

Sustrans – Cycling and Walking Charity

Sustrans has applied for planning permission to take a section of the National Cycle Network, route 41 or the Lias Line, between Leamington and Rugby, off road and onto new, purpose built tracks.

Work is expected to start in April 2021 and Phase One will follow the old Lias Line railway route between Offchurch and Birdingbury. A new bridge will be built at Marton.

Phase Two will make use of the old railway branch line to improve off road connectivity with Long Itchington and nearby villages.

Phase Three will follow the branch line route south to Stockton Reservoir.

The 6.18km of off - road track, made possible by £20 million of Department of Transport funding, was picked out for development in Sustrans review of the network last year. When complete, it will be Warwickshire's largest traffic free greenway and will transform cycling and walking in this area of Warwickshire.

<https://tinyurl.com/y32wo25k>

Ann Forgan

Chairman's Report

Mud, mud, glorious mud.....the Warwickshire mud is back after all of the glorious walking weather of the spring and summer. What a good year it has been for Southam Ramblers and this despite the extraordinary circumstances we all find ourselves in. In March, with impeccable timing, we enjoyed an excellent meal at the Bell in Ladbroke. We now have seven new members and record numbers on walks.

OK, we had a few months, in the first lockdown, when we could not walk, but Eric kept us in touch, by suggesting local walks and sending out quizzes, while Ann produced an excellent newsletter. The walks, with initially only six people allowed, were not feasible, but it did at least allow us to go on one of the Summer Stroller events, when 21 people, in four groups, enjoyed a walk around the Stoneythorpe Estate on a lovely July evening. When the numbers who could walk together were increased to 30, Nigel and Kath then sprang into action and have done a fantastic job of organising walks, with two groups of 15, or groups of 30, with the help of the leaders who willingly came forward, with a new, locally based, schedule.

This year's Soup 'n' Puds was due to be the last hosted by Jackie Westcott, who has catered for us so well since 2004. In that time, she has raised £1,750 for local charities. We decided to mark her retirement by presenting her with a planter. Excess cash raised was given to Jackie for her to donate to charity which, this year, is HOPE4 in Rugby.

We are again allowed to walk in groups of 30, but with our friends and neighbours in strict tier 3 restrictions, the decision was taken that to go out in such a large group through local towns and villages was insensitive. Hopefully, we will be back in action early in the new year.

Although I am not walking at present, I am still very much a Southam Rambler and am supported by an excellent team. I would like to thank all of those, whether on the committee or not, who work so well together for the good of us all. Happy Christmas and a good 2021. Bill Pease



Editor's note It was a surprise how much information there was for the newsletter, given that we have not had our usual busy programme of walks and other activities. I have included some photographs even though they look better on the on-line version of the newsletter, rather than the printed one. All of them and more are on the Southam Ramblers' web site - follow the link on page two. Ann Forgan

Webmaster's Report

All of the walks for the year and for previous years are now available on the Website for anyone with a walking application on their PC, or smartphone, to download.

The instructions for the Harry Green Way have also been updated and a copy of the instructions and a GPX of the route is available at

<https://www.ramblers.org.uk/southam>

The site also has some pictures of members enjoying our limited walks over the past year. To see them follow this link

<https://photos.app.goo.gl/vXm1kxYWo7ej4MJUA>

Finally, if you want to see some pictures of Southam Ramblers over the years follow this link. How many do you recognise?

<https://photos.app.goo.gl/Ase2eFoZHMqJhAXi9>

Eric Forgan

Pictures from two lockdowns and tiers one and three.

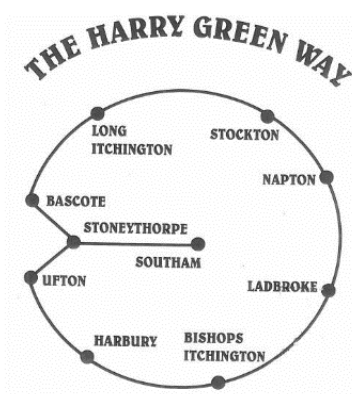
During the lockdowns many of the Ramblers participated in sharing some beautiful pictures of their gardens these are available at

<https://photos.app.goo.gl/WFAQuDf8NAYjgbMn7>

The site below, as it says above, has pictures of this year's walks, but it also has pictures of members of Southam Ramblers engaged in other lockdown activities

<https://photos.app.goo.gl/vXm1kxYWo7ej4MJUA>

Friends of the Harry Green Way



The Harry Green Way was devised by Harry Green in 1988 and the route was updated and waymarked in Harry Green's honour by Bob Dodd in 2007. During the lockdown of 2020, the walk brochure and waymarking was updated by volunteers from Southam Ramblers.

