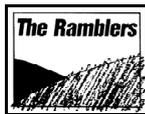


**THE RAMBLERS' ASSOCIATION
CITY OF BIRMINGHAM GROUP**

Registered Charity No. 1093577

Spring 2008
Issue No. 53



Footnotes



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Muddy Meanderings

Editorial by David Sutton

The joys of reconnoitring a walk! Sunshine, wide, smooth bridle paths, galvanised kissing gates, well-signposted way-markers. Well, we can dream... The reality for me recently for the Bidford Wednesday walk was flooding and mud and a closed pub – luckily just for the day of the recce! But the walk is listed in the programme, so something has to be done. A new car park had to be found and alternative routes recce'd, just in case the water level had not dropped sufficiently by the time of the actual group walk. It's a strange sight, seeing your neatly highlighted paths on the Explorer map occupied 'on the ground' by swans and ducks because the river Avon



is unable to accommodate what nature had thrown from the skies in the past few weeks. And strange too to see, from a bit of a ridge, fields swamped; the line of the river only guessed at by partly submerged trees and hedgerows.

We are giving our 'Committee Quarter' series of interviews on committee members a miss this issue. Instead is a report on our recent annual general meeting.

The winner of our Winter Crossword competition in the last issue, was member Ann Sargent, who has received one of our Birmingham group embroidered badges. Congratulations to her! ■

Millets

Social Scene 2007

From our Social Secretary, Derek Garfield

Friday 1st February saw the more sporty of our number descending on The Selly Park Tavern for a highlight of the country's sporting calendar, namely the Birmingham Ramblers **Skittles**

Evening. If you were not fortunate enough to get tickets, you may well have seen it on mainstream television. There was some fine skittling, Ray (The Power) Weekes trotting out the individual winner and Aart and Wiebina Heesterman proving that you can't be good at everything. (Wiebina *is* in fact very good at being a Webmaster). Thanks to Roger and Bob for their invaluable help and Val and Iola on Scoreboard.

At the time of writing, we are looking forward to **The Group Annual Dinner** on 29th February at The Edgbaston Golf Club and hoping it will be as successful as



last year.

Our first **Walk Day Out** of the year, on Saturday 19th April, sees us taking off for RAF Cosford and their fascinating Museum. There will be the usual morning walk and

I have been persuaded yet again to go to a pub for lunch. RAF Cosford is enjoyable for all ages and sexes. Initial interest is high so please book promptly; Booking Forms are now available on the coach or directly from me.

And finally, a date for your diary. Our **Annual Day Out** is on Saturday 12th July. We will be going to Windsor, visiting the castle and hopefully doing a cruise on the Thames.

And finally, finally may I remind you that our **20% off day at Millets** is on Thursday 8th May. ■



YOU! could hold the key to the future of the Warwickshire Area. *Fancy a challenge?*

You may not be interested in organising Group activities such as walk programmes, but how about contributing at Area level?

From February 2009, the Area needs a new secretary to liaise with the London office of the Ramblers' Association and help keep an eye on the 12 Groups forming our Area. There are no volunteers for the post yet, and it may be that you could play a part. Unless a suitable candidate is identified in the next few months, the consequences for the Area would be quite serious. Give it some thought. Contact Michael Bird on 0121 705 1118.

Maps, Compasses, Walk Planning and Leading: Part 8—Development of skills—the Compass

Roger Gibbs

Readers of this page should by now be able to set the compass from the map or from the ground. If not, ask around unless you keep back copies of Footnotes. We'll now go into various ways in which the compass is used.

Setting the map to the ground

To align the map with the ground, simply place the compass on the map and rotate the two together until the *compass needle* (red end!) points to the top of the map. Ignore all parts of the compass except the needle. The map is then "orientated" and it should be possible to relate map features with those in view on the ground.

Showing the way to go

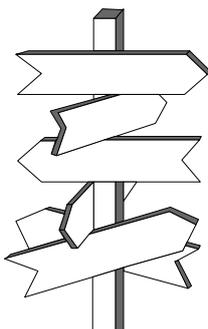
To follow any direction from the map, set the compass from the map (see previous *Footnotes* - part 4 - or ask), and follow the bearing, taking account of magnetic variation. For a map bearing of 115° , the compass bearing in the UK will be 118° or thereabouts depending on locality as defined on the map (difference *west*, compass *best*). In open country, when the path is not clear or your destination is not in view, line the *direction of travel arrow*, with a recognisable feature and walk toward that feature. Having reached it, repeat the procedure until you gain your objective.

Following a bearing in mist

In mist, features may not be visible. Hopefully you will have a companion who can go ahead and obey your instructions to align him/herself with the bearing sighting and act as your "visible feature" at the limit of visibility.

