



**Sutton
Coldfield**

November/December Newsletter



Sutton Park

All the long echoes, sing the same delight,
This shortest day,
As promise wakens in the sleeping land:
They carol, feast, give thanks,
And dearly love their friends,
And hope for peace.
And so do we, here, now,
This year and every year.
Welcome Yule!

Susan Cooper, extract from the Shortest Day

Chairperson's Report

As we near the end of 2024, we can look back at an active and enjoyable year of rambling. We've had a mostly full programme of walks, so sincere thanks are due to all our walk leaders, without whom there wouldn't be a Sutton Ramblers. Special mention should be made of our new walk leaders: Catherine, Sarah, Pat and Ynyr who have undertaken the Ramblers' mandatory Walk Leader Online Training, and have led or are about to lead walks for us.

Our walks this year have covered all of the surrounding counties: travelling as far north as the Staffordshire Moorlands and to Shropshire for the Much Wenlock and Cleobury Mortimer coach walks, with many new and familiar locations in between. At the end of October, Mike led a walk in the Clent Hills on a beautifully clear day which ensured wonderful views of the surrounding countryside. Sharon led the first walk in November from Whittington along a section of the Heart of England Way and through Hopwas Hays Wood at its autumnal best. Chris and Jenny led a popular walk in Chasewater Country Park with welcome coffee and snacks at the station café. On the same day, Dave R's walk was an enjoyable 8 mile circular in the beautiful Severn Valley. We headed to Shenstone for Merlin's walk over fields and lanes in lovely, bright weather. The last walk in November was Ken's in Newhall Valley. It replaced the planned Tutbury and Hanbury walk, postponed due to poor ground conditions. The Christmas season began with our Cleobury Mortimer walks and meal at the Cleobury Golf Club (see separate item). Rosie & Tony's Whiston walk went ahead (at the second attempt) along a section of the Staffordshire Way and through attractive, seasonally decorated villages. We had an excellent turnout for our Christmas Sutton Park walks with close to 50 Ramblers meeting up for mince pies, along with winter warmers kindly provided by Ken.

Thursday walks have included a variety of interesting locations featuring different canals: we walked up the Tardebigge flight of locks on the Birmingham & Worcester Canal with John & Marcia, and Jeanie's walk around the delightful Shugborough Estate included a section of the Trent & Mersey Canal. Jeanie's expert insider knowledge of Lichfield provided a fascinating walk in December including sections of the Lichfield Heritage Canal. We returned to the Trent & Mersey Canal for Barbara & John's Alrewas/Wychnor walk, which was slightly adapted because of extensive flooding on the Millennium Way.

I would like to thank everyone for their support throughout the year: walk leaders (as mentioned), organisers of holidays and social activities, webmasters, footpath workers, those who give lifts to walks, the committee for their work throughout the year and all our members for your cooperation, good humour, care of others and great company on walks.

Wishing you all a Merry Christmas and a happy, healthy and active New Year.

Barbara

Sutton Coldfield Ramblers AGM

SCR Committee

Our AGM was held on November 13th at Four Oaks Saints' Cricket Club. The Minutes of the AGM can be found on our website under the Documents Tab;

suttoncoldfieldramblers/documents/agm-minutes

SCR Committee members were elected on-bloc as follows;

Barbara Twort, Chairperson and Area Council delegate

Rosie Power, General Secretary

Tony Power, Treasurer

Andy Addison, Sunday Walks Coordinator

Julie Hamblen, Thursday Walks Coordinator

Rob Halley, Webmaster and Communications

Sharon Freedman, Newsletter Editor

John Harden, Footpaths Officer

June Wright, Welfare Officer

Following the business meeting, 45 members enjoyed a convivial evening with buffet supper. It was felt the venue was particularly suitable for our purposes; we plan to hold next year's AGM in the same place.

Warwickshire Area AGM

This will be held on Saturday, February 8th 2025, hosted by Southam Ramblers at Long Itchington Community Centre, Stockton Road, Long Itchington, Southam CV47 9QP.

