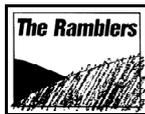


**THE RAMBLERS' ASSOCIATION  
CITY OF BIRMINGHAM GROUP**

Registered Charity No. 1093577

Summer 2007  
Issue No. 50



# Footnotes



## Muddy Meanderings

Editorial by David Sutton

Welcome to the 50<sup>th</sup> issue of *Footnotes*! The very first issue of the magazine came out in March 1995, edited by Pat Holmes. In it there was a report on The Centenary Way, which was established in 1989 to commemorate 100 years of Warwickshire County Council. At the time Birmingham



RA were in the process of walking this long distance path in ten-mile stages, the sort of project that the group continues today – currently The Monarch's Way is receiving the footfalls of our Sunday walkers. At the time of writing we have just completed stage 16 and have had no sighting yet of Charles II!

*(Continued on page 7)*

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## Ninety years' young!

Regular group walkers will know one of our veteran walkers, "little" Bill Hughes. Bill has until recently been a regular on our Sunday and Wednesday walks. On Saturday 21st April he celebrated his 90th birthday. At the party arranged on the previous Friday by his



daughter Audrey and son-in-law Colin, Bill was surprised and delighted to see a large number of his walking friends and acquaintances arrive to help him celebrate his momentous day.

And on Sunday 22nd, Bill made a welcome return to the group's Sunday walks. ■

Photo by Bob Hunt



## Social Scene 2007

From our Social Secretary, Derek Garfield

Friday 23<sup>rd</sup> March saw us assembled in the Grimshaw Room at St Chad's for a 'Birds of Prey' evening. Chris Neal from *Hawkeye* (a professional falconry outfit) flew three very large birds up and down the hall with an interesting commentary about them. Those that wanted had the opportunity to have them perch on their arm and get a very close look at these magnificent birds. The display was followed by our usual buffet supper and we must thank Janet Gibbs and her team for the quality and variety of food on offer.

Our first **WALK DAY OUT** of the year on 21<sup>st</sup> April saw us heading up the M6 to Cheshire to ride on **The Anderton Boat Lift**. This was by no means white knuckle stuff but a fascinating close up of an



impressive piece of Victorian engineering.

Before this we did a short walk in the Northwich Community Woodlands and were treated to some fine views of one of the worlds truly

iconic buildings, namely the Salt Works Factory at Northwich. People bang on about The Taj Mahal but here is a building equally beautiful, not to say breathtaking, right on our own doorstep.

Our **ANNUAL DAY OUT** on Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> July sees us heading east to the fair city of Cambridge. We hope to be viewing the sights from both land and water and I am hoping it will be a truly memorable day. Booking Forms are now available on the coach or from any reputable Travel Agent. ■

### Walking Ambassadors Help us to help others to Get Walking!

Volunteer Walking Ambassadors are a key part of **Get walking...keep walking!**, an exciting new urban walking project taking place in Lambeth, Lewisham and Southwark and **beginning in Birmingham** and other major UK cities later this year. Walking Ambassadors will work with a variety of community groups, including older people, children and parents, black minority ethnic groups and people with mental health issues, to provide inspiration, information and motivation to get people walking more in their everyday lives. You'll do this through one-to-one information sessions and helping to lead a short programme of weekly introductory walks in the local area. Full training will be provided. Please contact Sarah Clements on 020 7339 8541 or [sarahc@ramblers.org.uk](mailto:sarahc@ramblers.org.uk) for further information and an application pack

## Maps, Compasses, Walk Planning and Leading: Part 5—Some more on using the compass

Roger Gibbs

Part 4 covered use of the compass for identifying path direction from the map to show which way to go on the ground. This is probably its most common use – setting the compass from the map.

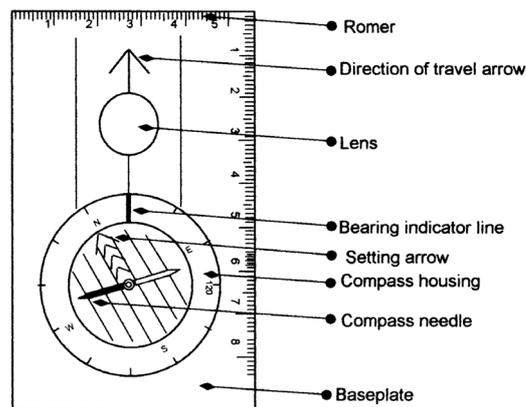
The other main use is to set the compass from the ground rather than the map, and we'll cover that this time.

Setting the Compass from the Ground. To determine the direction of any feature you can actually see on the ground, proceed as follows.

