

# Mid-Sussex Rambler



Newsletter number 175, Spring 2025



## CHAIR'S SCRIBBLINGS

Sue Berry

Welcome to the second Mid Sussex Ramblers newsletter for 2025. This year seems to be rushing along but at last we have been able to enjoy some lovely spring weather. On my first Ramblers' walk, after undergoing surgery in January, I found the footpaths to be nicely dried up with very little mud. What a lovely time of the year to be out enjoying the countryside and nature at its best.

Like many of you, I was saddened to hear of the recent death of Leslie Campbell, one of our group's founder members. When I joined the group over twenty years ago, Les was Chair of the committee and a great source of advice and information on footpath matters. He accompanied me when I went to speak to a landowner who was asking for a footpath diversion in Horsted Keynes and came along to support me when I gave evidence at a Public Inquiry in Burgess Hill. I was always grateful for his advice and support and will miss him greatly, as will all his many friends and his family. You will see more tributes to Les later in this newsletter and the committee is already busy making plans for a fitting memorial to someone who was such a strong advocate of walking and maintaining the footpath network in our local area. We have booked the 22nd July for a commemorative walk, followed by refreshments at Ditchling Sports Pavilion. Details of the walk are included later in this newsletter.

Sue Berry, Chair

## BRIEF NOTES

**Query about an upcoming walk? Send a text to the walk leader.** Walk leaders' phone numbers are listed against the walk information on our website. Sending a text to the walk leader is by far the quickest way to have your query answered.

**Don't forget:** our walks programme is always accessible online at [www.midsussexramblers.org.uk/walks/walks-programme.html](http://www.midsussexramblers.org.uk/walks/walks-programme.html)

**Appeal for volunteers at Sussex Area level:** a new Vice chair, West Sussex Countryside Officer and other roles are all still needed. If you are interested in any of these please contact [chairman@sussexramblers.org.uk](mailto:chairman@sussexramblers.org.uk)

**Footpath maintenance team:** The team meets on the 4<sup>th</sup> Thursday of the month and, for now, is mostly concerned with footpath clearance. If you would like to volunteer then please contact David Purcell at [westfootpath@sussexramblers.org.uk](mailto:westfootpath@sussexramblers.org.uk)

## ANNE MARSDEN

Elizabeth Berry

Friends will remember Anne Marsden who was a member when I first joined Mid Sussex Ramblers. Anne, who died in November, was a friendly and enthusiastic walker who also enjoyed our social activities, and particularly enjoyed the MSR Holidays.

Anne was always immaculately dressed and managed to look as smart at the end of a 10 mile walk as she did at the beginning despite the often muddy and rainy conditions. She had many interests including Choral singing and travel and will be greatly missed by all her many friends.



## SPRING NOTES

William Coleman

Springtime at last, I hear you say! The countryside is really waking up now and the bluebells and primroses will be making a fine show.

Confusingly and according to the Met. Office, the dates for spring depend on whether you are following the astronomical or metrological calendar. The date for astronomical spring is Thursday 20th March 2025, ending on Wednesday 21st June. Whereas, according to the meteorological calendar, spring starts on Saturday 1st March.

The birds will be singing in the spring air so listen out for the Robins and Blackbirds who will be nesting. Robins are particularly aggressive at this time of year as they pair up, and will chase most other similarly sized birds away, red-breasted, or not. Long-tailed tits are busy now too.

Prominent too, is the Chiff Chaff, one of the first avian signallers of spring with its rhythmic 'chiff-chaff' song, sing heartily. Although not brightly coloured it makes up for everything with a very loud repetitive song.



Chiff-chaff

Less vocal but more visible at this time of year are Nuthatch and Tree Creeper who scamper along the boughs and branches in a search for food. Keep an ear open for the drumming of woodpeckers; all three species (greater, lesser, and green) make their presence known at this time of year as they establish territories and start breeding. The tawny owls are also in fine voice this month, while buzzards are displaying and rooks starting to nest.

