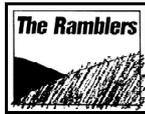


**THE RAMBLERS' ASSOCIATION  
CITY OF BIRMINGHAM GROUP**

Registered Charity No. 1093577

Winter 2007  
Issue No. 52



# Footnotes



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## Muddy Meanderings

Editorial by David Sutton

Well, as I write this it's that time of year: The clocks have gone back, the colours and sounds of fireworks fill the evenings and on TV the furniture manufacturers are suggesting we buy three-piece suites for Christmas. It feels as though the year wants to rush headlong to its end, ready for the sun to begin again its steady climb into the sky, to brighten our days once more.

Walking in the countryside the weather has been mild and dry, warmer than the average. Our group's Lake District weekend was blessed with pleasant sunshine (except for the higher level walkers!).



Leaves on the trees, burnished by the changing season, have been displaying their autumnal glory; muddy boots are a distant memory!

But Gaia can be a trickster. This year's English 'Summer' showed us how capricious Mother Earth can be. And locally, on a recent recce along part of the Newcastle Way, with my wife Sandra,

*(Continued on page 2)*



**Millet's**

## Social Scene 2007



From our Social Secretary, Derek Garfield

### Looking back . . .

Our final **Walk Day Out** of the year on 15<sup>th</sup> September saw us all aboard our extremely executive coach for a trip to the Cotswolds and in particular the charming small town of Northleach. We all enjoyed a short morning walk followed by a spot of lunch and the odd glass of wine at the pub in the main square. Afterwards, we visited The Museum of Mechanical Music where we had demonstrations of some of the weird and wonderful methods of musical reproduction long before the MP3 was a twinkle in Mr Sony's eye. We also paid a visit to the impressive local church where we were given another guided tour.

Friday 5<sup>th</sup> October saw some of us with thespian leanings assembled in the foyer of **The Alexandra Theatre** prior to a backstage tour of this famous Birmingham theatre. All very entertaining and informative after which we had a pub lunch in The Victoria, a well known hostelry right outside the theatre.

On Tuesday 16<sup>th</sup> October, **Millets** opened in the evening especially for us to buy gear at a handsome 20% off. Please always think about visiting Millets when buying new gear ; you will always get 10% off all of their competitively priced products on production of your RA



membership card. Remember, they support us so please support them when you can !

### Looking forward . . .

Apart from our usual Christmas festivities, our next Social Event will be a **Skittles Evening** at The Selly Park Tavern on Friday 1<sup>st</sup> February. This will be a tough amateur contest and larking about will not be tolerated.

The **Group Annual Dinner** will again be held at Edgbaston Golf Club, the date for your diary being Friday 29<sup>th</sup> February. There will be several minor celebrities in attendance.

Happy Christmas. Derek Garfield,  
Social Secretary. ■

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*(Continued from page 1)*

there was a prime example. A brilliantly warm, sunny Autumnal morning turned on its head. Within minutes a thick, cold fog descended, visibility dropped to less than a field's span. Gloves and hats were donned. And Sandra's map and compass training proved their worth as distant foot-path markers disappeared in the whiteout. Maybe it will even snow this winter? Happy Christmas! ■

## Maps, Compasses, Walk Planning and Leading: Part 7—Leading a walk

Roger Gibbs

Most regular walkers with our RA Group will at some time be asked if they would like to lead us a walk or to help in “prelimming” one. This is because we are always looking for new leaders to share the task of producing an attractive and successful programme of walks. Leading is rewarding, gives something back, and is self-developing.

Starting out can be daunting, but needn’t be. Just helping an existing leader by driving for a “prelim” gives an insight into the experience of walk planning, preparation, and leading. Some of us prefer planning to doing the actual ramble. So why not consider adding your name to the list of leaders – you’ll be helped and encouraged every step of the way. You could fill a vacancy as a “C” leader and get help, advice, and guidance from the “A” and “B” leaders.

If you want to lead your own walk, decide where and when, or ask for suggestions. Winter walks are necessarily local because of the journey time and hours of daylight, but the Programme Secretary will advise where gaps in the programme are to be found.

Plan the route, but remember for Sunday walks that coach access (no low

bridges or narrow lanes) and coach parking is necessary, and that ample car parking is needed for Wednesday walks. Liaise with other leaders of the day to ensure that the various walk arrangements don’t conflict.

