



**Sutton
Coldfield**

May/June Newsletter



Bluebells at Middleton

The Bluebell
A fine and subtle spirit dwells
In every little flower,
Each one its own sweet feeling breathes
With more or less of power.
There is silence eloquence
In every wild bluebell
That fills my softened heart with bliss
That words could never tell.

Anne Bronte

Chairperson's Report

In an extended period of unsettled weather, most of us have probably been hoping for higher temperatures, but we've been fortunate with good weather for most of our walks over the last couple of months.

Walks Programme In April we visited George Eliot country, walking from Astley along the North Arden Heritage Trail, the Canwell Estate and Weeford, Wombourne's historic Grade II listed buildings and spectacular bridge artwork. The spring coach walk to Coalbrookdale and Much Wenlock was well-supported and very enjoyable, allowing time for a sociable drink afterwards. May walks included some local areas: Pipe Hall, Lichfield, Middleton Village, Kingsbury Water Park and a rather wet evening pub walk in Shenstone where everyone was glad to get into the pub for a drink and to dry out! We ventured further afield for the Temple Balsall walks and afternoon tea, Belbroughton and Blithfield Reservoir (second attempt at Andy's walk). There was a surprise treat of tea and cakes in the church after the Ellastone walk. Another sunny day was enjoyed for our Shuttington walk - sadly no cake. Thank you, as always, to walk leaders for an interesting and varied programme of walks.

Navigation Skills Training You will recall that Andy led a navigation skills training session which he followed up by inviting people to join him on recces. Our walks on June 9th gave 15 SCR members the opportunity for 'on the ground' map reading practice with four groups navigating their way on different routes around Shenstone. I hope that everyone enjoyed the day and gained confidence in finding their way using a map. Many thanks to Andy and Sharon for their time in organising this event and our volunteers on the day (Julie, Rosie and Tony) - and to everyone who took part.

Summer Coach Walk This has been arranged for Sunday 28th July, visiting the Staffordshire Moorlands and Mow Cop. We are hoping for a full coach. Full details are on the website.

Emergency Contact Details These are now required for everyone taking part in a Ramblers' walk. Please make sure you have yours with you.

Ramblers' Resources Ramblers have recently developed new guidance and resources to support leading and taking part in group walks, which can be found under the 'Go Walking' section of the website. There is useful advice on safety - preparing for different situations that may arise on a walk. It is well worth everyone taking a look at the website. Online training for walk leaders is also being provided by the Ramblers, several of our members have signed up for this and we look forward to going on one of their walks in the future.

Social Events The Skittles Evening and Supper at the Walsall Arms Pub was well-attended and good fun, with Rosie declared overall winner, but closely challenged by Merlin. Well done both! Thanks to Tony for organising the evening. The next event is a visit to Highbury Little Theatre on June 19th.

As we move towards the summer season, with the hope of drier footpaths, I look forward to your company on some of our walks.

With best wishes to all,

Barbara

Future Changes to the SCR Website

Our website, designed many years ago, has been ably managed by Richard Creen for over 10 years. Unfortunately some essential background elements to the website are no longer supported, making it increasingly difficult for Richard to update it. Many groups use a website design that is designed and supported by the Ramblers. Using this Rob Halley has been working to develop our new website, which will give us more information but will be easier to use and maintain. This means that at some point in the next couple of months, when you use the link for our website it will take you to the new and improved website. Watch this space for future updates.

Coach Walk to Coalbrookdale and Much Wenlock

A full coach-load of over 40 hopeful ramblers left Wyndley in rather inclement weather conditions, heading to historic Coalbrookdale. Two circular rambles to Much Wenlock were planned. Ranjit and David led the B walk of around 14km, departing from picturesque Ironbridge, whilst the C walk of 12km was led by Tom and John. On arrival at Ironbridge, rain had ceased and the day turned out to be dry with sunny spells. Overnight rain had made underfoot conditions muddy, however, so the walks had slightly amended routes.

Ironbridge is now a pretty village nestled alongside the banks of the River Severn at the heart of the Ironbridge Gorge. Its name originates from the 30 meter cast iron bridge that has spanned the river since 1779, designed by Abraham Darby III, and described by R. N. Allen in his poem Ironbridge, as:

Three hundred

And eighty tons of lacy iron...

