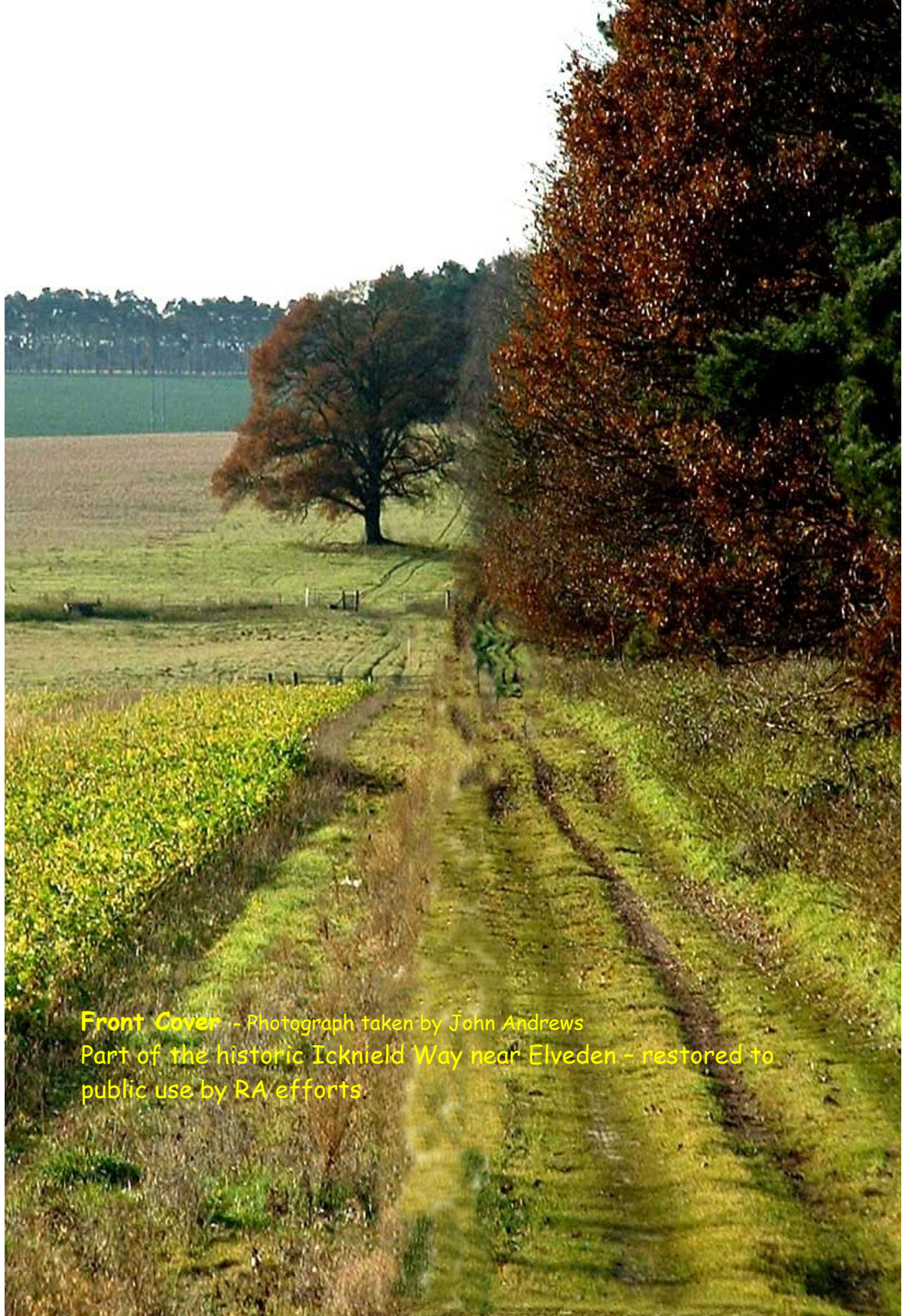




Front Cover - Photograph taken by John Andrews
Part of the historic Icknield Way near Elveden - restored to
public use by RA efforts.

