

Ramblers Association – Suffolk Area

Chairman's Report

Our Area AGM in February was fairly routine compared with the previous one. Two important positions were not filled as Phil Snelling, Area Secretary and Gordon Leverett, Area Footpaths Secretary had announced beforehand that they were not seeking re-election. Phil has kindly agreed to stay on until a successor is found. I have taken on the role of Area Footpaths Secretary with assistance from Nigel Meadows who has agreed to occupy the revived position of Area Rights of Way Adviser. Between us, we hope to keep things going until a permanent solution can be found. Since the AGM, Neil Mahler has also stood down as Countryside Officer. This is a position that previously went unfilled for several years. I would like to record our thanks to Phil, Gordon and Neil for the work they have put in.

I reported last time about the financial difficulties the Ramblers' are in. These were aired in General Council (the Ramblers' national AGM) and a motion tabled by members of Concerned Ramblers was defeated by just one vote. However, it does appear that the matters Concerned Ramblers highlighted have been recognized by the Board of Trustees and indeed, two of that group were elected onto the Board. One of them, Robert Peel, is Suffolk Area's new point of liaison, replacing Len Bannister who was not successful in his quest for re-election. We are grateful to Len particularly for coming to our Area Council meeting in March where he fielded some difficult questions from your group delegates.

I would again remind you that you can keep abreast of what is going on nationally through the volunteering section of the Ramblers' website. Also the Yahoo! Forum "Ramblers Net" is well worth following.

Locally, I am pleased to report that the boundaries of our Group Territories have now been confirmed. Previously there had been some uncertainty as to these. We have also been looking at the patches covered by our local footpaths secretaries to see if any adjustments need making.

I hope the rest of the year brings you lots of happy rambling.

Jim Richards – Area Chairman

Explanation of Group Territories, Postcode Allocations and Footpath Secretaries Patches.

I mentioned in my Chairman's piece that Area Council has now agreed what are the boundaries of our Groups' territories. Area Council thought an explanation of these, how members are allocated to groups and how they may transfer might be helpful.

Suffolk Area has eight Groups. They are Bury St Edmunds, Ipswich and District, Newmarket and District, Stowmarket and District, Sudbury and District, Waveney and District, Alde Valley and the Stour Walking Group. The Stour Walking Group is a group for walkers in their 20's and 30's and is not defined by a strict geographical territory. Each of the other groups has a geographical territory consisting of a number of civil parishes and these together make up a jig saw of the whole of the ceremonial County of Suffolk.

Unless they specify a particular group (or choose not to belong to one at all), all new members of the Ramblers are allocated by Central Office to a group. It is every member's prerogative to join or transfer to any group (in Suffolk or elsewhere) or not to belong to one.

Because our Central Office allocates members to groups by using post codes (it cannot be expected to know which civil parish or borough we live in as that is not always clear from our postal address), this does give rise to certain anomalies. Postcodes are a contrivance of Royal Mail and its predecessors and the component parts of them (areas, districts, sectors and units) do not seem to follow geographical features or local government boundaries. Some of these areas, districts, sectors and units may straddle more than one civil parish, district or even County. For example, I know that my own group, Alde Valley, is allocated members living in Holton and Wickham Market whereas those parishes belong to the Waveney & District and Ipswich & District groups respectively. So, if you live close to a territory boundary, you may find yourself assigned to the "wrong" group. Although this doesn't really matter if you are happy with the result, it is important that you know you have the option of changing if you wish.

To complicate the matter further, we in Suffolk Area organize our rights of way work between nine local footpaths secretaries whose patches do not always coincide with the group territories. Our most

westerly patch, by arrangement with Cambridgeshire Area, covers twelve parishes in East Cambs District.

In due course I will submit a description of each of our group territories for inclusion on the Suffolk Ramblers' website.

JIM RICHARDS – Chairmen Suffolk Area

It was also agreed at the last Area Meeting that members be reminded that they were at liberty to join or walk with a different group and details of all groups are on the Suffolk Area website. In fact Brian Milner who was a member of the Bury Group regularly walked with us at Newmarket and is now the Chairman of Newmarket Group: and very happy we are to have him.

ACCESS OFFICERS REPORT

Despite recent gloom about availability of funds, Natural England still intend to proceed soon with the National Coastal Trail. Work in Suffolk may start in 2011. At first a representative of Natural England will walk along a proposed route with the landowners.

