

Facebook

The committee have agreed that they would be happy for a Southam Ramblers Facebook page to be set up. We could then post details of walks and Summer Strolls, which could then be re-posted on the Southam Facebook pages and possibly those of the villages.

If there is anyone, or more than one person, who would like to take on the role of setting this up and updating it, please contact Bill Pease.

Editor's note

We thought it would be good to get a newsletter out, even though none of our organised walks have taken place recently, so the content is a bit different. There has been a lot of messaging on line since lockdown, but we thought it was important to touch base also with those who do not use on line systems. I hope that this brings you all up to date.

I noticed that a few of the articles mention developing new walks and meeting people out walking. I have certainly met lots of my neighbours out walking recently. It seems a good time to be persuading more people to join the Ramblers.

As to the Anecdotes on page three, it was very hard to choose three from all of the great feedback. Thanks for this and to all of the contributors to the newsletter.

Ann Forgan

Chairman's Chunterings



Eleven weeks since my last haircut and thirteen weeks since Southam Ramblers walked on a Wednesday. In spite of this, my weekly step count is not much different to last year, helped by a nightly walk around the streets of Southam in the early days of lockdown, then the nearby fields and more recently a short drive before walking. I am sure most of our members have also been making good use of the extra free time we have been having and probably walking a lot more than me. One of the reasons for Summer Strollers, which have also had to be cancelled, is to ensure the rights of way radiating from the town are walked. This will not be a problem this year as many local people have discovered them for the first time as they have been walking much more than usual. I am hoping that once we do restart, whenever it is, we can persuade some of these people to join us – certainly on Summer Strolls.

One thing that I, and others, have noticed is the unofficial paths that are being walked around local fields which look as though they have been in use for many years. I have often grumbled about one particular field where the path across is rarely reinstated, with most people using the field edge. I have noticed on my evening walks that people are walking the whole perimeter of this particular field, which has wide margins. The landowner must be very relaxed about it as at least half a dozen houses have gates on to a path which is not a right of way. Perhaps I will not complain quite so much in future, whilst of course trying to keep to the rights of way!

Eric has been doing a sterling job keeping us in touch with one another and giving us ideas for walks. Thank you, Eric!

I hope it will not be too long before we can walk again – and that we will be allowed to help each other over stiles!

Bill Pease, 3 June 2020



Webmaster's Report

I attempted to keep the Southam Ramblers active and informed throughout the lockdown by sending out information electronically on various topics including:

- Updates from the Ramblers about the current lockdown legislation and their advice about daily exercise and self-isolation
- Walking maps centred on the local villages
- A 'Gardens' photo gallery, set up on-line, as many of you fed back that you were busy gardening

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

- An 'Out and About' photo gallery, set up for members to show their keep fit activities during the lockdown

<https://photos.app.goo.gl/DijkGCRyx3HQrPu8>

- Web site updates, including information about the Ramblers' Lost Path initiative and feedback from one of our members on their attempts to find information about a lost path in his area
- Activities, organised by the Ramblers through their web-site #Roamsweethome
- Quizzes and Star of the Week competitions, circulated by email, which had many of the competitors keeping us smiling – so thank you!

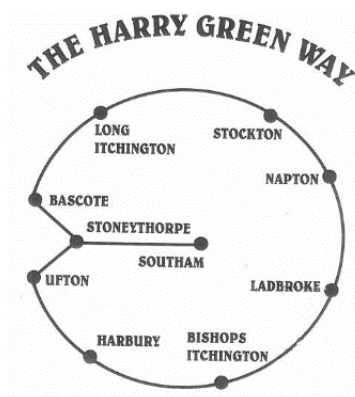
See Anecdotes from the last point on P3

Eric Forgan



The Harry Green Way

Most of the Southam Ramblers will be aware of the Harry Green Way. Harry was Chairman of Southam Ramblers for 20 Years and in 1988 he developed a walk around Southam which visited the local villages in a ring around Southam. The walk was recognised and published by the Long Distance Walkers Association and it has the distinction of being the shortest Long Distance Path in the UK! All the more reason for us to walk it and keep it well marked and available for others to enjoy.



Since we are limited on where we can go in this period of lockdown, I am proposing that, as a group, between us we walk the route. I have divided the route into 5 walks, each section being about four miles long and need volunteers to do a section of the walk and to record any problems or difficulties on route. A map of each route and a checklist to identify any issues will be provided.

