



January/February 2026 Newsletter



After so much wet weather.....Ramblers welcomed the sunshine on Cannock Chase

Light spills over the hills
Winter becomes a fable
Here are the flames of spring
The flickering March to April

Lemn Sissay

Chairperson's Report

Wet, wet, wet (along with some ice) is the best way to describe the weather from the start of our walking year. After a mild, bright day for Stephen's popular New Year's Day walk at Gentleshaw, the weather deteriorated, however we have been fortunate in having only one walk postponed. A small group enjoyed Barbara and John's frosty walk in Sandwell Valley, followed by Jeanie's Hammerwich walk which took us along another section of the Lichfield Greenway. Rosie and Tony's walk incorporated the sights of Shenstone, starting from Little Aston. Sharon had recced her Shustoke route several times, so avoiding the worst of the mud in the surrounding Warwickshire villages. There was a big turnout for Ynyr's Whittington walk, including new members and several guests from other groups. We braved the rain for Barbara and John's Witton Lakes walk (fortunately on surfaced paths) through some green spaces in dire need of volunteer litter-pickers! The warm welcome and hot drinks at the Eco Hub café were much appreciated. Ynyr's Chasetown to Chasewater walk included a further section of the Lichfield Greenway at Brownhills. It was a relief to have brighter weather for our Cannock Chase walk (the last in February) led by Barbara and John, where we explored forest paths and a section of the Trent & Mersey Canal. The guarantee of a dry, sunny day encouraged thirty-three walkers to take part!

Coach walk Details are on the website of our spring coach walk to Church Stretton on Sunday, 29th March. Please take a look and book your place by texting Tony Power on 07759 300856 before the coach fills up.

Social Activities We enjoyed a sociable evening at Da Vinci's Restaurant, Aldridge, where we were treated to generous portions of lovely Italian food. Thanks to Trish G for suggesting the venue and making preliminary enquiries. We look forward to the evening at Sutton Arts Theatre in May, arranged by Ynyr. If anyone else would like to plan another social event, please contact any committee member.

Walk Leaders You will have noticed more than the usual gaps in the current Walks Programme. Since Ramblers introduced training requirements for walk leaders, we have a reduced number of leaders. If anyone has an idea for a walk and would like support in doing a recce or co-leading a walk in the future, please contact Andy (Sunday walks) or Ynyr (Thursdays). Remember to regularly check the Walk Programme on our website, including the Proposed Walks section for walks being planned but not yet been recced - click on Walks and Walking tab and you'll come to it.

Footpath Working Party Looking ahead optimistically and the prospect of spring growth, we need to gather volunteers for the important work of footpath clearance. We're grateful for those who have given their time in the past, but there is a need for

more help. We work in Shenstone Parish, usually for 2-3 hours on the third Thursday of the month (supported by the Staffordshire CC Outreach Officer), with the opportunity for refreshments afterwards – always welcome in warm weather. No special skills are needed: just bring hand tools, protective gloves and strong footwear. If the prospect of fresh air, useful exercise in pleasant surroundings and contributing to the work of our group appeals to you, please get in touch with me.

There is a variety of walks proposed for the month of March which I hope will be well-supported. Looking forward to seeing you on a walk soon.

With best wishes to all,

Barbara

SCR Website Updates

A couple of useful features that website users may want to check out can be found under the ***Walks and Walking*** Tab.

Walks and Walking
Records:Photos, Routes,Maps
Information for Walkers and Walk Leaders
Car Park and Car Sharing
Walk Grades
Our Current Walks Programme
Proposed, but not yet recced Walks
Mapping Tools
Rights of Way Maps for the counties bordering Birmingham
Display routes of walks done: select list or map

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Our Current Walks

This can be displayed as a table or calendar and shows walks that have been confirmed with full details and included on the national website.

Proposed, not yet recced walks

This shows dates that have been reserved for walks in consultation with the Walk Coordinators. Once details are confirmed they appear on the Walk Programme.

Records, Photos, Routes, Maps

From information sent to Rob by members on walks, a record is created with walk details and photos. If available a GPX route map is included.

Display routes of walks

In addition to the Walk Records you can also find on the website Routes of Previous Walks. These now total 120 (dating back to 2018) which have been uploaded to the website by Tom where a GPX route has been available. These provide a valuable resource for ideas for walk locations providing starting point and route map.

Walk Programme 2026

Our 2026 walk programme started with a New Year's Day walk at Gentleshaw.



Our first Sunday walk at Sandwell Valley in sunshine.



