



July/August Newsletter



SCR Coach Walk to Mow Cop overlooking the Staffordshire Moorlands

**Stark in bleak chill landscape
Outlined against grey-washed skies
The ruined Mow Cop castle
Looks out through sightless eyes
High upon its towering ridge
With Staffordshire below
As down through muddy woodland paths
The hopeful walkers go
A forecast with just constant rain
And early morning fears
Forgotten as the grey clouds part
And timid sun appears.**

Peter Gibbs

Chairperson's Report

Walks Programme

Summer arrived, somewhat belatedly, with lovely warm weather for our walks at last! There has been an interesting variety of walks, including several first walks led by new walk leaders. Pat's walk was from Ticknall to Ingleby and the Anchor Church caves; Michael took us to Coleshill and the ancient village of Church End; Catherine's was one of her favourite walks around Kinver, where we had lunch by the impressive Enville Hall. Coming up we also have more walks with new walk leaders; Sarah's walk from Alrewas, Ombersley with Maggie, Lichfield with Sue Howles; and further ahead returning member Stephen Corfield is leading two urban walks in October. Congratulations to Sarah for completing the Ramblers' new Walk Leader Training and the award of her certificate. Thanks to all of our new walk leaders and to members who have supported with route planning and recces.

Other walks have been to Henley-in-Arden with great views and an interesting episode at the lunch stop; Wellesbourne, where we were joined by five guests and enjoyed the sunny garden at the King's Head pub afterwards; Giffard's Cross and Chillington Hall, the walk at Osmaston with beautiful parkland to enjoy, and good weather on our walk at Wolseley and the Trent Valley. The coach walk to the Staffordshire Moorlands took us further afield and provided a contrasting landscape and panoramic views. Whilst we had 38 walkers on the coach, the trip was unfortunately under subscribed, resulting in a financial loss. It is hoped the Christmas coach walk and meal will be well supported. More locally, we've had walks at Walsall Wood along the McClean Way; Kingsbury Water Park and Marston and evening pub walks in Stonnall, Shenstone and Sandwell Valley. Thanks, as always, to walk leaders.

Although our Thursday walk to the Warwickshire Moor and the Coventry Canal went ahead, regrettably the asylum seekers that were due to join us had been moved urgently to safety following the recent civil disturbance at the Tamworth Holiday Inn. Anna McLauchlan, the Staffordshire CC Community Cohesion Officer who had coordinated arrangements for the walk, met us at the walk start to thank us for our involvement and expressed the hope that it may be possible to put on a walk for refugees in the future.

Social Events & Holidays

Thanks to Rosie for arranging an enjoyable evening at the Highbury Theatre in June. Planning is well underway for the Ilminster weekend break in October. Thanks to Anita for all her work in organising and to Mike for coordinating the walks programme for the weekend. In 2025 we have breaks planned in the Cotswolds and the Mumbles, so plenty to look forward to.

Publicity

We have been contacted by the editor of the Ramblers' Walk magazine to let us know that our Facebook page will be mentioned in the autumn magazine as part of a Masterclass feature on 'Making the most of social media', for using that platform effectively. Make sure you look out for it! Also, there is a new publication (at the planning stage) entitled the Sutton Coldfield Charity News which will provide information about local charities. I submitted details of SCR to be included and had a telephone interview with the editor – watch this space...

Camino Frances

Congratulations to the group of SCR – Christina, Mike, Rob, Tom and John, accompanied by four Solihull Ramblers, who completed the third and final leg of this route. Christina shares her first Camino experience later in the Newsletter.

If members are having holidays in the coming weeks, I hope you have a relaxing time and enjoy your walking.

With best wishes to all,
Barbara

New Website for SCR

You will have read in the last Newsletter that our website is about to change. Richard Green has maintained our website for over ten years and I would like to thank him on behalf of us all for the work he has done on a weekly basis to keep us informed and the website up to date.

In common with many other Ramblers groups, we are moving to a new website design that is supported by the Ramblers. They provide a basic structure, and each group is able to tailor it to their own needs and requirements.

I would like to thank Rob Halley who has volunteered to manage the new website, and Tom Halstead who has supported Rob in setting it up. Tom set up the website for York Ramblers several years ago.