The Walks are –

**Southam to Long Itchington,
Long Itchington to Napton,
Napton to Ladbroke,
Ladbroke to Harbury,
Harbury to Southam.**

Please let me know which walk, or walks you want to do and I will send you a map and checklist. You can do half of the walk one day and the other half another day. Do not forget social distancing rules apply!

This message also went out electronically and we have some volunteers already, but the more, the better.

Eric Forgan



The elected committee members for 2019 to 2020 are

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

Non-Committee Roles

Publicity
Newsletter
Web Master

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

Di Weaver
Ann Forgan
Eric Forgan



Anecdotes from Lockdown

This was Star of the Week, Bob M

The opposite of exercise, last Saturday I had a throwback to a miss-spent youth: a lockdown pub crawl. I pre-positioned beer and crisps in most rooms of the house and then worked my way from room to room. Emails and messages provided lots of company. At one stage there was even a pub quiz going on. It actually went surprisingly well – until I got hungry. (OK sitting in the bathroom for 30 mins, did cut off the circulation to my legs). I did have a meal all ready to go for when I reached the kitchen, but didn't get there until past 10p.m. and for some reason it took over an hour to get fed – the home made cottage pie did sit heavily on the previous layers of beer and crisps. I wonder if I still have that train set?

From Alison H - I started last week with great enthusiasm – cleaning cupboards and washing curtains. Unfortunately, when I put them back up, they had shrunk and Mick compared them to certain old ladies' trousers – half mast! Now folks, guess who is unpicking them and re-sewing them – Mick. I hate sewing, it's a good job I have a practical husband. I am also doing a quick route march around the village, but not being able to stop and chat is very challenging. Take care everyone, stay safe till we all meet again.

From Di W - I have a bit of land at Flecknoe Station, where I have 2 rescue ponies and 12 sheep, also 2 dogs at home. Every other day I take the dogs and drive from the village 1.75 miles, feed the animals then spend time mucking out the sheds. I was unable to do this before, as it was so wet down there, I could not push the barrow through the mud. Then on the next day, I walk down do the feeding, walk home via Sawbridge and the old track to Nethercote and home. It's usually uneventful – however coming over the canal bridge today, there was a gent just about to relieve himself, a surprise for both of us. He said he was bursting. I suggested that next time he looked over the bridge and burst elsewhere! The things you see in the country. Cheers to you all.



The Wednesday Walks Programme

With our programme grinding to a halt in March, we have missed out on several interesting walks. We should have been meeting up with Linda Doyle on 10th June for what would have been an interesting look at the old Fenny Compton tunnels. We should also have been joining with Harbury Walkers for a joint ramble. Our annual Cotswold day out has had to be cancelled, along with Ann and Eric's Welcombe Hills walk, and Don's two walks are also on hold. When the lock-down finishes, we can hopefully resurrect some of these walks before the end of the year!

Meanwhile, Kath has suggested that we ask members of the group to consider finding some walks which we haven't done before. We suggest looking at the O.S. maps, searching for paths or combinations which would make interesting Wednesday walks, and maybe trying them out in lockdown. Then when this is all over and we can meet up again, we will have a full programme! Nigel Chapman



Membership Report

A report with membership data is sent out monthly.

The most recent data, up to May 31, shows we have a total of 68 members, of which 25 are individual and 27 are joint. There are 10 annual concession individual members and 6 with joint concession membership.

At present there are 5 outstanding memberships. Some are people who are not local to the Southam area and others may just have forgotten to renew in these strange times.

It may be worth checking your details. I can help if you are not sure.

Kath Chapman, kathchapman@hotmail.co.uk

Don's Lost Path

Intending to select a suitable future Southam Ramblers' walk, I reached for my maps and selected a small map centred on Stockton. The map is only about 24-inch square (dated 1973) and is very convenient to use compared to the current product. I hit on a Stockton/Blue Lias/Boat type route, but was short on distance. So, looking for an extra mile, I spotted a path and aspired to add Blue Lias/ Cuttle/2Boats to the walk. On checking my current OS map, I discovered that the footpath going south east of the Cuttle did not exist. Further research revealed the path existing on several maps going back to 1885. So, what had become of the lost path?

Further enquiry revealed that It took a campaign by the Ramblers' Association (as it then was) to get the information on the status of rights of way to be shown on publicly available Ordnance Survey maps. Initially this was only shown on 1" to the mile maps, from the mid-1960s onwards. A 1" map dated 1967 that shows Public Rights of Way, doesn't indicate any trace of this path, public or otherwise. So, my map bought in the 1980s was showing a private footpath.

What have we learned?

- There are lost footpaths.
- There are ways to track the history.
- Just because a footpath is shown on an old map, it does not mean you can expect to use it now!
- Specialist knowledge may be needed to properly pursue lost footpaths.