Newmarket Group Entertain French Walkers

On Friday the 28th April a number of our members awaited the arrival of our French visitors outside a Newmarket school. This trip had been so long in the planning that I must admit to feeling a little nervous before the coach arrived. I need not have worried, the coach pulled up on time and we were able to match the visitors with their hosts very quickly and after a bit of chit chat everyone set off for home.

Our party consisted of seventeen walkers from Maisons Laffitte, a town on the outskirts of Paris and twin town of Newmarket. Any concerns that the weekend would not be a success were soon laid to rest. Our visitors were very happy to be here and keen to enjoy their visit.

On Saturday the 29th our visitors were entertained by the Newmarket Twinning Association with a visit to Cambridge. The evening was spent relaxing with their host families. There was a slight concern for one of the hosts as their French visitors did not speak English. We need not have worried, I received a call during the course of the evening to say they were having a brilliant time and after the first bottle of wine language didn't seem to be a problem!

On Sunday 30th we spent the day in splendid sunny weather undertaking a 10 mile figure of eight walk in Lavenham. I could not believe our luck with the weather and even the church bells pealed on our arrival! Forty six took part in the walk and four markers were employed at the front, back and middle of the group. The big question was do we shout '**CAR!**' or '**VOITURE!**', we elected the former as our visitors spoke such good English. The walk was most enjoyable and as leader it was most encouraging to be aware of the friendly buzz of conversation as friendships were being formed.

In the evening we came together again for a buffet dinner at the Heath Court Hotel. We spent a very happy and sociable evening the high point of which was John Bellamy's inspired raffle prize of a bag of freshly dug leeks. These were most coveted by our French visitors, one of whom on holding the first winning ticket carried them off in triumph to the amusement of all in the room. Our thanks must go to John Morris for organizing the evening so well, to the Newmarket Twinning

Association for donating the wine and our host families who all attended the evening and entered into the spirit of the occasion.

On Monday 1st May we gathered again in Newmarket where John Bellamy and Phil Prigg lead a very informative walk around Newmarket. This took in the Rowley Mile Race Course, exercise tracks and other points of interest such as the Palace House and Jockey Club. At one o'clock our visitors finally boarded their coach to return home.

We plan to do a return trip in 2008 but we are considering taking a coach trip to France for a days walking next year as we are keen to get together again before 2008. Any member interested in doing this trip please let a committee member know.

The weekend was great fun and I must say a big thank you again to all the host families and members who took part and joined in so enthusiastically. I have been advised by Gui, the leader of the French group, that more would have liked to come so if anyone is interested in hosting a French visitor in 2008 do let me know. Many who would have liked to come were single. So please get in touch if you would be able to help.

Jan Cavell. Chairman Newmarket Group

Sudbury Group

This report must be overshadowed by the sudden death of Laurie Burroughs who organised our walks programmes for many years. Laurie brought to this task a military precision gained through his years of service in the army. The away day outings went like well oiled clockwork and the research he did for these walks was phenomenal. Even after his heart bypass operation Laurie could not stand still, continuing in his participation and organisation of many of the local societies in and around Sudbury. He could probably be best likened to a swan going up river, calm and serene on the surface and paddling like heck underneath. We all miss him very much.

The number of people coming on walks has increased over the last few months, as has the group membership. A combination of shorter and all day walks is a popular mix, appreciated by members. We have even had a few walkers from other parts of the country who

saw our walks on the internet. Thanks must be given to all those walk leaders who take the time & trouble to search out, check out and then lead the group walks.

On 6th May two coach loads of us walked the London canals from Bromley by Bow via Limehouse Basin up to Camden Lock then by waterbus to Little Venice where the coaches met us for the homeward journey. This excursion was originally planned by Laurie and gallantly taken over by David & Margaret Taylor, Margaret Rawles and David Burnett who put the finishing touches to it. Many of us felt that Laurie was there with us.

