



Ramblers Association Suffolk Area Autumn 2012

Newsletter & Annual Report



Issue 39

Front Cover

Bardwell Windmill - which can be seen from the footpath which runs through Bardwell.

The cap and sails were blown down in the gales of 1987. The sails have been re-built by volunteer labour after the discovery of a set of drawings which were produced by Geoffry Wheeler whose widow Enid still lives at the Mill. Estimates from professional millwrights made the cost prohibitive. The second pair of sail were fitted earlier this summer, a lot of work has also been done to the internal machinery so it is now a working mill.

Thank you everyone for your contributions. The deadline for the next edition will be the 31st August 2013.

Please send your contributions to - cavell709@btinternet.com

or

The Maltings,
Low Street
Bardwell

Bury St Edmunds. IP31 1AS

Ramblers Association

Suffolk Area

Annual General Meeting

Saturday 9th February 2013

at 10am for 10.30am

To be hosted by Bury Ramblers at:

Southgate Community Centre

Bury St Edmunds IP33 2PJ

Adjacent to the "Hardwick Shopping Centre"

– at opposite end from the Macebearer Pub

Grid ref TL859628

Travelling via A14 Westbound:

Take 1st exit for Bury St Edmunds East at junction 44 (also signed Sudbury) Take 1st exit at roundabout then* 2nd exit at subsequent three roundabouts, the last of which takes you onto Wilks Road which then bears left to become Hardwick Lane. Take 1st left into Home Farm Lane alongside Macebearer Pub, then 2nd left into Heron Road; bear left at the bottom of Heron Road, and the car park for Southgate Community Centre will be on your right.

Travelling via A14 Eastbound: take 3rd exit for Bury St Edmunds East at junction 44 (also signed Sudbury) then right hand lane to take 3rd exit at roundabout. Then as above.

Coffee or tea available from 10am prior to start of AGM at 10.30

Soup available at lunch-time and coffee or tea

Bring packed lunch if required

Fish and chip shop next door!

Afternoon social walk to be followed by refreshments on our return.

Rambler Association - Suffolk Area

AGM Saturday 9th February 2013

Agenda

1. Welcome and apologies for absence
2. Minutes of A G M held on 4th February 2012
3. Matters arising from the minutes
4. Presentation and acceptance of Annual Report
5. Presentation and acceptance of the accounts for the previous year
6. Election of Chairman
7. Election of Officers
8. Election of Representatives of Affiliated Societies and Individual Members¹
9. Appointment of General Council Delegates
10. Appointment of Independent Examiner
11. Consideration of motions for Area Council, notice of which should 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)

¹There 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 there will be a talk by Justin Bend. Justin works for the national office on the Ramblers Routes Project.

He will explain this exciting new project to our members and no doubt be available to answer any questions we may have.

RAMBLERS' ASSOCIATION- SUFFOLK AREA

The Minutes of the Annual General Meeting

Saturday 4th February 2012 at 10.30am

at Sizewell Sports and Social Club

King George's Avenue, Leiston, Suffolk, IP16 4JX

hosted by Alde Valley Group

1. Welcome and Apologies for absence

Alde Valley Group Chairman Richard Tyson welcomed 28 members, including guest speaker Owen Plunkett (RA Board of Trustees), to the 2012 Annual General Meeting of the Suffolk Area of the Ramblers' Association, which was then chaired by Area Chairman, Jim Richards.

Jim Richards welcomed and introduced the guest speaker, Ramblers' Board of Trustees member Owen Plunkett, thanked Alde Valley Group for hosting the AGM and Pauline Nettleingham who would be leading the afternoon walk. Jim would lead a shorter version of the walk himself.

Apologies for absence were received from Ralph Brighton and David Taylor.

2. Minutes of the Annual Meeting held on Saturday 5th February 2011

Acceptance of the minutes of the 2011 AGM was proposed by Iain Taylor (Sudbury), seconded by Rosie Perham (Bury St Edmunds) and duly approved as a true record.

3. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

4. Presentation of the Annual Report

The Area officers gave updates of the reports that had appeared with the agenda in Area News the previous September.

4.1 Chairman's update is appended (annexure 1) During this item the Chairman invited Iain Taylor of Sudbury Group to receive from Owen Plunkett the Ramblers' Good Service Certificate in recognition of more than 30 years' service to the Ramblers.

Phil Snelling, on behalf of the all members of the Suffolk Area, thanked Jim for his chairmanship over the past four years, and noted that he would be continuing in his other role as Area Footpaths Secretary.

4.2 Area Rights of Way Advisor Nigel Meadows presented his report. (annexure 2)

4.3 Area Footpath Secretary Jim Richards presented his report. (annexure 3)

4.4 Area Membership Secretary Ralph Brighton had submitted some figures which Jim presented in his absence. (annexure 4)

4.5 Area Access Officer Richard Tyson commented on the protest rally against forest sell-off last autumn which was well attended by diverse user groups. He advised that the National Panel which is re-considering the possibility of forest sales is visiting Suffolk in March. And the ten year review of access land is coming up this year.

