

Brenda Parker Way will mark rambler's life

by **Stephanie Cockroft**

A WALKWAY created in memory of a Farnborough woman who dedicated her life to rambling will be officially marked with a commemorative plaque and tree next week.

Walkers celebrated the opening of the 78-mile Brenda Parker Way, which runs between Aldershot and Andover, on Easter Sunday last year.

The track, created by the North Hampshire Downs Group of Ramblers, was opened in memory of Brenda, who died in 2008, just days before she was due to be made an honorary life member of the Ramblers' Association, for her lifelong dedication to walking.

Users of the track are now installing a plaque in Manor Park in Aldershot, where the route begins, alongside a tree, both in Brenda's memory.

Retired major Graham Smith, from Aldershot, who is chairman of the North East Hampshire group of the Ramblers' Association, said the plaque and bench would be a lasting tribute to the work Brenda did during her life in the area.

He said: "The path is very much a celebration of the work Brenda did for so many years.

"We would welcome anyone to come along and join in with the ceremony, and to use the



Brenda Parker.

path as much as possible, as it really is a wonderful asset."

Born in Aberdeen in Scotland in 1939, Brenda moved to Farnborough after completing a PhD, to work for the Royal Aircraft Establishment (RAE), now QinetiQ.

Almost as soon as she moved to the area, Brenda began leading walks for the Ramblers' Association groups, Hampshire County Council, and any other walking groups with which she could help.

In 1970, she was elected to the Hampshire Area Council of the Ramblers' Association, where she started working on public rights of way.

Every day she would look in the London Gazette, to see if there had been any changes made to her beloved footpaths.

In 1972, she helped set up the North East Hants Rambling Group, becoming footpath secretary, and represented that group during the creation of the South Downs Way bridleway through the Meon Valley.

Brenda, who also wrote several walking books, retired from her job in 1994 and moved to Basingstoke four years later, where she continued to be involved in walking groups.

The Brenda Parker Way was then opened last year and includes several wildlife habitats, to reflect Brenda's passion for nature.

Kate Ashbrook, general secretary of the Open Spaces Society, Britain's oldest national conservation body, of which Brenda was a member for 40 years, described Brenda a 'builder' of the Ramblers' Association.

She said: "She formed new groups to increase the number of walkers, and workers, for the association.

"Brenda worked tirelessly and without complaint for over four decades to win a better deal for walkers throughout Hampshire."

The tree and plaque will be unveiled in a ceremony, near to the war memorial in Manor Park, on Friday, January 20 at 11.30am.

For information, visit www.brendaparkerway.hampshire.org.uk.



Ramblers unveil a plaque and tree in memory of Brenda Parker, Manor Park, Aldershot. Picture: Alistair Wilson. (Ref: AN120406)

New plaque for Brenda

A WALKWAY created to honour the life of a dedicated Rambler was marked last week by a commemorative plaque and tree.

Walkers gathered on Friday at the start of the 78-mile path in Manor Park, Aldershot, to unveil the tributes to Farnborough woman Brenda Parker, who died in 2008.

The plaque and tree now mark the entrance to the Brenda Parker Way, which runs between Aldershot and Andover.

It was opened last year to celebrate the work Brenda did for the walking scene in Hampshire.

Peter Davis, from the North Hampshire Downs Group of Ramblers, said: "It's great to be able to mark the Aldershot end of the Brenda Parker Way with a commemorative tree in Manor Park.

"The path has been open since Easter 2011 and we are getting positive feedback from individuals and groups that have been out walking the path.

"Later this spring the route will appear on new editions of

the Ordnance Survey maps for the area.

"Brenda was modest about all she did for walkers, but I think it's wonderful to have a walk named after her with her name shown on the map."

Brenda moved to Farnborough after completing a PhD, to work for the Royal Aircraft Establishment (RAE), now QinetiQ.

She began leading walks for the Ramblers' Association groups and Hampshire County Council almost as soon as she moved to the town.

Brenda, who also wrote several walking books, lived in Farnborough until her retirement in 1994, when she moved to Basingstoke. She died just days before she was due to be made an honorary life member of the Ramblers' Association.

Mr Davis also thanked Rushmoor Borough Council for its involvement in creating the park.

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