On April 20th I attended a training session at Ramblers Head Office in London. Ramblers want local areas to produce their version of the Trail before Natural England start their walks along the route. Hopefully Suffolk Ramblers might map a proposed Trail in the next year or two – the Trail should be continuous and near the coast with sea views and it will continue round the estuaries up to the first bridge or all-year ferry. The meeting examined several stretches of coast as a training exercise; one stretch in Suffolk was Dunwich to Walberswick where Natural England propose that the Trail go inland following the existing path along the edge of the woods to the marshes then use the bank the River Blyth entrance as far as the pedestrian bridge. I think readers can envisage some stretches where the “trail” already exists but others where difficulties will be encountered. One interesting stretch of sea coast will be at Orfordness; how will Natural England reconcile their duty to make the coastal path with the opinions of the National

Trust and the dead-end nature of a route past the Lighthouse to the tip of the Ness?

I also attended another Suffolk Coastal Community Conference at Snape (March 26th) and a meeting of the Alde and Ore Partnership. Although the people attending these meetings exemplify the variety of leisure activities in our County most delegates seemed to think that views had been amply expressed and the time has come for action!

With regard to access land I recently visited Chippenhall Green near Cratfield where I was accosted by a local resident who insisted that the Green was neither a registered common nor access land (both incorrect). The Green is shown on maps as access land and is so by virtue of being registered; registered commons in Suffolk are listed on the SCC website where Chippenhall Green is No.29 out of over one hundred.

Richard Tyson

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RA General Council 2010

Notes and thoughts by Ralph Brighton one of two Suffolk Area Delegates

NB. I have tended not to repeat items covered by Anne's excellent report.

Saturday Discussion Groups

6 groups in one room - idea soon abandoned with 2 groups going elsewhere.

Unable to hear anyone any further than 6 feet away- not well organised!

CRM

The Senior Systems Archivist /Developer presided over discussion; I was not impressed; he was ineffectual as a speaker and could not even get his computer presentation illustrating the database to work! Came away after ¾ hr with no more confidence in system.

The old database had been maintained (and understood) by one person only.

Was out of date and many months spent trying to extract meaningful info from it. Software not at fault –fault was old database,'90% of system OK'

Cannot give Membership Secretaries information regarding those who pay by D/D for example blaming Data protection!! Ditto re e-mail address releases.

Typical reports run to 111 pages for Surrey (=8000 members)-even without addresses.

Asked “Would you use CRM if starting today?” –a guarded yes –no other system can cope with Gift Aid !

CRM functional but not delivering information needed by Membership Secretaries.

Main Conference

Tom Franklin Chief Executive (did not say much throughout whole GC)

An update was given on the progress of the current year's business plan.

Most importantly he reminded us of recent membership figures:-

Oct 09 123123

Jan 10 119165 !!

Apr 10 124063

He admitted that we were behind with new membership turn around but it is now getting better. Wants to develop direct debit membership (with discounts?)

“every day CRM still biggest issue but things are getting better, clearer”

“data is accurate, I have confidence in it (not 100%)”

Julia Bradbury, the well known TV outdoors presenter and walking enthusiast was elected President.

Website quotes:-

Tom Franklin "We are thrilled to be marking our 75th anniversary with such a well loved, vivacious President as figurehead."

Julia “My ambition with the Ramblers over the coming year is simple: get Britain on its feet. The country is stuffed with beautiful walks and a 130,000 mile footpath network I want everyone to get out there and enjoy it!”

Unfortunately Julia was unable to attend –sent apologies (filming in France!)

Motions

The most eagerly awaited motion, submitted by “Concerned Ramblers” re dismay over last year’s debacle, was, after considerable and occasionally heated, discussion, lost by 1 vote (59 for and 60 against). Board of trustees conceded that communication with ordinary members must improve.

Walking Environment Priorities

Discussion headed by Adrian Morris after the main debating session.

Most impressed: a good speaker, well versed using IT, very open to ideas, good communicator and young.

