



**Sutton
Coldfield**

March/April 2025 Newsletter



Bourton-on-the-Water - walking along the River Eye

Let us walk where reeds are growing,
By the alders in the mead;
Where the crystal streams are flowing,
In whose waves the fishes feed.

from A Walk by the Water by Charlotte Smith

Chairperson's Report

Several warm, rain-free weeks have dried out footpaths and provided excellent conditions for walking, resulting in large numbers of Ramblers and guests on our Sunday and Thursday walks. The coach walk to the Peak District at the end of March was blessed with wonderful weather and everyone enjoyed marvellous views on both the longer, linear walk from Earl Sterndale and the two shorter circular walks from the attractive village of Hartington. There was time for all the groups to gather afterwards for a sociable drink before returning home. Thanks to John C, Ranjit, Ken and Tony for leading the walks and giving us a thoroughly enjoyable day out. The next coach walk will be on Sunday 27th July - please make a note of the date in your diaries.

Bourton-on-the Water Weekend Break Our weekend break was enjoyed by a large group of Ramblers with a good mix of walks and sight-seeing options. A sincere thank you to Rosie and Tony for organising a successful holiday, and to the walk leaders and those who provided evening entertainment. (See separate report.) We look forward to the next break in October to the Mumbles arranged by John and Marcia.

Walks Programme Our walks in early spring included Stephen's walk from Curdworth to Wishaw, where we learned interesting historical facts about these ancient settlements, their churches, pubs, houses and canal. We left the cars behind, using the train, to reach the start of Mike's walk at Longbridge Station from where we followed sections of the Greenway and Cycle Way 5 to the city centre. We were fortunate to dodge forecasted wet and windy weather on Jenny and Chris's walk from Barton-under-Needwood to Dunstall, being skilfully led through muddy terrain. We returned to Staffordshire for Barbara and John's walk through the Shugborough Estate to Tixall: along stretches of two canals with a picnic lunch on a sunny Milford Common.

Thursday walks in March included John and Marcia's where we visited Sutton Park's Seven Pools, and Ynyr's Middleton walk where we were treated to the sight of Greylag geese close to the RSPB Nature Reserve. Ynyr's Sunday walk from Furnace End took us through several north Warwickshire villages, looking their best in bright sunshine. Tom and Di put on an interesting, varied walk in Derbyshire which included the Staunton Harold NT estate, the grounds of Calke Abbey and Dimminsdale Nature Reserve. Fortunately, conditions in the recently-flooded Trent Valley were ideal for Sarah's walk from Alrewas to Yoxall along the National Forest Way and Millennium Way. Barbara and John led two local Thursday walks at the beginning of April: the Tame Valley walk from Perry Hall Park to Sandwell Valley with a brief sighting of a kingfisher; and Walsall Arboretum, Park Lime Pits Nature Reserve and the Rushall Canal were enjoyed in the sun, with a local expert pointing out a Little Owl on the canal side.

Pat led a popular Sunday walk, with sweeping views across north Warwickshire, starting at Polesworth and along the Coventry Canal towpath. Our Easter Sunday walk, led by June W and Barbara N, traversed the watery landscape of Middleton Lakes, Cliff Lakes, Kingsbury Water Park and the Birmingham/Fazeley Canal towpath. Thank you, as always, to all our walk leaders.

Symphony Hall Backstage Tour This was kindly organised by Sue H, where a group of ramblers enjoyed a fascinating insight into the workings of this wonderful concert venue, followed by a relaxing lunch in the B: eats Café. Thank you, Sue for arranging this event.

ICE cards We should shortly be receiving our order of the Ramblers' re-designed In Case of Emergency cards which we are all encouraged to carry with us on walks. The card will be the size of a bank card as well as being waterproof, so should be more durable and user-friendly.

Footpath Working Party Thank you to those who have contacted me volunteering to help with footpath maintenance this season. There is still room for a few more! The first session will be on Thursday 15th May - details will be emailed to you.