At ground level there is a flush of activity which is well worth looking at on walks. Daffodils produce a dazzling display and these accompany the crocus which look best in vast swathes across the

lawn. The Snowdrops were the first to show. Soon after, the pale yellow, five-petalled Primroses appear and provide an early source of nectar and pollen for bees and butterflies.



Alongside them is one wildflower that is often smelt long before it is seen, Ransoms or Wild Garlic, whose flowers and leaves give off its familiar pungent garlic smell. Wild Garlic may be picked and used in cooking but beware, it is very strong and should be used sparingly.

Seen too, in shady hedge-cover, is perhaps Britain's most curious wildflower, the Wild Arum, otherwise known as 'Lords-and-Ladies'. With its green, womb-like leaf sheath, dark purple spadix, and its tendency to flourish in dark corners, it appears somewhat sinister.



As spring begins to unfold, wildflowers are seen at every turn. Amongst the earliest is the Wood Anemone, with its delicate creamy white blooms that nod in the slightest breeze, giving it the country name of 'wind flower'.



Truly a marvellous sight when walking through the woodlands giving a snow-like covering of the flower on a woodland floor can indeed be a magical sight.

Also making an early appearance are Lesser Celandine, which carpet woodland areas with a mass of shiny golden yellow stars. Happy Springtime Walking!



## OUR WALK PROGRAMME

Please always visit our walks programme page at

<https://www.midsussexramblers.org.uk/walks/walks-programme.html>

for the latest information.

|                                |                                                                                                                                      |                                                                                                                                     |                                                                                                                   |                                             |
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| <b>Sunday,<br/>27th April</b>  | 10am at Road side parking in Eastern Road near recreation ground. Meet at entrance to recreation ground parking., TQ346200, RH17 7QG | A Wivelsfield Circuit, in search of bluebells.<br> | 5.6mi / 9km<br><br>Leisurely     | Contact <b>Anne W.</b><br>07731660285       |
| <b>Tuesday,<br/>29th April</b> | 10am at Wivelsfield Recreation Ground or roadside parking., TQ346200, RH17 7QG                                                       | Sussex Border Path & The Farmers                                                                                                    | 10mi / 16.1km<br><br>Moderate    | Contact <b>Anne W.</b><br>07731660285       |
| <b>Thursday,<br/>1st May</b>   | 10am at Free Car Parking in West Gate and surrounding roads., TQ362166, BN7 3BQ                                                      | Plumpton and East Chilmington and the Downs<br>    | 5.5mi / 8.9km<br><br>Moderate    | Contact <b>Elizabeth B.</b><br>07989 217818 |
| <b>Tuesday,<br/>6th May</b>    | 10am at Seven Sisters Country Park, Exceat. Parking Charges apply. Please car share if possible., TV518995, BN25 4AD                 | Cuckmere Valley<br>                               | 9.2mi / 14.8km<br><br>Moderate | Contact <b>Anne W.</b><br>07731660285       |
| <b>Saturday,<br/>10th May</b>  | 10am at Jack & Jill Windmills Car Park, TQ302133, BN6 9PG                                                                            | To Wolstonbury Hill.<br>                         | 4.4mi / 7.1km<br><br>Moderate  | Contact <b>Anne W.</b><br>07731660285       |