5. Presentation of the Accounts for the year ending 30th September 2011

The accounts were not available at the meeting but Area Treasurer Geoff Knight summarised the general position which was financially sound. The accounts will be posted on the Area website and Geoff volunteered to email a copy to anyone requiring them.

Geoff confirmed that he would be available to assist the new treasurer to settle in to the role.

6. Election of Chairman

There was only one nomination for the position of Area Chairman, the current Stowmarket Group chairman Roley Wilson. Roley was proposed by Iain Taylor (Sudbury) and seconded by Wilfrid George (Alde Valley) and duly elected.

Roley took over the Chair and introduced himself to the membership, and set out his aims as chairman to get as many members as possible involved in the various committees and activities of the Suffolk Ramblers, with a view to bringing in new people and ideas and avoiding the problems of enforced long periods in office. He hoped that members would give serious consideration to filling the vacancies of Area Secretary and Treasurer , for which there were as yet no nominations.

Suggestions from the floor included seeking to fill the vacancies from outside the membership, advertising the vacancies in the Area News with brief job descriptions, and advertising vacancies in walks programmes.

7. Election of Officers

The chairman informed the meeting that the current office holders for positions other than secretary and treasurer were willing to continue in their roles but he did need volunteers to come forward to fill the vital roles of Treasurer and Secretary. To the great relief of all present David Holmes (Alde Valley) kindly volunteered to take over as Area Treasurer and was proposed by Richard Tyson (Alde Valley), seconded by Ann Hubert-Chibnall (Alde Valley) and duly elected.

However no volunteer came forward for Area Secretary and it was left for members to try and find a group member willing to take on the position.

There being no more than one nomination for each of the other positions on the Area Council for the year 2012/13, they were filled by the incumbents by block election as proposed by Geoff Knight (Ipswich) , seconded by Ann Hubert-Chibnall.

The Area Council Offices were therefore elected as follows;

Chairman	Roley Wilson
Secretary	Vacant
Treasurer	David Holmes
Membership Secretary	Ralph Brighton
Footpath Secretary	Jim Richards
Rights of Way Adviser	Nigel Meadows
Access Officer	Richard Tyson
Area News Editor	Tim Cavell
Area Website manager	Dave Hodgkinson

The following positions also remain vacant

Countryside Officer

Publicity and Media Contact

Phil Snelling kindly agreed to finish taking the minutes of the meeting.

8. Election of Representatives of Affiliated Societies and Independent Members

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

9. General Council delegates

Richard Tyson (Alde Valley) and Roley Wilson (Stowmarket) volunteered to represent the Area at General Council at Leicester in April.

10. Appointment of Independent Examiner

Geoff Knight confirmed that he would be willing to take over as independent examiner of the accounts, to which no objection was raised.

11. Consideration of Motions [for Area Council] (the words in square brackets appeared in error on the agenda)

No motions had been proposed for consideration.

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

No notice of any recommendations or motions had been proposed for consideration.

13. Any Other Business

No matters raised.

Following the formal business, meeting Wilfrid George (Alde Valley) treated the meeting to a poem of his own composition on the subject of Rights of Way.

There was then an interesting and informative presentation by our guest speaker Owen Plunkett, a member of the Board of Trustees of the RA, covering a wide range of issues affecting the RA including the Kipling Report on RA finances, falling membership and improving the RA's image with the public.

At the conclusion of Owen's talk a vote of thanks was proposed by Ann Hubert-Chibnall.

SignedDate

Roley Wilson - Chairman

Chairman's Report 2012

The 2012 A.G.M. saw some changes to Council officers. Jim Richards stood down as chair and I took over his position. We did not lose all his experience and expertise however as he remains a Council Member in his role as Footpath Secretary. As will be seen from the minutes Phil Sneling stood down as Secretary and Geoff Knight as Treasurer. We thank them for their valuable contribution over many years. We have welcomed David Holmes as our new Treasurer and he has quickly slipped into this role. The Council always welcomes new members and just a reminder to all Groups, you are eligible to send two of your members to Council meetings which are now held three times a year.

Richard Tyson and I attended the General Council A.G.M. held at Leicester University in April. Of particular note were two resolutions passed concerning Member Services.

The first put forward as an emergency motion expressed dissatisfaction with the way that HF Holidays had replaced RWH as the Ramblers preferred provider. The terms appeared to have excluded the promotion of RWH by Groups who had previously had strong links with them. The main issue appeared to be one of communication. Points were made very strongly by some delegates that they felt more consultation should have occurred with Groups before any decisions were made. The resolution was carried. The issue was not about whether one provider was or was not better than the other as clearly both were well thought of.

The second motion concerned what some members saw as the unsolicited receipt of mail shots from BUPA. It was felt that as this had no direct link to walking it should not be imposed on everyone. A motion that the BUPA contract should not be renewed was carried.

