



# The Poly Rambler

Members' Newsletter of the Polytechnic Rambling Club

[www.polyramblers.org.uk](http://www.polyramblers.org.uk)

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### Chairs Message October 2024

Welcome to our special edition of the Poly Rambler newsletter celebrating the thirtieth anniversary of the first edition, which was instigated and compiled in 1994 by Peter Gould. Peter was instrumental in ensuring the continued success of our club by increasing membership, he also led numerous walks and organised weekends away. He continued to edit the newspaper for 8 years.

Peter recognised the need for providing a means of communication between club members of news, views and items of interest. He noted 'the success of this venture depends on you, the ordinary member to contribute items such as news of members, past and present'. This need for inclusivity has not changed today. However, technology has most definitely moved on, and we now very successfully use our website for walk reports and other information, emails on current walks are routinely sent out weekly. The Poly Ramblers What's App social group is also a popular source of communication. Most recently Gillian has organised quizzes by Zoom which have become extremely competitive!

I first joined the Poly Ramblers in the mid-1990s, my friend Anne Sheldt was a club member, she encouraged me to contact Peter Gould as she knew I enjoyed hiking. I never completed a walk with Anne

Material for this edition collated by the committee.

Printing and production by Kim Chowns

as she then moved onto to Ceroc dancing!

Geoffrey who has kept many of our programmes from the 1990's and has informative accounts of the rambles and social events of this time, has taken the lead in compiling our anniversary newsletter.

Those of you who attended our AGM in March will remember the discussion about the future of the newsletter and that we agreed to revert to an annual publication focused on a digest of club year. We hope to publish the next issue at the turn of the year.

Next year we will be celebrating the 140<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the formation of the Polytechnic Rambling club in 1885. We hope to organise some events to mark the occasion. Suggestions for walks, places to visit, picnics etc. would be very welcome. I am sure many of you will remember the extremely popular boat trip from Windsor organised by the committee to celebrate our 125th anniversary in 2010.

We have recently heard the sad news of club members who have died. Mike Hilton (known to us as Mike trainers) joined the Poly Ramblers in 2007. He served on our committee for three years. Mike attended several of our hostel weekends and led walks. He was friendly and welcoming to new members and everyone remembers him as being good company

Shirley Hafey was very involved in club activities prior to her move back to Jersey a few years ago I have fond memories of the weekend she organised in Jersey 15 years ago. She organised many theatre and panto visits over the years.

Christine Bignold made a huge contribution to the club. I am sure many of us will remember the walks and weekends way she organised. She served on the committee for many years including as Chair. Christine was appointed as club president in recognition of her years of service to our club. We hope to include a tribute to Christine in the next newsletter.

I hope you will have the opportunity to join us on future walks and look forward to seeing many of you at this year's Christmas lunch. Best Wishes **Hilary**

## **The Polytechnic Rambling Club**

(in association with the  
University of Westminster)  
*Founded 1885*  
Affiliated to the Ramblers'  
Association (Inner London Area)  
Affiliated to HF Holidays

### **OFFICERS AND COMMITTEE**

#### **Honorary members**

Rosie Binnie  
Peter Bonfield  
Rosemary MacLoughlin  
David Stevens  
Mary Stevens  
Lucy Wee  
Peter Wee

#### **COMMITTEE**

#### **CLUB OFFICERS**

**Chair**  
Hilary Abbey  
**Secretary**  
Gillian Swan  
**Treasurer**  
Daniel Duffy

### **COMMITTEE MEMBERS**

Pam Beach  
Kim Chowns  
Susan James  
Jennifer MacKenzie  
Christopher Maslen  
Sunita Shah  
Geoffrey Waters

#### **CONTACT FOR CORRESPONDENCE\***

Kim Chowns  
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**Club's Facebook page:**  
<https://tinyurl.com/2p8fzk7n>

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\*Articles for inclusion in the  
newsletter are welcome from all  
members. They should be walk  
related, but do not necessarily  
have to be about a club walk.,  
e.g. walking holiday or past  
memories of the club.

