

OPEN SPACES SOCIETY NEWS RELEASE

AMENITY CHIEF PAYS TRIBUTE TO BRENDA, BUILDER OF THE RAMBLERS

Kate Ashbrook, general secretary of the Open Spaces Society, Britain's oldest national conservation body, and a trustee of the Ramblers, today (Saturday 23 April) paid tribute to Brenda Parker,⁽²⁾ who did so much for walkers in Hampshire.

Kate cut the ribbon to open the Brenda Parker Way,⁽³⁾ a 78-mile long-distance path through north Hampshire between Andover and Aldershot. The route has been devised, created and waymarked by the Ramblers, Hampshire County Council, Basingstoke and Deane District Council and Hart District Council.

Said Kate: 'Brenda was a builder of the Ramblers. She developed Hampshire Area and formed new groups to increase the number of walkers, and workers, for the association.

'As Area footpath secretary from 1972 to 1997, she defended paths from damaging change, claimed routes for the definitive map, organised walks and kept detailed records. For many years she went meticulously through every copy of the *London Gazette* in which all notices of public path changes were published, making a note of each one and checking when it was confirmed. She led countless walks, for the Ramblers and for Hampshire County Council.

'Brenda worked tirelessly and without complaint for over four decades to win a better deal for walkers throughout Hampshire. It is thanks to her dedication and commitment that so many people can enjoy the excellent walking in Hampshire today. Most importantly, she inspired others to get involved in path work, thus spreading the message that paths are vital for people's enjoyment of the countryside.

'We owe her a huge debt of gratitude, and I am delighted that the Brenda Parker Way will be a lasting and fitting memorial to her wonderful work,' said Kate.

Brenda was a member of the Open Spaces Society for nearly 40 years. She died in 2008 only days before she was to have been made an Honorary Life Member of the Ramblers as a tribute to her lifelong work for the cause.

ENDS

Walkers Celebrate Opening of New Long Distance Path

On Easter Saturday walkers will be celebrating the opening of the Brenda Parker Way. This new long distance path covers 78 miles across north Hampshire from Aldershot to Andover, taking in local beauty spots such as Fleet Pond, Silchester Roman Town, Ashford Hill Nature Reserve and Highclere Castle.

The path has been created by the North Hampshire Downs Group of the Ramblers, in memory of Brenda Parker who worked tirelessly to preserve Hampshire's network of public footpaths. BBC Countryfile presenter and outdoor enthusiast Julia Bradbury commented, "I believe that the Brenda Parker Way is a wonderful tribute, and a perfect way to explore the idyllic north Hampshire Countryside."

The opening ceremony will take place at Silchester Roman Town on 23rd April at 10.30 am. It will be attended by Brenda's family and friends, local walkers and those who have helped create the path. There will be a short walk after the ceremony and anyone wishing to join in will be most welcome.

The Brenda Parker Way has been designed to be walked in nine stages, each accessible by public transport. A dedicated website www.brendaparkerway.hampshire.org.uk gives walkers all the details needed to enjoy this new long distance path across beautiful north Hampshire.