On a more positive note one of the many workshops on offer gave an introduction to the roll-out of the new Ramblers Routes. When completed this promises to be an exciting new resource for Ramblers. We have asked Justin Bend the Routes Project Manager to be our Guest Speaker at the Area Council A.G.M. details of which can be found at the front of this newsletter. He should prove to be an interesting and entertaining speaker.

I do hope as many of you as possible will attend the Area A.G.M. This is your opportunity to be updated on what has been going on and to have your say on the future of Suffolk Ramblers. If you are a new member or have just never been to one of our A.G.M.'s before you will be most welcome to attend to just see what goes on.

For those of you who were involved in any way with the Forest Protests, either by attending a gathering, signing a petition, writing to your M.P. etc. it is heartening to see that the Government commissioned report has concluded that the overall benefit to society of our woodland far exceeds its purely commercial value as timber. The report also points out that 82% of our woods lie outside the public forest estate, with the majority of these delivering "less than they could for people, nature, and the economy". There is a huge challenge ahead in encouraging private owners to do better with their woodland properties. Suffolk benefits from easy access to a number of forests and for the time being any way they look safe. Protesting really does work.

Roley Wilson – *Suffolk Area Chairman*

Area Membership Report (figures as at 1st August 2012)

The decline in numbers of RA members in Suffolk has continued over the last twelve months but the rate of decline (2.25%) was much less than the previous year (just under 5%). Suffolk membership presently stands at 1775 (last year 1816)

Nationally, membership has declined by just 1% (previous year 5%) - present figure 114300 (115503)

Group figures are as follows (last year's figures in brackets)

Alde Valley	136	(134)	Bury St Edmunds	362	(336)
Ipswich	446	(483)	Newmarket	168	(163)
Stour	21	(21)	Stowmarket	151	(155)
Sudbury	202	(211)	Waveney	285	(308)
Not allocated to group	4	(5)			

Ralph Brighton - *Area Membership Secretary*

Access Officer's Report

It is possible to report some but not final progress on securing access to forests such as Rendlesham and Dunwich. Thanks are due to members and other for coming to the Ramblers' Rally at Rendlesham on October 9th 2011. Nearly 60 members and representatives as well as staff from Ramblers head office were present and we got a photograph in the next days local paper. Ramblers also held two other rallies in Sherwood and Cuckmere (Sussex) forests. Later the independent Forestry Panel inspected forests in west Suffolk as part of their national tour. Results so far are expressed in a letter I received in July from Dr Dan Poulter MP (my local MP). He writes " - - Panel on Forestry has recommended that England's public forests should remain in public ownership - -" and continues " - government has announced a firm commitment -to public ownership." The Secretary of State (Rt. Hon. Caroline Spelman MP) will issue a full response in January 2013.

The position regarding coastal access remains less clear. Natural England has announced an intention to create the National Coastal Trail from Norfolk to Scotland by 2017. Why Suffolk and Essex are omitted is not stated despite the existence of many sections of coastal access in Suffolk and the recent publication of a Cicerone guidebook to the two Suffolk Trails near the coast. Meanwhile the first section of National Trail has opened near Weymouth (but I thought the Southwest path already existed there!). Work on the Norfolk section should start soon.

Nearer home, land at Knettishall Heath has been acquired by the Suffolk Wildlife Trust who intend to "develop" the site – could members please monitor the paths if visiting? At Sutton Heath near Woodbridge there seems to be continuing opposition to tree felling associated with "heathland restoration" but when I visited access did not seem affected although a lot of cuttings remained on the ground. Another visit is planned by the Alde Valley Group path volunteers. One wonders if "restored heathland" automatically becomes access land under the ten-year review if it was not already designated.

My attention has been drawn to a parcel of land at Mendham which is "permissive access land" – a designation new to several of us. I intend to look into the matter on the web and on the ground. Perhaps other members have found this type of access land..

I also attended National Council in Leicester with Chairman Roley Wilson who will report on another page

Richard Tyson – *Access officer*

Area Footpaths Secretary/Area Rights Of Way Adviser Report

We have continued to work with the nine local footpaths secretaries on the various diversion and other proposals that have been coming in.

Our report to the AGM mentioned the Court application regarding John Andrews' long outstanding claims for modification of the Definitive Map to add byways, one at Lindsay and Monks Eleigh and the other at Lakenheath, Wangford and Elveden. Matters have moved on and the officers at Suffolk CC have now prepared draft reports to the Rights of Way Committee recommending Orders be made. Assuming they go through, these routes will be valuable additions to the rights of way network.

We also mentioned a hearing in the Queens Bench Division about a short section of the Icknield way at Barnham and West Stow. Unfortunately, because of technicalities concerning the Inspector's original handling of the matter, mostly over widths of the route, the entire Order was quashed and the County Council has had to re-draft and publish a new Order. Apparently the new order, specifying a width of 3 metres throughout on the grounds that that is a reasonable width, will be advertised shortly.

