



November/December Newsletter



Weekend of walking at the Brecon Beacons - Bannau Brycheiniog

*'My heart leaps up
When I behold a rainbow in the sky'*

William Wordsworth

Chairperson's Report

Walks Programme

At the time of writing, we have entered meteorological winter with freezing temperatures to match – a good time to look back at our autumn walks, in new and familiar locations, and the fine weather we enjoyed. In October, Andy took us to the unspoilt Severn Valley with fabulous views and the added attraction of a vintage diesel locomotive event viewed from our lunch stop at Highley Station. Jeanie led a Thursday walk from the edge of Lichfield to the well-preserved Roman site at Wall. We headed to south Warwickshire for Jon's walk from Napton-on-the-Hill with its iconic windmill, canals and unwelcome attention from a rather large pheasant! Barbara and John led a local walk around Shenstone Woodend, taking advantage of footpaths cleared by our Working Party in recent months. Mike's lovely rural walk in North Warwickshire ended with drinks at the popular Church End Brewery. Cannock Chase, above a flooded Trent Valley, and the impressive Shugborough Estate was the location for Sharon's walk, and we returned there in November for Jenny and Chris's walk. Our autumn break at the HF house at Brecon took place at the end of October and was enjoyed by all who took part. Thanks to Rosie and Tony for arranging the weekend, walk leaders and entertainers. (More details about the weekend in a separate report.)

We managed a good walk, led by Phil and Jim, in Sutton Park before the strong winds and rain brought by Storm Ciaran hit. Ranjit led a walk in the Derbyshire National Forest with stops in attractive villages, a detour around a flooded path and a treat for steam locomotive enthusiasts at Netherseal. There was still evidence of considerable flooding on Barbara and John's local walk on Warwickshire Moor and Amington, where we were invited to have coffee in Saint Editha's Church amidst a very lively playgroup. We enjoyed Andy's saunter through the tranquil Cuckoos' Nook Nature Reserve and along the Rushall Canal, and were joined by some members of Walsall Ramblers. John C. and Barbara took us to the Earlswood Lakes for a walk across open country and through attractive autumnal woodland. Ramblers tackled the 'mud and ditch' challenge with style, good humour and effective teamwork in evidence.

There's also often been challenge on our recent Christmas walks in the Peak District: submerged Stepping Stones one year and last year a road closure with tricky diversion. This year it was snow, and plenty of it, particularly on higher ground. Our intrepid leaders Ken, Tom and Di led us expertly and safely through mist and along concealed paths back to the Bentley Brook Inn for an enjoyable evening with excellent Christmas fare. We were pleased that Jean, Bob, Kay and John B were able to join us for the meal. Thank you to everyone involved in the organisation and smooth running of the day. Jeanie's Lichfield city and countryside walk incorporated the ancient St Chad's Well and we returned to the city centre for food and drinks at the cosy Beerbohm café.

The snow had long disappeared, but was replaced by mud and surface water for Sue's Bittell Reservoirs walk which didn't spoil enjoyment of the wonderful views on offer.

To end the year's programme, we have Sharon's festive Birmingham City Centre walk on 14th December where we will benefit from her extensive knowledge of historical landmarks, and our Sutton Park mince pie walks on Sunday 17th December led by Phil, Barbara and John, with both groups meeting up at the Jamboree Stone for Christmas treats.

Looking back at the year as a whole, our walks have been well-supported and grateful thanks to all walk leaders for their time in planning and leading walks. Our spring and autumn breaks, arranged by Anita, Barbara N and Rosie to Selworthy and Brecon were a great success, and I can't leave out congratulating participants on some awesome fancy dress outfits at both venues. Congratulations, also, to our group of Ramblers who completed the second stage of the Camino Frances in Northern Spain.

Our social events - Skittles Evening with meal and Curry Night were well-attended and great fun. In the coming year we can look forward to Jenny's spring break in Barmouth and the autumn break, organised by Anita, in Ilminster. We are holding a (subsidised) Carvery Meal at the end of January – see separate notice. So, all in all, an active and successful year where we have been joined by several new members to the group who say they have felt welcomed and have enjoyed friendly conversation and company on walks.

AGM 2023

Over 40 members attended the AGM at the Plough and Harrow, followed by a buffet when the business was completed. The committee was re-elected 'en bloc', with the exception of the Member Welfare Officer position. June Wright has kindly agreed to replace Sue Wright in this role. Sue was thanked for her work in supporting members over the last four years. Please let June know if you hear of any Ramblers who may be unwell or in hospital so that she can contact them.

Warwickshire Area AGM 2024

This will be held on Saturday 10th February, 2024 at the Ex-Servicemen's Club, Rye Piece Ringway, Bedworth CV12 8JH. Tea and coffee will be served 10 -10.30am. After the buffet lunch there will be two walks. To assist the caterers, please book your place at the AGM by 1st February, by emailing Janet Lockett at jdlockett01@btinternet.com. We hope that Sutton Ramblers will be well represented at the Area AGM. Transport details to the venue can be found in the Area Report in 'News & Stop Press' on our website.