Iain Taylor

Waveney Group News

Analysis of our March-June 2006 walks programme revealed that during this period we put on 73 walks in the 17 week period. That averages out at nearly four walks per week. If we add to this a weeks walking holiday for the Group on Dartmoor (13 walks offered), the total for the four months rises to 86 walks.

I don't have any figures for the Suffolk groups but for the Norfolk Area, in the equivalent period, Fakenham had 9 walks, Norwich 14, South Norfolk 18 and Sheringham 22. King's Lynn, the most active Norfolk group had 60 walks.

A few years ago Waveney Group's usual fare was a short walk (5 miles) midweek and a long one (10 miles) at the week-end. Now we have expanded greatly and often have a short and long walk during the week and the week-end.

With such a busy programme, the key question becomes: how do we find enough leaders to organize all these walks.

Waveney's answer to this might be of interest to other groups struggling to find enough leaders. At present we have about 55 regular leaders, but when I took over as Programme Secretary I soon realized that walks

leaders come and go. For our latest programme I managed to recruit six new leaders but this was immediately nullified by six retiring through illness, injury, loss of interest, old age and so on.

The search for new leaders is unceasing. I have been trying to convince our members that everyone is capable of leading a walk for the group. As a result of this 'gentle persuasion' several new names come forward to lead walks.

However it was quite clear that members were often reluctant to lead because they felt they lacked the necessary skills to do so. Answer? Put on a simple, user-friendly walk leaders' course.

We held the first in March and it was a great success. It was deliberately aimed at beginners and avoided all mention and use of compasses – a big fear for novices! The course aims were threefold:-

1. to learn how to read an Explorer map and plan a short walk from it.
2. to develop simple measuring techniques (cotton, ruler, calculator).
3. to consider the factors involved in planning/leading a walk.

The group was small, deliberately, six altogether. Work was done in pairs, which boosted confidence, an important factor for beginners. Members devised a 5 mile walk which will be used in future walks programmes. Everyone received a leaflet on 'Useful Hints for Walks' Leaders' and in response to the plea, 'I never know where to start a walk from', all were given a lengthy list of over 130 car parks/start points, with grid references, for walks in the Waveney area.

We plan to hold more walk leaders courses in the future as the need to recruit leaders is constant.

We can certainly recommend this practice to other groups who might be experiencing problems in finding enough leaders for their walks programme.

Peter Westmacott. Waveney Programme Secretary

Stowmarket News

Keith Ager once again came up trumps with the group holiday at Thwaite, in the Yorkshire Dales.

I don't think any of the group could have envisaged the wonderful weather we would get, as we made our way up the A1 in torrential rain. We woke up the next morning to unbroken sun, and it was how it remained until the end of the holiday. After last year's good accommodation we didn't think we would be able to match it this year, but the Kearton Country Hotel turned out even better.

Walks have been well attended, and once again the trip to Norfolk on the train proved popular with 28 making the journey. Another glorious day greeted the party at Sheringham as it made its way via Pretty Corner and Roman Camp to West Runton and finishing along the coast path.

On the social front Brenda has organised a barn dance at, Needham Market, on the 28th October. The Christmas Dinner will be held at the Magpie, Stowmarket, on Sunday 17th December.

Our footpath group have completed the footpath surveys at Kenton and Thorndon. SCC have received a large number of problems to sort out.

New surveys will be carried out in Flowton, Thwaite, and Athelington, and if any member would like to join the survey group please contact me.

We have a number of issues at the moment, a new planning application for gravel extraction at Creeping St Mary has met with strong objections from the local community, we as a group have raised an objection on environmental grounds. I am aware that this has caused some aggravation in certain quarters as we did not object to the Snoasis project on environmental grounds. The explanation is straightforward – we attended the presentation and were given satisfactory answers on the footpath network that included extra paths so we raised no objection.

On a final note our commiserations to the Sudbury Group who have, on the death of Laurie Burroughs, lost a loyal servant who will be hard to replace.