- Point the *direction of travel arrow* along the line of the feature. It may be along the line of a footpath you are on, or along an imaginary line leading to a distinguishable feature such as a church tower, radio mast, mountain top, etc.
- Hold the compass *baseplate* steady, and rotate the *compass housing* until the *setting arrow* aligns with the red end of *compass needle*.
- Read off the “bearing”, which is the angle shown on the circular scale of the *compass housing* indicated by the *bearing indicator line*. For example,

if the feature were due east, it would be on a bearing of 90°.

Transferring a bearing onto the map. Once you have set the compass from the ground, the next



stage is usually to transfer the information to the map.

- Place the set compass on the map. Do not alter the setting. (The temptation will be to rotate the housing as you do when setting *from* the map, but not on this occasion).
- Rotate the map and/or the compass until the *setting arrow* points to grid north.
- Maintaining the angle of the

compass, move it until the baseplate edge or the *direction of travel arrow* lies over your identified feature, which could be your foot-path, or the church tower, etc. Use of the parallel lines facilitates this operation.

- The *direction of travel arrow* now shows the bearing on the map.

#### Grid north / Magnetic north.

So far we have assumed grid north and magnetic north to be the same. In fact they are not, as the magnetic north pole lies somewhere on the Canadian side of the grid north pole, which is on the earth's axis.

So the compass needle points slightly west of the "true" north (in the UK anyway). Over short distances the difference can be ignored, as not only is it small, it is reducing with time. But over large distances it does make a difference. So if you take a bearing over a large distance, such as across a mountain valley to a distant peak, the difference, known as magnetic variation, needs to be taken into account. Magnetic variation differs across the country, so is always recorded on the map as part of the key.

Accounting for magnetic variation. For us the variation is about 3° west at present, so let's assume that figure. A simple

way to take magnetic variation into account is to align the compass needle to 357° instead of 360°. All bearings will be "true bearings".

If you prefer to continue aligning the compass needle to 360° north, then you will be taking a "compass bearing", which will be 3° greater than the true bearing.

In parts of the World, the compass variation is to the east, and in places is considerably greater than 3°. Good maps will identify what it is for their area of coverage, and to account for it wherever you are, remember the rule "Difference west, compass best; difference east, compass least."

So for us a compass bearing will be 3° higher than the map, or "true" bearing, e.g. a compass bearing of 75° will be a bearing of 72° on the map.

We're quite fortunate. In New Zealand the variation is over 22° east and is increasing! Their compass bearing of 75° would mean a map bearing of 97°, so they do need to remember the rule.

The best way to develop your skills is to practice, practice, practice. You can't learn by reading about it! ■



## Meerkat Rambles

Steve Brittain

First of all who are the Meerkats? Well the Meerkats are members of the Birmingham Sports Club for the Disabled. We chose the name as the Meerkat is an animal that represents a family group and who look after each other.

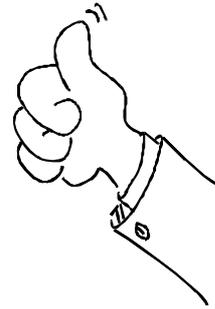
This year will be our eighth annual ramble. The first joint ramble was on Cannock Chase and we were joined by another disabled group from Coventry. Other rambles have been in Derbyshire, the Arrow Valley, Reddich, The Malverns and last year was in the Sherwood Forest. All these rambles have been led by Horace Marsh.

This year's ramble will be on Saturday July 14<sup>th</sup> and in the Forest of Dean. We shall be

meeting at Beechenhurst Lodge visitor centre (GR 615 120 map Landranger 162, Outdoor Leisure 14) the ramble will be led by Horace and starts at 11am, it will be five miles long with a pub at the end where we shall have lunch.

These joint rambles are for Group members who know of friends or relatives who have a disability of any kind and would like to take part in a day's ramble. The surface is suitable for wheelchair users.

If anyone would like more information about the ramble please contact either Horace Marsh on 0121 351 4820 or Steve Brittain on 0121 749 1227.



## Committee Quarter

Roger Gibbs—Birmingham RA Secretary

“What’s the committee ever done for us?”

“... well... there’s the organisation of the programme...”

“... yes... but apart from organising the programme, what’s the committee ever done for us?”

“... well... there’s the socials...”

“... yes, but apart from the socials and organising the programme, what’s the committee ever done for us?”

... and so on... you *must* know the reference (*Monty Python* for the uninitiated!)

Well, in an attempt to inform and communicate to all our



membership, in particular those who we don't see during the programme events, this humble offering is being submitted to record some of the committee activities and news.

The Committee meets monthly and follows an agenda covering the following, but in future issues of

*Footnotes* it is intended to highlight anything ongoing which is new or different, or to elaborate on one of the standard agenda items.