We are sure you have all met with increased overgrowth of vegetation along the rights of way network this year. Some economies have been made in the County Council's cutting programme but the unusual rainfall over the last few months has probably contributed to this situation. Another problem we are encountering is the rotting of some of the newer wooden finger posts at the base. It seems some were made from inferior timber. Please report all rights of way problems to Customer Services Direct (customerservice@csduk.com). We can provide you with a form on which to do this and it would help us if you copy us in so the local footpaths secretary can be aware and monitor the problem.

We noted with disappointment that the proposal to put a Digital interpretation of the Definitive Map on the SCC website has been dropped. This would have been a great help in identifying routes by their numbers when reporting problems.

Jim Richards/Nigel Meadows – August 2012.

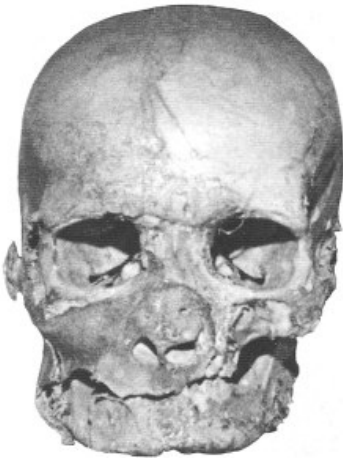
Sudbury Ramblers

The Group has "rambled" 254 miles with some 45 walks over the last year. Our walks were well attended and averaged 19 per walk. We normally arrange coach trips to London and Norfolk but this year as our normal London outing coincided with the Olympics, it was decided not to venture there. A number of our walks used public transport and returned on foot to Sudbury.

The return to Sudbury tended to be by way of the disused railway line. The line from Colchester via Marks Tey now terminates at Sudbury, but was once a through route to join the London to Cambridge line at Shelford with a branch line from Long Melford to Bury St Edmunds.

One of the most scenic views in the area must be from the disused line on the outskirts of Sudbury across the water meadows, to the tower of St. Gregory's Church. A great deal of interest recently was directed at the skull of its oldest artifact in the Church and its reconstruction.....that of Simon's skull to a fully reconstructed face.

Simon (Theobald) of Sudbury, whose skull still resides in St. Gregory's Church and who is best known for becoming, Archbishop of Canterbury in 1375, then finally, (and fatally), Chancellor of England, in 1380, as his demise resulted from the introduction of an additional Poll Tax. This made him desperately unpopular with the rebellious peasants, who eventually stormed the Tower of London, seized him, and dragged him to Tower Hill and beheading him.



From This

It is believed his head was placed on a spike on Tower Bridge, where it was spotted by a man from Sudbury, who grabbed it in the middle of the night and brought it back home.

The reconstruction project was the brainchild of Ian Copeman, a local Sudbury schools worker, and the then curate of St Gregory's Church, Rev Jenny Seggar.

They wanted a more complete picture of their local celebrity, so approached Dundee University and with current knowledge of facial muscles, skull measurements, it was mounted onto a pole in the horizontal plane. Using plaster of paris, tissue depth markers were placed at common facial anthropological points chosen depending on the age, sex and known ancestry of Simon, the reconstruction went from the above to that on the right.

Three of these heads have been made.

One will go on display in St Gregory's Church alongside Simon's original skull, a second will be used by Ian Copeman as part of his schools work projects and the third head will be donated to Canterbury City Council. It is understood that later one head is to be send to the Dean of Canterbury Cathedral where his body still lies. Currently one of the heads is on display in the Sudbury Town Council Museum.

More can be read about how this reconstruction was carried out at <http://simonofsudbury.weebly.com/index.html>



To This

Alan Worsley - *Chairman Sudbury & District Group*

Newmarket Group News

Since the last Newsletter we've had an interesting and active year with a variety of walks and activities. Its always good to walk by water and our Sizewell to Aldeburgh ramble had the double benefit of sea and sunshine – not to mention fish and chips. Mike and Jackie's walk in Norfolk included a visit to the lovely old church at Houghton-on-the-Hill where we received a warm welcome and a fascinating exposition of the restoration project from the gentleman who had done much of the work.

Last year was our 30th Anniversary so our Birthday Walk in November was especially important for us and was preceded by Bubbly and a visit from a local newspaper photographer.

Our AGM in October continued the celebratory mood and after the business part of the meeting we had home-made soup and rolls followed by Hilary's attractive cakes and coffee and then a walk. The result was an

excellent attendance, more than for many years. So if you want to attract members to your AGM – perhaps plenty of food is the answer.

The same venue at Kirtling provided a lovely setting for our Sausage Lunch which was followed by a light-hearted quiz and games organised by Hilary and Ralph.

The last leg of the St Edmund's Way was completed and Richard, Eileen, Jackie and Mike are now planning a series of walks covering the Icknield Way.

The Annual Dinner again went well although sadly several of us were away in such diverse places as Yorkshire and Australia. Those who did attend had an enjoyable evening at The Rosery Hotel.

In May Maria Castellina, a local girl from R.A. Headquarters led a walk with her dad along the Devil's Dyke. We certainly enjoyed it and I believe they did too. Its good to meet some of the folk from H.Q. and I hope the idea develops.