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| <b>Tuesday,<br/>13th May</b>  | 10:30am at Car Park on Highdown Hill TQ 098 041, TQ097040, BN12 6FB                                                                                                                      | Ferring Circular<br>                                  | 7mi / 11.3km<br><br>Moderate      | Contact <b>Elizabeth B.</b><br>07989 217818 |
| <b>Sunday,<br/>18th May</b>   | 10am at Church Lane Car Park, TQ339207, RH17 7RD                                                                                                                                         | Wivelsfield & Ditchling Common. Keeping it local.<br> | 5mi / 8km<br><br>Leisurely        | Contact <b>Anne W.</b><br>07731660285       |
| <b>Thursday,<br/>22nd May</b> | 10am at Car Park East Dean, TV557978, BN20 0DA                                                                                                                                           | East Dean inland & towards the coast.<br>             | 9.7mi / 15.6km<br><br>Moderate    | Contact <b>Anne W.</b><br>07731660285       |
| <b>Tuesday,<br/>27th May</b>  | 10am at Meet Millbrook West car park. Alternative parking across road at Millbrook East. Please ensure you can pay by App, Pay by Phone, Ring Go, Just Park, Horizon, TQ438297, TN22 3PJ | Millbrook. Ashdown<br>                                | 9.7mi / 15.6km<br><br>Moderate    | Contact <b>Anne W.</b><br>07731660285       |
| <b>Tuesday,<br/>3rd June</b>  | 10am at Arlington Reservoir Car park. Parking charges apply. Lay-by opposite may provide parking. TQ528074, BN26 6TF                                                                     | 7 Sussex Churches . A Circular Walk<br>             | 12.3mi / 19.8km<br><br>Moderate | Contact <b>Anne W.</b><br>07731660285       |

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| <b>Sunday, 8th June</b>      | 10am at Firle Beacon car park. Parking charges apply., TQ468058, BN8 6LR                                                                                           | Firle and Beddingham Hill<br>           | 4.8mi / 7.7km<br><br>Moderate  | Contact <b>Anne W.</b><br>07731660285 |
| <b>Wednesday, 11th June</b>  | 6:30pm at Vowels Lane Car park. Please arrange lift share as limited parking., TQ360350, RH19 4LQ                                                                  | Evening Stroll, Vowels Lane.<br>        | 3.1mi / 5km<br><br>Leisurely   | Contact <b>Anne W.</b><br>07731660285 |
| <b>Wednesday, 18th June</b>  | 6:30pm at Millbrook West car park. Alt. parking across road at Millbrook East. Pay via parking app, Pay by phone, Ring go, Just Park, Horizon., TQ438298, TN22 3PJ | Towards Chelwood, Chelwood Vachery.<br> | 3.3mi / 5.3km<br><br>Moderate  | Contact <b>Anne W.</b><br>07731660285 |
| <b>Wednesday, 2nd July</b>   | 7pm at small car park off Falmer Road. Add'l parking in Bexhill Road. Please meet at the car park., TQ356063, BN2 6NT                                              | Woodingdean a walk around the top.                                                                                       | 3.5mi / 5.6km<br><br>Moderate  | Contact <b>Anne W.</b><br>07731660285 |
| <b>Tuesday, 15th July</b>    | 10am at Kithurst Hill Car Park, TQ069124, RH20 4HW                                                                                                                 | Kithurst Hill, Chantry Post and Sullington Manor.                                                                        | 7mi / 11.3km<br><br>Moderate | Contact <b>Anne W.</b><br>07731660285 |
| <b>Tuesday, 22nd July</b>    | 10:30am at Ditchling Parish Council Car Park, Keymer Road, Ditchling., TQ323152, BN6 8SP                                                                           | Walk from Ditchling in memory of Les Campbell                                                                            | 5mi / 8km<br><br>Leisurely   | Contact <b>Sue B.</b><br>07905225711  |
| <b>Wednesday, 6th August</b> | 7pm at Parking at Chailey Sports Club, TQ389210, BN8 4EY                                                                                                           | Evening walk on Chailey Common                                                                                           | 3.1mi / 5km<br><br>Leisurely | Contact <b>Anne W.</b><br>07731660285 |

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|-----------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| <b>Wednesday,<br/>13th August</b>       | 7pm at Ditchling Beacon. National Trust Car Park. Fee Payable. Car sharing available., TQ333129, BN6 8RJ                                 | Evening Walk from Ditchling Beacon<br> | 2.5mi / 4km<br><br>Leisurely   | Contact <b>Anne W.</b><br>07731660285 |
| <b>Wednesday,<br/>3rd<br/>September</b> | 6:30pm at Parking at Devils Dyke by Devils Dyke Inn . National Trust and pay parking Meet in front of Devils Dyke Inn, TQ258110, BN1 8YL | Devils Dyke to Edburton Hill<br>       | 3.6mi / 5.8km<br><br>Leisurely | Contact <b>Anne W.</b><br>07731660285 |

## ART



This wonderful painting is by Heather Kay. It was inspired by Anne's walk from Ditchling Beacon to St Mary's Farm in January. Many thanks to Heather for sending it in.