Recognises where our strengths are and in not encroaching into areas dealt best with by other groups(with whom we work,) e.g Living Streets re urban issues (interesting point came out re Access land: it is not apparently a statutory requirement that Access points are shown on OS maps)

After dinner

A presentation was made to Paddy Tipping, MP in last Parliament and Vice President of the Ramblers, standing down from the House of Commons in the General Election. Paddy has worked tirelessly to promote issues of concern to the Ramblers throughout his years in Parliament most notably during the passage of the Countryside and Rights of Way Bill. He thanked Council, and gave an entertaining and inspiring address.

Sunday

Motion 4 (submitted by CRs) called for the reinstatement of the Legal Panel - whilst recognising that legal action is a last resort.

The legal panel was disbanded some time ago, and Kate Ashbrook felt that legal action – requests for which have to come from Area – had in the past been delayed by the Panel so present position is better. She assured delegates legal work is and will continue to be priority.

Amended motion, Legal panel NOT to be reinstated.

Carried (for 71, against 66)

(Interesting statistic (or opinion) from Rodney Whittaker, chairman, 84000 RA members don't walk" i.e. over two-thirds.)

Motion 5

Access to woodland and waterways

“This General Council calls upon the Board of Trustees to start campaigning immediately for public access on foot, to the maximum extent achievable, through woodland and beside rivers, canals and other inland waters in England and Wales, subject to the exclusion of domestic areas.” **Carried-after slight amendment.**

Motion 6

Devolution, submitted by B o T

“ This General Council resolves that it is in the best interests of walkers in England, Scotland and Wales for the Ramblers to operate across the whole Of Great Britain as one organisation. However, it recognises that members in England, Scotland and Wales have the right, if they wish to move to separate sister organisations, to be able to do so it therefore requests the Board of Trustees to set up a working party, which includes representatives of all three countries, to review the options and develop detailed proposals, in consultation with Areas and Scottish and Welsh Councils and their Executive Committees, for discussion and endorsement at General Council 2011, with the aim of concluding the process by General Council 2012.

Carried by a large majority.

Motion 7

Governance (submitted by Concerned Ramblers)

Jonathan Kipling, Hon.Treasurer said – unwise to lose Charitable status in view of £1/2m gift aid, discounted business rates, gov't funding, destabilising effect on RA.

‘This General Council calls upon the Board of Trustees to seek an independent and low cost review of the Ramblers’ Association’s interpretation of the Charity Commission’s requirements with special reference to the powers of the General Council, the Board of Trustees, and to the Board’s accountability to the General Council, and to report the findings of the review to the General Council 2011’

After amendment, motion carried.

Motion 8

Membership

‘This General Council recognises the critical need to increase our membership and income in order to extend our core activity of increasing access to the countryside and protecting the rights-of-way and paths network throughout Britain. To this end it requests the Trustees urgently to investigate methods of significantly increasing the appeal of the Ramblers, thereby opening up the membership of the charity to a new, much broader, range of people and thus increasing our membership base, with a view to taking immediate actions where required. This approach supplements and does not replace existing methods of recruitment. It further requests that, if these actions require alterations to the Memorandum and Articles of Association, the Trustees produce specific recommendations for consideration at General Council in 2011. It is specifically requested that Trustees involve Ramblers Areas in this process and that considerations include but are not limited to:-

- New members from a much more diverse range of backgrounds and ages
- New classes of membership
- Special interest walking groups
- Affiliated groups
- Improving the service to existing members”

Carried by show of hands

Motion 9

Rights of Way (submitted by Concerned Ramblers)

‘This General Council believes that to enable the Ramblers to achieve an easy to use Rights of Way network throughout Britain, it will be necessary to carry out an across-the-board review of Rights of Way policy and other relevant factors that affect successful outcomes in Rights of Way work. It therefore calls upon the Board of Trustees to carry out such a review during the next year. This review will be expected to include, inter alia, the effectiveness of section 130A, alley gating and other problems affecting urban paths, unmaintained country roads, and lost ways and will include a survey of all local authority rights of way budgets over recent years including the present year and the percentage of each local authority’s easy to use paths.

In the light of the outcome of such a review the Board should allocate to Rights of way and access work appropriate expert staff and financial resources, to facilitate the achievement of a rights of way network where ALL rights of way are easy to use, and access to open access land is enlarged, and access to the coast is achieved, in order to ensure that the protection of rights of way and the improvement of access not only are, but are seen to be, core objectives of the Ramblers’

Carried

Having run out of debating time, 7 further motions were ‘remitted ‘ to The Board of Trustees. (who will discuss and deal with as they feel fit and report to next General Council)

ELECTION OF TRUSTEES

Robert Peel a Concerned Rambler , member of RA for 36 years, a Government Adviser, has steered legislation through Parliament, accounts analyst, has IT expertise, has funded Concerned Ramblers.