Thursday walks braving the mud at Hammerwich on the McLean Way, and at Witton Lakes the Eco Hub provided shelter from the rain and coffee!



Sunday walk at Shenstone, walking from Litton Aston.



Sunday walk at Shustoke with the Reservoir and Nether Whitacre. Having been cancelled due to snow a revised route was needed to avoid the mud!



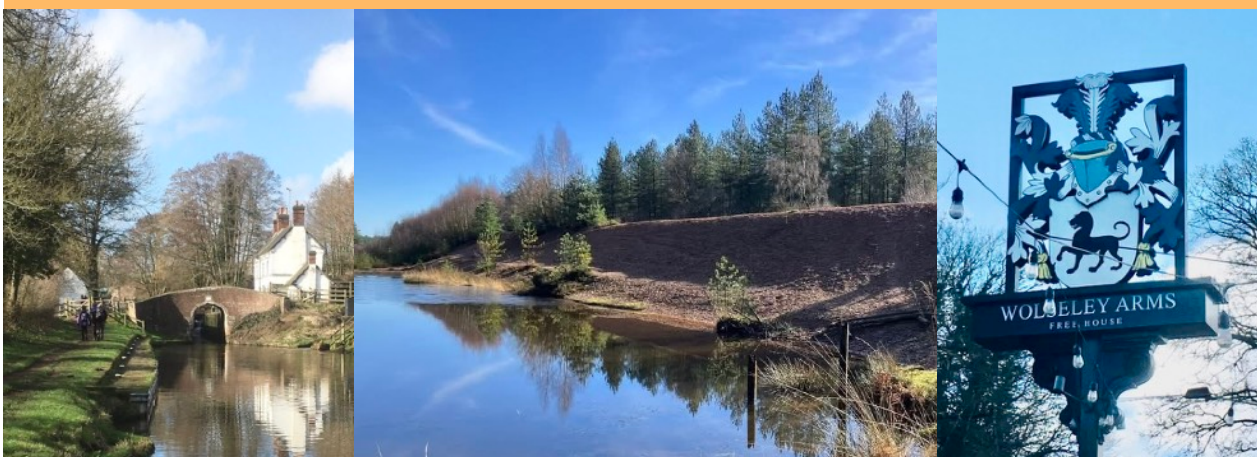
A Thursday walk from the Miner's Rest, Chasetown including the Wyrley & Essington Canal, Brownhills and Chasewater.



Whittington, with the MOD Firing Range, Hopwas Woods and the Packington Pigs.



.....and the last walk of February, sunshine at Cannock Chase.



Check out more pictures on the SCR website suttoncoldfieldramblers.org.uk and on the group Facebook page facebook.com/suttoncoldfieldramblers

Future Walks

Details of future walks currently planned can be found on the website suttoncoldfieldramblers.org.uk

Currently we have walks planned for March/April at Rushall, Chorley, Chasewater & Brownhills, Church Stretton, Lichfield and Chaddesley Corbett. There are a number of dates for Sundays and Thursdays still to be filled. Suggestions for walks could be urban or rural, local or further afield, easy or moderate.

Coach Walks

The spring coach walk is planned for Sunday March 29th in the Church Stretton area - check details on the website. There will be two walks on offer; a linear walk of around 10 miles and a circular walk of 7.8 miles, both finishing in Church Stretton. Bookings are being taken by Tony - £10 cash on the day.

Car sharing to walks

Ramblers are encouraged where possible to car share to the walk start. Please text the walk leader if you plan to go directly there.

Checking for Walk Updates

Occasionally changes to walks have to be made at short notice, and it may not always be possible for Rob to send out an email informing members in time. Therefore please regularly check both the website and your mailbox.

Check the Weather Outlook

bbc.co.uk/weather/outlook

Request from our Walk Coordinators

If you have wondered why there are gaps in the walk programme, this is purely down to having no offer of a walk. Our small band of current walk leaders do a great job of supporting the walk programme, and their efforts are much appreciated. To ensure there are enough walks, please get in touch with either walks coordinator. Training and support will be provided. There is no expectation for walk leaders to regularly put on walks.