## YOUR PHOTOS

Spare a thought for your newsletter when you're out and about, and please share your snaps.

The Folly of  
Forest  
walking!

Thanks to Pete  
Ruse



Photos from the joint Refugee Tales walk



Photos above, from Anne Woodroffe;  
below, from Christina of Refugee Tales



# LES CAMPBELL REMEMBERED

## A formal remembrance

William Coleman

I was saddened, as no doubt we all were, to hear that Les passed away recently.

Les was a joint founder of Mid Sussex Ramblers in 1973, and served us well on the Committee. As the group's first Programme Secretary he had the job of recruiting leaders amongst a new membership who often had little experience of walking the countryside, let alone map reading and leading. In the early days of the group when rambling was much less popular than it is now, footpaths were often found to be blocked and farmers found to be surprised by the fact that a public footpath crossed their land.



Photo by Phil Casemore

Les himself led many walks, and could be relied upon to ensure that the walk included a public house. Not only fond of a pint himself, Les was also an expert on the ploughman's lunch and had strong views about where the best could be found. He also firmly believed that no ploughman's lunch should ever cost more than £5. Les documented his encyclopaedic knowledge of local walks as a series of articles for Sussex Living. Eventually these became a book, with maps drawn by Tony Osmand, simply called Sussex Walks.

As an MSR committee member Les represented the group on planning inquiries. In 1982, successfully preventing the rerouting of a much-loved footpath that crosses Haywards Heath Golf course. Les was also a member of other organisations such as The Monday Group who do such great work on footpath maintenance and the provision of stiles, bridges, and gates.

As a Chair for the group, from 1998 until the 2008, Les had a no-nonsense approach that meant committee business moved briskly. I remember his email overtures to me in late 2006, explaining that Tom Minnikin would be standing down as Treasurer at the AGM

January 2007 and he would like me to join the committee and take up that role. I replied with a plethora of ideas and suggestions for change thinking that he might not like me after all. By return email he just said 'that's fine and welcome as treasurer'. That was Les – brief and to the point! Les also took his passion for the Ramblers to Area level serving as Sussex Vice-Chair. In addition, Les was also a Ramblers' Footpath Warden for several parishes for a number of years; a very time-consuming occupation, requiring much dedication.

Many ramblers joined others from his wide community connections over the years – Hassocks Councillor, Monday Group member, good friend and much more at his very well attended Service of Celebration at Woodvale, Brighton. We were comforted by lovely words and poem quotations given by Richard Penfold and Mike Flint, and heart-warming memories from his special friend Brenda Barnes on behalf of her family, and her husband, Les's great buddy the late John Barnes.

So, it is goodbye to a sincere and dedicated friend, fellow ramble, and a dedicated man of the community. We thank him for the memories and poignant moments which many have shared.



Photo of Les with Richard Palmer and group shot at Freshwater Bay in 1977 with thanks to Elizabeth Berry



## From the Editor

My first memory of Les is of him leading a summer evening walk over the Downs; probably in the late 1970s. I can remember Les being in shorts, and the fact that as a child, the ripe crops were taller than I was. Years later I was very grateful to Les for continuing to walk with my dad (Richard Mercer) after they were both too slow to walk with the group. I also had the pleasure of leading Les (with my dad and William) on a gentle ramble in the beautiful Chess Valley when I was living there a few years ago.

I interviewed Les two years ago for the group's 50th anniversary and asked him what 50 years of MSR meant to him. What he told me was 'the fond memories ... of exploring the countryside by foot, both in Sussex and further afield, and the great friendships that have been made along the way.'