Ironbridge is often referred to as the 'Birthplace of the Industrial Revolution', and the practice of smelting iron with coke was perfected there. Evidence remains of the industrial past with the Bedlam Furnaces along the river bank.

Having admired the bridge, the groups headed eastward along the northern side of the Severn, through woodland heavy with the scent of wild garlic and some late flowering bluebells. After an upwards climb, the route emerged into sunny fields and lanes affording glorious views of the surrounding Shropshire countryside, including some fine highland cattle and fields of spring lambs enjoying the sunshine. Continuing onwards, the route ascended to Windmill Hill to admire the 17th century windmill tower, minus its sails, and further views of rolling countryside. Following the disused railway line, both groups descended into a sleepy Much Wenlock, home town of Dr William Penny Brookes, the inspiration for the modern Olympic Movement and founder of the Wenlock Olympian Society.

Due to the closure of the desired tea-shops, Plan B was hastily adopted and the local pub afforded an opportunity for refreshments and further conversation. Some free time enabled exploration of the pretty Medieval town with its abbey ruins, Holy Trinity Church and Guildhall, housing historical artefacts.

Returning home by coach, it was evident that everyone had enjoyed the day. Many thanks go to all of the Walk Leaders and organisers of the day, and of course to the weather!

Sue W

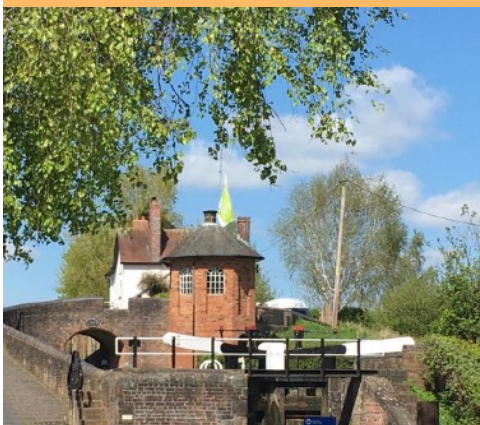


Walk Programme 2024

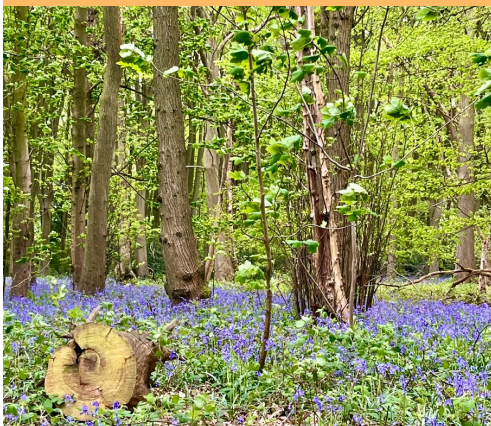
Check out more pictures on facebook.com/suttoncoldfieldramblers and suttoncoldfieldramblersphotos



Astley in North Warwickshire with its castle and George Eliot connections.
Bright skies for the walk from Weeford.



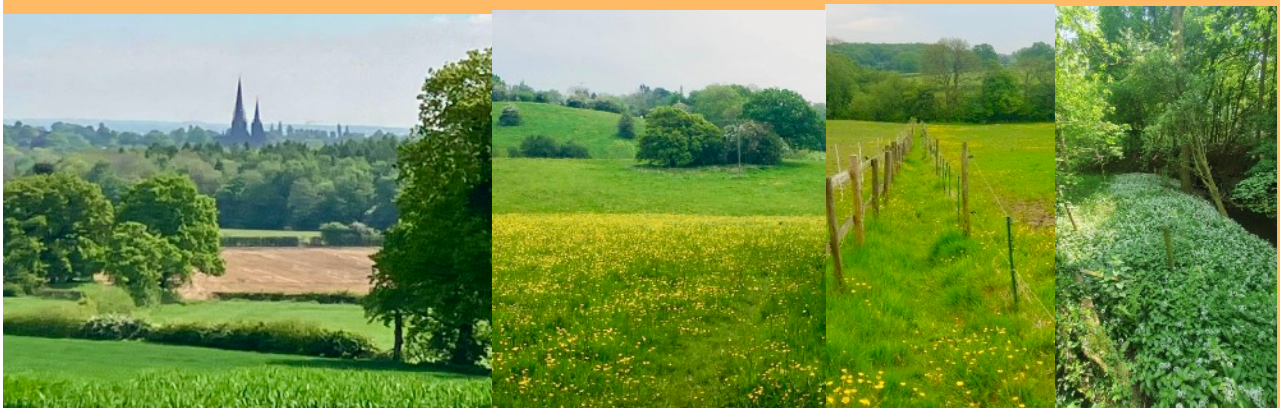
Wombourne - a mix of fields, canals and a dismantled railway with some unusual art.



