



Southam and District Group News and Views

Issue 96

April 2024

Treasurer's Report

We have now received £225 from Ramblers, the first of two instalments of an increased Group Allowance.

Next year, we are hosting the Warwickshire Area AGM and have booked the Grange Hall. The deposit we paid for this will be refunded by the Area Group. Our spending on other items this year to date is £102.20. Once re-imbursed for the deposit our credit balance will be £263.52, before the second half of our Group Allowance is paid in July.

Walk leaders can claim expenses for pre-walks etc. Forms have been revised so that we claim money, rather than miles. Please submit all expense claims on the new expense form and attach receipts, where possible.
Jeff Round

New Area Chair of the Warwickshire Ramblers

At the recent AGM, Dr Peter Rookes was elected Area Chair. He has served on the Board of Trustees of the Ramblers for four years, with two and a half as Vice Chair and more recently was elected Chair of South Birmingham Ramblers.

He has offered to join local groups if they are holding special events.

Chairman's Report

The Warwickshire Area Chairman suggested that all Walk Leaders should attend a one day First Aid course funded by the Area funding. Southam Ramblers' committee will look into finding a course that is suitable.

One of the speakers at the Area AGM spoke about Rail Trails. These walks, which start at different stations, may be useful to people wanting to plan a different style of walk. Walks are sometimes a loop, others go from one station to another. The information is on www.heartcommunityrail.org.uk/railtrails

An initiative by the current Lord Mayor of the West Midlands, is to define a West Midlands Walking Trail, with one 'Outer Loop' and eight 'Urban Loop' walks. They are looking for partners, including Ramblers (Central Office have signed up for this), to fund and provide people to help. Although there is a map, it is not detailed enough for us to identify actual routes. This will have only a small area in Warwickshire.

In terms of Walk Leader guidance, Ramblers aims to provide revised Walk Leaders Resource Packs in the Spring 2024. This should include - Walk Leader guidance on best practice, including pocket - sized versions, as well as a resource pack with templates, such as generic forms for risk assessments and route cards. There will be updated e-learning on topics like Walk Leadership Foundations and Preventing and Managing Incidents. The Regional Engagement Team are hosting fifteen regional conversations, with group chairs, to discuss the new resource packs.

Key Issues from the Ramblers nationally

There are proposed changes to the National Strategy, about which Ramblers reported that a groundbreaking report was published in September 2023. This led to a revised strategy being voted in, by 80% in favour, at the Extraordinary General Meeting (EGM) of the General Council, in November 2023. A document to explain the focus of the Ramblers and the new National Strategy will now be produced.

Paths continue to be a core focus. Ramblers championed paths at a national level and supported 4,000 path volunteers. In 2022 to 2023 Ramblers organised 44,000 group walks and over the last year, over 330 aspiring walk leaders joined online sessions and 1,150 completed Walk Leadership Foundations. Ramblers have 15,500 new members. The Paths to Wellbeing programme helped embed walking at the heart of eighteen communities in Wales, by creating over 140 new routes. Green Link Walks are due to open in London in 2024. Ramblers Wellbeing Walks continued to expand and welcome new partners. 'Out There' is an award for 103 young adults to develop skills and confidence in the outdoors, at more than thirty locations in Scotland. There are also new Peer-to-Peer sessions with volunteers, in order to share best practice.
Gordon Smith

Editor's note- the photographs, which we add to our newsletter and website, are popular with our walkers. If anyone has any safety or legal reasons for not having photographs of themselves used in this way, they should inform a committee member in confidence, or tell the person taking group photographs, or avoid being photographed. Ann Forgan

Webmaster's Report Walk Manager

The Walk Manager is now working well, with us able to publish our walks on the National Site and on our own Southam Ramblers Site.

The presentation is good and allows visitors to the sites to find the start of walks, using Post Code, OS Co-ordinates and What3words information provided by the software. It is also easy to publish a change notice or cancellation.

It would be useful if Walk Leaders organising a walk could provide a brief description of their walk to Nigel, so that some detail can be uploaded.

At the AGM it was agreed that I would run another course, to give Walk Leaders and other members information about using the Southam Ramblers site. This will include training in locating the details of the many walks we have done, as well as how to plot new walks, using OS Maps, within the web site. The date and time for this will be confirmed by email shortly. Attendees will find it useful to bring a lap-top to work on, if possible.

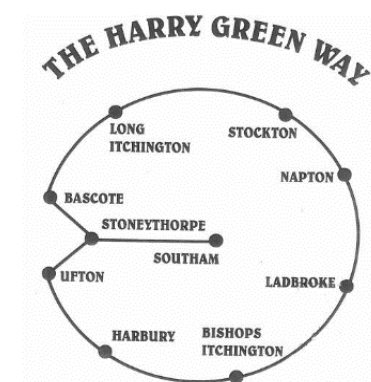
Eric Forgan

Janet Green

Janet Green a founder member of Southam Ramblers and a committee member since 1988, as well as Membership Secretary from 1988 to 2018, decided to retire in March 2024.

