

Ramblers Association Suffolk Area

Annual General Meeting – Saturday 5th February 2011
At 10am for 10.30am

To be hosted by *Newmarket Group* and held at

Moulton Village Hall

Bridge Street, Moulton, Newmarket. CB8 8SP

From the east leave the A14 at slip road for Newmarket & Kentford (B1506). Continue through Kentford Village to the second crossroads (Bell Inn on the right). Turn left onto B1085 and, in a little over a mile, arrive in Moulton. At village crossroads turn left into Bridge Street where the new Village Hall will, immediately, be seen on the right.

Grid reference TL696 644

Coffee and tea will be available from 10 am onwards prior to the commencement of the meeting at 10.30am

Following the meeting there will be a talk by **Rodney Whittaker** chairman of the trustees.

In the afternoon John Morris will lead a walk from the hall. If you are staying for the walk you are advised to bring a packed lunch.

RAMBLERS ASSOCIATION SUFFOLK AREA

Annual General Meeting - Saturday, 5th February 2011

To be held at

Moulton Village Hall

Bridge Street, Moulton, Cambs, CB8 8SP

Programme for the day

- | | |
|--------------|---|
| 10:00 | Assemble [Coffee and Tea available] |
| 10:30 | Annual General Meeting |
| 12:15 approx | Lunch. Bring packed lunch, coffee and tea available |
| 13:00 approx | Walk lead by Newmarket Group |

AGENDA

1. Welcome and apologies for absence
2. Minutes of Annual General Meeting held on 6th February 2010
3. Matters arising from the Minutes
4. Presentation and acceptance of the Annual Report
5. Presentation and acceptance of the Accounts for the previous year
6. Election of Chairman¹
7. Election of Officers

8. Election of Representatives of Affiliated Societies and Individual Members²

9. Appointment of General Council Delegates

10. Appointment of Independent Examiner

11. Consideration of motions for Area Council, notice of which shall have been given to the Secretary

12. Recommendations to Area Council or Groups and motions for next General Council

13. Any other business (time permitting)

Notes:

- ¹ Chairman willing to stand for re-election
- ² There is provision for one delegate to represent affiliated organisations and one for individual members. Both positions are vacant.
There are currently three affiliated societies to the Suffolk Area, namely Suffolk Rambling Group, Saxmundham Rambling Group and Ipswich Natural History Group.

Following the AGM:

Address by Rodney Whitaker, chairman of the Board of Trustees of the RA

Chairman's Report 2010

Here we are approaching AGM time again. I'm looking forward very much to welcoming our national chairman, Rodney Whittaker who will be our guest speaker at Moulton Village Hall in February.

The AGM is of course the time when we elect the Area officers . Like many organizations, we seem to be short on the ground for volunteers. I am currently wearing two hats (Chair and Area Footpaths Secretary) and that is not a satisfactory state of affairs. Subject to being re-elected, I will see out my customary three years as Chair. However, I will not be seeking re-election in 2012, but rather concentrate my efforts on rights of way issues.

You may recall that our very capable secretary, Phil Snelling did not seek re-election last year but subsequently agreed to be re-appointed by Area Council as no-one else had offered to take over. We hope that someone will come forward this time. Other important positions that remain unfilled are those of Countryside Officer and Media/Publicity secretary. I am sure there are members out there who would enjoy taking these positions on. I've been on Area Council now for about six years and have thoroughly enjoyed the discussions. As a first step, why not offer to represent your group as one of its delegates?

I am delighted that Andrew Woodin, Head of Countryside Access at Suffolk CC has agreed to contribute an article for the News. Andrew, who heads up the Rights of Way work at SCC, was our guest speaker at last year's AGM. You will see that Andrew's article encourages us to contribute to the divestment initiative under SCC's New Strategic Direction. Whatever one's political views are, it seems inevitable that services including rights of way will suffer. Although our Alde Valley Group still have a practical working party that has been going for many years, others seem to have fallen by the wayside for various reasons. Perhaps it is time for other groups to start or revive their working parties, particularly now that the Ramblers have put in place insurance cover. Details of this can be found on our national website. Seeing the results of a morning's work of clearing, waymarking or repairing stiles,

bridges or steps is very rewarding indeed. It is important that this work is done for pleasure though and not seen as any kind of compliance with some moral duty.

A pleasing piece of news is John Andrews' success with securing recorded public rights over a large chunk of the Icknield Way. This is noted later in this edition.

As you are all aware, the Ramblers have had to make quite drastic savings in the way the organization is run. One feature of this is the inevitable move towards "paperless communications". These economies have spread down to local level and in future, Area Council has decided to reduce the number of paper editions of the Area News to just one per year. It is proposed to publish the paper edition around Autumn time and to include the necessary papers for the following AGM. We hope to issue electronic bulletins at other times of the year and these will contain the more time-sensitive information.

Area News already can already be viewed on our website:

<http://www.suffolkramblers.org.uk/>

Meanwhile, we invite members to e mail us at:-

secretary@suffolkramblers.org.uk

if they will be happy to receive all future editions of the Area News electronically and save on production and distribution costs.

At group level, Sudbury and District Group have led the way with making their walks programme electronic only unless a paper copy is specially asked for,

I wish you lots of good rambling in 2011.