The new website is now ready, and I hope that you will find it easy to use and informative. Our website address remains suttoncoldfieldramblers.org.uk

Once again, thank you Richard.
Barbara Twort.

Autumn Break 2025

In the last Newsletter John Harden wrote about his and Marcia's trip to Mumbles on the Gower Peninsular. Following on from this John has arranged a three night break (Sunday September 28th to Wednesday October 1st 2025) to Mumbles staying at the Norton House Hotel. He has booked all 23 rooms at the hotel for 3 nights bed, breakfast and evening meal. Full details on room types and costs are on the website.

There are only two rooms remaining (a superior ensuite double room for two and a standard ensuite twin room for two). If you are interested contact John by email at jharden201361@gmail.com or by text on 07742015067 stating which type of room you require. A deposit of £60 per person will be required to reserve a place.

John is also operating a waiting list for single occupancy rooms.

Coach Walk to Biddulph Grange and Mow Cop Castle

A fine sunny day dawned as the coach left Sutton Coldfield for our destination. We headed north to the Country Park at Biddulph Grange in the Staffordshire Moorlands. Our Walk Leaders, Barbara and Sharon offered two beautiful walks both following a similar route but with varying lengths taking in sections of the Biddulph Valley Way, Staffordshire Moorlands Trail, Staffordshire Way and Gritstone Trail.

Leaving the car park we took a pathway hidden between houses leading us to Bailey's Bank, a small stone bridge over Biddulph Brook, and onto the Biddulph Valley Way, a former railway line, now a National Cycle Route.

After a coffee stop in a field we continued onwards as a beautiful leggy foal and mum trotted over for photographs.

The striking folly of Mow Cop was soon visible on the summit of a hill with panoramic views of Staffordshire and the Cheshire plains.



The 'castle' was built in 1754 by Randle Wilbraham of nearby Rode Hall, as an elaborate summer house in the style of a medieval fortress. The family used it for entertainment purposes and a diary entry from that period records:

'The wall was always broken so as to have the effect of a ruin when looked at from the valley.'

We were accustomed to boil our kettle and have tea in it on calm days'

The site is now managed by the National Trust. Both groups took their picnic lunch there admiring the sunlit views all around.

After a short descent, the route passed the impressive Old Man O' Mow rock formation, which as the name suggests is a cairn or possibly a burial mound shaped like a towering rock figure, some 65 feet tall.

From here our routes took us through changing landscapes of farmland and woods. While Group C continued along the Gritstone Trail, Group B took a longer route traversing an area of slightly boggy ground, the route circled through several fields, one of which contained an inquisitive and bemused herd of young highland cattle, who viewed us most intently.

We continued as the sun shone, finally reaching the disused railway line and eager to quench our thirsts at the Hideaway Café, which we made in the nick of time!

Returning home by coach, it was evident that everyone had enjoyed the excursion.

Many thanks to Barbara and Sharon, for leading such interesting walks, and to the other organisers of the day.

Sue Wood



Walk Programme 2024

Check out more pictures and walk details on facebook.com/suttoncoldfieldramblers



Lunch stop at the Anchor Church caves on the Ingleby walk.
Henley-in-Arden walking through the Warwickshire countryside.



A varied walk at Kinver.



Two Thursday walks - Coleshill and Walsall Wood.



The rescheduled Wellesbourne walk - this time in sunshine.
After a thunder storm at Kingsbury.



More sunshine at Osmaston Park.



At Sandwell Valley, last evening pub walk for this year.
Wolseley and the Trent Valley, with route taken from the current Ramblers Walk magazine.

Future Walks

Details of future walks can be found at suttoncoldfieldramblers.org.uk/walks/
Please check both the website and emails for walk updates in case it has been necessary to amend/cancel walks at short notice.

There are still some empty dates on the Walk Programme - if you would like to offer a walk 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. Please text the walk leader if you plan to go directly there.

Check out Ramblers' Resources

New guidance and resources to support leading and taking part in group walks has been developed by the Ramblers. These online resources can be found under the

Go Walking section of their website at;

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

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

Check the Weather Outlook

bbc.co.uk/weather/outlook

Birmingham Heritage Week

This 10-day city-wide event is a great opportunity to explore the city's history and heritage.