We thank her for her huge contribution to Southam Ramblers, over many years.

Friends of the Harry Green Way



The Harry Green Way is a long-distance path around Southam, devised by Harry Green, a former chairman of Southam Ramblers, in 1988. Southam Ramblers members ensure that it is cleared and waymarked. Will anyone who walks any section of the Harry Green Way please advise Eric Forgan at southamramblers@gmail.com of any problems with the condition of the stiles, signage, or the routing of the path.

Next Year's Area AGM

The Warwickshire Area AGM next February is being hosted by Southam Ramblers, in our 40th anniversary year. This event is being coordinated by Richard Clarke and the master of ceremonies will be Gordon Smith. The hall is booked, and the speaker has been invited and the committee is reviewing the options from local catering companies. We will need lots of volunteers to help set up the electronic devices and the tables and chairs in the room. We will also need car park and door people, as well as help with refreshments. After lunch, we will provide a short walk, possibly a town walk, as well as a longer country walk and we will need walk leaders for these. Obviously, this is still some time away so we will remind you again nearer the time to contact Richard Clarke to volunteer to help on the day.

Ramblers – the Structure of the Organisation

The Ramblers is a charitable company (limited by guarantee), registered with the Charity Commission in England and Wales and with OSCR in Scotland. The governing body of the Ramblers is the 15 member board of trustees, who are volunteers, but also directors under company law. Substantial authority is devolved to similar entities in Scotland and Wales.

At local level, activities for the over 100,000 members and volunteers are organised through about 500 local Groups and 59 regional Areas. Each Area and Group operates through its own constitution, but as part of the overall Ramblers organisation.

The General Council is around 150 people, who are formal company members of the charity, for legal purposes, including trustees, the president, vice-presidents and members. It meets annually. Each Ramblers Area is entitled to appoint at least two Council members. The Ramblers appoints a high profile person as honorary President.

The Ramblers has a paid staff team, led by the Chief Executive officer, who run the day to day workings of the Ramblers. There are around 100 people, located across Great Britain. Some staff are home-based, whilst others are based in offices in London, Edinburgh and Cardiff. Ann Forgan

The elected committee members for 2023 to 2024 are:

Chairman	Gordon Smith
Secretary	Richard Clarke
Treasurer	Jeff Round
Footpath Secretary	John Maughan
Membership Secretary	Kath Chapman
Wednesday Walks	Nigel Chapman
Summer Strollers	Richard Clarke
Newsletter	Ann Forgan
Webmaster	Eric Forgan
Publicity	Richard Clarke, Di Weaver (non-committee)
Committee Member	Janet Green



Membership Report

On March the first there were 81 members and the numbers are fairly stable.

All new members receive a welcome email with details of the next walk and are asked if they want to be on the mailing list. The national membership portal gives access to up to date information.

We have a few new walkers who have not yet appeared on the membership list. After a few walks, they are encouraged to join online and I have new membership leaflets with fees listed. I have requested advice from the Ramblers on whether we should have a separate list to contact this group directly.

The committee, after discussion, feels that non-members should still receive details of walks, blind copied as usual, but should be encouraged to join after two walks, as Ramblers request.

For Information – we now have seven or eight First Aid kits. Five have been numbered and assigned to five walk leaders. New leaders should arrange to borrow a kit for their walk or ensure someone with a kit is walking. I have a list of kit keepers. Kath Chapman

Key Dates for your diary 2024

Area Quarterly Meetings:

8 June, 7 September, 30 November.

Southam Ramblers AGM

7 November at 7.30 in the Nelson Club

Key Date for your Diary 2025

The Area AGM will be hosted by Southam Ramblers at the Grange Hall, Southam, on 8 February 2025, The Guest Speaker Tom Heap is a presenter on Countryfile.

The Wednesday Walks

As usual, I would like to thank the walk leaders for regularly coming forward to organize the walks. Sometimes we reach the stage, where we only have 3 or 4 walks on the programme, but this is always addressed by our regular leaders. Regarding leaders, it would be helpful if the number of volunteers could be increased. This would not only take the pressure off the usual leaders but would probably lead to more variety in the walks being added to the list.

Locations of walks completed recently have included local ones close to Southam, as well as some further afield. For instance, we have been to Leamington, Edgehill area, Chipping Warden, Flecknoe and so on, which gives a good variety.

Jeff Round is going to lead a walk in the Cotswolds in June. We normally put this in as an extra but having discussed with other committee members, we have decided this time to put it on the normal Wednesday programme.