Jim Richards Area Chairman

RAMBLERS' ASSOCIATION SUFFOLK AREA

The Minutes of the Annual General Meeting

Saturday 6th February 2010 at 10.30am

at Needham Market Community Centre, Suffolk

hosted by Stowmarket and District Group

1. Welcome and Apologies for absence

Stowmarket Group Chairman, Roley Wilson welcomed 35 members and guest speaker Andrew Woodin (Suffolk CC Countryside Access Leader), to the 2010 Annual General Meeting, which was then chaired by Suffolk Area Chairman, Jim Richards.

Apologies for absence were received from Norman Hammond, Iain Taylor, Ingrid Kaye, Margaret Taylor, Margaret Tracey, Gordon Leverett, Diana Snelling, Gaye and Mike Hodges, Wilfred George, Norman Jennings, Geoff Pratt and John Beamish.

2. Minutes of the Annual Meeting held on Saturday 21st March 2009

Referring to the Annual Report, Chairman Jim Richards corrected note 2 which follows the agenda which stated incorrectly that Stour Walking Group is affiliated to the RA whereas in fact they are full members of the Suffolk Area. There are however currently three affiliated societies to the Suffolk Area, namely Suffolk Rambling Group, Saxmundham Rambling Group and Ipswich Natural History Group. The Chairman, Jim Richards, clarified that only RA members could vote at the AGM

Jim also requested the addition of two items to the agenda, item 8a, Appointment of representatives of individual members, and 8b, Appointment of delegates for General Council.

There being no other amendments raised, the minutes of the 2009 AGM were duly approved as a true record.

3. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

4. Presentation of the Annual Report

Chairman Jim Richards presented the Annual Report to members highlighting the Membership Report by Dick Leech, Access Report by Richard Tyson, and various articles by other contributors.

He also reported on the Kipling report into the financial difficulties of the RA and the motions for General Council formulated by the Concerned Ramblers Group

Jim advised the meeting that Area Secretary Philip Snelling and Area Footpaths Secretary Gordon Leverett were not standing for re-election and thanked them for their contributions to the Area Council and hoped other members would put themselves forward for election to these positions.

Geoff Pratt has received a certificate of achievement from the RA for his many years of voluntary work for the association.

Neil Mahler presented his Countryside report to the meeting, including his and Richard Tyson's membership of Alde & Ore Estuary Planning Partnership and his attendance at the Alde & Ore Futures community conference. Neil is also keeping a watching brief on National Grid's plans to upgrade their transmission lines between Ipswich and Twinsted which may result in more pylons which could adversely affect the countryside along the route.

Adoption of the Annual report was proposed by Ralph Brighton, seconded by John Haseltine and approved.

5. Presentation of the Accounts for the year ending 30th September 2009

Area Treasurer Geoff Knight highlighted matters of interest to members in the annual statement of account and referred to the on-going policy of reducing Area and Group reserves in line with the requirements for the RA's continuing charitable status.

Geoff explained the £1,200 Boxted bridge donation to SCC as part of a footpath diversion which had been approved by Area Council two years ago and the increased cost of AreaNews due to colour printing and larger content. However there are plans for possible electronic distribution of the Area News in the future which would save printing and postage costs. A copy of the accounts is appended to these minutes. Adoption of the accounts was proposed by Nigel Meadows (Alde Valley), seconded by Tim Cavell (Newmarket) and approved by the membership.

6. Election of Chairman

Area Secretary Philip Snelling congratulated Jim Richards on his chairmanship of the Area Council over the past two years and thanked him for offering himself for re-election and proposed that he continue for the coming year. There being no other nominations Jim was re-elected unanimously.

7. Election of Officers

There being no more than one nomination for each position on the Area Council, for the year 2010/11, the following were proposed by John Haseltine, seconded by Rosie Perham and duly elected

Treasurer	Geoff Knight
Countryside Officer	Neil Mahler
Membership Secretary	Dick Leech
Access Officer	Richard Tyson
Area News Editor	Tim Cavell
Area Website manager	Dave Hodgkinson

The following positions were not filled

Secretary [Post meeting note; Philip Snelling continued as acting Area Secretary]

Area Footpaths Secretary

Publicity and Media Contact

8. Election of Representatives of the Affiliated Societies

There were no nominations from affiliated societies Suffolk Rambling Group, Saxmundham Rambling Group or Ipswich Natural History Group to sit on the Area Council.

8a. Independent Members' Representative

There was no nomination for a representative on Area Council for independent members so the position remains vacant

8b. Appointment of General Council delegates

Ralph Brighton (Newmarket) and Ann Hubert-Chibnall (Alde Valley) kindly volunteered to represent the Area at General Council in April.

Both addressed the meeting on the draft motions of the Concerned Ramblers, the Kipling report, concerns over membership records, the administration and leadership of the Association, etc.

Their adoption as delegates was proposed by Neil Mahler (Alde Valley) and seconded by Dick Leech (Ipswich) and approved by the members.

9. Appointment of Independent Examiner

Geoff Knight stated that he hoped Mr John Cresswell would be willing to continue as independent examiner of the accounts to which no objection was raised.

10. Discussion and consideration of Motions

No motions had been proposed for consideration.

11. Recommendations to Area Council, local groups, or Motions for General Council

The motions for General Council proposed by the RA Concerned Group, notably the unreliability of membership numbers issued by Central Office and lack of financial control were discussed so that the delegates could convey the Area's views at General Council.