Evening Pub Walks You will have seen that details of John and Marcia's Wednesday evening pub walks have been posted on the website. This is the ideal opportunity for those who prefer a shorter walk to join us as the walks are all around 4 miles in length with a sociable drink afterwards.

Leaders for short walks I would like to repeat Andy's recent request for more walk leaders to come forward, especially to lead shorter walks concurrently with longer ones, so that we have a variety of walks making the programme accessible for all our members. Andy has offered full support to anyone interested in leading a walk.

As we move towards summer, I look forward to continued enthusiasm for walking and enjoying the camaraderie in the group.

With best wishes to all,

Barbara

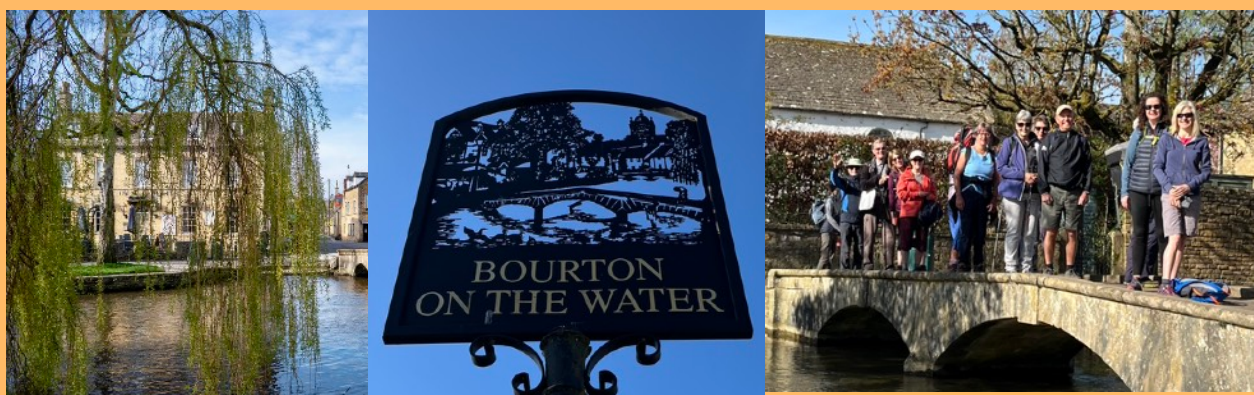
New Members

A warm welcome to our new members; Lorraine Cadd, Michael Doogan, Julie Handley, Keith Handley, Theresa Huburn, Martyn James and Tony Shandy.

Weekend Break to Bourton-on-the-Water

Members of the Sutton Coldfield Ramblers set out for the comfortable honey-coloured Harrington House, which is conveniently tucked around the corner from the centre of picturesque Bourton. Originally built as a family house in 1662, the property blends Palladium and Georgian architectural styles.

Weather forecast was set fair, after the recent spell of beautiful spring sunshine, which led largely to dry walking conditions over fairly parched ground. We were welcomed on arrival with tea and scones, followed by a short walk around Bourton led by Mike F. Before dinner our Walk Leaders briefed us on the following day's walking choices.



On Saturday, Sharon led the longer walk option of around 9 miles walking straight from Harrington House, incorporating rolling countryside to Little Rissington and Great Rissington - showcasing many beautiful Cotswolds buildings and churches. The sound of birdsong and emerging blossom was certainly lifting. As George Meredith wrote when describing the skylark ascending:

*'He rises and begins to round,
He drops the silver chain of sound
Of many links without a break,
In chirrup, whistle, slur and shake.....'*



Jenny and Chris led a leisurely 5 mile walk from the House to the unique villages of the Slaughters - see later description from Jenny. Others enjoyed time exploring Bourton itself, and the Birdland Park and Gardens.

After dinner, Elaine kindly ran an enjoyable quiz which grouped us into competitive teams. Dingbats were also available to challenge us through the weekend.