Tom Ellson, represents 20s and 30s groups, career in market and strategy consulting and degree in accountancy. Active member of Princes Trust.

Keith Wadd -second Concerned Rambler to be elected. Joined Ra in 1980s,
held many officer roles in Area; published many walking books.
(both Suffolk delegates voted for Tom Ellson, Robert Peel and Chris Bush)

Votes cast ;

Elected - Peel 74: Ellson 60: Wadd 59

Others:

Chris Bush (East Yorks and Derwent Area:a Concerned Rambler) 50,

Len Banister, Essex Area and formerly “our” Trustee 47,

Tom Fisher (Board of Trustee member) 47,

Salle Dare (Greater Manchester and High Peak Area) 46

Summary

Delegates did complain (including Anne!) that too many papers were issued during or just before sessions –giving little or no time to read, digest, comment on them e.g F/P casework, Q & A.

The debates on the motions were, as frequently happens, often dominated by the ‘old hands’ but Anne and I both took to the microphone and there was broad agreement between us when voting. Whilst the contested motion proposed by The Concerned Ramblers was narrowly defeated, two of their representatives were elected onto the Board of trustees. All delegates came together in the end in, agreeing that the RA must now look forward with renewed vigour.

Summarising whole GC, in just two words, a “score draw”

General Council 2010

Brief Report by Anne Hubert - Chibnell

Saturday started with a Good Ideas Discussions - Working Groups.

I attended the Finance Group officially titled '*Using Funds Effectively*'; it was pointed out that this was rather cheeky in view of the fact that it is not the Areas or Groups who were responsible for spending all the money! It was pleasantly run by Chris Hughes, Finance Director. They had not prepared figures for their expenses - no pie charts. Nor did they have comparative figures for Group expenses.

There were however a number of interesting points from the discussion :

1. Put copies of Area News brochures in Dr's. surgeries/libraries, waiting rooms, etc.
2. Publish more access and footpath news/updates in Area News brochures and Walk Magazine - particularly status reports on legal cases RA are pushing through and current & local access problems to keep our 'sleeping' members up to date.
3. Formal Area Council meetings are generally held quarterly as prescribed - some had tried 3 times p.a., but found this did not work people lost focus.
At Group level meetings were more informal, event driven and not necessarily minuted.
4. On the RA website - volunteers sector there is a well-signposted consultation site, where comments/suggestions are welcome. The question of a nominal fee for Area/Group pages on the RA website was aired. No popular reception.
5. Income Generation by Groups.
Generate income by publishing Group walks and selling these locally. Any income generated has to be accounted for to HQ under Charity legislation.
6. From 1st April OS maps available free online/can be downloaded.
Build up a library of maps available to Group members/Walk Leaders
Build up a library of walks organized by Group/Walk Leaders.
7. Some Groups had offered/advertised chargeable map-reading courses, which had proved very popular.

8. Area Treasurer Sounding Board to give feedback on Group expenditure - what different Groups do; there seemed to be a wide variety of practices with regard to expenses - some Groups even paid expenses to Walk Leaders to reconnoitre walks.
9. Although some Groups appear to do everything on the Internet, many felt we must offer members something for their annual fee - hardcopy Area News brochures and Programmes as well as on the website, as not every has or can afford IT. Some Groups were offering an opt-out facility on their website for hardcopy communication. Issue of walks programmes varied from 2-4 times p.a. One suggestion aired was rolling walks programme on website as Walks Leaders find it difficult to commit 6 months in advance.

Saturday Afternoon to Rest of Meeting

The main sessions opened with a hard-hitting review by the excellent Mr. Kipling, who elaborated on his report and did not mince words. His facit was 'Balance the books or go bust!' He issued a golden rule: 'Raise money first, spend it second'.

Funds had been exceeded by £1.3 million. There were unrestricted general funds amounting to £900K. There was a pension fund deficit of £875K. (The latter is nominal - accounting must be based on the assumption that all beneficiaries took entitlement at once and nobody died, which never actually happens.)