## **THIRTY YEARS OF THE POLY RAMBLER**

I have recently been sent a copy of our first Newsletter 'THE POLY RAMBLER' issued in June 1994 and edited by our late member Peter Gould. In it, he reports who are officers and committee because of changes from that year's AGM, together with more information about forthcoming events to expand on the information shown in the club programme at that time. Also, there is a piece about new transport to walks, as well as new information on long distance paths and new walking books that members may be interested in. However, it has no photos. I really do admire the hard work he put into this first edition and getting it started. It reflects an age when desktop computers, although prominent in corporate and public organisations, were just making headway in the home. However, the World Wide Web had only been born to the public domain the year before, thus many home computers were stand alone. Square diskettes and CD ROMs ruled the day, nevertheless, documents, like this newsletter as then, could be produced from the home PC. Little by little websites were born from both corporate and public organisations, to be viewed by the public at large, but this would be mostly on PCs in public libraries, or in one's workplace. The BBC didn't launch their website till December 1997!

Very few people in 1994 would have had a home email account, thus much communication between poly ramblers was still the landline telephone. At that time polyrambles were mostly fortnightly, usually on a Sunday, although the June to September 1994 programme contains three entries for the Stour Valley Walk including a weekend away. It was normal then for the club to hold two main trips away in the year, this would be Easter Weekend (Malvern in 1994) and August Bank Holiday YHA weekend (Sheringham in 1994). Anna Mayer was our General Secretary and Dominique Le Marchand doubled up as Chairman and Programme Co-Ordinator.

Photography, being a sideline hobby of many poly ramblers was still mainly old school chemical film, developed at the chemist. For those lucky enough with a home PC, the purchase of a digital camera was worth considering, and digital photography was beginning to take off in the mid 1990s. With a digital camera, you could connect it by cable to the PC and download your photos to view/print. And if you had an email account you could attach your photo to an email and send it to our Newsletter editor.

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## THIRTY YEARS OF THE POLY RAMBLER (continued)

This would impact on the production of our subsequent newsletters, through the addition of photographs of rambles. Without current day broadband you would have to connect your PC to a landline modem (this converts computer signals into sounds and vice versa), dial up your receiving host line, and send your photo that way. It took a while to transmit, or upload if you were receiving a photo. That's how we used to go online. One stage on from sending a fax. With a modem you could also connect to the internet, but this would take a while! Often one poly rambler might not get through on the phone to another, because 'the another' was using their landline to connect their PC online, rendering the landline engaged! However, during the late 1990s and into the noughties, more and more members started to have their own personal mobile cell phones, providing an extra route of 1 to 1 communication, be it by call or SMS text. And with the use of a PC, the club secretary could now send a group email notice to all members, particularly useful if train times were altered at short notice.

Another thing I noticed in 1994 is that we still had several social functions throughout the year. They included evening restaurant visits and the occasional interest visits e.g. National Trust. Our Christmas Lunch was called a Christmas Pub Lunch Ramble. This was initiated in 1989, by holding a short ramble before and after lunch, but booking a Christmas Lunch at the pub, and has become an annual institution since. Annual Dinners took place usually at a hotel in October. Later on and into the Noughties we continued to have restaurant visits, Adeline Philips was known for arranging free trips to the Kenwood Proms, where we had our special spot with a chink in the trees for a view. Also, Shirley Hafey organised lots of theatre trips especially to Regents Park theatre in the summer, and to the Richmond pantomime in January, also New Year gatherings to see fireworks.

As we moved into the turn of the Century, broadband became increasingly popular in the home, as an add-on to the landline. Websites could be downloaded much faster, and especially emails with attached photos. Then by June 2000, wham! The club website was launched through Peter Gould with his younger son Paul, as designer. Laptops were now becoming popular in the home, with the bonus that you could take them out and use them elsewhere. With the club website, members can access it to find the meetup details of the next ramble and other pieces of news; it initially supplemented the Newsletter, but also of course it is open to the general public, with an enquiry section for prospective members, and nowadays we often post ramble reports with pictures onto it.