Sunday walks were again from the House. Mike led the longer walk of just over 10 miles, following the River Windrush to the medieval villages of Lower Harford and on to Naughton. Crossing the Windrush Valley the route continued along Wardens Way to Upper and Lower Slaughter. The *Slaughters* derive their name from the Old English word 'slohtre', which means *muddy place* or *wet land*, assumedly from the River Eye, a tributary of the River Windrush. Happily, mud was no problem on this weekend! Along the walk we were able to visit the many village churches, which are a feature of the area.

Tony and Rosie's walk of around 8 miles took in Clapton-on-the-Hill and Lower March Farm. Again other members also used the day to visit Bourton and local places of interest.



Prior to the lovely evening meal, those who had decorated Easter Bonnets were invited to wear and flaunt them. Di was the chosen winner!

Evening entertainment was compered by Tony and included poetry readings by Jenny and Pat, followed by a delightful comedy sketch, with John, Tom and Chris. They re-enacted the iconic Class System sketch first broadcast with John Cleese, Ronnie Barker and Ronnie Corbett back in 1966! Ken kindly continued the evening by playing the ukulele and inviting us to sing along to some popular favourite tunes, like Eight Days a Week, Wild Rover and The Birmingham Rambler. Results of Dingbats were also given.



Monday morning was our departure after a leisurely breakfast.

A very special thanks go to weekend organisers Rosie and Tony, all walk leaders and the many members who kindly gave us such varied and enjoyable social entertainment. The staff at the HF house must also be commended for ensuring a comfortable stay with a variety of beautifully-cooked food.

Sue Wood

There are always interesting and diverse walks offered on our weekends away, and April in Bourton was no exception.

We wanted to ensure all Ramblers had an appropriate choice, and our 5.5 mile circular walk from our Bourton base, passing through Upper and Lower Slaughter before returning to Bourton, seemed to fit the bill. Sixteen Ramblers took part, and it was lovely to walk again with old friends, who were looking to join a shorter, slower ramble across easy terrain, yet still with glorious views.

The route took us through picturesque Bourton, along tracks and fields, before arriving at Upper Slaughter, where we took a short break in the church yard. The stop was enlivened by a helicopter landing and taking off at the nearby Lords of the Manor hotel. Presumably the occupants were dropped off for a posh lunch. They attracted a lot of onlookers!

At Lower Slaughter, we stopped by the river for a leisurely lunch break, before wandering back along the river, to a busy Bourton, teeming with tourists and families, all enjoying the wonderful sunshine.

Here's to our next Sutton Coldfield Ramblers weekend break!

Jenny Mitton

Future SCR Weekends Away

There are just 2 rooms left on the three night Autumn Break (Sunday September 28th to Wednesday October 1st 2025) to the Mumbles (close to Swansea) being arranged by John Harden. John has booked all 25 rooms at the Norton House Hotel for 3 nights bed, breakfast and evening meal. Full details of costs can be found on the website under *Social Activities* - if you are interested in taking one of the remaining rooms or being placed on a reserve list please contact John - jharden201361@gmail.com or 07742015067.

Looking forward to next year, volunteers are needed for future SCR weekends away. Members who may be interested in arranging or helping with such trips can discuss with Rosie (or others who have led weekends away) what is involved.

In recent years weekends away have been arranged for; Ilminster October 2024 (Anita W) Barmouth April 2024 (Jenny and Chris) Brecon October 2023 (Rosie and Tony) and Selworthy March 2023 (Anita W and Barbara N).

Walk Programme 2025

Our recent walks and the start of spring.....



Curdworth to Wishaw with canals, churches and pubs and;
By train to Longbridge and walking back to the city centre using the Greenway.



Barton under Needwood to Dunstall navigating the muddy terrain.



Sunny weather for the walk through the Shugborough Estate and Milford Common.