12. Any Other Business

1. Roger Wolfe advised that his second batch of railway walks based on stations on the Ipswich to Cambridge line were now available on line

2. In the absence of an elected Area Footpaths Secretary, Nigel Meadows volunteered to assist with covering the vacant Footpath secretary's position [Post meeting note; Jim Richards subsequently appointed Area Footpaths Secretary by Area Council]

Signed

James Richards
Chairman

Following the AGM guest speaker Andrew Woodin, Suffolk County Council Countryside Access Leader who gave an interesting and informative presentation on how the authority dealt with rights of way matters, coastal access, access land, budgetary constraints, etc. and expressed a wish to work with the RA to improve the ROW network.

AREA MEMBERSHIP REPORT

In line with the National figures the Suffolk Area membership has continued to decline during the year and now stands at 1907 against last years figure of 2134 down by 227 members.

The table below shows the figures for theeight groups in the Suffolk Area. The figures in brackets are for the previousyear.

Alde Valley	144 (155)	Bury	352 (379)
Ipswich	511 (581)	Newmarket	169 (180)
Stowmarket	186 (212)	Sudbury	210 (253)
Waveney	310(342)	Stour	19 (24)
Not allocated to any group		6	(8)

National Membership

The current figure is 121533 down 1083 on the previously reported figure.

Dick Leech

Area Membership Secretary

Ramblers Association - Suffolk Area			Draft	
Receipts & Payments Account			Balance Sheet as at 30/9/10	
	for year to 30/9/10		08-09	09-10
08-09	Income	09-10		
2800.00	Request / Grant from Head Office	3600.00		
	Donations	64.95	6890.97	Accumulated Fund
	[Reimbursement SCC] Angles Way	0.00	-3834.44	Surplus / deficit for year
36.79	Interest	2.74		
			3056.53	Balance at year end
2836.79	TOTAL	3667.69		2541.15
	Expenditure			Represented by:-
2000.00	Allocations to Groups	2520.00		
200.00	Special Grants	15.00	3056.53	Bank Balance (Unity Trust)
	Exec Committee:		0	Debtors & prepayments
45.52	Room Hire	54.26	3056.53	sub-total
246.10	Travel	223.48		less:
419.47	Officers	303.15	3056.53	TOTAL
	RCW expenses			2541.15
243.15	Area	46.70		
346.90	Local FS	396.42		Note: The sum of £517.80 was owing at end of year
603.72	Training / Publicity			for Newsletter costs
1'55.37	Area News	517.20		The effective balance is therefore £2023.35
1250.00	Other Donation - footbridge			
40.00	Other Donation / Subscription	40.00		Presented by Geoff Knight, Area Treasurer
'21.00	AGM	66.86	signed:	10/2010
6671.23	TOTAL	4183.07		Independently examined by John Cresswell,
-3834.44	surplus (deficit)	-515.38	signed:	Date:

Treasurer's Annual Report of the Suffolk Area of the Ramblers Association 2009 - 2010-11-24

Income was higher this year as Area asked for more from Head Office, being itself asked for more by Groups. This largely represents the limited ability of both Area and Groups to reduce further their reserves.

An increased expenditure of £2520 to Groups, to which reference has been made, was more than counterbalanced by lack of any significant donation by Area or Area-funded.

The absence for part of the year of an Area Footpath Secretary reduced costs, but Local Footpath Workers were evidently quite active.

Overall the annual deficit was very close to that planned. The Balance Sheet shows the Accumulated Fund now at a figure which does not permit of a deficit budget in 2010 – 2011.

Presented to Executive Committee by Geoff Knight

Agreed by Executive – 10th October 2010-11-24

Signed:-

ACCESS OFFICERS REPORT

Readers may have seen press reports about the proposed English Coastal Path. The legislation still stands and the Minister (Richard Benyon, M.P.) stated that he has a commitment to the Path and has not stopped the roll-out indefinitely but will look at resources available. Meanwhile Natural England is continuing coastal path work in the Weymouth area and also in the five pilot areas (e.g. Norfolk).

Possible sale of Forest Enterprise forests has also been mentioned; members will be aware that such land is dedicated for access and that the CROW Act uses the word “irrevocable” in connection with dedication. During the 1990s (pre-CROW) some forests were sold and public access lost (this was when I joined R.A!). I have written to Ramblers about my concern that access to forests such as Dunwich and Tunstall might be at risk.

At Wortham Common near Diss the Open Spaces Society opposed the making of a driveway on part of the Common; construction had started without permission. I am indebted to the Bury Group for routing one of their walks at Wortham where they found that offending construction seems have been removed.

