



**Sutton
Coldfield**

January/February Newsletter



Snowdrops at St Mary the Virgin Church on the Lapworth Locks Winter Walk

The Snowdrop

**Many, many welcomes, February fair-maid!
Ever as of old time, Solitary firstling,
Coming in the cold time, Prophet of the gay time,
Prophet of the May time, Prophet of the roses,
Many, many welcomes, February fair-maid!**

Alfred, Lord Tennyson

Chairperson's Report

We ended 2023 on a high with fifty Ramblers enjoying Christmas treats on our walks in Sutton Park. We have continued in the same enthusiastic vein with excellent numbers on our walks so far this year. Despite winter storms leaving the ground saturated, we have managed to have some interesting and enjoyable walks on 'terra firma'. We explored south Birmingham's Three Parks and made two visits to the Pelsall area walking alongside commons and canals. In advance of Storm Isha, John C and Chris (at very short notice) merged two groups and devised a route around Shenstone, incorporating interesting historical features. The original planned routes will be walked on 25th February. Sharon's 'Lapworth Locks Winter Walk' had been skilfully adapted to avoid a quagmire and included lovely snowdrop displays. We look forward to her 'Lapworth Locks Summer Walk'! More locally, we followed part of the Birmingham Greenway to Witton Lakes where we were warmly welcomed for coffee at the Witton Lakes Eco Hub. Unfortunately, bad weather caused the postponement of the Astley & North Arden Trail walk which will now take place in April. We had the opportunity to use public transport for Tom and Di's 'rail trail' linear walk between Redditch and Bromsgrove stations. Thank you, as always, to walk leaders who provided walks avoiding challenging conditions.

Car sharing It has always been the custom to car share when travelling to walks, but unfortunately the number of drivers offering lifts has diminished. With more cars parked at the walk start, the impact on the location is increased. We need to avoid a repeat of a difficult situation recently when we took up all the available spaces in a pub car park, preventing a party booked in before us from being able to park. If, occasionally, you do need to travel directly to the walk start, please text the walk leader, thus enabling communication in the event of a delay or cancellation of the walk.

Basic Navigation Skills Training You will have seen Andy's notice offering this training to members who would like to improve their navigation skills. There are also invitations to 'shadow' walk leaders on a recce and to co-lead a walk. We hope to encourage more people to come forward to make use of these initiatives. Thanks to Andy and his team for providing the training.

Spring Coach Walk You will have seen details on the website of our coach walk to Coalbrookdale and Much Wenlock on 28th April, organised by John Collins. The coach fare is £10, to be paid on the day. Please book your place in good time by texting Tony Power on 07759300856.

Warwickshire Rights of Way Improvement Plan Work is beginning on a review of this plan (ROWIP) and Warwickshire County Council would like the views of our Ramblers' group members on how the public rights of way network can meet the needs of the public now and in the future. We are asked to complete a public online survey at

ask.warwickshire.gov.uk/insights-service/warwickshire-rowip/ by 7th April. I hope you will be able to complete the survey.

Carvery Meal We enjoyed a convivial evening at the Toby Carvery, Shenstone Woodend at the end of January and are planning another social evening later in the year.

Christmas Meal 2024 Our Christmas Meal is being held at the Cleobury Golf Club, Cleobury Mortimer on Sunday 1st December, with a choice of walks beforehand. Please make a note of the date.

As the weather improves, I look forward to having your company on walks so that we can continue the promising start made to the walking year.

With best wishes to all,

Barbara

Sutton Coldfield Ramblers Committee

Following November's AGM the Sutton Coldfield Ramblers Committee comprises;

Chairperson: Barbara Twort

General Secretary: Rosie Power

Treasurer: Tony Power

Walks Coordinator for Sunday Walks and Coach Walks: Andy Addison

Walks Coordinator for Thursday Walks: Julie Hamblen

Webmaster: Richard Creen

Membership Secretary: Rosie Power

Communications: Rob Halley

Newsletter: Sharon Freedman

Footpaths Secretary: John Harden

Area Council Delegate: Barbara Twort

Member Welfare Officer: June Wright

Contact details for committee members can be found on the website suttoncoldfieldramblers.org.uk/committee/

As announced at the AGM, after more than 10 years as SCR's Webmaster, Richard Creen will be standing down at the next AGM. Rob Halley has offered to take on the role from Richard allowing a managed handover.

