

A Festive Walk

On a very fine and dry Sunday just a week before Christmas, 15 wonderful Lea & Icknield Ramblers boarded the train London bound where Ajay had organised a walk based on 10 of the most historic and prestigious bridges over the Thames .

The group were in fine festive spirits and the walk began at Battersea Station where we met up with a further two Lea & Icknield ramblers, Bob, and Maggie, as well as two other walkers who, although they lived in London, wanted to discover a bit more of it. They were welcomed and introduced to the group then we headed on our way to Battersea Park.

Battersea Park is a very large (200 acres) Victorian park built between 1854 and 1870 and is well worth a visit if you have never been. It has its own zoo, sports pitch, a large lake, and a gallery to name just a few of its highlights. We came to see the wonderful Peace Pagoda but firstly while we were en route to it, we came across several Santas in many shapes and sizes-a bit early for the big day I thought to myself, maybe an annual Santa Claus convention ? It then became apparent that it was part of an organised Santa walk with bib numbers attached to their festive red coats as the giveaway!

We shortly reached the beautiful Peace Pagoda and went up the many steps to see more and take in the views. The Pagoda was built in 1985 dedicated to peace (funnily enough!) and has statues representing phases of the Buddha's life. The weather was definitely on our side and a great photo opportunity was availed of.



Coming out of the park , we walked over our first bridge- the Chelsea Bridge- and after that the bridges just kept a-coming, Vauxhall Bridge , Lambeth Bridge, Westminster Bridge (passing the historic Abbey and coming across a fine statue of Richard 1st the Lionheart). We stopped for a coffee stop in Pimlico Gardens by another interesting statue -the William Huskisson Memorial- and afterwards the two ladies from London bade their goodbyes to the group, having previous arrangements already made.

The walk then proceeded to Hungerford Bridge, then over the famous Waterloo Bridge (anyone seen the old black and white film of the same name ? It's a must see if not !!) .

We stopped for a lunch break where we managed to find somewhere to sit and accommodate the whole group, which was great, given the crowds. I'd like to say the highlight here was having a festive

chocolate finger biscuit -thank you Jeff ! However the highlight for all the group, but definitely not for me, was being alerted by Eric to the fact that a squirrel was directly behind me and not only that but was eating half the mince pie which I was enjoying- arggggghh! Needless to say, this was abandoned and I can't honestly remember when I last screamed so loud!!

We carried on with our walk crossing Blackfriars Bridge then on to the Millenium Bridge (not at all wobbly now after its infamous beginnings) and then over Southwark Bridge, with the final bridge being Tower Bridge.

It was an extremely interesting walk and we came across some great statues/ memorials along the way too, including a memorial of Narendra Modi- the prime minister of India, and a statue of the Burghers of Calais. Anyway, the adventures of the day did not stop at walking the last bridge. Oh no- having walked to London Bridge station to start our return journey, unfortunately we had to then get the Underground back to St Pancras as no trains from London Bridge were stopping at Luton!

Once at St Pancras, we had to make a bit of a mad dash to catch the next Luton train back. Most of us managed to make it and literally squeezed in at the very last second -however it was only when the train left the platform did we realise 3 of the group had not made it. However they got the last laugh as the train they caught was a fast one and so they arrived at Luton ahead of our train which stopped at all the stops between West Hampstead and St Albans -so all's well that ends well !

My thanks to Ajay for organising and leading the walk and I'm looking forward to the next London walk with bated breath !

Valerie Dawson

Committee News

The new Committee met for the first time back in January, with full attendance, and chaired by Innes.

It was a productive meeting with many topics being discussed, among them ideas for social activities; one suggestion being that we could join in with a regular quiz night at The Old Farm PH at Totternhoe, which is organised by Leighton Buzzard Ramblers. Look out for further information in due course.

The possibility of a trip to do a walk further afield was discussed, including the logistics of transport. One walk which may come under this umbrella would be a walk from Dover to Deal (or possibly the other way round!), organised by Bob and Maggie.

The shortage of walk leaders is an ongoing problem and has been for a long time now. Shortly after our meeting Ramblers announced a Walk Leader on-line training session, and at least two of you have signed up for it- thank you! However if the February date was not convenient for you, or having thought further about it, they are repeating it in March; see below for details!



Introduction to Walk Leadership | 6-7pm, 26 March

Are you unable to join February's Introduction to Walk Leadership session? Don't worry: our next session will be taking place on Tuesday 26 March. Designed for all new walk leaders or anyone considering becoming one, this volunteer-led session will go over everything you need to know about the role and answer any questions you may have.

[**Register now**](#)

Photo Gallery



Enjoying a break on Chris's walk from Harpenden in January *photo: Andy Bahn*

Aspley Heath 11th February

An enjoyable morning walk (part of a figure of eight) led by Innes, in which we encountered:



hills:



mud:



fallen trees:



and snowdrops!



But at least we found some makeshift benches for our coffee stop!

I will be putting out a news bulletin on an occasional basis; if you have anything you would like to be included, or any photos, please email them to me at rhasker@gmail.com

Rosemary