Richard Tyson

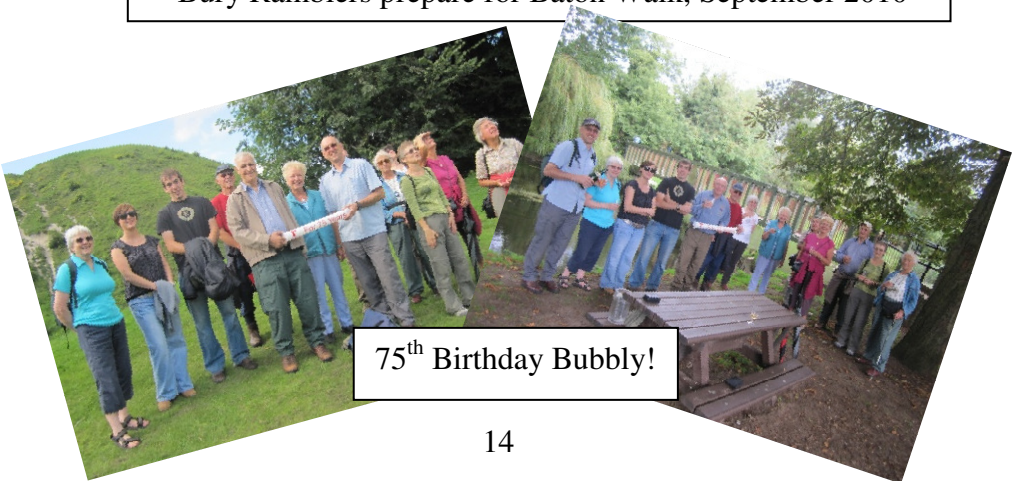
Bury St Edmunds Group Newsletter

We have just returned from an exhilarating walk in the snow, and it's only November! which also means it's time to get a report off to Tim again!

Bury Ramblers programme has continued to provide a wonderful variety of walks thanks to all concerned. This has been a special anniversary year for Ramblers of course and it was good to be a part of the symbolic Baton Walk which was launched in the south-west in January and 'arrived' in East Anglia early autumn. Dave Hodgkinson led our contribution to the event which very happily coincided with Brian Whitehand's 75th Birthday as well! so the bubbly at the end of the walk was a double celebration – for which many thanks again to Dave Chandler.



"Hello, hello, hello! Is this another mass trespass?!"
Bury Ramblers prepare for Baton Walk, September 2010



75th Birthday Bubbly!

Another recent highlight was our walk at Stradbroke hosted by Farmer Adrian and family at Battlesea Hall – which should perhaps be re-named Meerkat Manor?! (see picture in centre pages) – followed by tea on the farm, with our thanks again to all concerned.

We were also privileged as always to walk alongside members of the Millennium Farm Trust, this time in MFT member Kevin's home village of Horham, a delightful walk following a delicious soup lunch together – our thanks to Bernadette and team, and to Chris Barker for this special link.



In conclusion, this has been a year when we've been very pleased to see many more members from other groups walking with us and sharing ideas and experiences. Web-sites and walks finder programmes make it very easy to locate individually appropriate walks but cannot be a substitute for personal contact though, including through our paper programmes which continue to be valued by members – including those not able to actively participate in walking but who continue to support Ramblers through their subscription and their interest, and whose support is especially valued.

Rosie Perham Chairman Bury St Edmunds Group

Alde Valley Group News

We have continued our walks on alternate Sundays with one or two shorter walks during the week thanks to the help of old and new leaders. We welcome new leaders who can plan walks in our own or neighbouring areas. As some group boundaries have been 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 and includes places as far apart as Bawdsey, Brandeston and Walberswick

We have been able to welcome a number of holiday visitors recently who found details of our walks on the Ramblers website or our own Group site.

There has recently been a good deal of news about possible roles for “volunteers” – our Footpath Working Party Group has been meeting for several years thanks to the support of Suffolk CC. Recently we have surveyed and/or carried out light repairs in Rendham, Brandeston, Earl Soham, Benhall and Marlesford. Jim Richards has submitted some of our work as “path successes” for the Ramblers website; we average about five members on each visit. A visit was also made to a display of proposals for Bentwaters.

The Alde Valley Group Annual General meeting was held on November 24th 2010. One important topic discussed was the rising cost of distributing the county magazine and the walks programmes. In future the County magazine will appear annually in September with the Alde Valley walks programme for the following six months then another set of walks about April. To potentially save money Alde Valley members are to be given an option to receive programmes by email with the ability to print out copies.

Richard Tyson.

Newmarket Group Newsletter

Our trip to Lincoln in July was very successful and well organised. A coach load of members and friends had a most enjoyable day out. One group walked the 10 miles from Boothby Graffoe – there must be a connection with the comedian of the same name, or did he just find the village name very attractive? A second group set off from Waddington for a 5 mile venture, whilst a few people spent the day exploring Lincoln and its treasures. Afterwards we all joined up to take the coach home, gently tired but having had a very fulfilling day. Now where to go next?

I don't watch much television but I did switch on for a few minutes during the Open Golf at St Andrews. Unfortunately play was suspended because of bad weather. As I cast an eye over the almost autumnal scene who should the camera pick up but a couple of friends from Bury Ramblers. Good job they are married or tongues might have wagged!

I missed 4 or 5 weekends of walks due to being out of Suffolk or otherwise engaged. It brought home to me how much I enjoy walking with the Ramblers, the friendship, banter and lovely countryside. So it was good to get out on the St Edmund's Way and a week later to walk around Grafham Water - two very different but equally rewarding walks.

Soon it will be our Group's AGM – how to encourage more members to come along? Several ways have been tried. This time we might go for some Mini Olympics to get us in the mood for 2012. In the meantime I hope a good number of you will be able to attend the Area AGM to be held at Moulton Village Hall on Saturday 5 February 2011 and afterwards take part in an attractive walk. I look forward to meeting you there.

Finally some of us are gearing up for the Newmarket Twinning Quiz. Its keenly contested – but really we go for the fish and chip supper.

STOP PRESS – I'm pleased to report that we finished only 3 points behind the winners and the fish and chips were terrific.