In June our Peak District weekend, based on Buxton, was excellently organised by Ralph supported by Hilary, Peter, Ann and Rob. Over 20 members took part and our system of people booking their own accommodation and, where possible, sharing transport to the venue works well for us – even though half a dozen of us “upped sticks” after an interesting night in one B and B! One member, who shall be nameless, had hoped to bring home a 4-foot Chinese ceramic crocodile he'd seen in a local antique shop – happily the shop was shut on the morning we left or else the car might have been rather over-crowded.

At the beginning of July our coach outing to Stratford-on-Avon included long and short walk options. Our visit coincided with the arrival of the Olympic torch – and we thought the crowds were out to welcome us. The day was greatly enjoyed and the forecasted rain virtually passed by us thanks to Sue and Phil's excellent administration.

Organising the coming year's events is underway - walks programme, AGM definitely with soup and rolls, outings, annual dinner and so on. Its all good fun, especially as we receive such good support from our members and friends. Its my turn to step down from the Chairmanship as there is a willing replacement in the wings so, after my brief sojourn with Newmarket and District RA and, if they'll have me back, I'll return to my roots with the Bury group where Rosie is doing such sterling work. Of course I'll still walk with my friends of Newmarket RA – one of the great things is the fluidity and friendship between groups both near and far – long may it continue.

Brian Milner - *Chairman Newmarket Group*

Alde Valley Group

As a year has elapsed since the last issue of this magazine I would like to take the opportunity to welcome new members who have joined in the last year. Group boundaries were rationalised by Jim Richards during his tenure as County Chairman and Alde Valley area now extends from Bawdsey in the south up to the River Blyth and inland to Earl Soham. This means that some people living in the IP12 postcode area do not receive the Alde Valley walks programme. The walks are also found on websites or, if you wish, a copy can be posted to you.

The next walks programme starts in November and will include the date and venue for the Group AGM, held in November. In the current programme fourteen members have taken part in leading but new leaders are always welcome and often like to lead a first walk in their local area. The current programme features a “first” for Alde valley on September 2nd with a coach trip to Sheringham organised by Hilary (see programme for details).

During the year our path improvement group has continued to meet at various locations to look at paths and effect clearance and small improvements. We have also made some progress towards ensuring access to forests (see access officer’s notes).

A couple of members have contacted me about the relationships between Ramblers, Ramblers Worldwide Holidays (RWH) and “selected walking partner” HF Holidays. There was discussion at the National Council in Leicester about this matter, mainly its announcement without consultation and the treatment of RWH, also a new scheme by which people booking RWH holidays can nominate a Group to receive a donation directly. The matter will be discussed at our next Group Committee meeting before the Group AGM.

Richard Tyson

Four days with the in-laws or walking in the mountains?

This was the dilemma that I faced recently. My wife wanted to go to Wales but didn't fancy the train journey and changing stations in London plus using the underground. I wasn't too excited about four whole days doing the rounds of the in-laws! Reading through the HF holiday brochure one evening, I found that they had a house in Brecon. A devious plan began to dawn on me; the in-laws lived only an hour from Brecon. At breakfast the next morning I floated my plan, I would drive her to the door of the family in Wales, spend an hour as a dutiful husband making pleasantries and then I could drive on to Brecon for a walking holiday. 'What a super idea', says she 'but wouldn't you be lonely without me among all those strangers and after Suffolk it is very hilly around there'. 'I would cope', I said manfully. And so it came to pass that I managed to get a last minute booking at Nythfa House at the foot of the Brecon Beacons.

There was a distinct absence of footpath signs and on the first walk when we admired the views from a high vantage point, our leader pointed out a sheep track which zigzagged down the cliff face and said 'right, I will go first and you follow me carefully'. Now as a walk leader myself, I would never have contemplated leading a group down there but given the present company, two German athletes in track suits, a lady from Holland in her 60's, myself and the leader: I put on a brave face and followed this foot wide path down for 800 feet. Never again! Apart from that experience, the walks were exhilarating and the scenery breathtaking. The weather improved. The food was up to three star hotel standard and there was plenty of it. I covered 28 miles and climbed to 2,700 feet over three days which helped to burn off the extra calories put on by the food.

Time to return home; so I collected my wife, listened, on the long drive home, to all the things I had missed and how aunts, uncles, nieces and nephews had missed seeing me (what a shame I thought). There was just time as we drove up the A12 to mention the highlights of my holiday before we arrived home, both of us happy at what we had achieved and glad to be back in each other's company. Ah, domestic bliss is a compromise.

I fancy the Yorkshire Dales next time: I wonder if she has any relatives in that area!!!!!!!!

Gareth Evans – Ipswich Group

Suffolk County Council – Rights of Way and Access Manager, Andrew Woodin.

It doesn't seem long since I was last being chased for an article for your newsletter! It has been a productive year and I'm pleased to be able to give you a flavour of what has been happening in the rights of way and access team over the last year.