He felt RA needed to concentrate on members, money, influence and re-establishing firm foundations. He diagnosed the causes of the problems to have been high director turnover, scant business systems, over-dependency on legacy income, bad membership system - the debacle of the CRM system which is only now starting to work, an unstructured budgeting process, unclear priorities and the Board having been too unaware of economic environment and lacking the necessary cynicism, therefore not having insisted on preparation for a worst-case scenario.

The main point is now there is a balanced budget following last year's cuts. The aim this year is to become fit for purpose and achieve stability. Mr. Kipling will remain on RA Board as Honorary Treasurer.

He reported RA business model is now broadly on track and in balance at mid-term:

- Income £5.26 million - Expenditure £5.04 million - Surplus £183K
- legacies are up - £130K
- membership slightly up
- project funding on track
- campaign spending on track - legal funding £150K
- marketing on track.

His advice was: Watch national economics/ensuing financial challenges next year

Recruit more members

Raise more money

Manage pension's deficit

Move on.

Business Plan targets:

Updated reports of ongoing legal cases and rights of way strategy projects were provided. It was requested this be included in the Gen Council Info Pack next year.

Questions:

1. Pension Fund Deficit - The notional deficit was calculated by a pension's actuary. Pension's actuaries were also consulted when making the necessary investments. Technicalities and current investment problems were discussed.
2. Letter of 30th July 2009 - Brought deficits to light. It became apparent that authors had not understood accounts. Members admonished Management's reluctance to answer queries and correct matters, to reveal the developing state of affairs at the last General Council or announce the full situation in the subsequent Walk Magazine.

It was noted that the Festival of Winter Walks generated about 1000 new members each year.

The question of raising subscriptions every year/two years was raised. Was this realistic, did it represent value for money?

On the whole the general tone of the Council was highly concentrated and critical, discussions on motions were closely followed and although the motion of censure of the Management was defeated, this was by

only one vote; it was felt enough had been said and the vote had been so narrow, that Management would have to pay more attention to Members in future. Management had forgotten they were the executives to carry out the wishes of the Members. Members emphasized they wished priority to be placed on access work while not forgetting the other necessities of increasing members/funds without which it would be impossible to carry out such work.

The motion querying charity status was likewise defeated soundly. It is worth £500K p.a. and we are lucky to have it.

The Members elected Concerned Ramblers candidates Peel and Wadd onto 2 of the 3 trustee posts up for election onto the Board (in addition to the continued presence of Mr. Kipling as Hon Treasurer).

Anne Hubert – Chibnell

Bury St Edmunds Group Newsletter

I am writing this report on our return from a wind-swept North Norfolk Coast where we have just enjoyed a really marvellous Away Weekend. The weather didn't detract from our enjoyment and the 'near Force 10 gale?' off the sea made for some very exciting conditions and exhilarating walks! We had been able to arrange exclusive booking of a country house hotel to give our group the bonus of being a house-party and it was lovely getting to know each other better over meals and social fellowship. The local bus service was wonderful – and we are indebted to John Haseltine of Stowmarket Ramblers for his advice about contacting the Coasthopper bus people in advance to discuss our needs in relation to the size of our group. They could not have been more helpful and put on a special bus to accommodate us all! We also made use of the delightful North Norfolk Railway (Poppyline) steam train which made for a very memorable start to a walk!

Earlier on our current programme we had travelled back in time on the Mid-Norfolk Railway from Dereham to the start of a lovely walk from Kimberley Park station led by Trevor Arbon. It wasn't an area that we had walked in previously and so it was a happy coincidence that our

more recent Wymondham walk led by Richard and Shirley happened to dove-tail with it so nicely – a good example of unplanned ‘joined up walking!’

Somewhere else that many of us had not experienced was the *Malthouse Project* in Bury St Edmunds, which started life as a restoration scheme of an old maltings and is now a unique facility that provides an excellent café, heritage and training centre, community function rooms for hire, accommodation for local people with a general housing need and central offices for St Matthew Housing. We learned lots more about it over our ‘Full English’ on Chris Barker’s breakfast walk. The staff who are all volunteers or on job experience headed up by Simon looked after us all beautifully, and it’s good to know about such a superb local resource. Details available at www.themalthouseproject.co.uk

Bury Ramblers have also been ‘afoot in London!’ on a late spring sightseeing walk thanks to John Gateshill, a founding member of the group, and this new initiative which proved very popular looks set to become a regular event.