Brian Milner – Chairman Newmarket Group

CATARAN TRAILfrom Waveney Group (See pictures in centre)

A party of twelve Waveney Ramblers enjoyed walking this 57 mile circular walk in the heart of Scotland between Sept 1st and 8th 2010. GULABIN LODGE [an independent hostel] in the Spittal of Glenshee was used as our base, and the owners-Darren and Teresa Morgan- could not have been more welcoming and helpful.

The walk was done in six stages.

Stage 1 - 8 miles

Gulabin Lodge to Forter using the alternative route, as opposed to the waymarked stage which consequently cut out much road walking and was much more attractive from a scenic aspect. That day's lunch stop on the shore of Loch Beanie being particularly delightful.

Stage 2 – 12.3 miles

Forter to Ardormie Farm This was the longest stretch, but was well within the capabilities of all participants. This stretch was again a very scenic stretch with much to admire and photograph.

Stage 3 - 12.25 miles

Ardormie Farm to Bridge of Cally involved the most amount of road walking for the whole of the circular walk, but none the less was again enjoyed by all members of the group.

Stage 4 - 7.25 miles

Bridge of Cally to Blairgowrie. This day proved to be a new experience for most of us, as in addition to walking, we were spectators at the Blairgowrie Highland Games. Blairgowrie itself proved to be a bigger town than anticipated, with many attractions.

Stage 5 - 8.5 miles

Bridge of Cally to Kirkmichael. This involved walking over a small stretch of ground walked the previous day, before veering off to follow the route of the River Ardle and the A924-not that either was sighted during the walking of this enjoyable; scenic; and photogenic stretch.

Stage 6 - 8.4 miles

Kirkmichael to Gulabin Lodge.

This day will probably be remembered for all the wrong reasons. A classic example of Sod's Law strikes again. IT RAINED.

However, that illustrates what I have always maintained. Scotland is a wonderful country, but I defy anybody to have more than a week there without experiencing rain of some sort.

Darren [owner of Gulabin Lodge] having dropped us off and picked us up from various "staging points" during our stay, dropped us at Kirkmichael. It was raining. This rain continued for the duration of our days walk. A "lunch hut"/"bothy" some 3 miles from Gulabin Lodge provided a welcome shelter/lunch stop, before soldiering one to the end of journey. Despite arriving in a somewhat wet and bedraggled state, an exultant sense of achievement pervaded the atmosphere. Darren and Teresa, with their customary hospitality helped in drying wet gear. All in all I think [and hope] that all enjoyed the Cateran Trail, which proved to be not too much of a trial.

David Harmer

Programme Secretary-Waveney Ramblers.

Ipswich & District Group News

Our AGM has now come and gone for this year and all the committee places are once again filled. Our guest speaker was Charlie Haylock, well known Suffolk character, author and raconteur. He had just launched his new CD on Radio Suffolk that afternoon, so we were treated to the first live edition. This included an interesting piece on the Suffolk dialect and how Suffolk people often get mistaken for Australians; the vocal sounds being very similar. There was also the odd mardle and sketch, which kept his audience amused.

Our walks have taken us through the purple heather on Dunwich Heath, through rain soaked Rendlesham Forest and the ploughed up muddy fields around Barking. In the main we have been lucky with the weather and covered a large percentage of the footpaths within a 25 mile radius

of Ipswich. With the coming austerity budgets we can foresee Suffolk County Council and parish councils cutting back on spending on rights of way maintenance. We therefore see ourselves, in common with other groups, perhaps having to undertake more footpath work in years to come.

There are new members turning up on many of our walks and we do our best to retain them as members but then we find that some members have dropped off the membership roll, for a variety of reasons, when it arrives from Central Office. This means that our numbers hover just above the 500 mark for the group. Luckily they do not all want to come on the same walk!

After reading about a few incidents with bulls, cattle and walkers in the national press, it was interesting to read in *Walk* magazine that *it is an offence, subject to important exceptions, for the occupier of a field crossed by a right of way to cause or allow a bull to be at large in it.* One of those exceptions we are told is *if bulls are less than 10 months old.* Are we to assume therefore, that walk leaders must be brave, walk up to the bull and demand to see its birth certificate. If you then work out that it is younger than 10 months this will not cost you anything but if it is older, then it may charge you!

Our walk leaders do us proud and continue to take us on a wide variety of walks in this beautiful countryside of Suffolk. On the social side we have enjoyed post-ramble soup lunches at Kirton and Shotley and cream teas on summer evening walks at Belstead and Akenham.

Gareth Evans

Stour Walking Group News

We celebrated our 10th anniversary this year and ten of us enjoyed a walk from Colne Engaine, followed by an excellent pub meal.

Our new committee has steered us through another busy and successful year of walks, short and long. These have ranged from half days walks to the longest being an 18 mile linear walk from Nowton park to Hundon. Our walks can be anywhere in Suffolk or north Essex and just to mention a few, we had a 7 mile walk around Ickworth, a river walk in Cambridge and have been further afield to Great Bentley in Essex. It is a bonus when our walks include a very welcome pub or tea shop stop. A few of us participated in the 25 mile sponsored Orwell walk on a hot June day and suffered a little the next day.

As a change, one Sunday in August, a few members had a lengthy bike ride. Now and again we like to have pub meals and often plan our next programme on these occasions.

Over the years many other friendships have developed through the walking group and we look forward to the 3rd wedding of group members in 2011.