This time last year the county council was searching for a new Chief Executive. The good news is we have found one in Deborah Cadman, who has extensive public sector experience in Suffolk, with six years in the top job at St Edmundsbury Borough Council and, more recently, as chief executive at the East of England Development Agency.

Deborah has already involved herself in rights of way activities, both in proposals to change the way traffic is managed around the waterfront in Ipswich and to attend the launch of our new Easy Going Trails pack at Thornham Walks earlier in the summer. She was impressed by the enthusiasm of everyone involved and that the project involved so many different community stakeholders. Linda Hoggarth from Optua launched the pack, which includes 18 trails in Suffolk for the less mobile and it has been very well received.

Our Council Leader Mark Bee hasn't been left out. He is a keen walker and helped launch of the Suffolk Walking Festival in May (alongside Bill Tancred, an ex Olympian). The festival was a tremendous success, and included a challenge walk "From Flatford to the Fens" which attracted 121 walkers, of whom 6 completed the whole 70-odd mile walk over 5 days. The walk enjoyed one of the few weather windows of the summer...

Which leads me on to a different type of 'challenge' – the weather. Whilst a let-down for most of us, the grass and weeds love it, meaning we have had a lot of reports about paths not being cut, and I'm sure the local ramblers have experienced the same. As you probably appreciate, Suffolk County Council prioritises public rights of way for inclusion on its cutting programme, based on factors like whether a path is a promoted route, locally important, or gives access to local services. Two cuts are normally undertaken on paths which are on the programme, the first commencing in May and the second in August. My apologies to those of you who may have had a walk spoiled by an uncut path.

Other priorities for the team at the moment include:

Working with Network Rail on their proposals to close rights of way crossing railways in Suffolk. Like Network Rail, the county council wants improved rail links for Suffolk, which includes faster line speeds, and is working with them to prioritise the higher risk crossings and seek to either mitigate the risk (eg by cutting back vegetation or installing mini warning lights), provide an over or under bridge, or divert the right of way. This is a Network Rail project and we are reminding them of the importance of early engagement with stakeholders, and we have ensured our local access forum are engaged (see below).

Dealing with the outcome of the public inquiry in 2010 which established a byway and restricted byway at the Ipswich waterfront is another high profile project for the team. For those of you not familiar with this part of Ipswich, waterfront (which still has a working dock) the area is an example of how investment in one area of a town can have much wider benefits, and it's worth a visit. The county council is faced with an enormous task to address the issues of traffic management along the quaysides, including issues of parking, as well as dealing with the obstructions. Later this year traffic orders will be made to start addressing some of those issues.

The future of the public forest estate has been in the news recently, with the publication of the Independent Panel on Forestry's final report. Broadly, there wasn't a lot to disagree with it in, but I was disappointed the opportunity wasn't grasped to dedicate higher access rights in the estate, in the same way walkers currently enjoy. The Government will respond to the report 'in due course'.

A new initiative local ramblers will be interested in is the Paths for Communities project launched recently by Natural England.

The scheme has been set up to develop and enhance the public rights of way network to deliver benefits to rural areas. The objective of the funding is to encourage and support local communities to work with land owners to improve the rights of way network. The scheme will operate over the 2 year period from May 2012 to March 2014, with a total fund of £2m.

Projects **must** include some element of new right of way creation. In most cases this will include an element of new bridleway creation; either creating a bridleway where there was none previously, or upgrading a footpath to bridleway status to broaden its use. Projects should also include promotion to

support local businesses and services. All schemes needs to be genuinely community driven and have landowners on board.

Any suggestions for community driven new rights of way are welcome!

The Suffolk Local Access Forum has had another active year and you might be interested in the what they thought to be the highlights of the last year:

- Getting the Highways Agency to back down on its proposal to reduce the height of the bridleway underpass to be built as part of the A11 dualling scheme in Thetford Forest (under there revised plans equestrians would have had to dismount). Work on the scheme should start early next year.
- The forum has also been challenging Network Rail on its proposals to close rights of way crossings in the county,
- The forum played an active part in the consultation on the future of forests and woodland in England, and members of the panel met the Independent Panel on Forestry earlier this year to put the case to retain and improve access,
- The forum recognise that Suffolk County Council continues to invest in its access network, and would like to see this continue in the future.

And finally...

Here is an extract of an email we received in July:

“Our walk from Southwold through the marshes was particularly memorable as we spotted a Marsh Harrier. Last year we trekked in Peru but this walk was just as exciting as we ‘got lost’ in the reeds and then walked through the swamp woods towards open heathland. I am surprised that there are no outfits offering guided safaris in the area. Well done for your work on making this lovely piece of ‘wilderness’ accessible to all.”

There – it’s official: walking Suffolk's footpaths is as exciting as trekking in Peru...

Andrew Woodin

Stowmarket Group News

We have had another busy year of walks of varying lengths and, as I am sure our members have noticed, several during the week in addition to the more traditional Sundays. Our thanks as always to the walk leaders for putting in the time preparing and leading these walks.