CPR Training

Seven SCR members took part last month in CPR training at South Parade Methodist Church Hall. It was an interesting and informative evening with plenty of opportunity for 'hands on' practice of CPR techniques. It is hoped that further courses will be offered in the future for those who are interested in learning these lifesaving skills.

Shenstone Parish Footpaths

As you know, our Footpath Working Party maintains footpaths and stiles in this area. John Collins, who lives in Shenstone, has publicised our work in the Parish Newsletter and plans to give directions and maps of the routes that are now accessible in future issues, so that more people will be able to take advantage of them. Thanks to John for this initiative.

Thank you to everyone for your support of our activities this year and of each other. I would like to wish all members a very Happy Christmas and send best wishes for a happy, healthy and active 2024.

With best wishes to all,

Barbara

Albert Smith RIP

Many members attended the recent funeral of Albert Smith. His wife Vera has thanked the Ramblers for their support and donation to St Giles.

Albert was a founding member of the Sutton Coldfield Ramblers, becoming Chair in 1999. Both he and Vera were regular walk leaders and organisers of social events.

Members have shared fond recollections of Albert; *a sprightly walker up the hills, a stalwart walk leader able to overcome any hazards and an excellent organiser of activities* - with many references to how central he was to the success of the group.

Earlier this year Jenny Mitton spent time with Albert and Vera collating their memories of the group's walks and holidays over many years - 'Sutton Coldfield Ramblers the Early Years 1991- 2010' suttoncoldfieldramblers.org.uk/scr-early-years/

Albert Smith 1934-2023

2023 Walks in Pictures

A selection of photos from walks through 2023 - check out more pictures on the website's Photo Album suttoncoldfieldramblers.org.uk/photo-album-2/ and on the group Facebook page facebook.com/suttoncoldfieldramblers







Sutton Coldfield Ramblers Autumn Break to Brecon

On Friday October 27th members of the Sutton Coldfield Ramblers set out for the comfortable stone-build HF Nythfa House, located on the edge of the Welsh market town of Brecon.

Weather forecast was mixed and after heavy rainfall before our visit, terrain was expected to be 'boggy'!

We were welcomed on arrival with tea and scones, and before dinner our Walk Leaders briefed us on the following day's walk choices:

Tom was leading a circular route to the Four Waterfalls near Ystradfellte,

Sharon was leading to the high points of Twyn y Gaer and Allt Lom from the Visitor Centre near Libanus,

and Sue was leading a third option walk, again heading out around Libanus.

All walks were much enjoyed and showers gave way to several mood-lifting rainbows and sunshine.

*'My heart leaps up
When I behold a rainbow in the sky'*
wrote Wordsworth

There was, however, a fair dose of the expected 'mud', which he omitted to mention.

Others enjoyed a day at Hay-on-Wye.





Sunday saw many of the group walk to the high point and ridge near to the Llangorse Lake, the largest natural lake in this area. This was led by Ken, and afforded sweeping views of the surrounding Beacons.

A proposed hike to Pen-y-Fan and Corn Ddu, to be led by Mike, was unfortunately not possible due to expected heavy rainfall and high winds.

Alison ventured forth to Waun Fach and Castell Dinas. Jenny and Chris led a walk straight from the house, along the canal, returning across fields.

In addition to a programme of great walks, the weekend was about more than rambling and getting muddy. Social activities were enjoyed each evening. John C gave us a testing Mini Quiz on the first evening; Skittles, won by Jenny entertained us on Saturday night; Sunday saw many of us transform into scary Halloween outfits and John Harden won the 'Best Outfit' award in his guise as a Mad Monk, replete with open-toed sandals! Liz provided her very challenging Dingbats Quiz throughout the weekend and kindly offered the solutions, putting to an end our mental torment in attempting to decode them! Rosie and Tony gave us a fun numbers game on Sunday evening, which turned out to be highly entertaining and competitive!



Monday morning was our departure after a leisurely breakfast.

A very special thanks to weekend organisers Rosie and Tony, all walk leaders and social event co-ordinators for ensuring such a varied and enjoyable break away.

Sue Wood

Sutton Coldfield Ramblers Christmas Walks and Lunch

In spite of the layer of snow, our coach driver was waiting in good time for us at Wyndley and after an uneventful drive got us to the Old Station car park near Alsop en le Dale in good time, and where we were met with more snow!

The shorter walk (led by Ken) headed off along the Tissington Trail for a short distance, before starting the descent into Milldale where conditions were very different to those experienced on the recce a few weeks before, soon encountering 4 inches of slippery snow overlying the stoney slope.

Carefully negotiating the steeper part of the path, we joined the riverside lane to Milldale Village and our welcome coffee/toilet stop (fortunately unlike the shop and café, the toilets were open).

After crossing the packhorse bridge, the route continued following the river bank along Dovedale through a fairyland of snow encrusted trees with misty glimpses of tors, rock spires, and caves with sightings of several Herons and a Dipper in the River Dove before finding, as expected, that the stepping stones and lefthand riverside path were impassable.