We welcome new members and take on board fresh ideas for walks or social activities etc. Our web site is www.stourwalkinggroup.co.uk

Valerie Squires

Stowmarket Group News

It is very pleasing to report we are once again putting on a full and varied walk programme with hopefully something for everyone. The occasional Wednesday walk has proved popular with a small number of people whose numbers have been swelled by our friends from other groups. By the time you read this we will have had our popular Sherry and Mince Pie walk and the Christmas walk and lunch.

Some long standing members of our committee stood down at our A.G.M. this year and our thanks go out to them for all that they have done over the years for the Stowmarket Group. Membership remains healthy, including the numbers participating in our walks. As always we are keen to encourage those with perhaps just a little spare time to come and join us on our committee.

At our last Group meeting we were joined by Sharon Berry, a Public Rights of Way Officer with Mid Suffolk District Council, for a question and answer session on our thoughts and experiences of walking. It proved to be a very interesting and enjoyable event as we shared some of our individual thoughts and feelings about walking in the countryside. One thing was clear, as Ramblers, we all share a passion for walking and a passion for ensuring that it is freely available without let or hindrance for all.

Roley Wilson
Group Chairman

Sudbury & District Group News

Sudbury Ramblers organised 46 walks this year, of these 23 were on a Sunday and 19 on a Wednesday. The majority of our walks were in the Suffolk area – 32, but we have ventured into Essex for 11 of these walks and one into Norfolk. In addition we also had two Wednesday evening walks followed by a pub suppers, which as always are well attended. These rambles, totalling some 248 miles, were organised and led by 18 of our fellow members (the leaders considerably more with the two or three recce walks in advance, our many thanks go to them).

Two walks were cancelled, one due to snow/ice and the other to heavy rain. The average attendance for the Sunday walks was 18 (20 last year) and on the Wednesday walks 19(18 last year).

In September 33 members set off by coach to Norfolk where we had two walks, both arranged by Lesley Pilbrow. The longer walk, led by Lesley, was 10 miles from Hunstanton to Sandringham and the shorter walk, led by David Taylor, was 8 miles from Heacham to Sandringham. Those on the shorter walk started off by having tea, coffee, cakes and

bacon butties at the cafe on Heacham Beach – their leader the priorities right! whilst the remainder were transported further afield to their starting point.

Both walks then gave us long stretches of sea front walking with both groups having their lunch stops at the RSPB bird reserve near Snettisham. The route then took us inland to Dersingham and through Dersingham Wood to the car park at Sandringham where groups met up, as usual, in the tea rooms and to pick up the coach for the return journey home.

This year we were all saddened by the deaths in March 2010 of Lucy Hazelden, a regular member on our walks, and in April 2010 of Ingrid Kay. Ingrid was the partner of Iain Taylor our Membership Secretary and had led four or five walks every year for the past ten years. She was also the Group's Secretary for six years. Both will be missed.

Alan Worsley Chairman

Report from Andrew Woodin of Suffolk County Council

First I'd like to thank Jim Richards for giving me some space in your newsletter to say something about the latest developments at Suffolk County Council and how they might affect access to the countryside. Some of you may have heard me speaking at your AGM in February, when I spoke about SCC's New Strategic Direction. Since February the council's plans have taken more shape, culminating in the latest milestone in September when the County Council agreed SCC's future role will be an enabling one, transforming public services through collaboration and strengthening communities whilst reducing costs by 30%.

Under the new model, SCC will "divest' services, reduce its size, cost and bureaucracy and build community capacity to enable Suffolk citizens to take greater control of their lives". This is how SCC will meet the expected reductions in government funding of at least £110m over the next four years, and the immediate task is to find £40m of reductions from next year's budget.

Under the divestment model, services will be delivered in a variety of ways which enable and encourage local people to take more control of the services they need and enjoy, and do so in a cost effective way. SCC will provide fewer services directly, with many services being delivered by different organisations – including the voluntary sector, private sector and community groups.

What does this mean for access to the countryside? Options for managing the council's countryside recreation sites, eg country parks, are under consideration, and this may affect the level of public access enjoyed on them. The Ramblers will of course want to express their views on this and engage in any consultation process.

Public rights of way and open access land are being addressed as part of a review of the council's transport and highway services. Again at the time of writing, the review has only just started and it is too early to say what the effect will be. But the principles of divestment as outlined above will still apply.

None of this is new in rights of way naturally, and highway authorities all over the country have for many years had schemes involving parishes and groups delivering aspects of maintenance and improvement. This is a model SCC can learn from, but we are now in a very different financial context, with much less money to spend. Classically, highway authorities have invested heavily in schemes to involve groups in managing local rights of way, often with financial support from Natural England's predecessors. This will not happen in the future and there will need to be a much leaner process for divestment. The trick for SCC will be to balance its statutory duties in what is a complex and sometimes contentious service, while divesting more control to local groups and volunteers. Those groups will need to have the means and competence to deliver an acceptable level of service, and SCC will need to consider how to fill the gaps where there are no groups stepping forward.

Jim and I attended an event at Endeavour House (SCC's offices in Ipswich) on 23rd November, when Andrea Hill, our chief exec, and Jeremy Pembroke, the council's leader, hosted a meeting of over 300 people representing Suffolk community groups. Some were from parish and town councils, others from charities like the Ramblers. A lively Q&A session followed an explanation of the financial pressures facing

the council, and what divestment means. Questions from the floor covered: is there enough capacity and funding in local communities to deliver services; how do you ensure equal access to services and accountability and how will the county council meet its statutory duties, with the example given of cutting highways. These, and other concerns, are what SCC will address in developing its New Strategic Direction, and the point was made that it is not a one-size-fits-all solution and different parts of the county may see services delivered in different ways. Part of the solution will be about how the council works with community groups to build their own capacity.