Area Meetings

Margaret McAulley and I attended two area meetings just before lockdown – here are a few notes on things which came up that we thought you might find interesting.

Warwickshire Area Ramblers AGM 1ST February

The treasurer's detailed report included comments on the national office drive to have less money sitting in area and local group bank accounts. In 2016 to 2017 Area funding was £12,000, last year £5,000, so funding to the local groups has gone down, but only 2 have asked for more.

Chris Hodgson, Ramblers

Trustee and Chair of Ramblers Cymru was the guest speaker. He said that the new National Membership Department is looking to grow numbers and Ramblers is forecasting a growth in numbers. We have 101,713 members and need to stay above 100,000 to remain influential. Warwickshire Area Group is growing and moving from 8th largest to 7th largest area group with 3,000 members. However, 9 million people who go out walking are not in Ramblers. Lower fees are being discussed, but also providing more for the current fee, such as exclusive discounts in shops. We need more young people and U3A are now competitors, with growing numbers and providing walks for a much lower fee.

Ramblers need to publicise more what they achieve as a national group, for example, the work on footpaths. We need more short walks and to link with groups like Walk for Health, to encourage more people to join.

The excellent CEO who modernised Ramblers has now left and there is an interim CEO. The Ramblers work with other groups such as Sustrans, the cycling group and there is a need to work together with other path users. Ramblers are founder members of the Walking and Cycling Alliance.

Slow Ways

During lockdown I have been involved in a project called Slow Ways. Hundreds of volunteer ramblers have been exploring the UK from their own homes, as part of an ambitious plan to map all of the country's walking routes. The "Slow Ways" initiative aims to provide an online map of UK walking routes, so people can stomp safely from town to town or village, rather than taking the car, when the lockdown is lifted. Working remotely and in collaboration with Ordnance Survey, volunteers have been using maps and other online tools to identify existing walking routes, information that will then be made available to everyone, online and in one place.

The project is the brainchild of former geography teacher, Daniel Raven-Ellison, who spearheaded the campaign to have London declared the world's first National Park City. Raven-Ellison came upon the idea whilst planning a walk between Salisbury and Winchester, during which he realised that there was a lack of information about suitable walking routes online. He thought this would likely encourage more people to drive instead of walking. Slow Ways was born. It started in February with 70 volunteers attending a London "hack-day". Ten further meet-ups were planned across the UK but, as Covid-19 arrived on our shores, it became clear that these would no longer be possible.

Undeterred, Raven-Ellison has moved the operation online, recruiting volunteers to plot routes remotely. "There are currently thousands of people who love maps and walking, but are stuck at home and often very isolated," he said, adding that the scheme "created an opportunity to be positive, optimistic, creative and collaborative during this time of crisis, while also being productive and helping to create something with serious legacy." Nearly 400 hundred volunteers signed up and plotted over 7,000 routes between them stretching almost 60,000 miles. The next step is to test the routes, which will involve the collaboration of walking groups and individuals, before launching a Web Site open to the public.

Eric Forgan



Warwickshire Area Quarterly Meeting 7 March 2020

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

The Area Footpath and Countryside Secretary said that HS2 has cut through 58 of the area's rights of way, but alternatives have been found for 57 of them, although some are diversions to road bridges.

The Area Membership Secretary reported 3,003 members, up from 2,979, similar numbers for a few years, leavers are non-walkers and 10% are new members.

Don't Lose Your Way Project - the Local Access Forum discussed the 33,000 miles of lost tracks and this is really a national issue, since National Office has more power. Warwickshire is good at sorting out its local path issues and supports the project.

The Trustee Report was given by Dr Peter Rookes, who also presented notes from the Board of Trustees meeting. In February, the board had a brand review and thought the focus of Ramblers should be on protecting paths and facilities and acting on behalf of walkers and people need to be made aware that Ramblers do this. Urban and rural walkers need to be attracted into Ramblers by health, freedom and pleasure of walking messages. There are organisations, such as U3A, with lower fees which organise walks. We need to also make links with Walking for Health.

The issue of possibly having a scale of fees, rather than just one fee was raised. Some people can only attend a few walks and this also might encourage new, younger members. The issue of making sure people understand how the fees are used to benefit walkers was also raised.

Motions to be discussed at the General Council are raised through Area Groups, 9 had been received and were discussed.

We have detailed notes and minutes of these meetings if anyone wishes to see them. All upcoming area meetings and the National Conference have been postponed.

Ann Forgan