The full programme can be found at
birminghamheritageweek.co.uk/

This includes a number of walks by local organisations including the City of Birmingham Ramblers.

This year there is an extended programme of events in Sutton Coldfield

birminghamheritageweek.co.uk/sutton-coldfield/



Birmingham
Heritage
Week

#BHERITAGEWEEK

6—15 Sept 2024

Celebrating ten years
of
your heritage,
your stories,
your city

Camino Frances - the final stage June 2024

This year a group of SCR Ramblers undertook the final stage of the Camino Frances, four of them having completed the first stage in 2022 and the middle stage in 2023. Christina Siekierska joined the group for the final stage to Santiago de Compostela, and shares her experience as a first time Pelegrina.



Preparing for the Camino

Planning for the Camino walk of 262 km/135 miles over 13 stages involved research and frequent conversations with previous Camino walkers. The detailed route and daily logistics planning and booking of accommodation was completed by John. As a newbie I needed advice from experienced long distance walkers as my previous long distance walks involved 5 days fairly flat walks only, whereas this walk was to be 13 days continuous walking, including some mountains.

As usual with the SC ramblers everyone was generous with their advice and recollections with many hints and tips shared on Sunday rambles. When packing, priority was given to everything foot related! Our luggage was transported daily by Spanish Post Office - The Correos.

Nine people took part in this section of the Camino, Tom, Rob, Mike and John, plus five first time Pelegrinos, myself, and three Solihull Ramblers; Richard, Myra and Val and Val's brother Ray. We met as a group a couple of times before the walk to get to know one another and get some advice from the experienced walkers.

Getting to Spain

We began the trip with a flight from Birmingham to Madrid on June 5th. The following day we had a four hour journey by comfortable bus to Astorga, arriving to 30 degrees sunshine. The next day was spent relaxing in Astorga and my only opportunity to go for a morning run along the first part of the Camino route.

Day 1 Astorga to Rabanal del Camino 13.49 miles

We anticipated rain, so we made an early start, and had a good five hour walk. It rained after we arrived and continued overnight. I walked further than we needed to as I went right past the accommodation and into the village. Note to self, check accommodation destination at the start of every day! First impressions were the ease of navigation with the traditional Camino scallop symbol or yellow arrows at very frequent intervals and the regular *Buen Camino* greeting amongst all the pilgrims, a very friendly and easy route to follow. We also started to collect our Camino stamps from cafes, churches, shops... in the Camino 'passport'.

Day 2 Rabanal to Molinaseca 15.98 miles

This was a tough day for all of us. Slowly climbing towards the Cruce de Ferro – 1,504 metres up, and clouded in mist, the highest point on the entire Camino – an iconic spot. A very moving place with time for quiet reflection, I left a special pebble in memory of my husband.

Then we began the descent which started off OK, but the next section was very challenging. The path was steep and very rocky, great concentration was needed for every step. Fellow walkers opted for safer descents in a taxi and all the experienced Camino walkers said that it was the most challenging section they had encountered on the whole Camino Frances. It was even more difficult because of the recent heavy rainfall and the surrounding mist. On this tricky section I developed my first blister!

We arrived at Molinaseca– relieved to get there unscathed but needing a shower and dinner.

**Day 3 Molinaseca to Cacabelos 14.34 miles**

Swapped from my boots to trainers today. We started in our familiar routine with some people getting breakfast before walking and others, starting to walk and then eating later. We walked at our own comfortable pace either single, pairs or fours of walkers with our paths criss crossing during the day. Had breakfast in a lovely square in Ponferrada where we all met up. Time for a blister inspection, another one growing on the opposite side of the foot from the first blister.

A lovely few miles alongside a river and sunny weather and some shade. We walked through the Bierzo region famous for its fertile soil, vineyards, fruits and vegetables. We were given a beautiful hand made card by three local ladies who were full of praise for our endeavours, another touching moment on the Camino.

Ate some delicious cherries for lunch from an honesty box on the edge of one of the farms.

Day 4 Cacabelos to La Portela de Valcare 16.26 miles

A great walk from Cacabelos walking through the fertile Bierzo valley surrounded by mountains and vineyards. Then took the alternative challenging route for the amazing views, very hot 28*. Arrived in La Portela de Valcare ready for a shower.