To help to keep the walk up to date in the future it was agreed that the walk would be divided into 10 walks of approximately 2 miles and that these walks would be 'adopted' by members of Southam Ramblers.

Friends of the Harry Green Way will aim to walk a section of the route twice a year, identify any problems they encounter on the walk and do 'gardening', where practical, to keep the walk open for everyone. They will also advise if any additional signs are required or need replacing, if the walk is blocked or diverted, if it becomes impractical to follow the signed walk, or if any stiles or gates have become unsafe.

The friends of the Harry Green Way who have volunteered to "adopt" a walk are:

Southam to Bascote
Bascote to Long Itchington
Long Itchington to Stockton
Stockton to Napton Folly
Napton Folly to Welsh Road
Welsh Road to Ladbroke
Ladbroke to Bishops Itchington
Bishops Itchington to Harbury
Harbury to Ufton
Ufton to Southam

Richard and Vib Clark
Peter and Jay Webster
Jeff Round
Don and Reine-Marie Bates
John Gymer
Bob and Margaret McAulley
Gordon and Dawn Smith
Bob Middlemas
John Maughan
Ann and Eric Forgan



Will anyone who walks any section of the Harry Green Way please advise Eric at southamramblers@gmail.com with any problems relating to the condition of the stiles, signage, or routing of the path.

Notes from the Treasurer's Report to the Southam Ramblers AGM

The Main Account has a total of £314.33, as of 30 September 2020. This compares with opening cash of £237.92 at the same time in 2019. There was an excess of income over expenditure of £76.41 in 2019, leading to closing cash of £314.33. The Social Account is largely dormant, being unused for the last two years.

The elected committee members for 2020 to 2021 are

Chairman
Secretary
Treasurer
Footpath Secretary
Membership Secretary
Wednesday Walks
Committee
Summer Strollers

Non-Committee Roles

Publicity
Newsletter
Webmaster

Bill Pease
Margaret McAulley
Ann Hayes
John Maughan
Kath Chapman
Nigel Chapman
Janet Green
Bill Pease

Di Weaver
Ann Forgan
Eric Forgan



Notes from a Warwickshire Area Quarterly Meeting

Sandra Sutton, City of Birmingham group, is the Area Chairman.

Warwickshire Area Quarterly Meeting was held via Zoom on 5th December 2020. 16 people attended virtually.

It is quite a different experience having a meeting via Zoom. The main challenge is to stop everyone speaking at once. Muting people out until they wish to comment seems to be the only way forward.

The 'Don't Lose your Way' Campaign has approximately 49,000 paths to save! Ramblers' Central Office need to provide more detailed maps. So far £75K has been raised, through crowd funding, to help with this project.

The Footpaths' Report included information on construction of a massive solar farm (across 9 fields) and Warwickshire will be objecting to this proposal. The site will be visible from the Burton Dassett Hills.

The change of use of a disused historical railway line to Sustrans 'Lias Line' cycle and pedestrian route will be an improvement. Southam Group expressed their support for this.

The Area AGM on 6th February 2021 will be held via Zoom. Margaret McAulley

Date for the Diary Southam Ramblers AGM

Thursday, 11th November 2021
Southam Sports and Social Club,
School Street, Southam.

This year's 35th AGM meeting, on 12 November, was held as a virtual meeting.



The Wednesday Walks Programme

It has been an unusual year! With the threat of Coronavirus, we were forced to cancel our walks during lock-down from March until August. However, Government guidelines subsequently permitted us to ramble in groups of 30, so our programme re-started, albeit with our proviso that we sometimes had two groups separated by about 15 minutes for each walk. Members have been very good about volunteering to share the leadership of each walk. Thank you to everyone who has taken a group leader role.

We were not able to walk the planned 'Special Walks' this year, such as to Leamington, or a Cotswold walk, since these have not been possible. Similarly, the 'Soup and Puds' walk has been cancelled, as we could not meet in Birdingbury Club and be sufficiently socially distanced and the 'Sherry Walk', for similar reasons.

Once walking in groups again became possible, we did develop a full programme, which was planned until 13th January 2021 and walks took place both when we were in tier one and the second lockdown. Bubbenhall, Compton Verney and Cropredy were among the walks on the programme, as well other more local ones. However, since we were put into tier three, we felt it was necessary to cancel again.

Walks Programme Co-Ordinator Nigel Chapman, Tel 01926 813765

All walks begin in Wood Street Car Park at 9.30 a.m.