Warwickshire Area AGM

The annual AGM for the Warwickshire Area was held on February 10th hosted by the Coventry Ramblers Group and attended by around 70 members from the thirteen Ramblers Groups that make up the Warwickshire Area.

At the meeting Dr Peter Rookes (South Birmingham) was elected as Chair and Ann Hebden (Solihull) as Treasurer, the other committee members remain the same.

The key speaker, Ramblers' Trustee Malcolm Mc Donnell, spoke about the successes of the Ramblers summarised as: the new, modified strategy to be introduced shortly; the strong use made of the new Ramblers' website and Walks Manager, with enhancements continuing; a review of the suitability of Assemble (used by volunteers) is underway, as well as campaigning and fundraising initiatives.

Julia Singleton-Tasker, Lead Community Officer for the Heart of England Community Rail Partnership spoke about the various strands of the organisation's work, including encouraging train use for leisure purposes and the development of short walking routes. Further details in the item below.

Minutes of the AGM will be posted on our website in due course.

Barbara

Rail Trails

If you like the idea of accessing walks by train you may be interested in the work of the Community Rail Partnerships in developing and promoting walking and cycling routes.

As reported above, the Heart of England Community Rail Partnership presented their work to the Warwickshire Area AGM. The partnership (covering Warwickshire, Coventry and Solihull) has developed a series of short walking routes between thirty-six stations.



Discover the Heart of England by rail at:
www.heartcommunityrail.org.uk/railtrails



Design by: www.blackspiraldesign.co.uk



Information and routes can be found on heartcommunityrail.org.uk/

Also within our wider area, Worcestershire Community Rail Partnership has produced ten Rail Trails with walking routes of varying lengths. Further routes are being developed. wcrp.org.uk/rail-trails/



Rail Trails | Worcestershire

Free station to station walking guides in
Worcestershire

A project supported
by



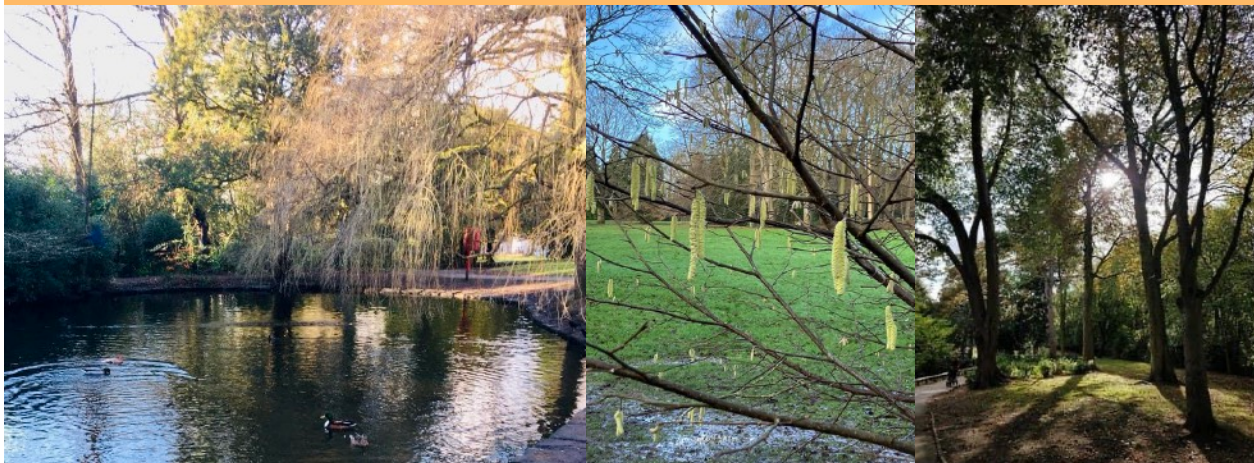
Continuing with the concept of accessing walking routes by train railwalks.co.uk is launching a project where people can record on a public website walking routes between railway stations. It is supported by Slow Ways, which has a similar grassroots approach for identifying walking and cycling routes between local points of interest. beta.slowways.org/



SCR had their own 'rail trail' walk this February, taking the Cross City Line to Redditch, walking to Bromsgrove using part of the Monarchs Way and the Worcester & Birmingham canal, and returning by train to Sutton Coldfield.

Walk Programme 2024

Our 2024 walk programme started with a good mix of walks. Check out more pictures on facebook.com/suttoncoldfieldramblers and suttoncoldfieldramblersphotos



A mud free walk taking in three South Birmingham Parks.