Day 5 Portela de Valcare to Pedrafita do Cebreiro 14.01 miles

Mainly steady, challenging, uphill walking today in the sunshine. The first few miles were deceptive as we followed the River Valcere – quiet and flat. Then we began the climb, with great views, towards O Cebreiro.

At the mountain top we were greeted by a bagpiper and rewarded with stunning views. An extra 3.5 km to our accommodation, starting to take it in our stride!

Day 6 Pedrafita to Triacastela 13.47 miles

Beautiful sunny morning with a cool breeze starting with a 3.5 km taxi rides back up from Pedrafita to rejoin the Camino at O Cebreiro.

Then began the downhill section across the valleys, with a short uphill section to keep us on our toes, and a final steep downhill section. Headed off to a pharmacy with my translator app to get some dressings for my two blisters as they just kept growing! Pierced, drained and dressed, much better.

**Day 7 Triacastela to Sarria 11.27 miles**

Drizzly start followed by rain. Pleased to have passed the halfway stage of our Camino and walked through the most challenging stage of the Camino Frances.

In a misty mountain hideaway came across my favourite eating place on the Camino, run by a group of young people offering coffee, fruit, cakes... for donations, a welcome, hippy place on a cool damp day. It was also my favourite handmade camino stamp in the shape of a heart fashioned out of a dried fig.

As we approached Sarria the weather improved and the ponchos were returned to the back pack. Treated myself to a massage to ease the tired muscles.

Day 8 Sarria to Portamarin 15.46 miles

A wonderful start to an overcast day as a passing stranger presented me with a red rose as I climbed the steps out of Sarria old town. Some short inclines and descents but all in all a lovely country walk. We passed the 100km marker today - the minimum distance a pilgrim can walk and claim a certificate in Santiago, as a result from here on the numbers walking the Camino increased.

Arrived in town to warm sunshine and a welcome washing machine!



Day 9 Portamarin to Palais de Rei 11.05 miles

Lots of walkers today including groups of Spanish young people completing the walk and camping on the way, groups from Japan, South Korea and individuals travelling from all round the world.

Then it began to rain. Not a good day to forget the poncho, so John and I begged bin bags from a café owner and made our own! Another day and another rose from an Italian pilgrim - the theme continues.

**Day 10 Palais de Rei to Melide 10.5 miles**

Overcast for most of the day which made for a comfortable easy walk. Lots of fun talking to other pilgrims about phrases used to describe the rain in the UK; *raining cats and dogs, a shower, torrent, mizzle, sprinkle...* Their favourite was *It's just spitting*.

Highlight of the day was a swim in the hotel pool, in the rain.

Day 11 Melide to Arzua 9 miles

A walk in the park!

Then a humbling sight, two pilgrims pushing a paralysed man in a recumbent wheel chair as four others accompanied him and took over in relay, great respect to them all.

Overcast for most of the day then bright sunshine as we arrived in Arzua in time for a picnic lunch on the balcony.

Day 12 Arzua to Pedrouzo 10.12 miles

Lots of small very quiet villages in this section and plenty of places to stop to eat, lots of tortilla eaten on this trip. We pass main roads and many pilgrims so need to take care. We walk through the pretty village of Santa Irene, the fountain with curative powers and the chapel.

Day 13 O Pedrouzo to Santiago de Compostela 13.5 miles

We started the morning in light drizzle and surrounded by large groups completing the final section to Santiago, many setting off around the same time to attend the mass in the cathedral.

Then the rain came and was continuous for most of the day. Heads down and kept moving with welcome respite at cafes when needed. We passed the Mount of Joy, which is the first place you can view the cathedral towers but not possible because of the misty rain.



After a winding approach through the outskirts of Santiago we arrived at the famous square in beautiful sunshine and lots of excited and elated pilgrims, including me!

Highlights and Lasting Memories

Great sense of achievement having walked on 13 consecutive days, averaging about 12 miles a day, overcoming the challenges and climbing two mountains.

Wonderful scenery, landscapes, farm animals, trees and beautiful flowers.

Inspiring people I met on the way from the French woman who had walked over 500 miles across Europe to the Israeli midwife 'taking a break' from the war in her country.

