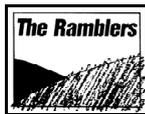


THE RAMBLERS' ASSOCIATION
CITY OF BIRMINGHAM GROUP

Registered Charity No. 1093577

Summer 2008
Issue No. 54



Footnotes



Inside this issue:

Social Scene	2
Walks Planning & Leading	3
Committee Quarter Interview	4
Ridges & Tops	6
Seen on Rambles	6
Climate Change Festival	7
Definitive Map for Birmingham	7

Muddy Meanderings

Editorial by David Sutton

It has been a busy time for the group committee. During the early part of Spring we have had to think about the July-December walks programme. This entails our programme organisers finding leaders for around a dozen Wednesday walks and at least two leaders for each of the twenty plus Sunday walks. Add to this the monthly Saturday Walks for the public and sundry other social events. The result of all this backroom work can be seen if you take a look at the Programme sent out with this issue of *Footnotes*.

And then this year there's Birmingham's week-long Climate Change Festival, which required our publicity officer to scout for volunteers to man the stand and lead city



centre walks. You can read about the planning for this this on page 7.

And then there's the Birmingham Definitive Map survey, which is ongoing and requires volunteers to find and check the path on the ground and complete a survey sheet—see page 7 for more details from our Footpath Secretary. ■

Charles Dickens said, "The sum of the whole is this: walk and be happy; walk and be healthy. The best way to lengthen out our days is to walk steadily and with a purpose". And Lao tzu the ancient Chinese philosopher said most succinctly, "Meandering leads to perfection". Happy Summer rambling! ■

Millets

Social Scene 2008

From our Social Secretary, Derek Garfield

The **Group Annual Dinner** took place on Friday 29th February at Edgbaston Golf Club and was enjoyed by a large party of members and friends. This year, our After Dinner Speaker was former MP and distinguished Birmingham businessman Mr Anthony Coombs who regaled us with some entertaining stories of backstage life in The Houses of Parliament. The food and service was very good and I think all who attended had a good time.

Saturday 26th April was the date for our first **Walk Day Out** of the year and saw a full coach heading out towards the village of Beckbury for a walk and lunch before touching down at the RAF Museum at Cosford. As soon as we picked up our Guides, all was plane sailing and hope-



fully all who attended can speak with some authority about Vulcans and Vampires and other birds of prey.

Our **Annual Day Out** is scheduled for 12th July when we will be visiting **Royal Windsor** for a right royal day although there is some doubt as to whether Her Majesty will be personally welcoming us. It nevertheless promises to be a full and interesting day what with the Town, The Castle and the River. Booking Forms are now available on the coach or direct from me.

And finally, a date for your diary for our second **Walk Day Out** which will be on Saturday 20th September, venue as yet undecided. ■

Yours socially
Derek Garfield

Meerkats Ramble 2008

This year's ramble will be on **Saturday 28th June**. We are meeting at the Brindley Visitors Centre on Cannock Chase, at 10.30am (OS Explorer Map 244 (6), Landranger 128, GR 005 152). The ramble will be about five miles long with the usual pub lunch at the end. The walk will be led by Horace Marsh. If you know of anyone with a disability who would like to take part, please contact Steve Brittain on 0121 749 1227 for more information.

Contribute to Footnotes: Your walking experiences, general articles associated with walking and the countryside, letters, 'Heard on rambles', poetry and other contributions are welcome. David Sutton, 194 Station Road, Kings Heath, Birmingham, B14 7TE. (Phone: 0121 444 6188). Email at: david.sutton986@btinternet.com.

Maps, Compasses, Walk Planning and Leading: Part 9—Development of skills

Roger Gibbs

This series of short articles has hopefully given encouragement to pick up a map, follow it on a ramble, use a compass, prepare a walk, and ultimately lead a walk. But the consistent message has been that practice in the field is the only way to learn.

Enthusiasts will develop their skills in mountains and open country where navigation is more demanding and can be more satisfying. The CROW act gave us access to large areas of mountain and moorland which had previously been out of bounds; evidence of paths may be lacking as will waymarks, and hence the need to read maps and use a compass becomes essential.

In such areas, there is a need to be aware of other available help:

- Naismith's Rule – in the mountains the time taken depends as much on the height climbed as the distance. Naismith's Rule takes account of this – allow 1 hour for every 3 miles plus half an hour for every 1,000 feet of ascent (Somewhat flattering for us?)
- Weather checks – a local weather forecast is usually available in hill walking areas, needed for planning in case of poor weather.
- Emergency telephone numbers to call for help if the worst should happen,

for instance Mountain Rescue.