At least one “prelim” is necessary to ensure that you can follow the route without problems such as blocked paths, getting lost, taking too long or not long

enough, etc. During the “prelim” note times and distances, and identify good places for coffee breaks, comfort stops, etc. This will nearly always involve arrangements at the pub, where unexpected large groups are not welcome, and the question of lunch-time food needs to be answered.

It has become usual to prepare a map of the route for Sunday rambles, passed round the coach and then

used by the backmarker as a guide. The map should have a sticker with our copyright licence number, available from Roger Gibbs. Optional extras would be items of interest about the ramble, and a road map for the driver to show him drop off and pick up points.

On Sundays, advise the coach driver of the details and ensure he understands



the pick up point. Make a note of his mobile number and those of other leaders. One of the leaders should introduce him/herself to the party, announce walk lengths, other leaders, lunch arrangements, and any stops.

Before starting the walk, appoint a backmarker, check all are ready, and as soon as possible agree the number in the party with the backmarker. Once underway, avoid losing anybody. Keep in regular visual contact with the backmarker and take extra care at junctions. If they can go wrong, they will.

Adjust the pace to suit the whole

party, and gather at critical points where extra care is needed such as golf courses, railway crossings, gardens, etc. Check that no-one has been left behind after breaks, and always do your best to have the party observe good practice on roads and through crops. Keep an eye on the clock and make adjustments where possible to arrive back on time. If things do go wrong, ask for help and advice, and let people know what is happening.

At the end of the ramble, receive your accolades and enjoy that feeling of a job well done. ■



#### FINDING FEATHERED FRIENDS ON WALKS

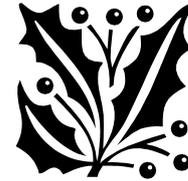
Are you a walker who also loves birdlife? Do you ever combine a bit of bird spotting with a decent walk? If so, we'd love to hear about your experiences, such as what sort of birds you've encountered and where your favourite bird walk is located.

In order to spread the word about the Ramblers' Association and promote our work and walking groups to a wider audience, we're hoping to run a joint article with the RSPB in walk magazine and Birds magazine. We'd like to feature examples of how people get more out of walking by including bird watching on their walks. It doesn't necessarily have to be a serious hobby, even if you just partake in the occasional bit of bird spotting during particular seasons this is of interest to us. We're trying to get in touch with any Ramblers' Association members who are also supporters of the RSPB.

If you can help us out, or you know another Ramblers' member who can, please get in touch with Ruth at [ruthw@ramblers.org.uk](mailto:ruthw@ramblers.org.uk) with details

## Committee Quarter

Our Webmaster, Wiebina Heesterman talks to Footnotes.



Readers of *Footnotes* may be interested to note that the Birmingham Ramblers group has a new website address at [www.birminghamramblers.org.uk](http://www.birminghamramblers.org.uk). The old site is still accessible at the moment, but will be closed down in due course.

Our webmaster is Wiebina Heesterman. She has managed the site since its inception and does all the development and updating required. One of the things a website must do for its living is to attract people browsing the web. I asked

Wiebina how many 'hits' the new website has been receiving.

"Developing the new website to run it in parallel with the old one in this case implied copying exactly the same pages as on the old website to the new location, apart from the contact form, which uses a different program from the old website.

"The most recent set of statis-

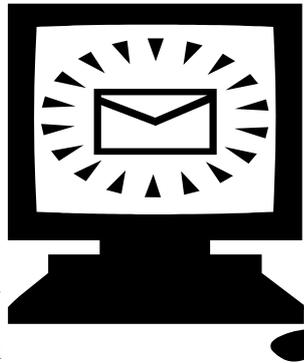
tics for September show 207 hits for the homepage, 82 for the programme and 34 for the 'Walks for the Public' page. But the entry 'Usage by Country' gives 35% for 'US Commercial', i.e. webcrawler thingies."

Our readers may be interested in the statistics you provide to the monthly committee meetings. Can you tell us what kind of information you are able to glean from hits on the website?

"As we have two websites running in parallel, I have to consult two sets of statistics. Those on the old website are far easier to

understand: I tend to check how many visits

the main pages get each month, for instance, in July this year, 76 people logged into the homepage, 71 had a look at the programme and 138 at the 'Walks for the Public' page, and I say *people* on purpose, as I get the impression that these statistics refer to actual visits from people in contrast with the new website, which clearly logs visits





from so-called webcrawlers, computer programs that log different websites. Why would there otherwise be an entry “crawl-66-249-73-219.googlebot.com”? For July statistics for the <http://www.birminghamramblers.org.uk> website logged 34 visits to the homepage, 12 to the programme and none to the “Walks for the Public” page. However, there are really too many statistics, referring to so many ‘hits’, ‘files’ and ‘visits’ – but what is the difference? Your guess is as good as mine!”