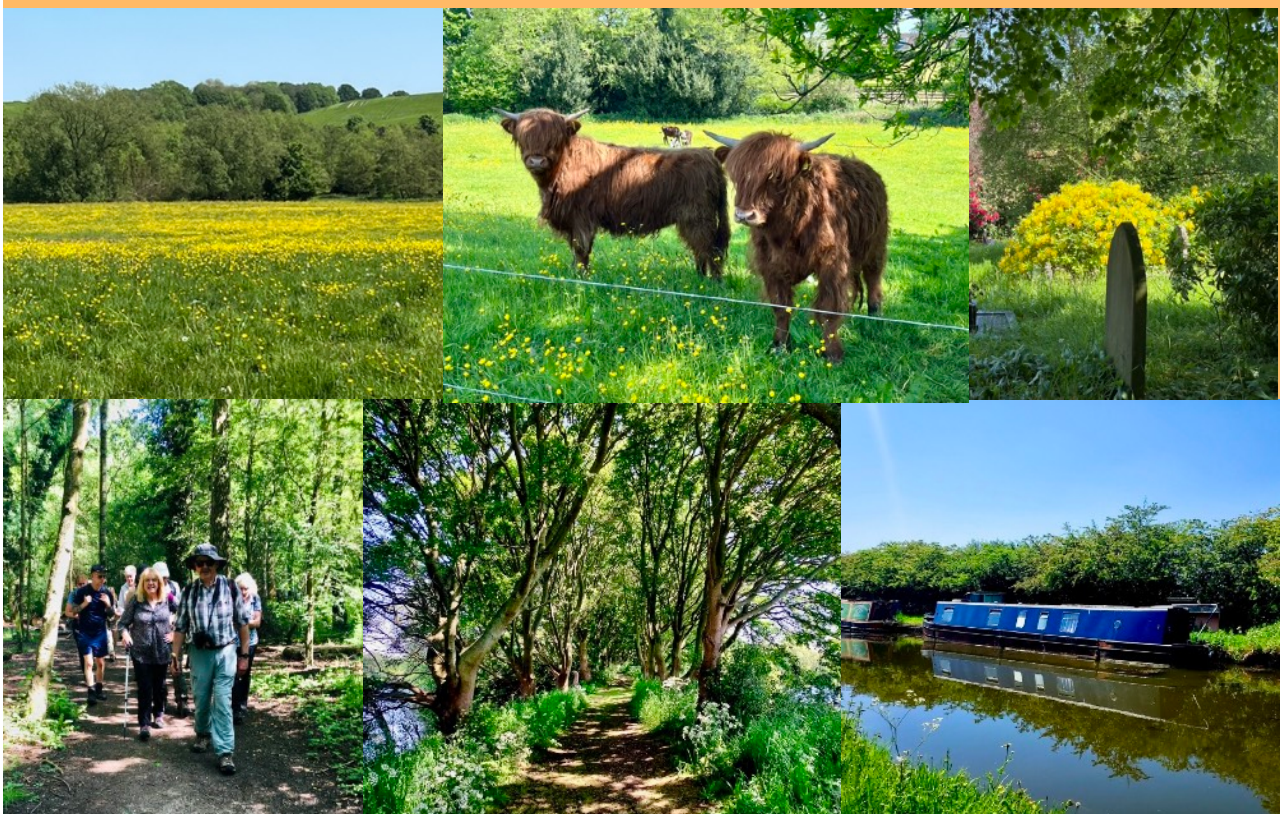
A good turnout for the first walk in May at Middleton with the bluebell woods.



Glorious sunshine at Temple Balsall plus cakes at Old Hall



A tranquil walk around Pipe Hall Lichfield; and a very green Belbroughton.



Walks in sunshine at Blithfield and Kingsbury.