- Group Finances – keeping solvent
- Walking Activities – providing a comprehensive walking programme
- Holidays – weekends and biennial holiday
- Footpath Matters – protecting our paths
- Footnotes – producing this newsletter
- Social Events – say no more
- Publicity – increasing the awareness of the people of Birmingham
- Website – providing updated information to members and newcomers (Just type: “Birmingham rambblers” in your search engine to find the site)
- Membership – how are we doing?
- Correspondence – who's been in touch

Recently we have been concentrating on one of the main charitable objectives of the RA – promotion of walking. The RA is keen to provide for a wider audience than would traditionally be expected, and as part of this our Group is pursuing various areas of activity, including:

- Provision of short walks using public transport:

These have been ongoing for a while now and have proved very successful, not only in meeting the needs of some members for shorter walks, but in introducing newcomers to the walking fraternity who may or may not decide to join the RA (we hope they do!)

- Health Walks:

This area of activity is comparatively new for us, and at the time of writing is in a formative stage. We'll let you know how it goes.

- Publicity:

In order to publicise more widely how good the RA is, and this Group in particular, we are working on publicity material which will hopefully be widely available, and will describe the opportunities that are there for the taking. Watch this space.

Finally, this seems a good opportunity to mention membership of the Ramblers' Association, which has stopped growing in recent months.

Our Group is not exempt from this trend, but the losses are

mainly from those who do not walk with us. In fact sometimes there is a coach overflow on the Sunday walk, up to forty on the mid-week walk (more than enough), and our weekends, socials and holidays are invariably fully booked. So Group activities do not appear to be the reason.

*We would be glad to hear any views* on how the RA can regain its momentum in increasing its membership. Letters, please, to *Footnotes* at the usual address. ■

*(Continued from page 1)*

In this issue of *Footnotes* I include a piece on the workings of the Birmingham Ramblers' committee, as an introduction to a proposed series in which the work of various committee posts is highlighted. Needless to say, all of the committee members work hard to ensure that the charitable aims of the RA are promoted and that you all can enjoy the fruits of our organised activities as though they are run by a well-oiled machine! ■

### Book Review by David Sutton.

**Ramblers' Choice: Some Favourite Walks in the Midlands.**  
Edited by Peter Groves. Meridian Books 2007, £5.95. ISBN 1869922549.

Meridian Books should be a firm favourite with all Ramblers in the Midlands area! Previous titles include *The Elan Valley Way*, *Walks in South Warwickshire*, *Walks Around the Malverns*, *Waterside Walks in the Midlands*, and many more. The latest title, *Ramblers' Choice*, is an anthology of favourite walks described by its editor and various other contributors – all members of the Birmingham RA.

The book contains twenty walks, fully described, with maps, parking, public transport, terrain, refreshment stops, a bit of history and also photographs. What more could you want! Titles of some of the walks will serve as a better enticement for you to buy this book than if I go on at length about the contents: 'A Hill Fort and an Obelisk', 'A Nature Reserve with an Industrial Past', 'Severn Valley Panoramas', 'A Poet's Legacy', 'Two Canals and the Devil's Den', 'Berculs Well, Cromwell's Horses and Sherlock Holmes', 'An Act of Penitence', 'Prudent Allegiances'. There... those titles should have piqued your interest. Now all you need to do is buy a copy. You can obtain it direct from Meridian Books, from bookshops or *even better*, at a discount from Birmingham RA. Peter Groves has kindly discounted the price to members to **only** £3.75 (a saving of £2.20 on the bookshop price). If you would like to order a copy, please make a cheque for **£5.65** (this includes postage and packing), payable to 'COBRA' and send with your name and address to: 194 Station Road, Kings Heath, Birmingham, B14 7TE. Please contact me on **0121 444 6188** if you would prefer to collect a copy on the Sunday coach rambles to save postage. ■

### Heard on rambles...

**B**ernard was heard to remark to Jim, "I was at York Minster when they were reinforcing the foundations." We presume he wasn't talking about the date the cathedral was completed and consecrated in 1472!



**A**fter crossing a busy road, Irene, referring to the map, felt compelled to say, "That's funny, the road doesn't look that vicious on my map."

### TAKE ACTION

The RA monthly *Take Action* newsletter keeps members and non-members updated on Ramblers campaigns and offers simple actions for individuals to get further involved. It's now been going for over a year and already has over 22,000 subscribers. It's easy to subscribe (and unsubscribe!) by visiting [www.ramblers.org.uk/newsletter](http://www.ramblers.org.uk/newsletter). Do spread the word and encourage your friends to sign up.

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### Footnotes:

Articles, letters, 'Heard on rambles', poetry and other contributions are **most** welcome.

Please write to

David Sutton, 194 Station Road, Kings Heath, Birmingham, B14 7TE.

(Phone: 0121 444 6188).

Email at: [david.sutton986@btinternet.com](mailto:david.sutton986@btinternet.com).