**Mid Sussex Ramblers coach outing at The Globe Theatre  
Les next to Richard Mercer (the organiser) 17th May 2003**

Photo by David Bishop

**From Brenda Barnes** (selected text from the words Brenda shared at Les' funeral)

My husband John and I met Les on a walk with Mid Sussex Ramblers. We became good friends. Les and John used to walk for many miles, stopping at pubs half way for a few beers and lunch; then staggering the rest of the way home. We also walked out routes for the walks programme and for Sussex Living magazine.

After Les had his hip operation, he was unable to walk so far, so John, Les and myself would walk about four miles on Tuesdays. Sometimes other friends would join us. We would often end up at our house for a cup of tea, and Les would insist that he bought cakes to have with the drink.

Les was a very generous and loving man; he laughed at jokes and was very friendly; he would speak to most people in Hassocks.



Photo by David Bishop

## **MY MEMORIES OF LES CAMPBELL**

**DAVID BISHOP**

I first met Les on a Mid Sussex Group Ramblers' walk in about 1976.

I had read about the walk in the Middy & decided to go along and give it a try. As we approached Horsted Keynes where there was to be a pub stop for lunch, I said to the one of the group that I hoped they would not be going to the Crown (a Watney's Pub back then) as my preference was The Green Man. Well, the person who I did not know at the time said to me 'are you David Bishop from CAMRA (Campaign for Real Ale)?' I was astounded, but replied yes, that's me, how did you know?

It was Les of course! He had recently obtained a copy of the CAMRA Sussex Beer Guide in which my name appeared as editor so he put two and two together and guessed correctly it was me. He said not to worry, we shall go to the Green Man. There we enjoyed the pub lunch with some Harvey's beers to wash down the food.

Soon after that I joined Mid Sussex Ramblers and saw Les many times on various walks. When Les was leading there was always a good pub stop!

We became good friends and Les who was programme secretary back then persuaded me to lead a few walks, especially the summer Wednesday evening ones. Les would assist me sometimes by planning the walks with me and marking up an OS map. We walked the routes out together before the event, and that's when I realised what a good sense of direction he had, and how skilled he was using a map and compass when the route was not obvious on the ground. Needless to say, all these evening walks ended at a public house for refreshments! We had some great times with lots of laughter.

Later Les took up the role of Chairman of Mid Sussex Ramblers and he roped me in on the committee as Publicity Officer. He was a good Chairman and ran the meetings well to avoid us finishing late. He had so much knowledge of public rights of way, having walked with other groups such as The Sussex Wealdmen, as well as The Ramblers.

Les played an important role on Hassocks Parish Council for many years. He was also an active member of Hassocks Field Society & worked with the Clearance Team on the Monday Group that he introduced me to a few years ago.

More recently with his loss of mobility Les would invite me round to his home for afternoon tea, cake and a chat. We did not always agree on political and current affair matters but we begged to differ amicably. He had an amazing memory for details of past walks, dates and people's names.

Les served his home town of Hassocks and the community very well over many years.

Above all Les was a reliable and loyal friend whom I shall miss greatly.



Photo by Phil Casemore



Photo by David Bishop

Many thanks to everyone who has contributed to our memories and photographs of Les.

**Please send us your stories, photos, comments, or suggestions...**

contact the editor at [msramblersnewsletter@gmail.com](mailto:msramblersnewsletter@gmail.com)

## YOUR MID-SUSSEX RAMBLERS' COMMITTEE



Pauline Piddock,  
Treasurer



Sue Berry, Chair



Sue Blandford,  
Secretary



Paul Jenkins,  
Rambles Programme Secretary



Judith Bowron,  
Membership  
Secretary



Elizabeth Berry,  
Committee  
Member



Anne Woodroffe,  
MSR Area Representative



William Coleman,  
Committee Member



Barbara Kirbyshaw,  
Newsletter Editor