More sunshine for the walk in Sutton Park and;
North Warwickshire country-side through Furnace End, Old Arley and Over Whitacre.



Middleton Lakes, Middleton Hall and Bodymoor Heath and;
Further afield with Calke Abbey, Melbourne and Staunton Harold.



Following the Trent Valley from Alrewas and sections of the National Forest Way and
the Millennium Way.



Warm sunshine for walk starting from Perry Hall Park following the River Tame to Sandwell Valley and on to the Tame Valley Canal.



Another sunny local walk from the Longhorn PH through the Arboretum, passing the beautiful Church of St Michael the Archangel, to the Park Lime Pits Nature Reserve.



More North Warwickshire countryside in the sunshine, walking from Polesworth and; An Easter walk at Middleton Lakes.

Check out more pictures and walk details on facebook.com/suttoncoldfieldramblers and on the Website - click on *Walks and Walking* and follow the tabs (or the orange arrow if using your mobile) to Sunday or Thursday walks. You can see details of the walks, photos and the route maps if the GPX data was recorded.

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 proposed but the recce has not yet been undertaken.

A thank you from the Walk Coordinators to all the Walk Leaders who have led (or will be leading) walks this year. The Walk Programme is dependent on walk leaders coming forward to offer a variety of walks - this could be a local stroll around a park or a more demanding 8/9 mile walk or anything in between. Support can be provided from finding a route, doing a recce and the logistics on the day. 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

Evening Pub Walks

John and Marcia will again be leading a series of summer evening Pub Walks. These will start at 7.00pm for easy walks of about 4 miles returning to the pub by 9.00pm. Please meet in the car park of the pub at 6.45. Full details of the walks can be found on the website.

Summer Coach Walk

The next coach walk will be Sunday 27th July - details to follow in due course.

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

In case walks have to be amended/cancelled at short notice please check both the website and emails for walk updates.

Check the Weather Outlook

bbc.co.uk/weather/outlook

Peak District Coach Walk

The coach left Wyndley on time in brilliant sunshine promising an equally brilliant day. Despite the roadworks in Ashbourne, which necessitated driving via Wirksworth, the first group were deposited near the village of Earl Sterndale pretty much on schedule.

From the village we descended into Dovedale with views of the Parkhouse and Chrome hills - two limestone reef knolls formed from coral reef around 340 million years ago! Sadly on this occasion we were not climbing them. After a climb up the West of the valley, which was for the most part mud-free, we reached Longnor with all its extensive facilities - teashop and loos, for the coffee break. Leaving the village the route went South East back into the Dove Valley, and after passing through Crowdicote we paralleled the stream to reach Pilsbury castle for lunch. It was ideal to sit amongst the earthworks imbibing the sunshine with the sandwiches. In the afternoon we continued above the valley through the limestone pastures with distant views before reaching our destination - the pubs and refreshments of Hartington.

For the second group, the coach returned along the A515, and then on twisting narrow roads to start the circular walk at Hartington for some of the best dale walking in the area. We started with a steady climb along the road out of Hartington past the youth hostel and then along a wide track for a well deserved coffee stop at the highest part of the walk. We then descended to reach Biggin Dale for a walk along this attractive high sided dale. Reaching the River Dove valley we turned West along Wolfscote Dale to walk along the river before continuing along Beresford Dale towards Hartington. While the main group continued along the river, a hardy group of walkers did an extra loop along Beresford Lane, past a very smart Lower Hurst Farm to the Raikes and on to Hartington via Hartington Bridge. Finishing the walk we joined the other two groups for a very pleasant drink in the sun at the Derbyshire Arms.