Website hosting companies often provide software to make the development of a website relatively painless, but do you find that a familiarity with the hypertext language a useful tool to design a website or add in special graphics/forms etc?

“Both the old webhost and the new one provide editing tools,

however, I already had a hypertext program, which I use to edit webpages on my own computer, and which allows me to make links with photos and graphics. This means that the website exists in a sense on my notebook, and that I can test all the links without logging in to the Internet. If you are editing tools by the webhost, it means that it has all to be done online. Once I am happy with one or more changed pages, I can go on the Internet, log in with a special password and transfer them to the right place.

Finally, have you a favourite walking area in the UK or abroad?

“That has to be the Pembroke-shire coast path – we try to get there at least once a year. However, walking in the Malverns is great too, or along Birmingham’s canals perhaps ..?” ■

### Message from Little Bill.

Regular Sunday and Wednesday walkers will remember the two walks in Bill Hughes’ honour earlier this year, a midweek walk to Waseley Country Park and a Sunday on Hergest Ridge, both in May. Bill had celebrated his 90th birthday on April 21st. Bill sent us this letter:-

I would like to thank, through *Footnotes*, all members for their gifts, cards and wishes for the event on 21st April; with special thanks to organisers and leaders of the celebratory rambles. The weather being so kind, all made for an unforgettable occasion – thanks to everyone, *Bill*.

## Folklore under foot

David Sutton

As we walk the picturesque countryside around the Midlands, we encounter historic buildings and churches, archaeology, geology, and so on. But there are things lesser known that do not have the solidity of the history books or rocks or landscape...

Devilish works were afoot in the Lickey Hills, where we have had several Wednesday walks in recent programmes. It's said that the Devil and his huntsman tracked wild boar by night on the Lickey Hills. Mounted on white bulls, they ran with a pack of hounds that were kennelled at Halesowen. During these hunts the sky was haunted by the Seven Whistlers, which were thought to be seven of these hounds... Or perhaps they might have been the six birds of fate in search of their missing companion, which if found heralded the end of the world...

In the Malverns, beware Raggedstone Hill, for it is said that it will bring misfortune on any who fall under its shadow. This superstition began in the Middle Ages, with the death of a monk from a nearby priory. This monk had to climb up Raggedstone Hill every day on his hands and knees, as penance

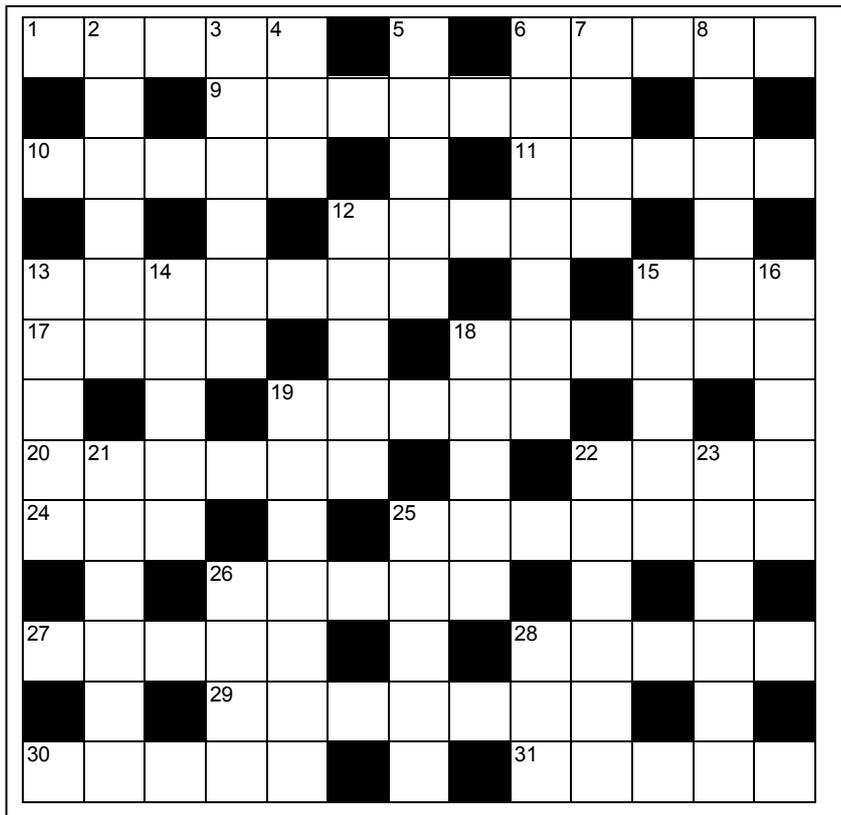
for some misdeed. When his hands and knees were open, festering wounds and his strength was sapped, he cursed his persecutors, crying "May all upon whom the shadow of this stone falls die untimely as I do." At which point he fell dead.