Tony Buck. Stowmarket Chairman

Bury St Edmunds Group

The year got off to an enthusiastic start with a turnout of nearly eighty for our New Year Bank Holiday walk in Ickworth Park, followed by mulled wine and mince pies, and it continues to be a very full and interesting programme with perhaps a record number of walks offering a wide choice of distance and locality. We're using trains for the East Suffolk Line Walk (Ipswich to Lowestoft) and buses for our new Thursday leg-stretchers once a month – and we are planning to provide an extended choice of shorter local walks at a leisurely pace. It was good to join with NW Essex Ramblers for their Castle Hedingham walk, and we enjoyed a super day out with Windsor Ramblers who led a walk for us in Windsor Great Park which had several unexpected Wow factors!

(and there are still seats available for our summer coach-walk to Walberswick and Southwold !)

Of course walks don't just happen – and nor do programmes – and so a big thank you as always to Chris and Wendy Barker for co-ordinating and producing our programme, and may I pay special tribute to our committee and walks leaders for all they do so unstintingly on behalf of Ramblers.

It was our pleasure to host the Suffolk Area AGM this year and we were so pleased that our guest speaker Peter Ayling was able to stay for our afternoon walk. He phoned subsequently to say how much he had enjoyed his day in Suffolk with special thanks to Roy for the thought he had put into the walk for visitors to the area. Some interesting and lively discussion had followed his talk in the morning, and we touched on possible times of need for a quick re-think on a walk when faced with the unexpected, but I think he would have been surprised how soon we were going to find ourselves needing to come up with an 'instant Plan B' just a week later !

It should have been galling to drive all the way to Bishops Stortford via Braintree, to leave a car at each end of the 15 mile Flitch Way, with the prospect of the subsequent journey home, to walk the distance in preparation for a planned group walk in March – and then to

find just prior to the date that the path was closed for a period of improvement work.....BUT, far from a disappointment it was wonderful to have a valid reason for not inflicting such a **boring** walk on the group! In the event, thanks to a hurriedly revised plan 'on the hoof' by two experienced stalwarts Trevor Arbon and Dave Chandler and the usual lovely good humour of the group, we all had a really great day (don't mention the mud!) with a figure-of-eight walk based on Gt.Dunmow – of Flitch fame – and taking in two delightful Essex villages.

Perhaps the moral of this story though is that, when offering the original walk in the early planning stages of the programme, I should have let the **Map** speak to me – and not been seduced by the beautifully produced leaflet, which presented the straight, almost totally featureless path along an old railway line in such a beguiling way! So I'm especially pleased that one of the themes for our **Training Day on 30th September** will be about 'seeing the **picture** that maps can paint for us' as we share and apply ideas and expertise, as well as looking at new RA initiatives together.

Meanwhile, I was surprised and delighted to receive a call from the RA press office asking if we would be happy for Roy Risby's walk in Bury St Edmunds on Sunday afternoon 9th July to be celebrated through our local press as the 50,000th walk published on the Group Walks Finder.

What a lovely opportunity to raise the profile of Ramblers and promote membership in Suffolk !

Rosie Perham



Dave Chandler with Bury St Edmunds Group adds a finishing touch to his walk in search of Old Mid Suffolk.



Stowmarket Group enjoying a break during their Group Holiday in Yorkshire



Thanks to our Access Officer, Richard Tyson for this photo of erosion to the coastal path at East Lane, Bawdsey. The broken line shows the original coastline.

Richard reports, although access to the Suffolk coast and estuaries is fairly satisfactory there are problems with coastal erosion and broken estuary walls. It may be possible in due course to have a right of access to open country adjoining the beach (e.g. at Sizewell) which was excluded from CROW access because it was not 'heath' (i.e. it lacked heather etc).

Walking Abroad Independently

For years we have been visiting different parts of the UK, buying the map, walking, writing to the Highways Authority, as you do, and enjoying the whole experience.