More sunshine for walk at Ellastone with bonus tea and cake at St Peter's Church.

Future Walks

Details of future walks can be found at suttoncoldfieldramblers.org.uk/walks/
The programme includes the Coach Walk on July 28th to Biddulph Grange in the Staffordshire Moorlands and evening pub walks on June 19th, July 10th and August 14th.

Please check both the website and emails for walk updates in case it has been necessary to amend/cancel walks at short notice due to weather conditions.

Car sharing to walks

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

Check the Weather Outlook

bbc.co.uk/weather/outlook

Dates for the Diary

Summer Coach Walk to Biddulph Grange on July 28th - to book message Tony Power on 07759300856. The fare of £10 is subsidised and payable on the day, members are reminded that anyone booked who does not cancel before Thursday 26th July will be asked to pay the coach fee.

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

Spring Break 2025 - a provisional booking has been made by Rosie for April 11th-14th at HF Bourton-on-the-Water. Full details are on the website.

National Walking Month

May was National Walking Month, the annual reminder of the benefits of walking and spending time outdoors. In addition to our group walks many members were also busy with a wide mix of walks both in our area and further afield on holidays in the UK and abroad. Thank you to members for sharing their walks.

Sarah continued with her quest to walk the South West Coastal Path.....

After trekking in many many countries I thought I better walk more in our own. I started the South West Coastal Path two years ago and it has certainly made me appreciate how beautiful our coastline is. In May I returned to walk the section from Perranporth to Penzance over 5 days. I couldn't wait to get back on the path so off we went for the first day.....it started with absolutely dreadful weather with drifting rain and blustery winds but as normal we just get on with it. However the day didn't get any better as I had to ring the coast guard for my friend....but that's another story. She had to go home so it was just me as usual .



So another day dawned and Portreath was very quiet and quite tranquil in the early morning sunshine. The sea at times looked very Atlantic but then the aquamarine sea returned; such glorious scenery and the wind was pushing me forward which I didn't mind. A few ups and downs but this is the coastal path; such dramatic scenery with the waves crashing onto the rocks. I love a lighthouse and Godrevy was coming into sight, then it was a nice long walk along the beach at Hayle.

Was I mad in deciding to walk from St Ives to Pendeen as I had read how hard it was! It's classed as severe and I can understand why.....boulders, boulders and more boulders and not many people about, I wonder why. Although after Zennor it was a lot easier than people have said. The old knees were ok but Pinky and Perky (my poles) had had enough of getting stuck in the boulders. There was even a bit of grass in parts which was heaven. I walked for about another 2 -3 hours and not seeing anyone only me and the bird song, a little great tit followed me for a while so I had a bit of company. Towards the end of the day something appeared in the sky, I think it is called the Sun. I stayed in a lovely pub in Pendeen, a former farmhouse that dated back to the 15th century.

Off early the next morning from Pendeen to Porthcurno, this was my favourite walk of the week. To see the industrial archaeology of Geevor and Botallack mines thinking how these young miners led such a hard often short life; at what age they were when they started, such history. Geevor mine do a lovely Cornish cream tea but unfortunately they weren't open at 8.30am - such a shame. Walking along I was waiting for Poldark to come and rescue me but he never appeared! Less said the better about Land's End so onto Lamorna, a lovely little cove, and great ice cream - well you have to treat yourself.

I came across another lovely little cove called Penberth where there are about five fisherman cottages and no internet - how the other half live. A couple of climbs again but what was harder was the overgrown path - Barbara the working party need to go and sort it. Pinky and Perky were getting tangled I tripped a few times which is not good when you are on the cliff edge. There were a few swamps and at times I felt like a Orangutan. Good job nobody was about as I was laughing to myself. Before you know it you're in Mousehole - after a nice stop in an old pub and Pinky and Perky packed away it was all on the flat to Penzance. We are so lucky to have such a fantastic coastline - I've had some lovely encounters with Dutch, German and Americans saying how amazing our coastline is, they are certainly right. The South West Coastal Path is a great walk and as they say it's only 630 miles and I'm not even half way yet. **Sarah P**

Walking the Malverns

Sharon had a big day out walking on the Malverns from Colwall; an undulating route taking in the Worcestershire and Herefordshire Beacons giving great views. Lots of sunshine and refreshments at the Colwall Park Hotel before catching the train home. **Sharon**



Distance	Time	Total ascent	Total descent
10.77 mi	5h 26m	2209 ft	-2213 ft

Elevation



Rosie and Tony Walking on a Greek Island

We stayed on the island of Syros, the capital of the Cyclades and formerly the chief port of Greece, owing to the deep harbour of its main town. We walked from the village of Galissas to the village of Poseidonios, using small roads and tracks. Poseidonios is known for its many extravagant and stylish mansions built in the mid 19th century by wealthy traders as their summer residences, being in a spot sheltered from the summer meltemi winds. There is one currently on sale for €3.5m!