10am for 10.30am start.

Speakers will be Lucy Robinson (Chair of Ramblers' Trustees) and Tom Heap (broadcaster) who will have copies of his books for sale.

There will be a cold buffet lunch and (most likely) the opportunity for a walk after lunch.

Members from all the Warwickshire Area groups are invited to the AGM and I hope that Sutton Ramblers will be well-represented.

If you would like to attend, please book your place by emailing the Area Secretary jdlockett01@btinternet.com by January 24th, indicating any dietary requirements you may have.

Barbara Twort

Christmas Coach Walk Cleobury Mortimer

We were extremely fortunate in the timing of our Christmas meal on the 1st of December. Had it been the following week, Storm Darragh would have prevented the possibility of any travel, let alone walking. 42 Ramblers set off for Cleobury Mortimer in Shropshire, hoping for good weather and we weren't disappointed. However, recent stormy weather and overnight rainfall made the going heavy with a great deal of surface water in places.

Both walks were circular; the longer walk of 8 miles led by Rosie and Tony and a shorter walk led by Barbara and John, started from the Cleobury Golf Club and headed north through lovely countryside and woodland with views of the Clee Hills. The shorter walk also explored some of Cleobury Mortimer's interesting features including the parish church's twisted wooden spire.

Despite the wet conditions underfoot, everyone returned safely to the golf club (thanks to good teamwork) where we appreciated the warm welcome, good food and friendly, efficient service. Thanks to all involved in arranging the day.

Barbara



2024 Walks in Pictures

A selection of photos from walks through 2024 - a wide variety of locations, wildlife, historic buildings, weather and ground conditions.

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

January to May



June to October





November and December

with the last walk of the year in Sutton Park, along with mince pies and refreshments.

Walk Programme 2025

Future Walks

Details of future walks can be found on the website suttoncoldfieldramblers.org.uk. This shows confirmed walks plus provisional dates where walks are planned but the recce has not yet been undertaken.

We currently have a number of gaps to be filled in the programme for January and February so there are opportunities for existing or new walk leaders to get involved. A variety of walks in terms of length and localities are welcomed. There is plenty of support available to help plan, recce and lead a walk. If you would like to offer a walk please get in contact with the relevant Walk Coordinator;

Sunday Walks - Andy Addison andyaddison11@hotmail.com 07565153649

Thursday Walks - Julie Hamblen hamblen74@gmail.com 07817151165

Ramblers' Walk Leadership Training

Congratulations to members who have completed the Ramblers' Walk Leadership Foundations course; most recently Ynyr Owen who gave the following feedback - "I would say the training is very straightforward. The content is easy to understand and follow, the knowledge checks are not daunting. The emphasis on planning the walk was good as the focus is on keeping calm and using common sense in any difficult situations." Ynyr will be leading his first walk in January.

The Ramblers' online resources can be a good start for new walk leaders or a refresh for existing walk leaders. The Walk Leadership Foundations course takes you through the Ramblers' eight guiding principles to leading group walks, along with interactive scenarios that you might face on a walk. In addition experienced walk leaders talk about what makes a successful walk with tips on how to plan and map a route. The online course can be completed at your own pace and at a time that is suitable for you. To arrange access to the course contact Andy Addison.

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

Recently walks have had to be amended/cancelled at short notice due to weather and ground conditions so please check both the website and emails for walk updates.

Vagabond: A Hiker's Homage to Rural Spain (2024) A review by John Twort

A welcomed birthday present that would also make a great Christmas present! The author Mark Eveleigh is a vastly experienced travel writer.