Another regular national event now is ‘Get Walking Day’ and this year we had booked Moreton Hall Community Centre as a base for a choice of Sunday afternoon walks and refreshments. We had a very encouraging take-up on what was the hottest day of the year thus far, with a good number of new members joining Ramblers – to whom a special welcome from us all.

Our thanks as always to all who put so much into Ramblers in so many different and often unsung ways, both at group and area level, to whom we are all indebted.

Rosie Perham Chairman Bury St Edmunds Group

Alde Valley Group News

Members will have noted that the current walks programme ends earlier than hitherto. The new programme for autumn and winter should be enclosed with this magazine. In future both items should be sent together saving postage and members time. As some group boundaries have been slightly revised one or two members may find they are now in a new area. Alde Valley now extends north of the Deben as far as Mid-Suffolk.

We have been able to welcome a number of holiday visitors recently who found details of our walks on the Ramblers website. Jim Richards has set up a website for the Alde Valley Group and it's hoped to develop the site in the near future. Meanwhile Ramblers Head Office has suggested that groups communicate with members by email alone. The Alde Valley Committee considered that email newsletters and programmes are not desirable or necessary at present.

As well as the walks programme our Footpath Group has revisited the area north-east of Framlingham where paths are now much improved. We erected and repaired waymarks in the area near Benhall Church and did some work in Earl Soham, Hacheston. Two members turned up to inspect Middleton Moor under six inches of snow where a few repairs are in prospect for the summer.

On April 29th Anne Hubert-Chibnall and I were pleased to guide two ladies from ITV (director and producer) from Walberswick to Dunwich. A programme "Walks with Titchmarsh" is envisaged and will probably be screened in the autumn. Alan Titchmarsh will walk with a "local celebrity" chatting as they walk!

Finally please note that the Alde Valley Group Annual General meeting will be held at the Quaker Meeting House, Leiston at 7.30p.m. on November 24th 2010 as passed at the last AGM.

Richard Tyson.

Newmarket Group Newsletter

As the new Chairman of Newmarket Ramblers this is my first contribution to the Area Newsletter – so here goes!

In January we had a very enjoyable Walk and Sausage Lunch at Chippenham when almost fifty members attended.

In April we held our Annual Dinner at the Rosery Hotel in Exning where we enjoyed good company and a tasty well-presented meal. Also in April our Quiz Team finished just outside the prizes in the Newmarket Town Twinning Quiz, nevertheless a good evening was had by all. We were disappointed to have to cancel our proposed trip to Scarborough due to lack of numbers.

Amongst our full programme of walks a couple readily spring to mind - Ralph led us from Shire Hall in Cambridge to the thought provoking U.S. War Cemetery at Maddingley and on to Grantchester where we had lunch in the orchard next to the Old Vicarage. No, there wasn't honey for tea, as the clock didn't stand at ten to three, but we did have Rupert Brooke's famous poem read to us. Then, still enjoying lovely weather, we completed our walk to Cambridge.

A contrasting walk took place at Snape when one of our members was taken ill. Brian, the leader, and the other walkers including some from other Rambler groups acted very effectively. The Emergency Services were called and a Paramedic Team arrived promptly followed by an ambulance. With great efficiency the unwell walker was checked over and transferred to Ipswich Hospital. He was kept in a few days and received first rate treatment. I was unable to be on that walk and it was pleasing, although probably not unexpected, to hear how all the Ramblers and the Emergency Services had acted so promptly and capably. Thank you to all concerned. It's good to report that our member who was taken ill is once again out and about and leading walks.

We are looking forward to 18 July when we will take a coachload of members to a ridgeway walk to Lincoln. There will be a 5 mile and a 10 mile walk, or just a visit to the city.

We are also hoping for a fine evening for our BBQ on 26 June.

Thanks to all our walk leaders and Footpath Secretary for their hard work.

Finally - Heard on a walk – (not necessarily a Newmarket RA event)

Walker to Leader: “How far is it to the pub?”

Leader: “About 2 miles”

Walker: “Oh! Back there somebody said it was only only a mile”

Leader: “Ah, but we’ve slowed down since then!”