No other walkers were encountered en route, and the only sounds were the buzzing of bees, twittering of birds and the occasional crow of a cockerel. Poseidonios even sold ice cream. **Rosie**

Walking the Pontcysyllte Aqueduct- Sue W

Having recently returned from the Glyn Ceiriog area in Wales, there was the opportunity to explore the canals and aqueducts which were engineered to carry the first 11 miles of the Llangollen canal. Due to the nature of the route, it best lends itself to a linear walk, which can be accessed from the Horseshoe Falls of the River Dee at Llantysilio, or from the other end near Chirk, using the Shropshire Union Llangollen canal path. The landscape is varied, with plenty of places to admire the River Dee and stop for refreshments.



The impressive 307 metres long Aqueduct at Pontcysyllte, engineered by Thomas Telford towers over the river valley some 38 metres high, so is not really suitable for those who dislike heights, or on a very windy day! However, there is also a route under the aqueduct across the valley floor. Nearing Chirk there are two tunnels to walk through. The towpath is in good condition, but a torch is handy too! There is a further aqueduct at Chirk, although not as high, it runs alongside the railway which also has an impressive arched structure. The River Ceiriog below, is the border between England and Wales. Look out for horse-drawn barges along the stretch near Llangollen. **Sue W**

Angie and Margaret, a local walk from Walsall Wood

This was the first of two recces for a potential Thursday walk (now in the Walk Programme for July 11th) starting from Walsall Wood, with Barbara joining for the second outing. The walk included a section of the Forest of Mercia Timberland Trail - a 9 mile circular route around Pelsall that links with the Beacon Way; it's part-funded by the Timberland footwear company - hence the name.



The walk then continued along the McClean Way, a dismantled section of the former South Staffs Railway which ran between Walsall and Lichfield. An enthusiastic group of volunteers have led the clearance and maintenance of the track to provide a pleasant walkway. It's named after the engineer John Robinson McClean who was an important figure in the development of the South Staffs Railway Company and the South Staffs Waterworks Company. It is hoped that eventually it will be extended as far as Lichfield.

Barbara T

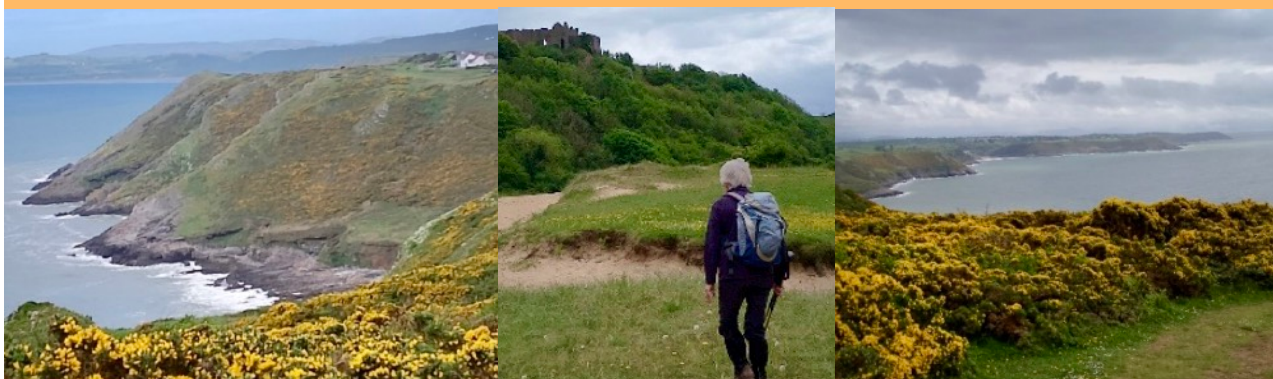
John and Marcia's walking adventures on the Gower