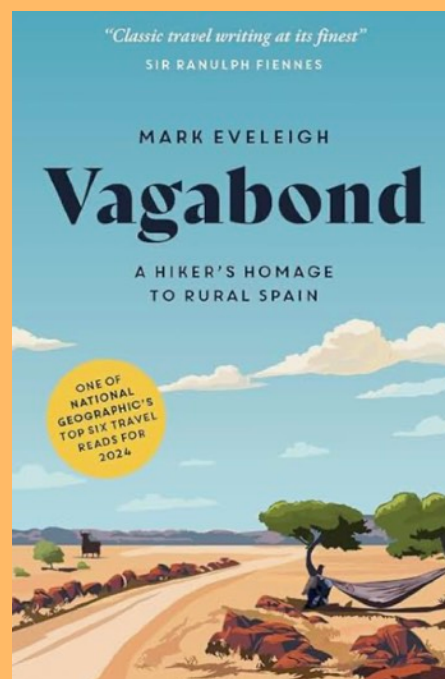
Vagabond, the incredible true story of one man's 1,225km hike across the Iberian Peninsula is a celebration of rural Spain along the road less travelled. Inspired by a nomadic "vagabundo" he met decades ago, Mark eschews the fast pace of modern life and sets off on a solo hike from Gibraltar in the far south to Estaca de Bares, Spain's most northerly tip - carrying just a backpack and a hammock.

Hiking through sleepy siesta-hour plazas, shady cork forests and heat-shimmering plains, the hours would be long, dusty and hot. But as Mark passes through the many small villages and communities en-route, his trek comes to be characterised most of all by the sharing of stories, the true kindness of strangers, and the unbridled freedom of the open road.

Recounting Mark's fascinating nomadic journey through Spain, including Extremadura, its least-visited region, *Vagabond* is a homage to the disappearing lifestyle of the vagabundo, as well as a celebration of rural Spain and its forgotten communities. It reminds us of the value of slowing down and finding connection with others, and the beauty that can be found in taking life one step at a time.

Well so much for the commercial - what about the product? Given my love and interest in Caminos you would be forgiven for thinking that this book is about a Camino - it is not and the title **Vagabond** is key - it revisits the fast disappearing lifestyle of the *vagabondo* in Spain. Where it does bear a similarity to the Camino is the constant battle with blisters - mercifully something I have always fortunately escaped!

The book is composed of three chapters; *Across the South*, *Up the Middle* and *Over the North*. The middle chapter is largely about Mark's walk northwards; this follows the Via de la Plata, which he finds largely as free of pilgrims as when I walked it a few years ago; until Astorga, where he joins the Camino Frances for a few days until reaching Lugo, near his journey's completion. He distances himself from pilgrims by declining to wear a shell and avoiding Albergues - but often enjoys their company.



However he has constant anxiety about being harassed by the Guardia Civil as he makes his nightly search for two trees to which he can attach his hammock!

I greatly enjoyed his explanations of local history and customs, plus his translations, cameo like, of conversations both overheard and some in which he participated, from Spanish. All delivered with a dry sense of humour and eye for significant detail. *"To sad eyes you should ask less questions and give more hugs"* - a quotation that epitomises his empathy for those he meets on his travels.