Sunday Walks - Andy Addison andyaddison11@hotmail.com 07565153649

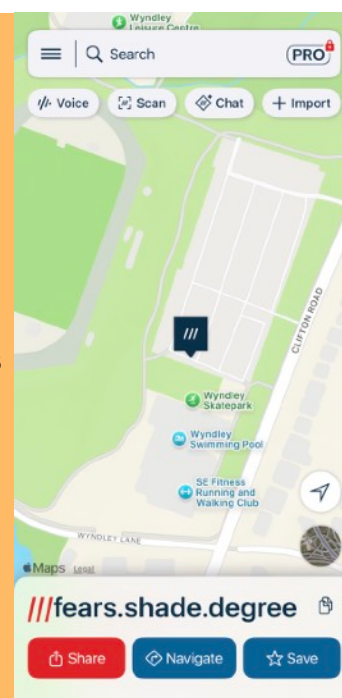
Thursday Walks - Ynyr Owen ynyrownen@hotmail.co.uk 07814863074



What Three Words?

You may have noticed that Ramblers walk details for starting locations are using in addition to Postcodes and Grid References, **what3words**. This is basically a geocoding system that divides the world into 3m x 3m squares to give greater address location accuracy. For example ///fears.shade.degree is in the car park by Wyndley Swimming Pool.

The easiest way to use what3words is through the App (the standard version is free) and it is useful to have it downloaded. The App is particularly helpful for sharing your location when you don't have an address, addresses that cover a large area and for precise locations within large car parks.



Making the Most of Ramblers Membership

In January the Ramblers published a summary of their annual Member Satisfaction Survey for 2025. This can be found at;



ramblers.org.uk/member-satisfaction-survey-2025-highlights

The survey reports on overall satisfaction of members (86% of respondents are satisfied/very satisfied) and what members most enjoy about their membership and the benefits of their membership. 72% of respondents said group walks, followed by discovering new routes, meeting people and socialising, and supporting the work of the Ramblers. Whilst the results are not particularly surprising it is a reminder as we start 2026 to think about making the most of a Ramblers membership.

Group Walks; fundamental to the Ramblers, group walks are a great opportunity to get outside in the fresh air and socialise with others. Members can join walks programmed by their own group as well as other Ramblers groups, subject to published joining details. All Ramblers group walks are published on the national website www.ramblers.org.uk/go-walking/group-walks On here you can search for walks by location and other filters such as length. Using the Ramblers app allows you to search for group walks via location but also quickly find walks using the tabs for *Your Group* (Sutton Coldfield) and *Your Area* (Warwickshire).

Ramblers Library of Walks; the Ramblers online library has over 4,000 tested routes. Again these can be accessed via the Ramblers website www.ramblers.org.uk/go-walking/routes and the App. Using the App, routes can be saved and downloaded to a mobile device for off-line use.

Getting Involved; In addition to our regular Sunday and Thursday walks, SCR have 3 coach walks a year, evening pub walks in the summer, weekends away and social events. Last year we had just over 80 walks on offer with close to 1,400 participants.

All this activity is dependent on both volunteers and the engagement and support of members. New volunteers are always welcome with opportunities for leading walks, organising events and helping with the Footpath Working Group. Speak with a member of our committee if you would like to find out more - there are lots of ways to get involved!

Warwickshire Area AGM - Saturday February 28th

Solihull Ramblers' group hosted this year's AGM held at the Fentham Hall in the attractive village of Hampton-in-Arden, attended by around 90 Ramblers. We were welcomed in the Victorian era Main Hall by the Area Chair, Dr Peter Rookes.

In his opening remarks, he commented on the vibrant, active groups which comprise the Warwickshire area of which he is extremely proud. He spoke about the 90th Anniversary of the Ramblers from its origins in the Kinder Scout Trespass. He went on to recommend the Millennium Way and its 44 circular walks and the Rail Trail routes throughout the county. He thanked the Area officers for their work: in particular Michael Bird, Footpaths and Countryside Officer, for his detailed reports and for the good relationships he has established with planning authorities.

Roz Faynes, a Ramblers' trustee, spoke briefly about the new training requirements for Walk Leaders which will have to be updated every three years.

The election of committee members followed, with all being re-elected apart from the Area Treasurer, Ann Hebden, who is standing down after two years in post. As she was not present at the meeting, her Annual Report was read by the Area Secretary, Janet Lockett, and the accounts were approved.