When we looked at the weather forecast we could see that Sunday looked OK, Monday would be a washout, and Tuesday was possibly going to be dry. So we left home early on Sunday to reach The Mumbles by lunchtime so we could do a walk in the afternoon. It was a wonderful walk we found on the Ramblers website of about 5 miles from our hotel south-east along the Coastal Path on the seafront to the headland by the pier, up several flights of steps and westwards on the cliff top towards Langland Bay. We were impressed by the way the Coastal Path was clearly signposted and surfaced. At Langland Bay we bought ice creams and took advantage of the public toilets and the walk details said "turn right up Alma Road, cross the road at the top and climb steps leading up the cliff". What it didn't say was there were more than 200 steps! **Never trust the walk details to tell you the whole truth!**

Once we got to the top of the cliff, we followed the walk through the outskirts of The Mumbles and through the grounds of Oystermouth Castle back to our hotel.

Monday dawned wet and windy as forecast, so we decided to spend the morning driving round the Gower coast. We couldn't see much driving west into the rain and it wasn't very pleasant. We drove to Port-Eynon but weren't impressed with the waterlogged sea front area and decided not to head further west into the mist to Rhossili so back-tracked to Southgate at the eastern end of Oxwich Bay. There we found a café at the end of the road to the National Trust car park by the Coastal Path. The café sold maps, including the rain resistant Route Finder Collection of The Gower including 4 circular walks, which we bought. We drove back to the hotel and spent a restful afternoon doing nothing in particular.

Tuesday's forecast was for sunshine and showers so we decided to go to Southgate and do the Southgate walk on the map we had bought. **What could go wrong?** The route was 9 miles long which is a bit much for us as we knew it would involve climbing up to the top of cliffs on the Coastal Path and back down again, so we shortened the walk by 2 miles, cutting out the north-eastern part. The section along the Coastal Path eastwards toward 3 Cliff Bay was easy to follow, although we did walk on the parallel road part of the way to avoid the waterlogged areas from Monday's downpours. **The views from the tops of the cliffs were superb.**



Turning north inland towards Bishopston we walked through woodland alongside a stream, we've never seen so much wild garlic in one place before. Nearing Widegate we turned back towards Southgate and then north to Parkmill to rejoin the published route. Arriving by the A4118, the route took us again through woodland alongside a stream until we came to Pennard Burrows with Pennard Castle perched above. Pennard Burrows is about a square kilometre of sand dunes - **it's here that our troubles started!**

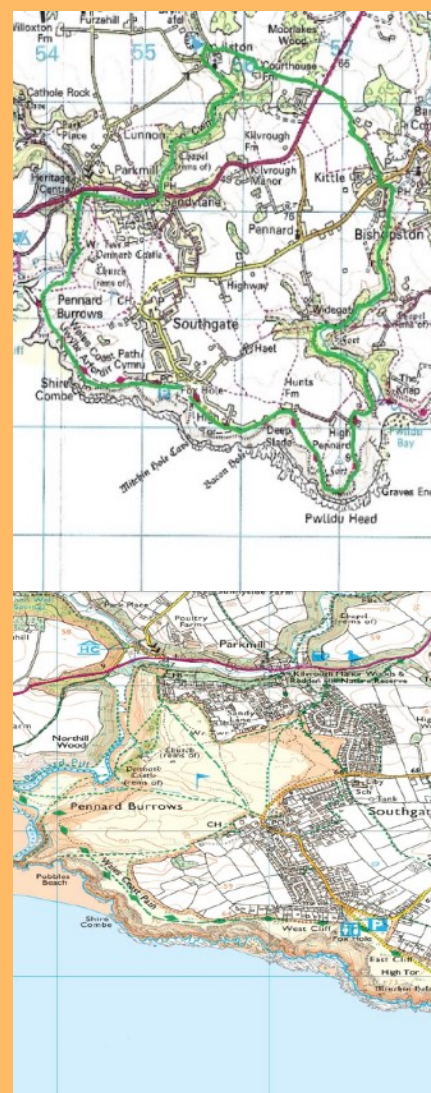
There were no distinguishable trodden paths, just area of grass set in bright yellow sand. I was trying to follow the footpaths on my phone's map using the GPS marker, but none of the places with footprints where people had walked matched the footpaths. We eventually came to a sign post with the south-pointing finger saying Coastal Path in the direction it was shown on the maps.