In common with several other Groups, this year we are encouraging our members to receive their Group Programmes by email. This will not only save a considerable amount of money on postage but it is a quicker and more efficient method which is increasingly the method of choice for a lot of people. When we have a sufficient data base of email addresses we will also be able to update our members quickly on any changes or additions to the programme, as well as any

important information about our social events.

On the social front the group had a very enjoyable holiday on the Isle of Wight this year and next year a visit to the Lincolnshire Wolds is in the planning stage.

The Stowmarket Groups A.G.M. will be held on the 11 October at 7:30p.m. at the Thorntree Centre Milton Road, Stowmarket. The meeting will be followed by cheese and wine. We look forward to seeing our members at this meeting which is an opportunity for everyone to have their say in how the group is run. New members or those who have never attended before are encouraged to just turn up and see what goes on.

Roley Wilson – *Group Chairman*

Breaking News

Suffolk Area Ramblers are pleased to welcome Jan Palmer as the new secretary to the Area Council. Jan joins Suffolk Area from Essex where she had experience in a similar role. We are very lucky to have secured the services of such an experienced person and look forward to working with Jan. Jan is a member of the Stowmarket Group.

Bury St Edmunds Group News

As I write this report we have just launched our first Thetford Walking Festival and wow! - what an amazing weekend its been!! After weeks of what has felt like unremitting rain, described as "the wettest drought on record!" the weather has really come good for us at the right time. In excess of 50 participants came along on the first day alone not including children and dogs and with the Fox Pub at Honington putting on an excellent bar-b-q and everyone enjoying the sunshine to match, there has been a real "festival feel" to the start of the fortnight.

Aimed at raising the profile of Ramblers in the north-west of the county, the Festival was the inspiration of Dave Hodgkinson who has masterminded all the arrangements and to whom go our congratulations and appreciation, along with all who will have led or supported walks during this two week event.

We are accustomed to our national Ramblers Festivals such as Get Walking Day and the festival of Winter Walks offering special opportunities for us to introduce others to Ramblers at a greatly discounted joining cost, but it is lovely that Group initiated festivals also qualify, enabling new members to join at currently half price with special forms available to organisers on request.

We are looking to this becoming a regular event but possibly at a slightly later date next year to coincide with the Thetford Festival itself and maximise on free publicity opportunities which even this year have been considerable.

Staying with the theme of Festivals we were delighted to support the newly extended Suffolk Walking Festival in May and were pleased to lead local sections of the 5-day Challenge Walk which formed a central part of the event and gave us excellent opportunities to raise the profile of Ramblers across the county.

The festival was very much the baby of SCC's Countryside Access Development Officer David Falk, who manages the Discover Suffolk Project (a really superb web-site to "discover" if you haven't already done so – there are 2-way links between our Suffolk Ramblers web-site

and Discover Suffolk) and, in liason with Roley Wilson, we look forward to building further on this excellent working relationship.

David's been a great help with our St Edmund Way waymarking project and we are now well underway in our task. The work has been headed up very professionally of course by Ron West but other members of the group have enjoyed having a hand as well, sometimes opportunistically on a walk!



Vicky sets to work under Ron's helpful guidance

We hope to have completed the whole way by the end of the summer but plan to save a few symbolically perhaps for our annual St Edmund's Day walk in November!

Meanwhile our 35th birthday year has seen a bumper programme of walks! YHA weekends and coach walk outings, whether to London or the coast, continue to prove very popular and our April Break saw over sixty of us enjoying new challenges in the Lake District, following which many expressions of appreciation were received but, if I might quote from just one:

...It was truly a "mountain" experience, such a wonderful few days ...walks I wasn't sure I'd be able to do but just brilliant leaders who gave me confidence in myself and them!

Thank you to all who "go the extra mile to help others go the extra mile" whether on a leisurely 3 mile walk or on a much longer all-day walk and in whatever geographical context: the challenges to the participant – and the rewards! – can be just as great!!

Rosie Perham - Chairman Bury Ramblers

East Suffolk Line ‘Station to Station’ Walks

How the project began...

I’ve often enjoyed browsing through the booklets published in the 1930s by the ‘big four’ railway companies, including the London & North Eastern Railway (LNER), the company that ran the most of the trains in East Anglia at a time when the rail network was at its most extensive.

For a modest 6^d (2.5p) ‘Rambles in Suffolk’ described 12 routes with sketches of places of interest together with route maps and directions. And what rambles they were! Notes on the Wickham Market to Woodbridge walk, a circuitous 19 miles via Orford advised:

‘...it will be necessary to cross waterways over which there is no regular service...not even an occasional ferry, only a boat drawn up on the mud beside some cottages. The choice lies between persuading the cottager to hire or lend you his boat, or swimming’.

On the walk from the former Orwell station on the Felixstowe line station to Woodbridge:

‘...some member of the party should be deputed to watch the tide, as it is only possible to cross the river Deben at Waldringfield when the tide is in. At low tide the mud on each side is impassable.’

