



Southam and District Group News and Views

Issue 99

May 2026

Chairman's Report

Since our AGM in November, the focus has been on ensuring that we have enough authorised leaders for our walks. Since the second half of 2025 Ramblers' central office has pushed for leaders to either declare as 'experienced', having led twelve walks within the last 3 years, or to complete the three modules of the leaders' online training. At the end of 2025 we only had seven leaders who were qualified to lead walks. This was a concern, but I am glad to say that now eight additional people have completed the online course and we now have fifteen members qualified to lead our walks. This is great to see, as it shows involvement by our members and interest in sustaining Southam Ramblers. I would like to thank everyone who is now qualified to lead. At the Warwickshire Area AGM the role of leader again came up in discussion. At the start of March all existing Leaders who have not now qualified as a leader, by doing the course or having led 12 walks in the last 3 years, will be removed from the Ramblers database and will not be able to lead, since Ramblers insurance will no longer apply to them. The question also came up, about 'what happens now.' New leaders will always be able to take the existing training to qualify. It seems that we are now covered for the next 3 years. However, expect to see a 'top up' course appearing for existing leaders, to ensure we stay 'qualified'.

I would like to thank Derek Price, who took over as Footpath Secretary at our AGM at the beginning of November, for his efforts in organising the schedule for the end of 2025 and for 2026, whilst this all went on. His prompting has obtained commitment from leaders for the full fortnightly Wednesday schedule through to the end of 2026. A special thanks to Richard, who continues to be the 'go to' man for any issues which arise. Finally, thanks to all the other Committee members, I thank you for your commitment to our club. Gordon Smith

Could you be our media contact person?

The Background

The Southam Ramblers committee publicises our activities in a number of ways – **Social Media Sites** Richard Clarke puts details of upcoming walks and key activities on Facebook. Eric and Ann Forgan keep the WhatsApp site up to date about upcoming walks. Eric sends out emails about upcoming walks.

Our Website Eric Forgan updates our information on the Southam Ramblers website and creates a gallery of our photographs. Ann adds the Newsletters to this and occasional articles from the national website.

The Newsletter Ann Forgan edits our Newsletter, which contains articles about our activities, about footpath changes, photographs and sometimes articles about Ramblers nationally. Copies go to local organisations and Warwickshire area group.

Displays and Posters Richard Clarke produces posters about the Paths and Pub programme for public display. We produce posters and displays for community events and Ramblers events, for example Ann produced posters for the Warwickshire Area AGM, Richard produced posters about our history for the Southam history group.

Attendance at meetings Richard attends the Southam community group forum. Gordon Smith, Richard and sometimes other members attend the Warwickshire Area meetings quarterly, including attending their AGM. We send representatives to some of the national meetings.

Gordon, Richard, Ann and Eric are happy to continue with the roles described above, but this leaves the issue of liaising with contacts in local publications and placing articles or adverts about Southam Ramblers in local free papers and magazines.

Richard has recently been picking up some of this but is already busy as Secretary and Paths and Pub Co-ordinator, as well as updating Facebook and local meetings on our behalf. He has built links to the District Advertiser, the Town Council website and St Wulfstan Surgery. Ann has a list of village magazine contacts.

The role of the media link person is, in liaison with key committee members,

- To build links with local free papers and magazines
- To build links with village community magazines, whether paper or online, in the area
- To raise the profile of Southam Ramblers by ensuring, in liaison with the committee, that articles on Southam Ramblers walks and activities appear in local free publications from time to time.
- To write articles about a recent walk, or about the group, or the Ramblers nationally, or about issues for walkers, or to request these types of articles from the members of the committee, to increase the publicity for Southam Ramblers. Sometimes articles may already exist on the Website, or in the Newsletter and may just need adapting for local publications.
- To advertise upcoming activities in free local publications. These adverts also may exist elsewhere and just need adapting to the publication.

If you would like to help and are interested in this role, please contact our Chairman Gordon Smith or Secretary Richard Clarke to discuss.

Webmaster's Report

Walks Manager

There have been no significant changes to the Walks Manager software in the last six months. The weather over the winter did mean some cancellations and rearranging of walks. Notification to members has been made much easier with Walks Manager and, along with WhatsApp, this has helped to keep members up to date with short notice changes. Eric Forgan

Treasurers' Report

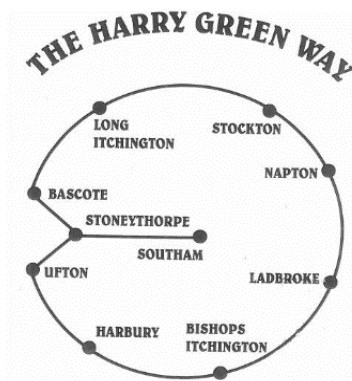
The accounts are in good shape. Our Group Allowance for the year to date is £210. In addition, we have received £20 as a donation from The Walking World. The donation is unrestricted, so we have transferred this to Bob and Margaret McAully as a contribution towards the annual Sherry Walk expenses. So far this year we have spent £128.78. Hence our reserves stand at £342.65 and are higher than usual at this stage of the Financial Year. Jeff Round