By-passing obstructions

If you come across an impassable area of wetland, or a steep drop for instance, plot a route on the map to by-pass it. For example, say you were walking north and came across an area of impassable bogland about 50 yards in diameter. Follow an easterly bearing for 60 yards, then turn onto the northerly bearing again until the bogland was passed. Now go 60 yards west and then regain your original bearing north.



Aiming "off"

In open country it may be necessary to take a bearing on a footbridge over a stream, or a gap in a wall. To avoid missing it due to inevitable small errors which do occur, a well known technique called "aiming off" can be employed. Set the compass to a point slightly to one side of the required feature (say $\frac{1}{4}$ inch on a 1:50,000 map which will equate to 176 yards). When you reach the stream or wall, you know the direction in which the

feature should lie – so follow the stream or wall until you come to it.

Taking bearings to locate a position

If you take bearings from two (or three) identifiable features, ideally at about 90° to each other, and then transfer the bearings onto the map (by pencil?), where the bearing lines cross should be your position. Taking bearings on a third feature usually produces an area of uncertainty known as a “Dutchman’s cap” within which the required location lies. This technique is not frequently used, except at

sea, but can be useful to confirm your position along a path or on open land (if features are visible).

Use of the romer

The graduated scale on the edge of the compass is used to measure linear distances and to measure accurate grid references between the gridlines.

The final section in this series will round up a few other ways to develop your skills. ■

For those who remember Jean Groves

Peter Groves has assembled an album of photographs of his late wife, which can be viewed on the web.

Log on to: www.flickr.com/photos/ourjean/

Peter emphasises that the spelling of “flickr” is deliberate and says click on the view as slide show option, top right. When the first photo appears, click on the large “I” in the centre. Don’t click on log in as this requires his password.

Peter and Jean were regular walkers and leaders in the group until time took its toll. Also Peter was our publisher for many years and his company (Meridian Books) publishes walking books to which several of our members have contributed.

**THE ORDNANCE SURVEY OUTDOORS SHOW
NEC, March 14-16**

With new and exciting features, celebrity speakers and the latest walking gear on display, the NEC is the place to be in March. Whether you enjoy a stroll on a Sunday afternoon or you’re a serious hill walker, you’ll find something to fuel your passion for walking at the Ordnance Survey Outdoors Show. Find out more at www.TheOutdoorsShow.co.uk.

AGM 2007 Summary

As all members of the Birmingham group are unable to attend the annual general meeting, it was thought that a summary of the last event might be of interest.

Chairman John Penny welcomed the 72 members and guests who attended the AGM, and gave an illustrated presentation covering the previous year's activities.

He identified the Group as one of over 400 in the Association, and the largest of twelve in the Warwickshire Area, and defined our four charitable objectives. Funding was reported as primarily from a grant from the RA via Warwickshire Area, based on an agreed budget, supported by a sponsorship of £1500 from Millets secured by Derek Garfield for the fourth year running. The main features of the year were then covered.

- There had been 47 coach rambles with 183 participants including 40 leaders who had led between one and six times each, but with a reduction in coach occupancy from 83% to 73%, probably because of poor weather.

- The Wednesday rambles were very well supported, to such an extent that the size of the party, the availability of car parking, and the increasing scarcity of suitable pubs were sometimes a concern.

- Walks had been held to commemorate Bill Hughes' 90th birthday and Joachim Auerbach's old school at Trench Hall in Shropshire.

- Six "Ridges and Tops" walks had been organised by Honor Dixon, all well supported.

- The Walk Days Out and Annual Day Out, organised by Derek Garfield and Ceri Dittrich, had all been well supported, and Derek had arranged five other social events.

- John thanked Steve Brittain and Andy Bates for organising the 'YHA' weekends and reported that the Cheddar YHA booking for Easter 2008 had been cancelled but that Steve had managed to move most participants into B&B accommodation.

- Libby Hunt was organising the Group holiday for 2008 in Sicily in addition to the annual Lakes weekend. The 2006 Lakes trip had been to Monk Coniston, where the usual variety of walks had been offered. John reported that Derwent Bank had been the 2007 choice, and had been booked until 2010.

- Steve Brittain and Pat Bird had organised well-supported Christmas Lunch rambles for Sunday and Wednesday walkers respectively, and Derek Garfield had arranged the fully attended Group Annual Dinner at Edgbaston Golf Club.

- The Chairman then described RA campaign activities of the Group. Pat Holmes was continuing to have success with the "Walks for the Public" on Saturdays once a month. These walks had resulted in 25 new members since 2005 from a total of 300 "members of the public", of which 150 had been first time walkers.

- The annual joint ramble with

the Meerkats, organised by Steve Brittain and Horace Marsh, had been as successful as ever, but the “Use Your Paths” public walk, arranged so thoroughly by Pat Holmes, had been disappointing because of bad weather.