As we tackled the diversion round the base of Thorpe Cloud, which included the only significant uphill part of the walk, it became apparent that the slight thaw and drizzle had caused very slippery conditions affecting both the uphill and downhill slopes resulting in several sit-downs and some members progressing for short lengths on their derrieres!

It was only 15 minutes later than anticipated that we rounded the corner onto the Thorpe to Ilam Road to find the coach waiting for us as planned. I would like to thank everybody who took part in the walk, which was not as easy as anticipated, whether they were able to be striding ahead or were slipping and sliding at the back, for keeping together and finishing the walk as a team, and also to Ken the coach driver, for getting us there and back safely.

Ken Bratton



Given the snow, the longer walk group (led by Tom and Di) were given the option of a shorter walk but decided to valiantly continue with the original 6.5 miles route. From the carpark we took the footpath down to Alsop and after passing through the village we climbed up (130 ft) to the high ground on the northern side of the dale. The path took us along the dale edge through woodland and pasture to Parwich, which looked particularly pretty, and instead of the village green there was a *village white*. Despite a 2-inch covering of snow the going was good but the Mapy navigation app proved valuable as the mist reduced the visibility to about 50 yards - the group was assured that the views were normally wonderful!

After Parwich we joined the Limestone Way climbing (130 ft) over the ridge to cross Bletch Brook and then climbing steeply (250 ft) out of the dale to follow the Tissington Trail around Tissington. From here we picked up a footpath leading past Basset Wood Farm, eventually descending to reach the A515 near the Old Hall in Fenny Bentley.

Did you know that Fenny Bentley was named to distinguish it from the 'lost village' Hungry Bentley.

Despite the conditions everyone agreed it was a really nice walk.

Back at the hotel we found that the coach (carrying our best clothes) had gone to pick up the other group. We had no choice but to resort to the bar in our boots. Once it returned we able to change into our finery.

As usual we had an excellent meal at the Bentley Brook Inn enjoyed by all.

Rosie Power and Tom Halstead



News from the Ramblers

Reporting Problems on Public Paths

Through their website the Ramblers have provided a new interactive tool to report an issue with a public right of way. This should be made to the relevant local highway authority - the interactive map can show the relevant authority and contact details (I found the interactive map worked on a laptop but not on a mobile device).

go-walking-hub/dealing-problems-public-paths

All public footpaths are recorded by local highway authorities on a “definitive map” or “rights of way map”. The example of Staffordshire County Council can be accessed via staffordshire.gov.uk/environment/RightsofWay/Legal/Definitive-map.aspx

Ramblers Members Benefits

Check out the benefits provided by your Ramblers membership.

ramblers.org.uk/support-us/my-benefits

Booking with Ramble Worldwide - formerly Ramblers Holidays

You may have seen that Ramblers Holidays has been rebranded as Ramble Worldwide rambleworldwide.co.uk

Their relationship with the Ramblers and the Walking Partnership is unchanged.

Therefore if you arrange a holiday with Ramble Worldwide your nominated group (eg Sutton Coldfield) will still receive a financial contribution (£10 - £30 depending on the type of holiday). The nomination has to be given at the point of booking - it cannot be done retrospectively.

Dates for the Diary

Warwickshire Area AGM 2024 Saturday 10th February - will be at the Ex-Servicemen's Club, Rye Piece Ringway, Bedworth CV12 8JH. Please book your place February 1st by emailing Janet Lockett at jdlockett01@btinternet.com.

Evening Social Event Wednesday 31st January - a subsidised carvery meal has been arranged for Wednesday 31st January, 7.30pm at the Toby Carvery, Birmingham Road, Shenstone Woodend WS14 0PA. We will have a private room, and ask you to bring £5 in cash towards the cost of the carvery and also pay for any desserts and drinks you have on the night.

Numbers are restricted to 36. If you would like to come, please text Barbara by 5th January - 07896935429.

Walk Programme 2024

Details of walks for January and February can be found on the website suttoncoldfieldramblers.org.uk/walks/

If you are interested in leading a walk in 2024 please contact;

Sunday Walks - Andy Addison andyaddison11@hotmail.com 07565153649

Thursday Walks - Julie Hamblen hamblen74@gmail.com 07817151165

Welcome to New Members

A warm welcome to our new members; Catherine Roberts, Christopher Jackson, Denis Meehan, Joan Nimmo, Karen Swingle, Ralph Congrave, Rose Leung, Roanna John, Sarah Kasper and Sean McDermott.

Thank you

.....to all who contributed to the newsletter. Contributions are invited for the next Newsletter - please send these to sharonfreedman04@gmail.com by January 30th.

Christmas Greetings and Best Wishes for 2024

hf
holidays

WALK YOUR WAY

WALKING & SPECIAL INTEREST HOLIDAYS
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Walking is even more wonderful when shared with others. Choose any of our holidays and we'll contribute funds through The Walking Partnership to your group. Just tell us their name when you book.

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