A tranquil walk from Pelsall North Common.



Shenstone and the achievements of the Footpath Working Party.



A winter walk from Lapworth Locks.



Sutton Park and Witton Lakes following the Greenway route, and Wyrley Common and canals Pelsall.



Using the train, a linear walk Redditch to Bromsgrove.

Details of future walks can be found at suttoncoldfieldramblers.org.uk/walks/

Checking for Walk Updates

Due to bad weather it has been necessary to amend/cancel walks at short notice. On recent occasions members have been advised by email, however 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 emails, and if you are unsure if a walk is going ahead contact the walk leader.

Check the Weather Outlook

bbc.co.uk/weather/outlook

Walks February to April

The programme over the next few months has a broad mix of walks; including new dates for the walks that had to be amended or cancelled due to bad weather; the first Coach Walk of the year to Coalbrookdale and Much Wenlock; and the fully booked Spring Break to Barmouth. However there are some empty dates in March and April; if you would like to offer a walk for these dates or in the future please get in contact with the relevant Walk Co-ordinator;

Sunday Walks - Andy Addison andyaddison11@hotmail.com 07565153649

Thursday Walks - Julie Hamblen hamblen74@gmail.com 07817151165

Car sharing to walks

Ramblers are encouraged where possible to car share to the walk start. If you do need to travel directly to the walk start, please remember to text the walk leader of your intention to do this.

Basic Skills Navigation

Available Online Resources from the Ramblers

For many walkers nothing beats that exhilarating feeling of being free and confident to explore the outdoors whether in new locations or just finding different walks closer to home. Key to planning and following a route successfully are navigation skills.

To help walkers develop navigation skills for a range of environments the Ramblers have put together a comprehensive series of videos. These cover some fundamental techniques, from map reading to compass basics, as well as practical advice for finding your way in different surroundings.

Specifically these are intended to help with one of the biggest barriers to getting out in nature.....the fear of getting lost!

If you are keen to develop/improve your navigation skills start with the online video series using the link; ramblers.org.uk/go-walking-hub/beginners-guide-navigation



What happens next?

If you are interested in getting to grips with the basics of navigation SCR are holding a workshop session for its members. This will be facilitated by Andy Addison (Walks Coordinator for Sunday Walks and Coach Walks) supported by other SCR members.

FREE BASIC NAVIGATION SKILLS TRAINING

Wednesday March 6th at 7pm
Sutton Coldfield Methodist Church - the Lounge Room
16 South Parade, Sutton Coldfield B72 1QY

Doors open 6.45pm for a 7pm start and 9pm finish.

Tea/Coffee and snacks will be provided.

No existing navigation skills required or expected.

Topics to be covered include: map basics, map symbols and grid references.

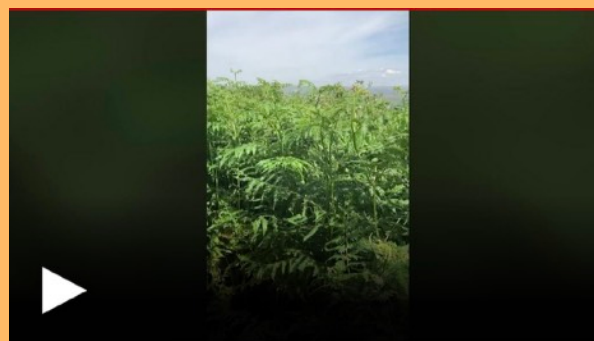
Evening to be facilitated by Andy Addison with support from other Sutton Coldfield Ramblers.

To book a place get in touch with Andy - andyaddison11@hotmail.com or 07565153649.

News from the Ramblers

Obstructions to Public Footpaths

Issues with access to public footpaths has been highlighted by a BBC news item, which identified that at nearly 32,000 locations, public footpaths were obstructed or blocked - this included fenced off paths or overgrown vegetation. In addition the BBC investigation found that the number of reported blockages is increasing year on year. For the full article see bbc.co.uk/news/



"The path is there... somewhere" - watch volunteers from The Ramblers negotiating blocked rights of way

In response to the article, the Ramblers have highlighted their work to help keep the public path network open and accessible to everyone ramblers.org.uk/news/. This includes volunteers undertaking footpath maintenance; SCR has an active Footpath Improvement Working Party.