So off we went until we came to the next signpost pointing west for the Coastal Path, clearly not where we wanted to go. So back we turned to the previous signpost, getting more and more tired as we walked through soft sand. When we got to the signpost there was an eastward pointing finger saying Coastal Path which did not relate to the green route on the map. My phone showed this footpath going straight to the Southgate Golf Club, well to the north of the Coastal Path. We soon came to another signpost at the junction of the path to the clubhouse and a path (on my phone's map but not a public right of way) north to Pennard Castle and south marked Coastal Path.

We were completely confused, but here our luck changed. A lady runner came up from the south. Marcia asked "Are you local, and if so, could you help?" She stopped and asked us where we wanted to get to. When we told her the National Trust Car Park, she asked "How far do you want to walk?" When we said we were tired and wanted to get to the car as soon as possible, she said "Follow the path to the east to the Club House which will soon be marked with white stones and then take the road to the car park."

Were we glad to get back to the car and the welcoming cafe!

John Harden



News from the Ramblers

Ramblers Walk Magazine

The summer edition can be read at; ramblers.org.uk/current-walk-issue

Ramble Worldwide

If you arrange a holiday with Ramble Worldwide (the new brand name for Ramblers Holidays) www.rambleworldwide.co.uk SCR will receive a financial contribution if you nominate the group at the point of booking www.rambleworldwide.co.uk/responsible-tourism/the-walking-partnership

Ramblers Members Benefits

Check out the benefits provided by your Ramblers membership.
ramblers.org.uk/support-us/my-benefits

Members News

New Members

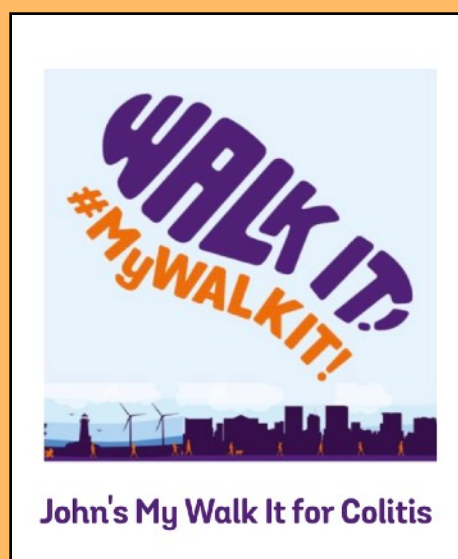
A warm welcome to members who have recently joined SCR - Caroline Bentley, Chris Bentley, David Burdock, Diane Burdock, Denise Corfield, Stephen Corfield, Val Dutton, Jennifer McLoughlin, Linda McManus and Abe Shenker.

John's Walking Challenge in support of Crohn's & Colitis UK

This month John Harden is taking part in the My WALK IT challenge in support of Crohn's & Colitis UK. They are the UK's leading charity for Crohn's and Colitis working to improve diagnosis and treatment, fund research, and raise vital awareness. John has set himself a target to walk 50k and raise £250.

You can read about John's story at;
www.mywalkit.org.uk/fundraising/johns-my-walk-it-for-colitis

Donations to support John's challenge can be made via the above link or by contacting him directly jharden201361@gmail.com



In memory of Albert Smith

always a proud member of Sutton Coldfield Ramblers, a regular walk leader, and past Chairman of the club.

His wife Vera has his boots at her front door. A delightful memory for all who knew him.

Jenny Mitton



From the Archives

As part of National Walking Month, Birmingham Archives on their Facebook page posted about an item from their collection (MS 1462/2) a journal from 1877 of an unknown diarist recording their visit to Birmingham and where they walked.

After arriving from Lichfield their first excursion is to Elkington & Co (the silver manufacturers) a pin factory and a metal button factory. The diary highlighting how visiting places of manufacturing were considered a part of experiencing industrial Birmingham.