The famous iron working trade in Alcester, before the Norman Conquest, was said to have died out in an unusual way. The blacksmiths worked every day, including Sunday, and were reprimanded for this by St. Egwin, Bishop of Worcester. The smiths continued to work on the Sabbath and hammered ever more loudly and sang, to drown the Bishop's voice. St. Egwin then cursed them and they all grew tails. The smiths were so ashamed of their new adornments they would not meet their customers... and their trade died out.

St. Egwin reappears when the devil threw a huge clod of earth at the new abbey at Evesham. Luckily the bishop was watching and his prayers were answered. The missile was stopped from destroying the abbey, and it fell to the ground and became Meon Hill. ■



Prize Crossword—  
Win a Birmingham Ramblers' Embroidered Badge



**Across**

1. Waste moisture while walking fast? (5)
6. Not recommended for rambling, sounding hereditary (5).
9. You, me, or a musical one from Manchester way (7).
10. A noisy gulp of beer results in a slur presumably (5).
11. Although possibly foetid, always take in rivers such as these (5).
12. Potassium, nickel, iron combine to produce something sharp (5).
13. By doing this, the waiter will give us one, sometimes helping (7).
15. A right card, this one (3).
17. Admired on a walk, put in your boot afterwards, or maybe at Christmas (4).
18. The first part of our toughest walks (6).

- 19. If all is changed, beat it! (5).
- 20. A short walk to be found from this bistro, Llangollen (6).
- 22. A convoluted cone at one time (4).
- 24. No conservative history will provide the answer to ownership (3).
- 25. Take cover from this harsh Elterwater weather (7).
- 26. Dick Barton was special (5).
- 27. Human existence? (5).
- 28. Available, but disabled – help? (5).
- 29. Is there pate in that pot? (7).
- 30. Enquired about a desk (5).
- 31. Bane of our society, or its cure? (5).

Down

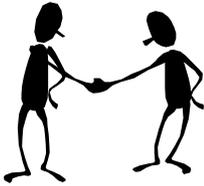
- 2. A 9 is a 2, but a 2 isn't necessarily a 9 (6).
- 3. A 2 or a 9 will get there in the end (6).
- 4. Pat on the back? (3).
- 5. Go off with this for a cracking start (1,4).
- 6. Will high speed water travel frustrate the airlines? (7).
- 7. A great lake for nesting, seemingly (4).
- 8. This ace nun will describe the subtle difference between 2 and 9 (6).
- 12. Is this hill in Cannock? No, Llangollen (5).
- 13. Put it away from Ash St.(5)
- 14. Brings up at the back?(5)
- 15. Was Dick Barton also one of these? James Bond was (1,4).
- 16. Compound from trees (5).
- 18. Which way to roam? The crow gives us the answer (5).
- 19. Tired out, but we've seen the signals (7).
- 21. Big cats run straighter, but miss the hart (6).
- 22. What the dickens? Twist its tail!
- 23. Giving in to the Wimbledon choice, it sounds (6).
- 25. What's that I hear? On the coach after the walk usually (5).
- 26. A bet that this volcano is changing – neat! (4).
- 28. Dan is included, even if he has changed (3).

Send your completed crossword to *Footnotes*, 194 Station Road, Kings Heath, Birmingham, B14 7TE, by the closing date of 15th January 2008. The first correct entry 'out of the hat' will win one of our embroidered badges.