For the last ten or so years Mary and I have been for a walking holiday abroad, sometimes with a group but more often independently. All you really need is walking gear, a map and it may help to have some knowledge of the language. So far French maps have been the most reliable and the German paths the best way-marked. In Spain and Italy the maps are a bit variable with scale and contours not as detailed as we are used to – mind you do have rather more contours to start with! You could almost say that the maps south of the Alps and Pyrenees are better where more visitors walk. (Some are printed in Germany and some in Northampton.) It is also possible to speak more German than Spanish when walking in Spain.

Accommodation we have found very reasonable in price and food most enjoyable. Of course if you choose the higher altitudes for walking, the heat tends to be more moderate, the landscape greener and the wild flowers more plentiful.

Planning where you might walk is part of the pre-holiday enjoyment, so we usually get some of the maps beforehand, even if they cost a little more from Stanfords.

Oh! And we always go somewhere different – this year the plan is to attack the Pyrenees from both sides, between Pau and Benasque.

Geoff Knight

You can't go there yet !

By an extraordinary coincidence, the group of byways called Hundred Lane, Kiln Lane etc. that featured in the winter edition have been the cause of some dispute during the past few months. We were amazed when Suffolk County Council issued notices saying that all four of these lanes had been closed to use and were to remain unavailable for at least six months. The official explanation - because there have to be good grounds for taking such a step, was that they were too dangerous to allow the public to walk or ride along them. It was perfectly true that several long sections were obstructed by the accumulated natural growth of many decades and needed a lot of clearance and were a number of ditches that needed bridges or culverts, but it was simply absurd to suggest that there were any real dangers and equally long lengths of the lanes were completely free of any kind of obstacle.

The real reason emerged after close questioning of CC officers. The confirmation that these are ancient public roads had proved deeply unpopular with some of the local landowners and the long delay is intended not only to enable clearance work to be undertaken, but also to provide time for discussions about the possible imposition of orders banning use by vehicles. We understand the concerns about access by motor vehicles, but the actions of the CC were far more draconian than was necessary and, we believe - illegal.

This has prompted a complaint to the Local Government Ombudsman - together with one about other CC moves which look like having significant long-term consequences. The most worrying of these is the threat to one part of the CC's Rights of Way service posed by the cost-cutting crusade of the new Council elected in May 2005. The target is the long-running programme of investigation of alleged public rights of way with a view to adding them to the Definitive Map. The new administration has made no secret of its dislike of this process, even though it is one which the Council is legally obliged to carry out, and has disbanded the team which has been carrying out this task and terminated the posts of several of the officers involved.

We had an emergency meeting in May with the Councillor who has oversight of the RoW work and senior officers, but this proved unhelpful and we were left in no doubt that the Council is in no mood to be dissuaded from its course, even though there is still a substantial backlog of claims awaiting investigation, many of which have been on file for over 25 years.

We were told that attempts to cause difficulties would be regarded as unacceptable and if we took any further action to pursue our interests, the members might decide to shut down the rights of way service entirely. Although we believe this to be a rather unlikely scenario, we are having to take the matter very seriously and, at the time of writing, a meeting of Area Committee and Local FP Secretaries with representatives from RA central Office, to decide our approach, is about to take place.

John Andrews

A Ramblers Nightmare (Not to be read after dark!)

Returning home from a late ramble through the slanting driving rain, wipers slapping noisily to and fro, thinking of slipping into my carpet slipper, a missing in the car engine becomes apparent. Unwilling to stop and get out in the torrential rain I continue for another mile until the engine dies completely. It is rapidly becoming darker the sky leaden and dull, my eyes become accustomed to the hazy light. The rain becomes a torrent, drumming loudly on the steel roof, the forest as dark as a tomb. Fumbling for a flashlight I curse as the batteries fade to oblivion literally giving up the ghost. Looking at my watch I see it's getting very late, jumping out the water floods over my walking shoes and the rain beats down on my bent back. The moaning of the steadily increasing wind through the top most branches of the swaying trees and the loud, frantic rustling of the rain through the leaves sounds eerie. My hands become numb and my feet frozen. My eyes readjust to the rapidly failing light and detect a movement; a shadow detaches itself from the

shelter of the trees and moves with the soundlessness of a shadow towards my immobile car.