Membership Report

There are currently eighty-four members of Southam Ramblers, as of May 2026 and membership is fairly stable. There are five new members since December and all have received a welcome e-mail with details of the next walk and asking them if they wish to be on the mailing list. Most have replied. Twelve members have left in this time period. Some did inform us that they would not be walking anymore. The membership portal continues to give up-to-date access to information. The new plastic In Case of Emergency, or ICE, cards are provided for distribution to members and we have cards to give to new members. We provided the old versions of the ICE cards to walkers who do not carry one, non-members and occasional walkers.

Kath Chapman

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.

The fortieth anniversary of Southam Ramblers was celebrated by walking the Harry Green Way in four sections last year. This was successful and we intend to repeat the walk in the next year or two.

Thanks again for the help of the Friends of the Harry Green Way. After the AGM Drew Chamberlain and the Kallenders offered to take over two sections of the walk. Over the past two months we have been updating the signage and checking out the conditions of stiles and bridges. Gordon had some success in getting a bridge repaired on his section near Bishops Itchington and we will identify and report any other problems we find to Warwickshire County Council.

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 Clarke
Pam and Andy Kallender
Jeff Round
Don and Reine-Marie Bates
Drew Chamberlain
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 me, Eric Forgan at southamramblers@gmail.com of any problems with the condition of the stiles, signage, or the routing of the path.

The committee members elected at the AGM ON 6 November 2025 are:

Chairman
Secretary
Treasurer
Footpath Secretary
Membership Secretary
Wednesday Walks
Paths and Pub
Newsletter Editor
Webmaster
Publicity

Gordon Smith
Richard Clarke
Jeff Round
John Maughan
Kath Chapman
Derek Price
Richard Clarke
Ann Forgan
Eric Forgan
Richard Clarke



Walking in hot weather

The Ramblers advice for walking in warm weather, as on their web page, is -

Check the weather and plan ahead for the weather and possible weather changes.

Walk in the early morning or evening to avoid peak heat between 11.00 -3.00.

Use sun protection. Be aware of heat exhaustion symptoms in yourself, or others. Take extra water 1-1.5 litres per half day.

Wear loose, lightweight clothing, including to cover arms and legs. Wear a wide brimmed hat.

Take more frequent breaks in the shade. Consider reduced mileage alternatives, or the ability to cut the walk short. Consider walks in woodlands, valleys, or canal paths, not exposed or open country.

Protect the countryside by being aware of fire risks and reporting fires.

The government advice for outdoor activities in hot weather is similar.

Their site says above 90 degrees F, 32 degrees C, stay indoors.

Then take precautions if walking outdoors in temperatures from 85-90 F, 29-32 C.

To be safer for outdoor activities you should be in temperatures below 85 degrees F, 29 degrees C, with similar precautions, as in the above section on Ramblers' advice, for hot weather.

Ann Forgan

The Wednesday Walks

Wednesday Walks

There have been some challenges and lessons learned since I took on the role of Walks Co-ordinator. At the start of 2026 we only had seven trained and qualified Walk Leaders which the Ramblers were advising would now preclude others from leading walks. I asked all seven, including me, to commit to providing three walks for the year. This would give me some assurance that, even if no others completed the training, we would have much of the year covered and I could then look at covering the gaps as the year progressed. Responses were received which meant I could just about cover all the Wednesday walks until October.

However, there has been a great response from our members and a further eight people have completed the training during the year and are now providing walks, with some trained leaders working in pairs. I am optimistic that going forward we have enough leaders to be able to continue our two week walk schedule and to potentially offer some additional walks during the summer months.

At the start of the year the weather was against us. Persistent rain during January and February led to walks being cancelled on January 7 and January 21. Both walks were postponed for one week, with one route change, due to conditions. Throughout the next month, there was still a lot of standing water and more rain causing further disruption. It would be a good idea if walk leaders, each developed a weather friendly walk for when we have very wet or icy conditions underfoot. Either that, or members need to be fully informed that there will be times when conditions are going to be very poor, with the added risk of slipping, falling, and getting very dirty. I note that other groups within the Warwickshire Area Group just go ahead regardless.

Thankfully, the weather improved greatly in March and, as a result, walking conditions were much better. From the start of the year, even when the weather was poor, we have had a high number of walkers attending. Whilst this is really welcome, I believe If we continue to get between 20 to 30 plus, we need to address, once again, the issue of car sharing. It has become more difficult for leaders to provide walks with a start point that allows for a large number of cars. Some do car share where possible. We need to ensure that there is always someone at Wood Street car park to pick up those who need lifts to the start of the walk.