With this information, and what you can read elsewhere, the Suffolk Rambler's challenge will be to think about how you fit into the new environment and what you can do to help maintain rights of way, and how you can influence the county council to ensure you can continue to enjoy the public access your organisation has fought so hard for in earlier times. Rights of way and open access land still provide a very cost effective, healthy and sustainable means of enjoying Suffolk and we will all want to try and keep it that way.

As a clearer picture evolves I look forward to working with your group to ensure there is still a viable path network in the county.

Andrew Woodin

Countryside Access Leader

Economy, Skills and Environment, Highway Network Improvement

Endeavour House, Russell Road, Ipswich, IP1 2BX.

01473 264753

ICKNIELD WAY SUCCESS

In November, John Andrews, our former Area Footpaths Secretary and legendary battler for the official recognition of rights of way, achieved another tremendous victory for the Ramblers.

About 35 years ago, having noticed a large black hole in the Suffolk Definitive Map, where the three large Breckland parishes of Elveden, Euston and Barnham appeared to have not a single right of way between them, John set about discovering why this was.

The answer that quickly became obvious was that virtually the whole area - and much of the land in the surrounding parishes which were scarcely better served, was the property of two wealthy and influential men : the Earl of Iveagh (family name Guinness!) and the Duke of Grafton. Searches of important 18th and 19th century documents soon revealed powerful evidence of a network of historic public routes criss-crossing the area in former times, many of those tracks still in use by the occupants of those estates and their workers, but zealously guarded against 'intruders'.

An unsurprising subsequent discovery was that, such was still the feudal stranglehold of the Estate owners, that great care had been taken to prevent local people from claiming that their villages had any rights of way when the County Council came calling in the early 1950s as it set about the first investigation under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act to record rights of way.

When John presented the Estate representatives with the documentary evidence, he was in effect told to go away and do his worst; they would fight him all the way and their lawyers would make sure that his efforts would come to nothing. The situation is now dramatically different because of the addition of a significant number of historic 'byways' to the map of the area following a succession of public inquiries during the 1990s.

Probably the most important of these routes was the 7-mile, still unmetalled, length of the ancient Icknield Way between the River Lark at Lackford and the Norfolk boundary on the outskirts of Thetford. In 1991-1993 the majority of this route was added to the Definitive Map after local public inquiries, but an inspector refused to confirm the order for a 500 metre length in the centre of the route which had been destroyed in the creation of a large arable field.

After a long period spent in fighting the refusal of Suffolk CC to make a further order based on new evidence and in appealing against that rejection, a new order was published in June 2008. Finally, nearly 2 ½ years later and following a lengthy 2-stage public inquiry, the order has been confirmed.

One key aspect of the inquiry was determining the width of this long-lost section of the Way. The inspector has concluded that the width is still as shown on early large-scale OS maps. Consequently, across a tract of more or less featureless arable land the landowner will now be faced with the task of reinstating a Byway Open to All Traffic which has a width as great as 43 metres in places.

Our congratulations and continuing grateful thanks go to John who, whilst now living in Scotland, is still "finishing off" some of the great work he has done for us. Most of you will remember that John was presented with an Honorary Life Membership certificate in 2007 in recognition of his long standing campaigning for paths, especially in Suffolk.

JR

Railway Walk with Roger Wolfe – Roger has asked us to publicise this anniversary walk.

To: Phil Snelling

Sent: Sunday, December 05, 2010 7:56 PM

Subject: *Ramblers' 75th Anniversary Book*

Hello Phil

I've not seen a copy of the above yet, but I'm told that one of the 75 walks featured will be Elmswell to Thurston, which I did for the Mid Anglia Rail Passengers Assoc website www.marpa.org.com (Walk no 4 in the series of 12 linking Ipswich to Stowmarket, Bury, Newmarket, Cambridge, Ely and intermediate stations.)

I have arranged to do the walk on Sat 26 February and if any RA members want to join me they will be very welcome, although I expect it will too late now to include in any of the group programmes or Area newsletter.

The walk is 7.75 miles and will start from Elmswell station at about 9.45 just after the arrival of the 9.19 from Ipswich (on which I intend to travel) and the 9.23 from Bury, etc. More info from me if needed.

If you could forward this to RA groups for info (and my apologies if it conflicts with anything they may have planned for that date) I should be most grateful.

Thanks

Roger Wolfe

I thought this email and the area membership figures on the following pages would be of interest. The membership figures are in order of recruitment success and it can be seen that Suffolk is doing extremely well.

Dear Phil

As you know, one of the Ramblers main priorities for this year is to increase our membership, after several years of decline. With more members, we will have more resources for our activities, more potential volunteers, and more impact with local authorities and government.

We are two months into the current financial year, and I thought it might be helpful to share with you, as Area Secretary for Suffolk, how we are doing on this priority. Overall paid-up membership on 1st December stood at 120,479. This is down by 1,019 since 1st October. Since October, 87% of existing members have renewed their membership when due (above our target of 85%), but we have recruited only 1,605 new members (below our target of 3,000). In Suffolk Area, your membership on 1st December stood at **1910**. This is a difference of **-7** since 1st October.