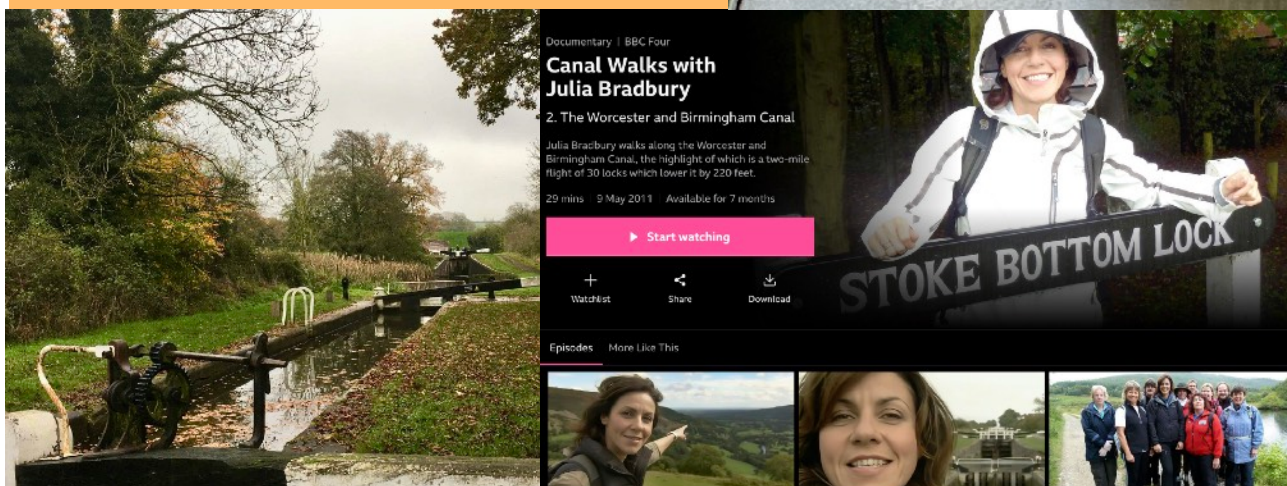
I found myself so immersed in the book that I had to ration myself because like any adventure you don't want it to end - an epic story and possibly the best book about a walk I have ever read, by *un picaro del camino* - a rogue of the road.

"Los abuelos tienen plata en el pelo y oro en el corazon" - translated as **Grandfathers have silver in their hair and gold in their hearts** - I hope so.....John.

Closer to home, if you enjoy watching walking related programmes there are a number available on the BBC IPlayer including **Canal Walks with Julia Bradbury**.

One of the episodes features the Worcester and Birmingham Canal with the Tardebigge Locks - a destination for SCR early this year on a walk led by Tom and Di and more recently with John and Marcia.

The Tardebigge Flight of 30 locks is the longest in the UK stretching two-and-a-quarter miles raising the water level by 220 feet.



News from the Ramblers

Ramblers 90th Anniversary

2025 is a notable anniversary for the Ramblers - it marks 90 years since the official creation of the Ramblers' Association on January 1st 1935. In its first year of operation the Ramblers' Association gained 300 affiliated clubs and 1,200 individual members. Today's membership is just over 100,000.

A history of the Ramblers is set out in the Winter 2024 Walk Magazine. This is a special digital only edition walk.ramblers.org.uk/digitalmagazine

Ramble Worldwide

If you are thinking of arranging a holiday with Ramble Worldwide (the brand name for Ramblers Holidays) don't forget that if you nominate SCR at the time of booking the group will receive a financial contribution as part of *The Walking Partnership* which provides direct funding to grassroots walking groups.

www.rambleworldwide.co.uk

Ramblers Members Benefits

Check out the benefits provided by your Ramblers membership.

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

From the Archives

'90 years of rambling'

Did you spot Rosie's submission for the '90 years of rambling' photo competition in the Winter 2024 Walk Magazine?

The photo is of Rosie's father Joe and his sister Wyn - Rosie says the photo is probably from the mid 1930s. Joe and Wyn were members of Erdington Ramblers - which is also where Joe met his future wife.

The photos selected to mark 90 years of the Ramblers can be seen at;

walk.ramblers.org.uk/your-shots/

Is there a photo you would like to have shared?



1929 JOE AND WYN, St Helier, Jersey

from Rosie Power

Dates for the Diary

Warwickshire Area AGM 2025 - Saturday February 8th 10.30am at Long Itchington Community Centre, Stockton Road, Long Itchington, Southam CV47 9QP.

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

Autumn Holiday 2025 - booking has been made by John H for September 28th to October 1st at the Norton House Hotel, Mumbles Swansea.

Members News

A warm welcome to our new members; Steve Burbridge, Tracy Collin and Elizabeth Whalley.

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 2025

hf holidays

WALK YOUR WAY

WALKING & SPECIAL INTEREST HOLIDAYS
UK, EUROPE & WORLDWIDE 2025

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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.

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