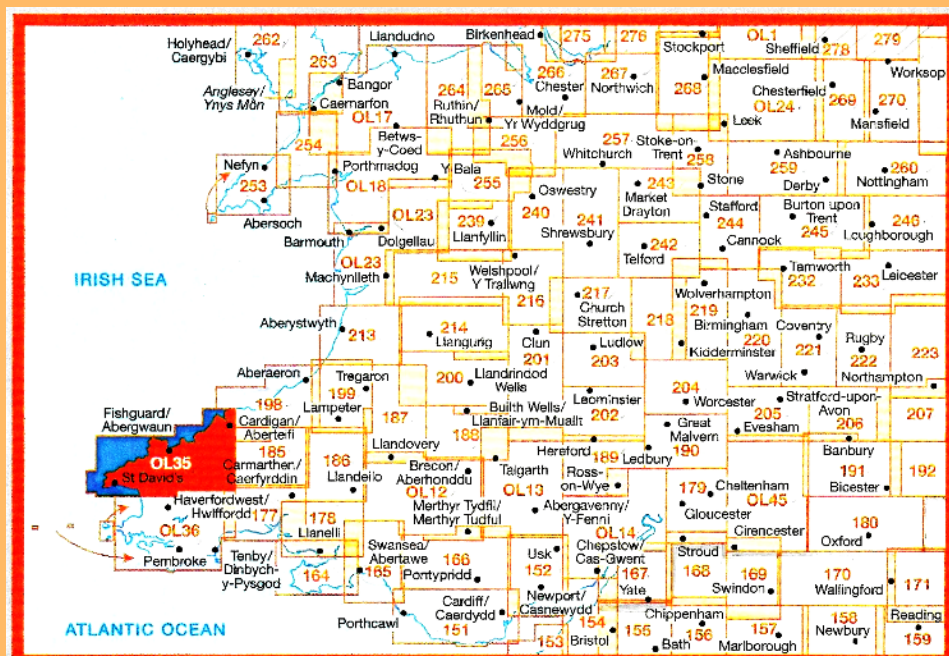
John Collins and Tony Powers

Thanks to John, Tony, Ken and Ranjit for planning and leading the walks.



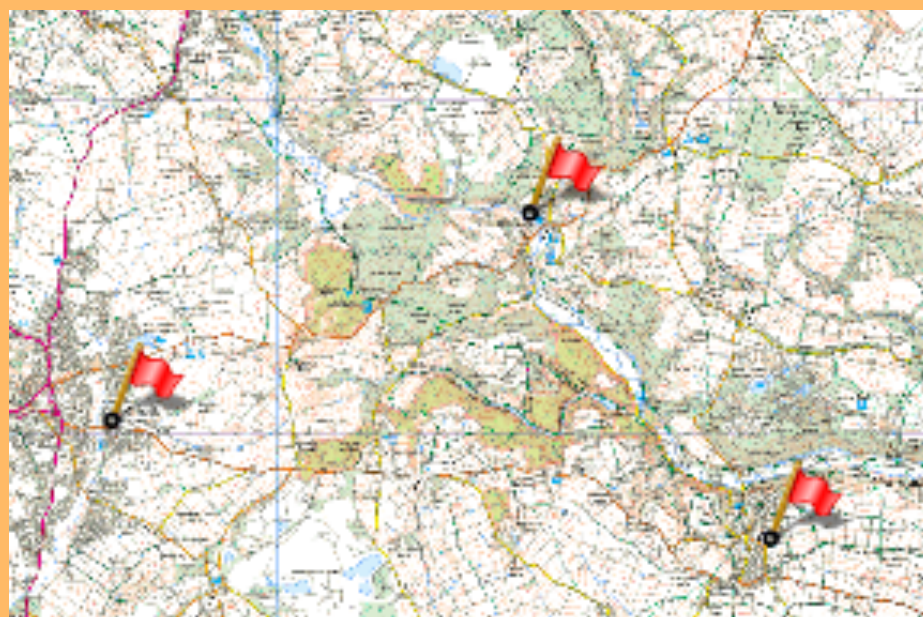
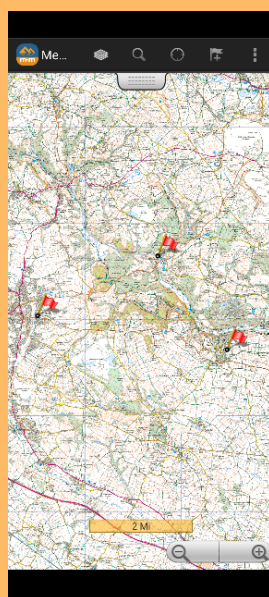
SCR Library of Ordnance Survey 1:25,000 Maps