With walking more popular than ever in this country, it is possible for the Ramblers to begin to grow again. But it will require all parts of the Ramblers to be focused on this. If your Area hasn't done so already, could you make sure that 'membership growth' is regularly discussed at meetings, and with your Groups too. Over the next few months, we will be developing various initiatives to help increase membership. I would also like Areas to experiment with ideas, and to let us know what works – so that we can tell other Areas too.

If you have any comments on membership growth, please don't hesitate to contact me.

Best wishes

Tom Franklin

RA Chief Executive

Area	1stOct	1stDec	Change
Oxfordshire	2270	2295	25
Lake District	1811	1825	14
Greater Gwent	882	893	11
Lincolnshire	2019	2030	11
Highland & Islands	306	316	10
Shropshire	1292	1301	9
South West Scotland	428	436	8
Herefordshire	638	642	4
Mid Lancashire	1540	1543	3
Ceredigion	389	390	1
Clydesdale to Solway	525	524	-1
Bedfordshire	955	953	-2
Pembrokeshire	173	171	-2
Somerset	2056	2054	-2
Renfrewshire, Cowal & Bute	425	422	-3
Gloucestershire	1810	1804	-6
Suffolk	1917	1910	-7
Merseyside and West Cheshire	2614	2604	-10
Cambridgeshire & Peterborough	1591	1580	-11
East Yorkshire & Derwent	1885	1874	-11
Essex	5616	5605	-11
North East Lancashire	974	963	-11
Norfolk	2039	2026	-13
Glamorgan	2317	2303	-14
Powys	329	315	-14
Worcestershire	1300	1286	-14
Grampian	467	452	-15
Isle of Wight	593	578	-15
North Strathclyde	1327	1312	-15
Avon	2238	2222	-16
Leicestershire & Rutland	1790	1774	-16

South & East Cheshire	1279	1263	-16
Lothian & Borders	1851	1834	-17
Wiltshire & Swindon	1400	1382	-18
Carmarthenshire	579	560	-19
Cornwall	1116	1097	-19
North Yorks & South Durham	1182	1163	-19
Hertfordshire & North Middlesex	3475	3455	-20
Forth Valley, Fife & Tayside	1484	1463	-21
Buckinghamshire, Milton Keynes and West Middlesex	3725	3702	-23
Greater Manchester & High Peak	3780	3756	-24
North and Mid Cheshire	1434	1410	-24
Nottinghamshire	2490	2466	-24
Northumbria	2537	2512	-25
Derbyshire	1549	1523	-26
Northamptonshire	1246	1219	-27
Devon	2807	2777	-30
Dorset	1968	1935	-33
Warwickshire	3435	3401	-34
North Wales	1713	1678	-35
South Yorks & N.E.Derbyshire	2708	2673	-35
Inner London	4487	4451	-36
Berkshire	2669	2631	-38
Staffordshire	2872	2834	-38
Kent	4694	4654	-40
Hampshire	4929	4886	-43
West Riding	3981	3937	-44
Sussex	3776	3714	-62
Surrey	7448	7340	-108

Area Footpaths Secretary's Report for AGM 2011

As noted under the Chairman's report, following the non-election of an Area Footpaths Secretary at last year's AGM, I took on this role with the assistance of Nigel Meadows as Area Rights of Way Adviser and we have agreed a split of the various tasks involved.

A long overdue meeting of the Area Footpaths Committee was held in June. We agreed some changes in the patches covered by the local footpaths secretaries. These were to bring the patches more in-line with group territories. There remain instances where one group's territory is covered by more than one lfps and others where an lfps patch covers parts of the territories of more than one group but to make further changes would probably cause more problems than it would resolve.

Apart from the Icknield Way success, John Andrews our former Area FPS has some 21 claims for modification of the Definitive Map still undetermined by SCC. He continues to pursue these from Scotland. Thank you John.

Concerning other ongoing issues, we were invited to Bentwaters Park (former airfield at Rendlesham) for a "pre-consultation event" hosted by the landowners. Their revised proposals were largely disappointing but no more so than we expected.

The long standing matter of the proposed extinguishment of Stansfield Footpath 7 is due to be the subject of a Public Inquiry at the end of March. Central Office have been working on this and our evidence will be in the form of written representations. This is another matter in which John has been heavily involved over many years.

What seems to be a serious obstruction has been reported on Framsdon Footpath 6 at Potash Farm (TM199613) in the form of large electronic gates that block the whole of the route and are also in breach of planning control. The County and District Councils each seem to want to leave it to the other to instigate enforcement action so we have

sought Central Office guidance as to whether the service of a notice on SCC under section 130 of the Highways Act 1980 is the way forward.

Another problem regarding gates to which we have had to investigate is on National Trust land at Ickworth.

Thanks go to our nine local footpaths secretaries for all their hard work in helping to protect the rights of way network for the benefit of all walkers. The other eight are Brian Bagnall, Dave Chandler, Alan Corden, Maggie Goffin, Geoff Gardiner, Norman Hammond, Margaret King and Bob Boardman.

Jim Richards – (Wearing his other hat)

Editors Notes.

You will have read in Jim's Chairman's Report that the newsletter is going to be published once a year from now on, starting in September next year. This is a cost saving measure: I am afraid Suffolk Area Ramblers are not immune.

The deadline will be 30th August so could you please send your reports and photographs to me by that date.

Email to:- cavell709@btinternet.com

Or post hardcopy to:-

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