Lawrence led an additional, longer, linear walk to Leamington which was well attended, was enjoyed by those who came along, and proved that there is an appetite for the occasional longer walk during the months when we can expect reasonable weather. I would like to look at including some more longer walks into the schedule. If any of our walk leaders has a walk which they would like to lead I could arrange a mutually agreed date. Richard will be leading this year's all-day Cotswold Walk on June 17th. At the beginning of July, I will be asking Walk Leaders for walks for the dates October to December. This will then be a rolling three-month request.

I have been very pleased with how easy it has been to step into the role of Walks Co-Ordinator, this reflects the positive attitude of all of our walk leaders, who have all been keen to make a contribution to the group. I would like to thank everyone for their help and assistance. **Derek Price**



Walks usually start from Wood Street Car Park at 9.30 a.m., with time variations published in advance, or from the published start for 10.00 a.m.

Only guide/assistance dogs are allowed.

Date	Place	Miles	Leader
10 June	Flore	4.5	Julie and Francoise
17 June	Cotswolds, Snowhill	9.5	Richard Clarke
24 June	Radford Semele	5.3	Eric Forgan

Publicity

We have entries in the District Advertiser, the new Your Call magazine and the Community Life section of the Town Council website. In addition, this year, St Wulfstan Surgery agreed to take occasional pieces from us in their regular email sent to all their patients. They published our first piece on Facebook on 16 February and subsequently in their regular email. In early May they published details of the Paths and Pub walks as well as posting a copy of the poster on their Facebook page.

Most walkers seem to get their information about walks either from the fortnightly email sent by Eric, from the WhatsApp group chat, from our website or The Ramblers website. Each walk is also advertised on Facebook. Richard Clarke

Southam Ramblers WhatsApp Group

The WhatsApp site has proved useful for reminding people of upcoming walks, announcing last minute changes to walks, arranging to share lifts and for weather updates. If you wish to be added in to the group, please contact Ann or Eric Forgan

Changes to Ramblers Organisation

We have received a number of detailed documents, from the Chair of the Trustees, about the proposed changes for the Ramblers organisation, as well as updates on the results of the consultation process. From this a short summary document explaining the changes, with a commentary, has been prepared. This will be sent out as a separate attachment. Ann Forgan

Footpaths Report



In December Michael objected on our behalf to an application for five houses at Bull Ring Farm, Harbury. Access is by County Road 0647, a regional long - distance path. Concern is that it could block the path for extended periods. This is the fourth attempt to build on this site in ten years.

In January Michael Bird commented on the continuing applications around Southam, saying that this Government intends to overrule any existing policies that get in the way of their housing plans.

Michael reported on the plans for land east of Southam bypass for four hundred and fifty houses. SMs 28 29 and 30 run through the site. It is not a full application yet, but he will object when it is.

In January I walked SM193 from the barn to the farm on Thwaites estate and found it much improved. It has been widened and extra signage has been added. We may have the Lib Dem Councillor Susan Ostrander to thank for putting pressure on Richard Barnard the enforcement officer. I have thanked her on our behalf.

In February Jeff, Richard and I reported to Warwickshire County Council that the bridge on SM188 on the way to Chesterton Church was unsafe.

Richard advised that SM31, the footpath from Stowe Drive has now been reopened and improved. There are new steps down to the bypass and a pedestrian refuge in the centre, on the route to the new Aldi store, which is a significant improvement.

HS2 is closing the canal towpath at lock nineteen on the Welsh Road. Also, Ridgeway Lane, between the canal and the Welsh Road, will be closed from March 4 to 13, to launch the new viaduct.

John Maughan



Date	Place	Miles	Leader
4 June	New Zealand farm	4	Derek 7.00 start
18 June	Blue Lias	6	Bob 6.30 start
2 July	Start Two Boats Long Itchington	3.7	Pam and Andy 7.00 start 6.45 Wood Street for lifts
16 July	Napton Airfield	5	Eric 7.00 start
30 July	Bascote	4	Francoise and Julie. 7.00 start
13 August	Stoney Thorpe	3	Drew 7.00 start

Paths and Pub

We have scheduled eight dates for Paths and Pub walks, on alternate Thursdays from 7 May to 13 August, with eight different leaders. The centrepiece as usual will be the Blue Lias walk on 18 June. One innovation is that Pam and Andy have offered to lead a Paths and Pub walk starting from Long Itchington. Ther other walks start from Wood Street Car Park, Southam. I have produced posters based on Ann and Strachan's designs from last year. These are now posted on ten noticeboards or shop windows around Southam and in Long Itchington and Bishops Itchington.

The first walk on 7 May attracted fifteen walkers, eight of whom were new to our group. Ten visited the recently reopened Crown in Southam afterwards for liquid refreshment. Most of the new walkers said that they found out about the walks from Facebook.

Richard Clarke