- Roger Gibbs had organised the Group Task Force of four or five stalwarts who had worked in conjunction with Warwickshire County Council.
- John reported a lack of progress with the Birmingham Definitive Map, but added that Bob Hunt would be reporting more fully.
- A BBC ‘Spring Watch’ Festival had been organised by the City Council for the first time in Cannon Hill Park. The Group was invited to attend and established a display stand for this very successful event.
- Our website, designed and maintained by Wiebina Heesterman was reported as a major source of information for the public.
- The reduction in membership was of concern. From a peak of 744 in 2003, numbers had dropped to 662 in September 2007.
- Finally, the Chairman thanked all the committee members and in addition gave his thanks to all others who provide invaluable help.

Phil Barnes asked whether the reasons for the decline in membership had been analysed. John replied that the fall in membership was in line with the national trend, which the RA was addressing centrally.

Sandra Sutton then presented the Group

Accounts which had been circulated at the meeting.

For the first time, coach rambles had made a loss, but this was offset by the Millets’ grant and a donation, which had resulted in a small surplus on the year of £8.03.

Sandra then pointed out that the social account must be self-funding, and was pleased to record a surplus of £430.03.

Krystyna Jarmolkiewicz suggested that asking walkers for a nominal £1 to cover tips and leaders’ expenses could reduce coach deficits. Sandra explained that this had been discussed by the committee, but had not been introduced because it was effectively a coach price increase, which we are trying to avoid.

Henry Oxenham pointed out that the break-even number on the coach used to be 37, and that he thought this number must have been increased. Sandra agreed that it had, but with rising coach costs, we were striving to avoid an increase to £9. It was feared that this would have a negative effect on numbers.

Krystyna then asked whether coach rambles on Saturdays may prove more popular, but it was pointed out that car-parking charges would be a deterrent.

Janet Knowles asked if having just one Sunday coach a fortnight might improve numbers, to which Sandra replied that this had been considered in committee but that general opinion had been against such a move.

Lawrence Cross asked whether the Millets take-over by Blacks had affected the grant, but Sandra assured the meeting that it hadn’t so far.



Ray Pollard, as auditor, assured the AGM that Sandra was doing an excellent job as Treasurer. He also asked why the publicity costs had risen so much.

Sandra explained that several factors were involved. Advertising for public walks, the "Use Your Paths" event, the Spring Watch Festival, the banner for use at publicity events (as displayed at the meeting), a double order for programmes and Footnotes, and the cost of the new web-host had all contributed to the increase, which was targeting new members.

The accounts were adopted by the meeting.

Bob Hunt gave an update on progress with the Definitive Map and Statement (DMS). Despite assurances concerning funding, there had seemed to be an "air of despondency" at the Highways ROW Office, and Bob suggested that it was now appropriate for Stephen Walsgrove to put in about 300 footpath claims, which he had researched. The latest update from Cllr Len Gregory had been received via an email from Doug Hyde, assuring a commitment for completion of the DMS by 2026, and the news that the Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP) would go forward for adoption by the Council in December.

Bob's claim for the recognition of the Harborne Walkway had finally resulted in

its classification as a "Restricted By-way".

Finally, Bob explained that the first "Gating Order" had been passed in Shard End. He feared that this could be the first of many.

Pat Holmes asked about the times that gates are locked. Bob said that this would be defined on the order, but that closure responsibility was a problem.

Henry Oxenham described a leaflet he had seen concerning the condition of paths in the Weoley Castle area. Bob replied that the Highways Department were now aware of their responsibilities for footpaths, and had prepared documentation to show their plans.

Bob then expressed his thanks to Fred Willits, Group Footpath Consultant, for his help during the year.

Officers, committee, and the auditor were then voted in and Phil Barnes, on behalf of the Group, expressed his appreciation and thanks to John and the team for the year's work.

John closed the meeting by thanking everyone for attending, and asked that all should ensure that they had signed the attendance record. He gave particular thanks to Janet Gibbs, Sylvia Hickman, and the team for preparing the buffet supper. ■

NOTICE: POSTAGE ON THE DECEMBER MAILING

A few members may have been charged for a postage underpayment when their December mailing was delivered. While most were delivered without any problems, and we do not understand why some incurred a surcharge, please accept our apologies if you were one of the unlucky few who had to pay extra to receive your copies of our publications.

Heard on rambles...

Picking and eating blackberries on a roadside walk a member was heard to say, "There's a distinct taste of unleaded." To which came the swift reply, "How can you tell the difference



between unleaded and diesel?"

David: "I didn't know they had Titanic in this pub!"
Steve: "Do they serve ice with it?"

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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.

Please Note: Discounts shown in this publication are wholly at the discretion of the retailer and are not an entitlement to RA members.