

SUTTON AND WANDLE VALLEY GROUP

Members' Newsletter: January – April 2026



(Carshalton Ponds: Photograph by Barbara)

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Welcome to our first Newsletter of 2026. Following the demise of our printed programme, where, in addition to listing the walks, we also used to let you know about upcoming social events and important dates, I realise there was a bit of a gap in communicating information to you. This newsletter is intended to fill that gap. Let me know what you think.

Last year was an eventful one for the Group. We celebrated our 30th anniversary. We hosted a stall at the Carshalton ECO Fair, we led a walk for London Blind Ramblers, we ran two very popular coach trips, we had numerous social visits to London, we had a couple of short walking breaks in Folkestone and Weymouth, and we ended the year with a film and short speech by our local MP at our Annual General Meeting. On top of that, we also said goodbye to our much-loved printed programme and made the switch to Walks Manager. And we were required to comply with Ramblers new edict on walk leader training. Leaders were required to either complete 2 online training modules or certify that they had led 12 walks in the last 3 years.

The walk leader training exercise will conclude in early February. Our Group now has 39 registered walk leaders. These leaders are officially recognised by Ramblers because they have either done the necessary online training or demonstrated their experience by having led 12 walks in 3 years. No leader can now put a walk on Walks Manager unless they are a recognised leader. Under these new arrangements, I do want to stress one thing. This does not mean that our walk leaders are qualified first aiders, have CPR training or in-depth medical knowledge. To expect this would place an unfair burden on them. **The onus remains firmly on walkers to make sure they are fit enough to do the walks.** And if anyone is in any doubt, they should contact the walk leader to discuss whether the walk is appropriate for them.

We continue to host our monthly “Raves” at the “Old Bank” pub on the first Monday of every month. Many thanks to Dave for his efforts in finding us a new home. Plus, Jan continues to host her coffee mornings once a month at the Waterstone’s Café in Sutton. These are mainly aimed at our members who are not walking as regularly with us anymore, but all are welcome. And, as a footnote, to the coffee morning meetings, I should add that some attendees asked if it might be possible to lay on some very short walks, with regular stops, so some walking can still take place. We are going to pursue this and see if we can offer perhaps a walk a month. Keep checking our online programmes.

Committee members

Your committee was elected/re-elected at the AGM in November. We have two new committee members (Ian H, who will be our new Treasurer, and Mary W, who will be our new Publicity Officer) but we said goodbye to Peter, our Webmaster, and to date he has not been replaced. If you would like to be considered for one of the positions on the committee, or as a walk leader, please do talk to Barbara, any other member of the committee, or one of our walk leaders

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DATES FOR YOUR DIARY 2026

25 March: Visit to Founders' Guild Hall
11 April: Coach trip to Henley on Thames
20 June: Midsummer Party
25 July: Walk with London Blind Ramblers
31 August: Carshalton ECO Fair
12 September: Coach trip to Eastbourne
21 October: Walk Leaders Meeting
22 or 29 November: Annual General Meeting

+ Visit to Apothecaries Hall (date to be determined)

MEMORIES FROM 2025 – AND OUR FORTHCOMING 2026 EVENTS

CARSHALTON EcoFair



(Carshalton EcoFair -August 2025: Photo by Alison)

Last year we hosted a stand at the Carshalton EcoFair. We promoted both our own walks and distributed literature from other organizations advocating the benefits of walking. We had a visit from Bobby Dean (MP for Carshalton) which led to him coming along to speak to us at our AGM and showing his film “Wandle: A River At Risk”. We intend to host a stall again this year and will try and get another high-profile visitor to visit the stall (maybe the Mayor of London Borough of Sutton) and perhaps give some local publicity to our Group.

OUR COACH TRIPS

We are offering two coach trips. The first to Henley-on-Thames on 11 April (£18) and the second to Eastbourne on 12 September (£19). A booking form for Henley will be available shortly.

We hope to offer the usual three walks for each trip and are working with walk leaders to find the six leaders we need. It is a commitment on the part of our walk leaders who volunteer to do the coach trip walks. It means carrying out recces some distance from base. It can take time and effort. But walk leaders will be compensated for any expenditure they incur, either the cost of train tickets or 30p per mile if using a car. If any walk leader wants to volunteer, please get in touch with Jackie! It is also important that we break even on the coach trips. Again, Group members will have priority over booking but if the coach for Henley is not fully booked by end March we will open bookings to other Groups to ensure that the coach is filled. To ensure you get a place, please book early!

OUR SUMMER PARTIES



(30th anniversary party 2025: Photo by Jan)

Following the success of our 30th anniversary celebratory party (above), we have decided to hold a Mid-Summer Party this year, to be held on 20 June. Marian F, aided by a small group of volunteers, has very kindly offered to organise this. Do save the date. More details nearer the time.

OUR SOCIAL ACTIVITIES

VISITS

With thanks to Jenny again, we have two social outings to offer in the first quarter of the year. The first is to Founders Guildhall on 25 March. This Guildhall, home of the Worshipful Company of Founders, a London Livery Company that casts and works metals, is in a modern, distinctive building near Barbican. Jenny will publish more details nearer the time. The second visit (date still to be confirmed) is to the Apothecaries Hall. This is one of the oldest Livery Halls in the City of London, now located in a beautiful building, and is very near St Paul's Cathedral. Again, keep an eye on the Social Events section of our programme. And a reminder that if anyone else has an idea for an interesting day out, and would like to offer it to our members, do get in touch.