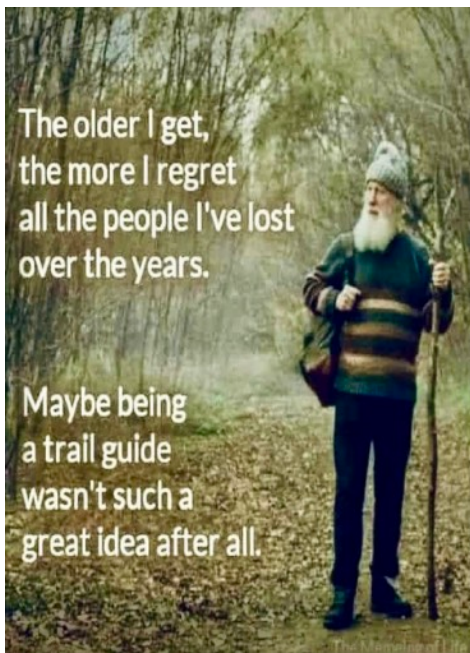
Over several days, the group travel and walk around various places in the city; Cannon Hill Park noting it is “very pretty, laid out like Battersea Park” and St Martin’s and St Bartholomew’s in Edgbaston. On their way up to Deritend they describe the Old Crown House with its half timbered front “like Chester houses, more than 500 years old”.

Walking down Ladywood Road to the Reservoir in Rotton Park they record “that the banks of the reservoir are prettily laid out with trees and flowers. Afterwards they walk on to the Botanical Gardens. A further day is spent exploring Aston Park and Aston Hall, describing in the diary the house, its history, and its contents.

Another day is spent walking around the town “to notice the different public buildings.” Firstly they go to “the Exchange to see the large hall where the merchants meet”. They also mention Dale End, New Street, Broad Street and Five Ways and seeing the Robert Peel, James Watt and Joseph Sturge statues along the way.

On their last day in Birmingham before heading for Bayswater, the diarist says it was “A lovely day. A most pleasant ending to our enjoyable wandering.”

While the City has certainly changed since 1877 many of the locations mentioned in the diary can still be part of an enjoyable urban walk today.



Check out Ramblers' Resources

New guidance and resources to support leading and taking part in group walks has been developed by the Ramblers.

This can be found under the **Go Walking** section of their website at;

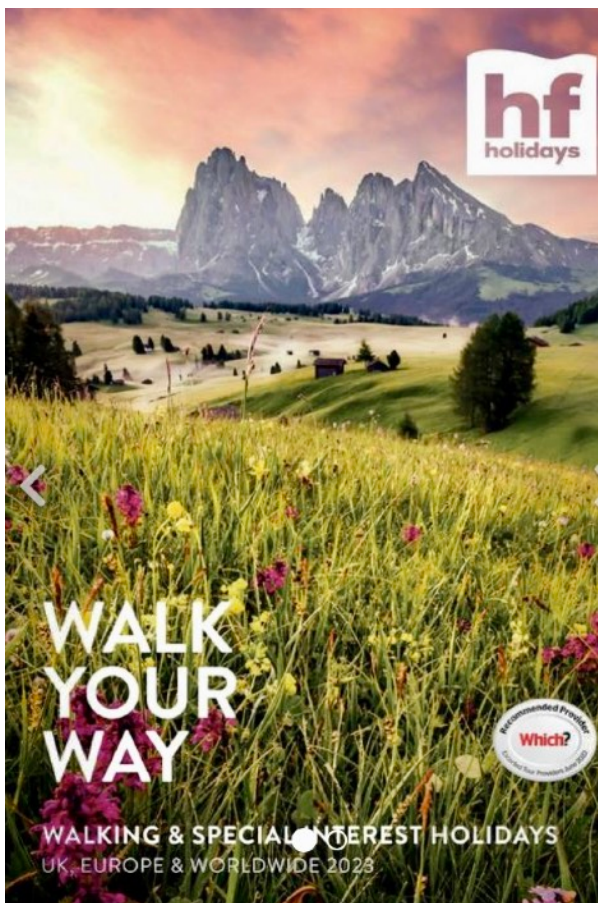
ramblers.org.uk/go-walking-hub/walking-advice

and

ramblers.org.uk/go-walking-hub/walk-leadership

Thank you

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



The world is just a step away.

Where will you ramble next?

Whether you enjoy classic trails or a more relaxed tempo, our new Collections make it easier than ever to choose from a range of fantastic walking holidays perfectly suited to your tastes and preferences.



Four Collections. Made by us, created for you.

