers but unless it's deep snow you will always get someone out walking. The saying is "there is no such thing as wrong weather only wrong clothing". Modern clothing is very good but can be a bit expensive but with waterproof everything there is no need to get wet or cold and when the spring comes sitting in the sun eating your sandwiches is just wonderful. A decent pair of boots is a must in the winter of course, particularly when it's wet.

The club has a large contingent of people that have retired early, OAP's and others with time on their hands who mostly walk on Wednesdays. It must be a healthy exercise because we have a number of ramblers in their seventies and a few eighty year olds who walk a usual seven to nine miles each week. The Sunday walks tend to be a bit longer of course say nine to eleven miles sometimes with a pub stop for a meal and a pint.

You see such great things when you are out, herds of Roe deer, Muntjac deer, a Slow Worm last week only the second one I have seen in six years, one adder, two weasles, several Kingfishers, Hares and various birds, Kites, Kestrels, Barn Owls and one Mole that was waddling down a path and loads of Rabbits of course. And then there are the flowers, the Snowdrops, Primroses and the Daffodils are out now and next month the woods will be carpeted with Bluebells, that's a sight worth seeing to shake off the winter blues. Later the pungent smell of wild Garlic will fill the air in the

woods, then later sweet Honeysuckle will fill the hedge rows and the wild summer flowers will come out. Then back to autumn colours of gold and brown and the hedgerows filled with Sloes and Cob Nuts, This the time of year we all dive into the bushes to pick the biggest Blackberries, I even found wild Raspberries once, it's all out there.

The company is always good of course and I'm not sure whether Rambling refers to the walking or talking, both are done in equal measure so if I have wetted your appetite then check out the rest of our web site.

Alex Gibbons