SUTTON AND WANDLE VALLEY'S WALK WITH LONDON BLIND RAMBLERS

We plan to offer a walk for the London Blind Ramblers (LBR) on 25 July. This has become a regular fixture on our summer calendar, and it is much appreciated by the London Blind Ramblers. Although we have fixed the date, we are still looking at interesting and attractive routes. We want it to be enjoyable by both the LBR participants themselves and our own volunteers. We will need several volunteers to act as guides for blind or partially sighted participants. Do offer to help if you can.

VOLUNTEERS

And a plea for your help. As all the above indicates, the Group cannot function without the help of all our volunteers, not only our wonderful Walk Leaders, but also the many other volunteers who operate behind the scenes. These members undertake an enormous amount of work to keep the Group ticking over and without their help many of our social activities, enjoyed by so many of us, would not take place. We are always looking for new Walk Leaders, and we always welcome members who are willing to take on roles in the committee.

MEETINGS

A reminder that the Walk Leaders meeting will take place on 21 October and the AGM will take place on either 22 or 29 November (final date yet to be decided).

Walkers

It is your responsibility to make sure you are fit enough for the walks. Please note that the descriptions of “Easy”, “Leisurely” and “Moderate” do NOT denote the **pace** of a walk! Check with the leader before if you are unsure. On a walk, alert the leader if you need to stop for a drink/rest. Do not lose sight of your leader. If you go ahead, the leader is not responsible for you. Note that on some walks the leaders still require you to book in advance to join a walk or eat in a pub. Check the walk description and contact the leader as requested. Do carry water and snacks, even if a pub lunch is planned. And please do not eat your own food in a pub or a café unless you have express permission to do so.

Also, please note that following our Walk Leaders Meeting in September, when the Ramblers “Leaders’ Handbook” was discussed by leaders, it was decided that walk participants would be asked to provide their names and their contact details to the leader at the start of the walk. This was so that if a participant went missing during a walk, the leader could contact them to find out if they had simply dropped out, or if they were in difficulty. The lists will be destroyed at the end of the walk.

And do carry your ICE card. New, pocket-sized ICE cards are now available. Ask walk leaders or contact your Chair or Membership Secretary.

Walk Leaders

Prior to the actual walk, leaders are asked to put as much information as possible, as early as possible, on Walks Manager, and to check that there is no clash with other, similar walks.

And a reminder that **Risk Assessments** (to be shared with walkers) are still necessary, even though written risk registers no longer need to be completed and kept.

And finally, a reminder that all new walk leaders must now undertake online training (provided by Ramblers) before they can lead walks. The online training (comprising two online modules) is very straightforward and easy. It is not a test.

And please do remember to send your walk numbers to Barbara.

IT IS UP TO YOU TO ENSURE YOU ARE FIT FOR THE WALK(S) YOU ATTEND AS DESCRIBED BELOW!

DESCRIPTIONS DO NOT DENOTE PACE!

EASY – walks for anyone who does not have a mobility difficulty or specific health problem or is seriously unfit.

LEISURELY – walks for reasonably fit people with a little country walking experience.

MODERATE – walks for people with country walking experience and a good level of fitness. May include some steep paths and may be at a brisk pace.

[1] Very important. Grades are provided as a general guide only; if you have any doubt about your ability for a particular walk, please contact the leader in advance. You should also consider the distance of the walk, the terrain and the possibility of bad weather, which can make a walk more difficult than planned. If you're unsure of your fitness level, try a short and easy walk first. Leaders may refuse to accept participants who, in their opinion, are inadequately equipped or unfit.

[2] For your own and others' safety please follow any instructions from walks leaders. Though walking is inherently one of the safest outdoor activities, no activity is completely without risk, and it is your responsibility to behave sensibly and to minimise the potential for accidents to occur.

[3] Where a public house is used, walkers should not consume their own food and drink on the premises, unless the landlord has given express permission. Please remove or cover muddy boots when going into a pub.

[4] Meeting points for car sharing are shown for the majority of walks not using public transport. This is either Belmont Bus Terminus (BBT) which is situated at the junction of Downs Road and Commonsides Close, Belmont,. Those without cars can usually be picked up here, but we regret that this cannot be guaranteed as we do not know who is attending a walk. When car sharing, drivers often appreciate a voluntary contribution from passengers. As a guide, 15 pence per mile per passenger is generally considered reasonable. **Please cover or remove & stow muddy boots in cars!**

[5] Dogs must be kept under control and must be kept on a lead across farmland and whenever requested by the leader. Please also do not pet or feed any animals you may encounter e.g. when crossing farmland. Best to keep well away from them!

[6] In really bad weather, or when the forecast is poor, e.g. fog, ice, snow, high wind and torrential rain, etc., the leader should be contacted to see if the walk is taking place.

[7] Please check the train times if you use the train to a walk (08457 484950)

[8] Picnic denoted in the walk details indicates that a pub might not be available. Pub means there may not be a suitable place to eat your own food. Pub/picnic means that you should have a choice.