J Brian Milner - Chairman Newmarket RA

Stowmarket Group

We have continued to offer a full programme of walks with our Sunday walks, as always, proving to be the most popular. We like to think there is something for everyone in our programme. Walk distances range from 3.5 miles, for those wanting a gentle stroll, to 12 miles for the fitter and more adventurous.

It is always nice to see our numbers swelled on occasions by Ramblers from other groups. Young or old, we all share the same common values and we have so much to learn from each other.

We were pleased to host the Ramblers’ Association Suffolk Area A.G.M. in February at Needham Market. After the A.G.M. we were able to show those who stayed behind the delights of walking in the Gipping Valley on a sunny February afternoon.

Our Group Holiday this year took place between the 11th to the 15th April in the Powis Shropshire Border area around Offa’s Dyke. The weather, which can be unpredictable at this time of the year, was very kind to us. It was off with the coats and jumpers. One of our members was even seen in his shorts. Our hotel proved to be very comfortable and good value, situated as it was in the very heart of an excellent walking area. As the new Group Chairman I was introduced to a Stowmarket Group tradition. You always get lost on at least one of the walks. It added to the fun and a group huddle soon had us back on course. We were never too late for dinner and the bar! Our thanks to Brenda and Roger who arranged everything for us.

Our A.G.M takes place on the 9th September this year. New members are always encouraged to attend and if anyone can spare just a little extra time you would always be welcome to join the committee and help with the organisation.

Roley Wilson - Chairman Stowmarket Group

Sudbury & District Group

Walk from Hendon Park to Abney Park Cemetery, Stoke Newington - Sections 11 and 12 of the London Capital Ring Path 6th June 2010

30 members set off at 10.30am from Hendon Park on a cloudy but humid day to walk the 11 miles to Stoke Newington.

After leaving Hendon Park we walked through a pleasant residential area until we reached the North Circular road. Fortunately, after 150m we entered Brent Park which runs alongside and we soon lost a lot of the noise from the road. We continued through various green areas until we reached Hampstead Garden Suburb. Next was a short walk through the suburb noting the various styles of housing and the many open green areas and mature trees.

Our first refreshment stop was in one of these areas and we able to have a drink and watch a cricket match - all very civilised. The walk continued through a residential part of East Finchley until we came to Cherry Tree Wood, which is named from the fragment of wood within it. A short walk followed until we arrived at our lunch stop, Highgate Wood, 28 hectares of ancient woodland probably dating from the last ice age which is owned and managed by the Corporation of London.

After lunch we continued through Highgate Wood and crossed the Muswell Hill Road and entered Queens Wood and for the next mile or so we had some steep inclines to contend with until we reached Archway Road. We soon turned off this road and made our way on to a disused railway track now called the Parkland Walk. This railway line once ran from Finsbury Park to High Barnet and Alexander Palace and was closed in 1970. It is now London's longest statutory Local Nature Reserve. We walked along a section of this track for about 2 miles passing the deserted platforms of the former Crouch End Station. This was a busy path with many local families out for a Sunday afternoon stroll.

After leaving the path we entered Finsbury Park where we had another refreshment stop. We continued through the park and after crossing a couple of busy roads we entered a gate which led us to the path alongside the New River. This is misnamed as it is neither new or a river – it is almost 400 years old and is an artificial watercourse which

brings water from Hertfordshire to Islington and owned by Thames Water.

We walked alongside the watercourse for about a mile or so until we arrived at Clissold Park, Stoke Newington where we again had a stop for teas/coffee/ toilets etc. A short walk took us along Stoke Newington Church Street where we saw many bistros, cafes and other eateries offering a wide variety of cuisines, a violin maker and other unusual shops. We then arrived at the end of the walk, Abney Park Cemetery which is now a nature reserve where over 300,000 graves have been laid since it opened in 1840. Many prominent people are buried here including William Booth, who founded the Salvation Army in 1865, whose grave we passed on our way through.

This was a pleasant well sign posted walk through parks, green areas and woods in the inner suburbs of London. After a short wait for our coach we left at 5pm for the journey home. After walking all day without rain we arrived in Sudbury at 6.30pm just in time to be caught in a thunderstorm.