Membership Report

There are currently 74 members, as of October 2020, with 7 new members, 5 of whom are actively walking with Southam Ramblers. One is new to the group, one is new to the area and 5 are new to Ramblers.

New members who join online receive a welcome e-mail with information about the group and details of the next walk. They are also asked if they would like to be added to the group mailing list. New members are then introduced to the group on their first walk.

Two members have left the group, one because of health issues. In addition, two people have experienced problems with the membership renewal process. Both are now resolved, but one person is still not appearing on the list, so this is being followed up.

The membership portal is useful and gives access to up-to-date information. It is becoming more useful and user friendly. It is particularly useful when following up membership issues.

Since the Wednesday walks started up again after the first lockdown, we have had 41 participants. Our members are based in each of these locations - Southam 26, Long Itchington 14, Bishops Itchington 4, Dunchurch and Rugby 3, Stockton 3, Leamington 3, Harbury 2, Marton 2, Woolscott 2, Gaydon 2, Eathorpe 2, Napton 2 and 1 in each of the following - Daventry, Kenilworth, Flecknoe, Yelvertoft, Alcester, Cubbington, Carterton and Ayreshire!

Kath Chapman



The Slow Ways Project

The Slow Ways project started early in 2020 and, making use of the spare time people had because of the Coronavirus lockdown, 700 volunteers were recruited, including me.

The volunteers were given the task of creating a network of walking routes across the UK, connecting towns and villages, using OS maps on line. They have created 7,500 walks, which stretch for over 68,000 miles. Using existing footpaths, or minor roads, people will be able to use the Slow Ways to walk between neighbouring settlements, or link routes together for long distance journeys. All of these routes have been checked and cross - checked by the volunteers.

There are walks centred on Southam to Daventry, Rugby, Leamington, Whitnash, Byfield, Kineton and Banbury. Ultimately there will be a Website with all of the routes, in order for the public to plan and plot their way around their local area, or to cross the country.

The next step is to launch the Website and then for volunteers to walk the routes and feedback on how easy they are to follow and report any issues. Hopefully, some of you will be interested in walking and feeding back on some of the routes.

You will probably see the launch on television. You may have already seen television coverage of Daniel Raven - Ellison walking one of the routes. I will email information on the launch when it happens.

Further Information about the project at:
<https://ravenellison.com/portfolio/slow-ways/> or speak to me.
Eric Forgan

Footpath Secretary's Report

The Lost Path

In the early days of lockdown, the twists and turns of Don's path provided a diversion for all who read the emails. After an impressive amount of work by Don, he came to the conclusion that it probably was not a public path and people in Long Itchington were expressing concern that the publicity we were giving it would alert the landowners Cemex, who may close it. Further guidance was sought by our committee from Michael Bird, Warwickshire Area Footpath and Countryside Secretary, alerting him of the sensitivity of the issue. Michael was aware of this path, as a lot of work had been done on it previously. The conclusion, then and now, is that it was a cement workers' shortcut to work and therefore never was a public right of way (PROW).

The Lost Path, part 2

Since then, the main opponent of us publicising the path in Long Itchington now wants us to encourage our members to walk it. It has been discussed with the Parish Council, who want more paths on the Cemex side of Long Itchington, due to all the extra houses that have been built. Therefore, they want people who use the path to fill in forms to say that they have done so. So, although it is not a PROW, it is being used by the public and they may have done so for some time and this may be sufficient evidence for a claim. However, other individuals and groups do not want to lead this campaign. We will have to decide if we want to help and whether, as Ramblers, we can use paths which are not PROWs.

Other Path Issues

We have received notices of road closures, because of HS2.

Also, a number of complaints about paths, such as the path from Napton to Stockton, where parts of the paths had not been reinstated and had no visible markers. The farmers will probably re-instate them but, due to Covid, Warwickshire is not issuing any construction material at this time. There is also missing signage at Bascote. Again, although the Action Team know about the missing sign, without any construction materials it will have to wait.

Viewlands, a house in Napton, has also blocked a footpath due to building work and has made little progress on this since last year.

We also investigated problems with signage and stiles on the Harry Green Way. These were passed on to Mike Ray, Southam PROW Group, who sent them to village action groups for their attention. We are allowed to add discs where needed to improve signage on the route, using existing council posts. John Maughan



Warwickshire Area Quarterly Meetings 2021 Dates

6th March, 5th June, 4th September, 4th December.

Warwickshire Area AGM 6th February 2021.

Please contact Bill or Margaret if you wish to attend any of these meetings.