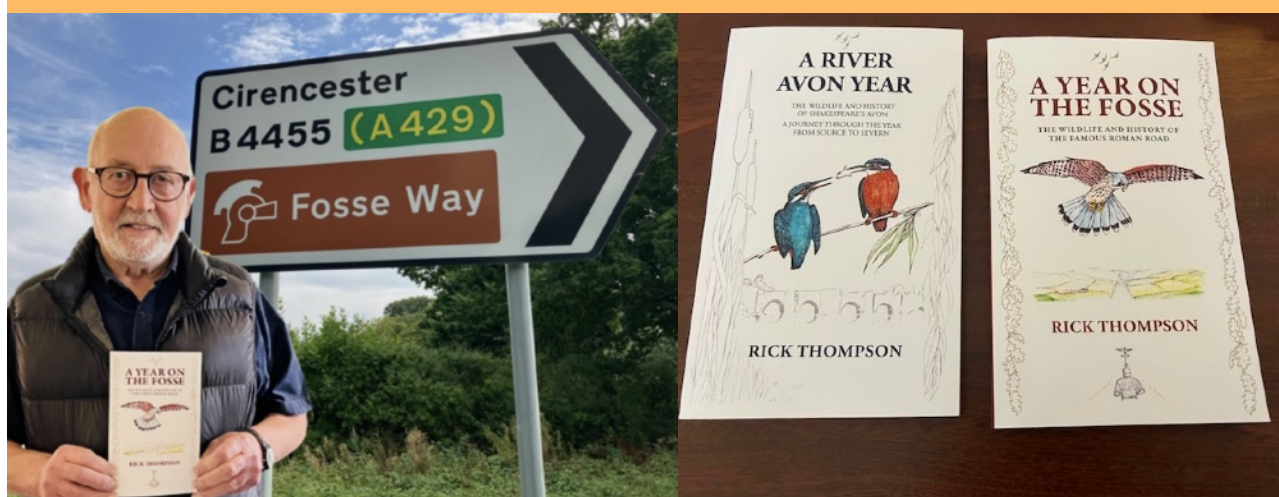
Janet Gee, a member of the Board of Trustees, spoke about the current governance review and the resolution to move towards the best practice of 'one member, one vote' in line with charity and company law, as opposed to the present model of 'representative democracy'. She described future plans to establish six 'forums' throughout the UK to help ensure decision making is transparent and accessible to members, and to consider the next 90 years of Ramblers' existence. She also reminded us that the Round Britain Footpath will be opening later this year.

We were then treated to a fascinating, entertaining and informative talk by former BBC news journalist and senior editor and local author, Rick Thompson. He is a lifelong bird watcher who skilfully blends his interests in wildlife and history in his latest book, 'A Year on the Fosse', which charts the 230-mile Roman road from Lincoln to Exmouth in Devon. He spoke about and illustrated the wildlife to be found in various locations along the route, often in former quarries, now nature reserves, as well as the impact of climate change. He was

optimistic about positive human intervention in habitat management and the reintroduction of birds and mammals that rely on these habitats. He had a wealth of facts, legends and stories connected with the towns and cities that developed from Roman times: from the Roman colonnades in Lincoln; the remains of Richard III discovered in Leicester; King Alfred the Great's residence in Chippenham and the death in 1960 of American rock star, Eddie Cochran, following a car crash also in Chippenham. In response to a question about the destruction of wildlife habitats caused by the construction of HS2, he was fairly sure that, once mitigation projects are completed, a favourable 'wildlife corridor' will exist along the route.

The customary end-of-meeting walks were somewhat curtailed owing to localised flooding, with a short linear walk along nearby lanes on offer.

Barbara T



Members' News

A warm welcome to our new members and returning members; Aisha Dass, Andrew Hayden, Eve Hough, Gregg Thomas, Jurgita Radzeviciute, Lesley Masters, Margaret Delaney and Nigel Compton.

Congratulations to SCR members Kay and John who got married at the end of 2025.



Dates for the Diary 2026

Spring Coach Walk Sunday March 29th: Two walks have been planned in the Church Stretton area, see details on the website. To book a place please message Tony on 07759300856 - £10 cash payable on the day.

Visit to Sutton Arts Theatre: A booking has been made for Wednesday May 6th by Ynyr for SCR members who paid for a ticket.

Summer Coach Walk Sunday July 26th: This is likely to be to the Welshpool area.

SCR Weekend Away September 25th: A three night weekend break to the HF House at Dolgellau has been arranged by Rosie.

Christmas Coach Walk: This is planned for Sunday December 6th to Ludlow.

Thank you to all who contributed to the newsletter. Contributions are invited for the next Newsletter, please send these to suttoncoldfieldramblers-sharon-freedman by April 20th.

hf holidays

WALK YOUR WAY

WALKING & SPECIAL INTEREST HOLIDAYS
UK, EUROPE & WORLDWIDE 2023

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The world is just a step away.

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