There was a first in 1998. It was a breakaway from the traditional YHA weekend at August Bank Holiday. That year we spent that weekend in B and Bs in Southwold, and so non YHA accommodation became the norm. Also, Easter weekends away ceased after 1994, probably due to lack of support and chilly windy weather. However, one exception was in 2000 when Peter Gould organised an Easter weekend to Llanberris in North Wales. From 1998 onwards the Easter weekend was substituted with a late May BH holiday weekend which were much better supported. Examples are Hebden Bridge (early May 1998), Beer (1999), Lulworth (2000), Bradford on Avon (2001). A first in May 2002 was when Dominique organised an overseas trip to Saint Valery sur Somme. Since then, there is a likelihood the club has a trip abroad during the late May BH, but sometimes it is in the UK. From 2003 and throughout the noughties we have introduced rent a hostel weekend in March, although these have declined in the late 2010s. With the addition of January Snow Walking weekends (originally snowshoeing) from 2008 by Dominique and an autumn weekend trip from 2000, the club usually has about five bookable weekend trips per year.

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## THIRTY YEARS OF THE POLY RAMBLER (continued)

Since the early noughties, the University of Westminster, formerly the Polytechnic of Central London, became more of a commercialised organisation and they started to charge the club for room hire, whereas this always used to be free when the club was part of the old Regent Street Polytechnic's Institute of Clubs and Societies. By 2001 the Institute had largely folded up. In 1994 our AGM was held in one of the Institute rooms in Riding House Street, as were committee meetings. This changed to Regent Street in the early noughties when room hire and refreshments had to be paid for. By 2018 the hire charges got so exorbitant that we took an executive decision to go almost independent and hire rooms outside the University for our AGM and committee meetings.

The later noughties have also seen the introduction of tablets, flat screens on PCs, and the smartphone, like a tablet, featuring the touchscreen. These all got more popular through the 2010s along with routers providing Wi-Fi to run several devices at once in the home. Broadband has now got very fast and is available through the mobile networks of 4G and 5G. Social media is well born by 2010 along with WhatsApp, a service that provides mobile calls (with or without picture) and texts through the internet. Whilst our membership may have dropped during the 1990s, it continued to flourish throughout the noughties and 2010s to the current day. Printed train timetables are now almost extinct, as we pick up our train times online, through our devices.

The arrival of the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020 had both an immediate and a long lasting impact on the Club. The immediate impact of course was several months with no rambles and no face to face socialising, interspersed with periods when numbers had to be limited, requiring a booking system for walks. On the positive side we discovered how to use Zoom software for regular social evenings and quizzes and WhatsApp for keeping in touch in between times. The WhatsApp social group has survived beyond COVID to become a long term feature of Club life, as has the now annual quiz. During the lulls in the pandemic restrictions, we managed to run weekends away in Northern Ireland and Leek, Staffordshire but a planned trip to Alsace had to be postponed twice, leading to a quiz team named 'Alas Alsace'.

*Saxon Shore Way, 1990s, showing Ruth Gosling, Dominique, Solvig and another.*



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## THIRTY YEARS OF THE POLY RAMBLER (continued)

Another long term change has been the decline of the pub lunch as a standard feature of our walks. Looking back on this period we are pleased that the Club has been able to survive and thrive, incorporating the necessary changes as positive features.

So now in 2024 the club is run in somewhat different ways to 1994. Spreadsheets have become a frequently used tool by our Treasurer. The committee recently reviewed the use of Newsletter to see if it still meets today's needs and is read by members. We now have several other ways of communicating to members. It has thus been decided to reduce its publication to one issue per year, probably in January, particularly for the benefit of non-active long standing members who are unable to attend club events very often and prefer to receive printed information by post.

**Geoffrey Waters**



*Immediately above: Former President, Bert Pitts addressing an annual dinner*



# THE POLY RAMBLER

MEMBERS' NEWSLETTER OF THE POLYTECHNIC RAMBLING CLUB

EDITION NO. 1

Editor : Peter Gould

JUNE 1994

WELCOME to the first edition of your new free members' newsletter, aptly called "THE POLY RAMBLER", to be published and distributed with the Programme every four months.

I have thought for some time that we should be providing a means of communication between the club and its members of news, views and items of interest. In many ways, the success of this venture depends on you, the ordinary member to contribute items such as news of members, past and present, accounts of walks, etc. It is hoped also that we can start a "letters from members" column, which will allow you to write about anything you wish, within reason, and it does not contravene the libel laws!