David Taylor

Waveney Group News

During the period 1st. March to 30th. June inclusive; Waveney Ramblers have again had quite an eventful time. Fifty one walks-some short, some longer-were attended by an average of eight point two members on the longer walks [9 miles +] and twenty three point four members on the shorter walks [5-6 miles.] I confess that I have never walked with point two of a member or even point four of one. During my years at sea, I encountered several mermaids, but I missed the better half, but enough of this levity.

In addition two walking holidays further afield were organized, one in the North Pennines and one in Somersetshire, and both of these holidays were very enjoyable.

The Waveney Ramblers held their Annual Dinner at the Randolph Hotel Reydon, and our joint social secretaries also organized a "Pudding Walk" which like the dinner was a great success.

Two Side shows depicting Provence and Gurnsey were displayed by members, which proved to be a good social evening.

It is with great regret that Waveney may well be losing from our area our former programme secretary Peter Westmacott and former social secretary Glenys Westmacott. They are planning to move to Somerset. Over many years they have both been a great asset to the group. We will miss them but wish them all the very best.

Overall Waveney continues to be an enthusiastic and active group, and long may it remain so.

David Harmer [programme secretary.]

Tow-paths – on a holiday near you?

I've always thought of tow-paths as flat – understandably – and in any case I don't know of any in Suffolk. Neither are most of them shown as Rights of Way, though they certainly seem available to walk.

However, looking at an O.S. Map covering south-east of Birmingham, we were pleased to find several canals including one with a 'staircase' of locks. On the Stratford-on-Avon Canal at Lapworth one can see 15 or so in a short distance, together with associated waterway traffic. There is, in addition, a junction section linking to the Grand Union Canal, which is constructed on an altogether grander scale. It, too, has a staircase of 4 locks not far away.

To use a canal section on a circular walk, for me is an improvement on road walking, especially with the added entertainment of seeing narrow boats passing through locks. Canals are part of our industrial heritage and reach secluded parts of many large towns. They don't generate much noise, and there is often a 'Navigation' or a 'Weighbridge' to visit during or after the walk.

One thing did surprise me, to see a notice prohibiting horses, now that was a bit ironic.

Geoff Knight

"Talk as we Walk"

Outdoor Counselling

Do you think you would benefit from counselling
but don't like the idea of a formal setting?

Pat Clarke, who is known to Bury Ramblers through her health service background and Bury Fair links, offers outdoor counselling - usually in Nowton Park where there are seats which enable a degree of privacy for talking but are not remote: "A great, healthy way to air your fears, phobias, or other concerns."

Tel: 01449 736202

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pocottpat@yahoo.co.uk

www.talkaswewalk.co.uk

The Ramblers' Hymn

May we express retrospective acknowledgement and appreciation to Nigel Beeton, whose "Ramblers Hymn" was printed in our last Area News.

Nigel, who is Manager of Radiology Services at West Suffolk Hospital, and editor of St Mary's Parish Magazine, is married to Carol - who also has demanding responsibilities as Church Warden - and together they enjoy walking when those commitments allow, and "perhaps to join Ramblers one day." Meanwhile a series of footpath frustrations prompted Nigel to put pen to paper in his inimitable way – the full version giving last verse as well is available courtesy of Nigel via Bury Ramblers.

Rosie Perham – Bury St Edmunds Group

Stowmarket Group on their Group Holiday in Shropshire.
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Next Newsletter Copy Deadline

The deadline for receiving copy for the Spring edition of the Area Newsletter has been brought forward to the 30th November. This will be a permanent change to enable the Newsletter to tie in with the date of the Area AGM which in turn has been brought forward to the beginning of February to give time for motions discussed to be sent to General Council. As we have to give members two weeks notice of the AGM, the Newsletter will have to be with you by the middle of January and with Christmas intervening it will have to be put together during December.

Please send items for Spring Newsletter to the editor please by 30th November 2010

Email to – cavell709@btinternet.com

Or post hardcopy to:-

Tim Cavell, The Maltings, Low Street, Bardwell,
Bury St Edmunds. IP31 1AS

I am afraid there is no coloured centre page this edition as I did not receive enough pictures to make it up. Thank you to those who did send photographs.

Note for Your Diaries

The 2011 AGM is to be hosted by the Newmarket Group. It will be held on February 6th 2011 in Moulton Village Hall, Bridge Street, CB8 8SP. Moulton is a village to the east of Newmarket.