NAME \_\_\_\_\_ ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



## Just to let you know...

### Pat Holmes on the Public Walks & Mentoring

#### PUBLIC WALKS:

**B**egun as an experiment in January 2005, we have continued to lead the once-a-month, public transport, 5 mile walks. Up to October 2007 we have had a total of 280 public attendances, of which 145 were first time attendees.

The walks are also popular with City of Birmingham members, especially those who cannot walk on Sundays, or who don't drive, or who find the Sunday mileages getting too much.

Although the primary aim is to introduce non-walkers to walking and to lure back former walkers, we are gratified if anyone wants to join the RA, and especially if they wish to become a member of the City of Birmingham Group. Up to September twenty four new members have joined from the Public Walks, some finding Saturdays enough, some joining the coach on Sundays and doing the C, B, and even A walks, and two or three even joining the Ridges & Tops.

Now we have moved into a new era. In October, two new converts led the Public Walk from Blakedown to Churchill, and we do have other converts in the pipeline. This really does give the committee a lot of

satisfaction and we would like to thank Averill and Arthur, and for next year Kathleen and Kris, for taking the next step in walking – that of map reading and leading, and we would also like to thank all members who have given their time so cheerfully to recce and lead the Saturday walks. They have all been most enjoyable. (We are looking for offers for next year now!)

#### MENTORS AND SHADOWS:

**R**ecently a notice has been circulated round the Sunday coach with the purpose of encouraging the participation of more members into leading. Without leaders the group folds. Recognising that some folk might find leading a walk too traumatic on their own we are suggesting a scheme of *mentoring* and *shadowing*.

**Mentors:** We now have a list of experienced leaders willing to share their expertise and to pair up with a 'shadow'. This would mean the mentor working with the shadow on the mentor's next lead i.e. map reading, deciding which foot-paths would be suitable, guessing where the coach would drop the parties off, etc., then testing it all out by recceing the



walk together and, finally, by having the shadow walk at the front with the leader on the day of the lead. All good experience.

**Shadows:** When the shadow feels more confident the roles will be reversed. The shadow and mentor again work out the walk together and receive it, but on the day of the lead the shadow leads with the mentor at

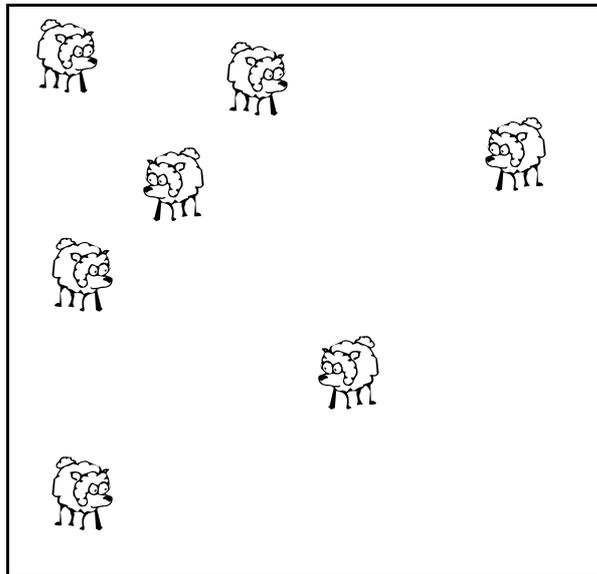
hand in case of advice. In this way a new leader won't be thrown in at the deep end. The current list of members offering to mentor, and the list of people wishing to be initiated into leading (shadows), is with the Programme Secretary, Michael Bird. Why not add your name to one of them? ■



### Puzzle Corner—The Sheep Pen

From Libby Hunt

A farmer has just three straight fences to divide his field of sheep below into individual pens. Where did he place the fences? Libby says this took her eight year old son Oliver 15 seconds to solve—see if you can beat that.



## Heard on rambles...

Lots of giggling was to be heard as Sheila attempted to understand a sign that read "Heisrisen". Mmm. Well, it was Easter and the sign was located in church grounds. But perhaps the lack of spacing between the words didn't help!



Overheard at Bourton after the floods: "We called the dog and he came swimming across the living room."

*(Please send **your** Heard on Rambles to the editor).*

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### **Contribute to Footnotes:**

Your walking experiences, general articles associated with walking and the countryside, letters, 'Heard on rambles', poetry and other contributions are **most** welcome. Please contact me:

David Sutton, 194 Station Road, Kings Heath, Birmingham, B14 7TE.  
(Phone: 0121 444 6188). Email at: david.sutton986@btinternet.com.

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