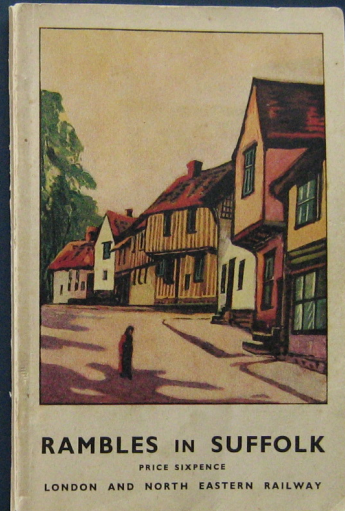
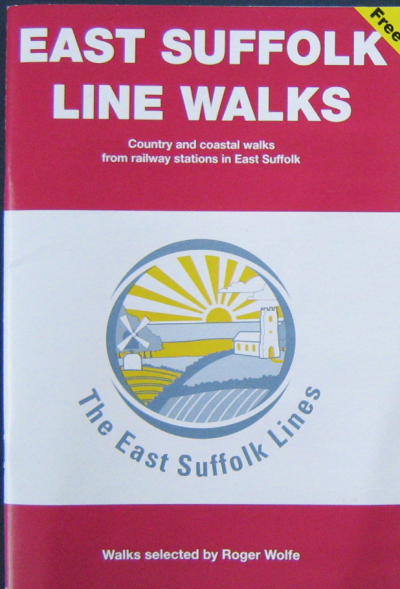
Apart from present day concerns about Health and Safety, I wondered whether such a compilation of ‘station to station’ walks could be made to work in the 21st century? Miraculously the East Suffolk Line between Ipswich and Lowestoft survived the dreaded Beeching Axe of the 1960s, together with most of its intermediate stations, which now make ideal gateways to the beautiful and still largely unspoiled East Suffolk countryside. Exploring the network of public paths, tracks and bridleways in the vicinity of the line was great fun and I was delighted when the East Suffolk Travellers’ Association (ESTA), the voluntary organisation formed to fight the threat of closure, agreed to publish a booklet in 2004 with support from Suffolk Area of the Ramblers’ Association.

Publication has since devolved to the East Suffolk Lines Community Rail Partnership, a joint venture between the local authorities and the rail industry. The current edition of the booklet describes 16 rambles ranging in distance from a gentle 1.5 mile stroll along the banks of the Deben, passing the famous tide mill at Woodbridge, to a more ambitious 13 miles from Wickham Market to Saxmundham via Snape Maltings; all very civilised

compared to the epic 17 mile *average* of the LNER walks – and no need to swim!

The booklet is free from local libraries and tourist information centres and there is also a website version www.eastsuffolklinewalks.co.uk through which booklets can also be ordered.

Roger Wolfe



Notes

1. This article first appeared in the 'Ipswich Lifestyle' magazine in June/July 2011.
2. As a result of the interest in the East Suffolk Line Walks project, a similar series of 'station to station' walks has been produced for the Ipswich to Stowmarket, Bury St Edmunds, Newmarket, Cambridge and Ely lines
3. Details from www.marpa.org.uk

Walking for Health

The Ramblers and Macmillan Cancer Support are now the new home for 'Walking for Health'. At the last Area Council meeting in March I was delegated to act as liaison for any walking for health type groups in Suffolk.

I had a meeting in April with the organisers of 'Livewell Suffolk', who run the walking for health programme throughout Suffolk County. Both organisations now have links on the websites to each others programmes, and we are jointly planning to have an increased crossover between the two organisations, aiming at having current shorter walks, or Ambles, actually on both programmes. We already have many Ramblers who are Health Walk leaders, and several groups do have suitable walks on the current programme, so although the next 4 monthly Health Walk programme has already been finalised, we will be able to add an article about Ramblers and some examples of actual walks onto the next programme. I have been in touch with all the programme organisers regarding this, and a possible inclusion on their next programmes of an item about health walks as well.

I also had a meeting in May with the organisers of 'Health Ambitions' They are planning a series of long walks in October to try and get people to complete 1 million steps in a month, aimed at companies and organisations who could get small groups involved. They were asking if the Ramblers could put on additional longer walks in October. I contacted all the programme organisers about this, and met with reluctance to add additional walks especially, but we have invited Health Ambitions to let people join any walks on our current programmes. Also, if successful, they plan to make this an annual event, so if they do use any of our walks for the scheme this year, then we hope to be able to help out more in future years.

I see both these projects as a potential source of new members, and the walking for health programme as a useful source of walks for Ramblers who find our longer walks too much for them. I will continue to liaise with both groups.

Nigel Meadows – 31st July 2012

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You'r all nicked for jay walking. Bury Group tangle with the law in London



Ramblers setting off for the walk after last years AGM

Alde Valley Path Group volunteers inspect new fencing, access points and waymarking at Sutton Heath near Woodbridge in August



Ipswich Group have found a hill in Suffolk!

Alde Valley group on their Hollesly walk in June