I don't move, I stay exactly where I am breathing lightly not stirring an inch. The storm redoubled in violence. The rain trickled down my legs, I didn't move as it trickled into my shoes. Uncontrollable shivers shook my body, I couldn't move, only my eyes moved following and tracing this silent enemy. The shadowy apparition moved with great stealth. Looking down I could see a large paw print undoubtedly a large animal and stalking me. Crouching, I edge back to the safety of my car, easing into the driver's seat and locking all the doors. I wipe the rain from my eyes and peering into the gloom I momentarily see a large cat like profile with yellow eyes hungrily gazing at me from the bonnet of the car. Evil slavering jaws gape into a wild grimace; I can almost smell the foul fetid breath of this wild incarnation. I stand on the horn and it lopes away into the shadowy undergrowth. It is the Black Beast of Essex and East Anglia.

Attempting to use my mobile I find there is no signal. Deciding to remain in the relative safety and dry confines of the car I fall into a fitful doze. I imagine I can hear tearing and scratching sounds to the cars coachwork.

Dawn breaks early and the clouds scud away to the south, leaving behind a damp early morning chill. Walking around the car I discover the terrible scars etched deeply into its panels. Frighteningly large paw prints are all over the car; a witness to the events of the dark night.

Fortunately the car fires up and pressing the throttle I swiftly drive away from the wretched and pervaded place. Creeping in through the kitchen door, shedding my damp clothing I pad upstairs and luxuriate in a hot bubbly tub and recount my terror of the night before spent in the ancient mediaeval Forest of Dunwich.

But please don't have nightmares: it was just a rambler's nightmare.

Greg Walker

SUFFOLK AREA MEMBERSHIP FIGURES

1st April 2006

	Last Report	1st April 2006	Difference
BURY	369	364	-5
IPSWICH	605	605	-
NEWMARKET	166	164	-2
STOWMARKET	205	215	+10
SUDBURY	233	239	+6
WAVENEY	355	364	+9
ALDE VALLY	161	159	-2
STOUR GROUP	29	37	+8
GROUP 98	6	6	-
TOTALS	2129	2153	+24
NATIONAL MEMBERSHIP	139,515	139,459	-56

Clearly these figures are in the right direction and buck the national trend. Dick Leech says he finds them most encouraging we should all be very pleased

From the Editor

I hope you all like the new look newsletter with its colour pages. It's a little more difficult to organize but I think worth it. Next time will be easier!

Of course we need suitable pictures from you to fill the colour pages. The lovely front cover this time was from a photograph supplied by John Andrews, maybe next time it could be *your* photograph which makes the front cover, it would be nice if I had to several contributions to choose from. The rule for any photo you submit has to be a scene taken in our area *of* a footpath or *from* a footpath and the front cover photograph must be portrait orientation. Also of course photographs of your group enjoying their walks will be welcome.

I found Geoff Knights' contribution on walking abroad interesting and his remarks about German waymarking. This was interesting in view of John Andrews' article 'Just a Dream' in last summers' newsletter, with the photograph of a German waymarker. Has anyone else a story about walking abroad? Let me have your walking abroad contribution for the next edition.

Tim Cavell

Items for the Winter 2006 issue should be sent to the editor please by **31st December 2006**

Email to: cavell709@btinternet.com or post floppy disc or hard copy to:
Tim Cavell

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Tel: 01359 250263

And finally

Introducing your new committee:-

Chairman	- Will Sitwell
Secretary	- Pen Scriber
Treasurer	- D. Ficit
Footpath Secretaries	- Di Version & Dotty Line
Programme Secretary	- Mustapha Leader
Publicity Officer	- Bill Sticker
Social Secretary	- Joy Makin
Area Representative	- I. Batty, mus.B.
Work Party Officer	- Don Overall



Start of Newmarket Rambler's Lavenham walk
with their French visitors



French visitors with their host families
Enjoy the sunshine at Brent Eleigh Church