## \*\*\*\*\*CLUB NEWS

### A.G.M. March 1994

A number of changes took place in the composition of the committee and the new line up is as follows:- Chair - Dominique Le Marchand, General Secretary - Anna Mayer, Treasurer - Peter Gould, Committee Members - Christine Bignold, David Crosfield, Ruth Gosling (Membership Secretary, Rosemary Macloughlin, Sylvia Teat (Restaurant Visits). Peter will look after Publicity and Dominique will continue as Programme Co-Ordinator. President and Vice Presidents were all re-elected with the exception of Freddie Lunn, who sadly past away last December.

### MALVERN HILLS. Easter 1994.

Five members supported this four day break at Great Malvern in Worcestershire. Two main walks were carried out, one on the Malvern Hills and the other in the Cotswolds. Despite a mixture of gale force winds, snow and hailstorms, continuous rain, everyone agreed that it was a most successful weekend. Our free day was spent at Hereford exploring the cathedral, and after lunch, we drove down to Goodrich Castle, an English Heritage property situated in the Wye Valley. Luckily for us, it was a free day for all these properties, so we were able to enjoy the surroundings free of charge. On our return home on Easter Monday, we drove down to Tewkesbury to look round the abbey and then travelled on to Chipping Norton for lunch. We finally parted company and made our various ways home. Members taking part were Anna, Ruth, John and yours truly, together with Geoffrey who had travelled all the way down from Crosby on Merseyside.

### STOUR VALLEY WALK - Discover the pleasures of walking in Kent!

It is planned to walk this Long Distance Path in four stages from June to September (see Programme details), and enable you to explore the diversity of the Kent Countryside along the valley of the River Stour between Ashford, Canterbury and Sandwich. The area is of interest for its natural history, archaeological and landscape features. This linear walk will give you the opportunity of enjoying the valley, open downland and deciduous woodland; farmland, orchards and hop-gardens; dykes and marshland; unspoilt villages and hamlets; and historic towns. Linking all these features, thread-like, is the meandering River Stour. For the last two stages, you will be able to walk both on the same weekend, either staying overnight in Canterbury or as two separate walks on Saturday and Sunday and arranging to meet with the rest of the group on Sunday morning. Leaders for this walk will be Dominique who first suggested the idea, and Rosemary who provided most of the research. Bookings for the overnight in Canterbury should be referred to Dominique (071-381 4544).

### SHERINGHAM - August Bank Holiday Weekend.

As you will see from the programme, this is a four day break staying at the youth hostel at Sheringham on the North Norfolk Coast. Attractions of the area are wide sandy beaches, good walking, seal colony and wild flowers. The North Norfolk Railway runs 7 mile along coast and inland to Holt, giving access to beaches and National Trust properties. In this traditional seaside town there is a theatre, cinema and indoor swimming pool. At present, eight members have booked at the hostel with a vacancy in the party for one lady. Further bookings may be made, provided notice is given without delay by contacting the Organiser, Peter G. (081-866 9179). Deposit is £10 per person, balance to be paid by 19th June. Total cost for Bed and Breakfast for four nights, including cancellation insurance is £46. 20. It is hoped to provide transport for everyone. Members who wish to stay at Hotel or Guest House accommodation must make their own arrangements.

### INTEREST VISITS TO FENTON AND KENWOOD HOUSES, HAMPSTEAD, NORTH LONDON.

On Saturday 24th September, visits have been arranged by the Poly Mens Old Members Association and we have been invited to join them! Members (including the ladies) wishing to come should meet at 11 o'clock in the Corporation of London car park adjacent to the car park of "Jack Straws Castle" Public House. Nearest Tube Station is Hampstead on the Northern Line (Golders Green and Edgware Branch), turn right, then 5/10 minute walk up Heath Road. Further details from Roger Rowley (0923 829253).

(Continued overleaf)

**ANNUAL DINNER 1994.**

PLEASE NOTE in your diary that this year's event will take place on Saturday 29th October. Venue is still to be decided and full details will be circulated in late July with booking form attached.

**QUESTIONNAIRE 1994.**

YOU WILL FIND enclosed with these papers a questionnaire form for completion and return. Please read the front page to find out what it's all about before completing the questions on the other side.