Time to just walk and reflect and a common sense of purpose.

The Cruz de Ferro, a very reflective place, the palace of Gaudi in Astorga, the bridge and town of Porta Marin, the views from O Cebreiro...

My gifts of roses from complete strangers.

Lovely varied accommodation with welcoming hosts.

Receiving the Compostelas - the certificate of completion.

The delicious Spanish food and wine.

The best part of the trip was spending time with my fellow pelgrinos and sharing stories, miles, laughs and at times peaceful silence. Thanks to you all for your support and kindness.

Special thanks to John for organising the whole trip, finding great places to sleep and eat and for our daily sharpners!

My first Camino was a great success, highly recommended!

You can read more about our Pelegrinos' adventures on John's very enjoyable blog at;

ensuitepilgrim.blog/2024/06/

Buen Camino



Members News

New Members

A warm welcome to members who have recently joined SCR - Maria Ocampo, Stephen Saxton and Julie Watchorn.

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

John Harden would like to thank those members of SCR who gave generously to his "Walk IT for Colitis" collection - he walked 55.5 km/34 miles and raised £345, exceeding his personal targets of 50k and £250.

John was one of 1,860 people who took part in the WALK IT challenge raising in total £205,000 for Crohn's & Colitis UK. The funds raised will enable the organisation to continue supporting those affected by Crohn's and Colitis, bringing us one step closer to finding a cure.

From the Archives

This year SCR is 33 years old - back in June 2016 the Sutton Observer reported on the group's 25th anniversary.

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SUTTON COLDFIELD OBSERVER, June 17, 2016 15

to put best foot forward



The Sutton Coldfield Ramblers group (pictured here on a walk in Hereford) is marking its 25th anniversary this month.

Dates for the Diary

AGM 2024 - will be held on November 13th, further details will be circulated.

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

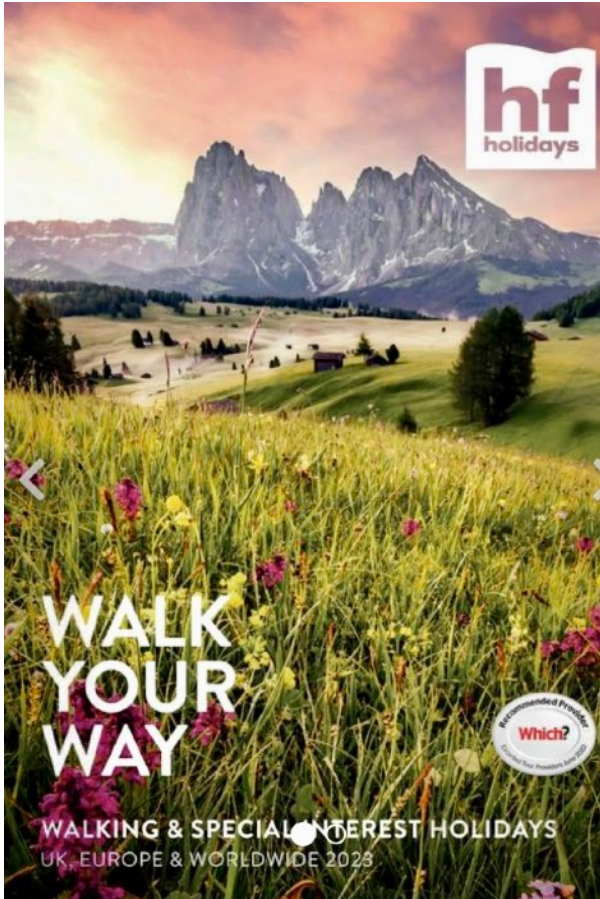
Spring Break 2025 - booking has been made by Rosie for April 11th to 14th at HF Bourton-on-the-Water.

Pat Williams RIP

I am sorry to share the news that former member, Pat Williams, has died unexpectedly. Ramblers who took part in the Camino Ingles in 2019 will remember Pat fondly for her resilience on the walk and for her gentle sense of humour. We send our condolences to her family and friends.

Barbara

Thank you to all who contributed to the newsletter. Contributions are invited for the next Newsletter, please send these to sharonfreedman04@gmail.com by October 20th.



hf
holidays

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