Wednesday Walks Programme **See also Thursday Strollers on the next page.**

Date	Leader	Location	Distance in miles	Tel No	Email
8 May	Don Bates	Badby Woods and Fawsley	4.5	01926 812584	debates@talktalk.net
22 May	Ann and Eric Forgan	Kineton	4.2	07775860693	eric@4gan.com
5 June	Kath Chapman	Leamington Parks and Canal	4.8	07969960968	kathchapman@hotmail.co.uk
19 June	Jeff Round	Cotswold Walk	5 or 10	07799771778	Jiround77@gmail.com
3 July	Gordon Smith	Boddington	5	07596798233	Gordonsmith2311@gmail.com

Wednesday walks usually meet at an agreed start point at 10.00 a.m., with lifts available from Wood Street Car Park at 9.30 a.m. Only guide/assistance dogs are allowed.

Nigel Chapman



For booking a walk slot in the programme

nigelchapman@hotmail.co.uk

Community Groups Alliance

This is a group of about twenty local voluntary organisations, who have met a few times to explore the possibilities of working together on events and publicity and better understanding the roles of the others.

Our entry in the Community Life section of Southam Town Council's website, can be accessed using either the Social and Leisure, or the Health and Wellbeing, filters. The most recent meeting was on 18 April, when various alternative ways to publicise the voluntary organisations were discussed. A voluntary groups' stall at the Town's Fun Day and a leaflet drop were the favoured options.

Richard Clarke

Publicity

Di Weaver published some interesting articles in the December and March editions of the District Advertiser. Southam Ramblers features in the Heritage Collections Clubs and Associations exhibition, which will run until the end of June. Cardalls' Corner for April, the Advertiser's regular historical feature, will be an article about the history of Southam Ramblers.

Details of walks, including re-scheduling, are posted on Southam News and Views.

The A5 posters, supplied by the Ramblers have been disappointing, in that they emphasise campaigning and footpath clearance, rather than walking for heathy exercise, or for company and meeting new people. Some are displayed on local noticeboards. I will contact Ramblers central office again to ask if there are any more suitable posters. Richard Clarke

History of Southam Ramblers

Richard Clarke spent some considerable time researching old newsletters and minutes, in our group's history, then creating a detailed list of key events and people, given that it is our 40th anniversary in 2025.

I have since spent time writing the information into a year by year narrative account of the key events, as well as creating summaries of each decade. This will be emailed to Southam Ramblers members soon, as a special edition of the Newsletter, with some of the photographs from the first few years. It will also be available as a leaflet for the Area AGM. Ann Forgan

Summer Strollers Report

Summer Strollers begin on Thursday 16 May, and each of the walks now has a leader. Thank you to everyone who has kindly agreed to lead again. The appeal for new leaders resulted in one response, from Derek Price, who has agreed to lead the New Zealand Farm walk.

Summer Strollers Programme 2024

Date	Place	Leader	Distance
16 May	Southam Holt	Richard Clarke	3 miles
30 May	Ufton Woods	Annie and Roger Lane	4 miles
13 June	New Zealand Farm Stockton	Derek Price	4 miles
27 June	Stockton Blue Lias-6.30 start and short stop at the Blue Lias	Bob McAulley	6 miles
11 July	Lower Fields Farm	Ann and Eric Forgan	5 miles
25 July	Bascote	Kath Chapman	4 miles
8 August	Stoneythorpe Estate	John Gymer	3 miles

All Strolls start and finish at Wood Street Car Park at 7, or 6.30 (Blue Lias).

Walks are researched and led by members of Southam Ramblers.

Apologies but no dogs allowed, except guide/assistance dogs.

Richard Clarke



Footpaths Report

November

There was a request for a scoping and environmental report on land within the Gaydon/Lighthorne development. Path SM80 crosses the southern half of the site over the M40 and on to Chesterton. There is no point in objecting as the land is already approved for development. Also, we would be consulted later on any planning application.

January

Michael Bird has sent us an article from the Stratford Herald. It advises us of the consultation survey for the next Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROIP), asking us to participate in order to assist in the next plan, starting in 2026. It was confirmed that our Committee response has been submitted, but there has been little feedback from individual members about whether they have participated.

February

There was notice of the temporary closure of Bridleway w129x at the bridge over the river Leam, one mile south of Weston under Weatherly. The temporary closure is in place as the bridge is being undermined by the river. However, walkers are still using it so the council will lift the deck for health and safety reasons. This bridge is a critical link between Cubbington and Offchurch and there is no alternative route.

Eric and Ann Forgan, while exploring Thurlaston, managed to find a cut through to Draycote Water on the OS map. Unfortunately, the path R 179 was closed and the Definitive Map revealed that, unusually, the OS map was in error.

Eric Forgan noted, in addition, that a temporary route near Chesterton, intended in theory to divert the footpath around a building site, led nowhere.

John Maughan