\*\*\*\*\*NEWS FROM THE RAMBLERS' ASSOCIATION

**GETTING THERE**

**EAST SUSSEX**

From the 29th May, hourly trains will stop at Southease daily on the Lewes to Seaford Branch - Network South Central are to produce a "trails by rail" leaflet featuring self guided walks from rural stations. One of the obvious stations for a ramble is from Southease. This should be a boon for walkers on the South Downs Way.

**WEST KENT**

Metrobus are introducing a two-hourly summer Sunday bus service from Bromley to Tunbridge Wells via Downe, Westerham, Hever and Penshurst. We shall be taking advantage of this service on Sunday 25th September on our ramble to Westerham, a town that has not had a direct Sunday service from London for at least two summers!

**LONG DISTANCE PATHS**

THE STORT VALLEY WAY is a new 32 mile circular walk in the countryside around Harlow in Essex (officially opened on 8th May). Leaflet available (sae) from John Camp, Planning and Environment Dept., Courty Hall, Hertford. Telephone (0992 555257)

THE HANGERS WAY, a 17 mile waymarked route from Alton to Petersfield has been extended a further four miles southward through Buriton to the Queen Elizabeth Country Park. A new path then runs south for 12 miles to the coast at Langstone Harbour, near Havant. Called the Staunton Way, the walk follows closely to the boundary of Hampshire and West Sussex. Leaflets on both walks can be obtained (A5 sae please) from Hampshire County Council, Information Centre, Mottisfont Court, High Street, Winchester, Hants SO23 8FZ. (0962 870500)

LEA VALLEY WALK. The complete guide to this 50 mile walk from Bow to Luton, via Waltham Abbey, Ware, Stanborough Park Lakes and Harpenden will be available soon. For further details ring the Lea Valley Park Countryside Centre on 0992 713838. The above items have been taken from "South Eastern Rambler", a quarterly magazine distributed regionally free to Ramblers Association members. If you are not an R.A. member but would like an annual magazine subscription, make out a cheque for £5 made payable to "Raven Marketing Group" and forward to me at 78 Cambridge Road, North Harrow, Middx., HA2 7LE. I will then forward on to the publisher.

\*\*\*\*\*FOR YOUR BOOKSHELF

A NEW GUIDEBOOK has recently been published by the Ramblers' Association. For those of you who would like to lead a club ramble but are not quite sure how to go about it, "Navigation and Leadership - a manual for walkers" is written primarily to give confidence in navigating by map and compass. It is organised into sections and modules under the headings of navigation, leadership and training, to be selected according to the reader's precise needs. Price is £6.00 including p+p. Send cheque payable to the Ramblers Association at 1/5 Wandsworth Road, London SW8 2XX.

ONCE YOU HAVE MASTERED all the skills, you may consider purchasing a brand new paperback entitled "Country Walks near London - 52 walks within easy reach of the capital". Priced at £7.99 (approx. 15 pence per ramble) it is written by Christopher Sommerville and describes walks of between 2 and 17 miles (mostly 5 to 10 miles), all but a handful accessible by public transport from Central London. The script is clearly written and includes a detailed sketch map for each walk together with information on travel, terrain conditions, refreshments and O.S. map requirements. Should be obtainable from Stanfords (Long Acre) and all good bookshops.

FOR THOSE OF YOU WHO ARE STILL NOT SURE, there is always the excellent "idiots" guide, published in 1992 and entitled "Joe's Walks for Bad Map Readers - 13 Country Walks around London" by Joe Alexander priced at £3.50 (about 27 pence per ramble). All walks start and finish at a railway station, enabling both the motorist and public transport ramble to enjoy each walk.

\*\*\*\*\*ENDPIECE

Well I hope you have enjoyed reading this first issue as much as I have done in writing it. From now on it is up to you! I shall continue to provide news of club activities, past present and future, together with information about our most popular recreational sport in the country, but I would like to receive contributions from yourselves. Copy deadline for the next issue will be Wednesday 31st August so please put pen to paper and send to "The Editor, The Poly Rambler, 78 Cambridge Road, North Harrow, Middlesex HA2 7LE."

Some more photos from the mid 1990s



Above: Christmas pub lunch



Above and l-r: David Crosfield, Rosie Binnie, Anna Mayer, Solvig and Dominique



Left and l-r: Geoffrey, Bill & Adeline Phillips, Lillian and other poly ramblers

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