SCR has library of maps that comprises nearly all of the 1:25,000 scale Explorer Maps for Wales and the Midlands as shown on the index map below.



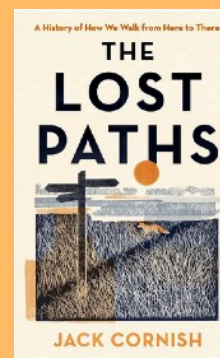
These are available for members to borrow via John Harden. Please contact John Harden on 07742015067 or email jharden201361@gmail.com to arrange collection. John can also supply a printed map at 1:25,000 or any scale required. Members may find these particularly useful if the area they want runs across two or more OS maps.

As an alternative John can also supply a screenshot image from his phone of the Explorer Maps for any specified area. You can then view this on your mobile device or crop it and print the area you want.



Ramblers '90 years of rambling'

During the Ramblers' 90 years history the organisation has campaigned to improve access to the countryside. Their lobbying led to the *National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949*, which created the *definitive map* - the legal record of public rights of way. Today England and Wales has 140,000 miles of footpaths, bridleways and byways but how did this network come about?



Answering that question is Jack Cornish (Head of Paths for the Ramblers) in his book *The Lost Paths: A History of How we Walk from Here to There - A history of the public path*. This explores how this millennia-old network was created, has evolved, and been transformed. A summary of the book can be found at ramblers.org.uk/lostpaths

Members News

Six Sutton Coldfield Ramblers on the Camino Francigena June 2025

The Camino Francigena begins in Canterbury and finishes in Rome; it is over 2,000 km long. Our group (Christina, June, Tom, Mike, Rob and myself) is walking the last 233 km - that's 145 miles in old money! We fly to Pisa from Luton, then transfer to Siena by minibus, stay overnight and then the saunter begins. We shall be walking for 14 days with a rest day, just over half way in Viterbo. We shall have an additional day in Rome at the finish.

The Camino traverses the regions of Tuscany and the less visited Lazio. Research has shown that it is of high historical interest and set mainly in picturesque scenery. The landscape is characterised by soft hills, olive groves, hazelnut plantations, meadows and light deciduous forests. The volcanic activity that shaped the landscape makes itself known through the hot springs and crater lakes that litter the path. At every stop, we hope to enjoy the unique local wine, cuisine, and rich cultural practices of towns that may differ greatly over a matter of mere kilometres.



Highlights of our route

- **Val d'Orcia:** The scenic beauty of this valley with its charming villages like Montalcino and San Quirico d'Orcia.
- The thermal pools of **Bagno Vignoni**,
- **Aquapendente:** Torre Alfina in this city is a well-preserved medieval tower.

- **Radicofani:** A significant historical town with a strong medieval presence, it played a key role in the Via Francigena's past, with a historical road serving as a crucial connection.
- **Bolsena:** To experience the tranquil lakeside charm of this charming town.
- **Viterbo:** With its picturesque medieval centre

We shall be collecting stamps in our pilgrim passports en route, in order to obtain a *testimonium* (certificate of completion) at the Vatican.

John Twort

Buon Cammino to Christina, June, Tom, Mike, Rob and John

Dates for the Diary 2025

Next Coach Walk - this is being arranged for Sunday July 27th.

Autumn Holiday - September 28th to October 1st at the Mumbles Swansea.

Christmas Walk and Meal - Sunday December 7th near Ludlow.

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