The Ramblers encourage the public to report any obstructions on public footpaths so that the relevant local highway authority is at least aware. A toolkit to help with reporting can be found at; ramblers.org.uk/go-walking-hub/dealing-problems-public-paths.

If you are unsure if a footpath is a public right of way, this can be checked with the relevant local highway authority through their "definitive map" or "rights of way map". Authorities are also required to have a "Rights of Way Improvement Plan" that is to be reviewed every 10 years. As noted in the Chairperson's Report, Warwickshire County Council are currently seeking views as part of their review process - comments can be submitted via the public online survey at by April 7th. ask.warwickshire.gov.uk/insights-service/warwickshire-rowip/

Ramble Worldwide

If you arrange a holiday with Ramble Worldwide (the new brand name for Ramblers Holidays) SCR will receive a financial contribution of £10 if you nominate the group at the point of booking. This is part of the **Walking Partnership** set up by Ramblers Holidays to provide direct funding to grassroots walking groups that are affiliated to the Ramblers. Ramble Worldwide holidays can be found at; rambleworldwide.co.uk

Ramblers Members Benefits

Check out the benefits provided by your Ramblers membership.

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

Members News

New Members

A warm welcome to members who have recently joined SCR - Andrew Clynch, Margaret Holland, Michalis Kourtidis, Trevor Lote, Lorraine Martin and Persephone Sextou.

Karen's Walking Challenge for the Samaritans

Members who know Karen Swinger will be aware that she is a Listening Volunteer for the Samaritans, an organisation close to her heart. To raise funds Karen is taking part in a Challenge to Walk 70 miles in March. Karen would appreciate any support for her efforts - she has set up a [Just Giving page on Facebook](#) and also has a paper sponsorship form.

RIP

SCR has been informed that former member Jack George has died. Long standing members may remember Jack and his wife sharing stories of their travels.

Dates for the Diary

Basic Navigation Skills Training for SCR Members March 6th at 7pm at Sutton Coldfield Methodist Church.

Places to be booked by email to andyaddison11@hotmail.com

Spring Coach Walk to Coalbrookdale and Much Wenlock on April 28th cost £10, to book message Tony Power on 07759300856.

Christmas Meal Coach Walk 2024 will be held at the Cleobury Golf Club, Cleobury Mortimer on December 1st.

From the Archives

Sutton Coldfield News June 1st 2001 - Walk in the Park is Haven!

"Sutton Park has become a haven for walking groups from all over the West Midlands since the Foot and Mouth outbreak. The crisis has even helped some of the Town's own ramblers rediscover acres of countryside on their doorstep. The group now has 330 members with a hardcore 80-90 who walk often and for whom walking is as much a sociable occasion as a pastime."

Thoughts of Spring

With thoughts of longer days and walking without mud 🤔

*Spring is sprung, the grass is riz.
I wonder where the birdies is.
They say the birdies on the wing, but that's absurd.
I always thought the wing was on the bird.
Or so I heard.*

This well-known poem (with many variations) is often attributed to the New York prolific writer of comic verse Ogden Nash. In the UK it is often associated with Spike Milligan.

Could the words have inspired Leonard Cohen's most famous song...🤔

Thanks to John T.

Thank you

.....to all who contributed to the newsletter. Contributions are invited for the next Newsletter - please send these to sharonfreedman04@gmail.com by April 5th.

The banner is split into two main sections. The left section shows a vibrant landscape with a field of yellow and purple wildflowers in the foreground, leading up to a valley with small houses and a large, jagged mountain range in the background under a sunset sky. The 'hf holidays' logo is in the top right corner of this section. The right section has a solid blue background. At the top, it says 'WALKING HOLIDAYS HERE, THERE & EVERYWHERE' in large white letters. Below this, there are three circular icons with 'R' in the center, each representing a different holiday destination: 'UK' (showing a castle on a hill), 'EUROPE' (showing a large cathedral), and 'WORLDWIDE' (showing a mountain lake). To the right of these icons, text reads: '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.' At the bottom left of the right section, it says 'ramblersholidays.co.uk' and 'Ramblers Holidays' with a logo. At the bottom left of the entire banner, it says 'WALK YOUR WAY' in large white letters, and below that, 'WALKING & SPECIAL INTEREST HOLIDAYS UK, EUROPE & WORLDWIDE 2023'. A 'Which?' Recommended Provider logo is also visible in the bottom right of the left section.