- A "GPS receiver" – global positioning system using satellites to pinpoint your position on the earth's surface to an accuracy of an eight figure grid reference, i.e. within ten metres.

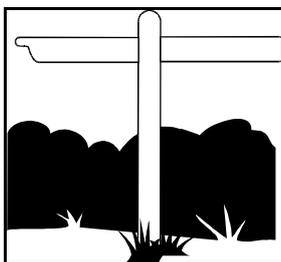
These units are becoming more popular at around £100, and will give accurate speed and distance information, indicate the direction to take to a defined point, record the route taken,

plot a route, etc. Our Group has GPS units for loan, either for training purposes or for aids to navigation if leading for us in the Lakes for example.

- An interactive mountain navigation training CD ROM is available for loan on request to Roger Gibbs.

But before all that, be sure that you are comfortable with map and compass in our more local areas and that you can put your skills to good use in planning and, hopefully leading, a walk. There are books available for loan from our Group library to help in learning more. Recommended are *Navigation and Leadership – a Manual for walkers*, published by the RA, and *OS Map Skills* from the Ordnance Survey.

At the time of writing there are free courses offered by Solihull College ("Routes and Rambles"), and for the



enthusiast there are weekend schools at which bronze, silver, and gold achievement awards can be earned, for which Group funds are available.

With so many opportunities for

learning and developing new skills, our walks programme should include new leaders for every issue. Why not include your name next time? ■

Committee Quarter

Footpath Secretary—Bob Hunt

The Birmingham Ramblers' Footpath Secretary is Bob Hunt. It's a role that, for our area, combines both the outdoor activity we all enjoy, along with poring over maps and manuscripts, texts and planning proposals. *So I asked Bob if he could give us a brief description of his role and the tasks he undertakes on our behalf.*

"The Ramblers' Association campaigns to open up all public rights of way in England and Wales and to ensure that the existing rights of way network is protected, as part of or national heritage, and is available for everyone to use.

To this end each Area and Group of the RA has its own Footpath Secretary. Birmingham has three Footpath Secretaries: John Knight looks after Sutton Coldfield, John Chapman is in charge in South Birmingham and I took over from Fred Willits in November 2003 to oversee The City of Birmingham.

Birmingham has over 2,500 public rights of way, most of which we have recorded on a computer database which was compiled by Fred and computerised by

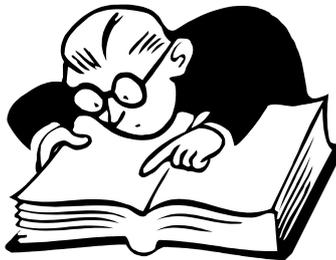
Tony Holmes.

The task of a Footpath Secretary in an urban environment is rather different to that of a rural Group. Much of the work I do centres around studying planning applications and investigating proposals to close or divert paths for redevelopment. In some cases the new development may give us more

and better paths but this is not always so. We have to be aware that an objection to a path change may hold up a development for many months and could lead to a public inquiry, so we don't make objections without being sure of our

case. Local Footpath Secretaries work closely with the Area Footpath Secretary, Steven Walsgrove, who is always available for help and advice and he will usually handle the objections we make."

The Definitive Map of Birmingham has been a challenge to push forward with the council. Do you think the Birmingham Ramblers' has been making headway and having an



influence on the council, to try and have public footpaths confirmed by the deadline.

“One big and continuing problem we have in Birmingham is the lack of a Definitive Map and Statement (DMS). Each Highway Authority, throughout the country, is required to produce a DMS. This is the legal documentation showing the existence of a public right of way (PRoW). Many of the problems we have with our PRoWs in Birmingham stem from the fact that there is no DMS.

The Birmingham Group continues to lobby the Council to produce the Map. We have had some success recently. The ‘Rights of Way Improvement Plan’, which the City has just published, recognises the need for the DMS and even gives a costing for its production. All we are waiting for now is for the Council to make the necessary funds available. In order to ‘help’ the City in this task Steven Wallsgrave is preparing to put in over 100 ‘claims’ These are detailed documentary evidence that an old path exists and ‘claiming’ it as a PRoW. The Authority has to process this claim and if there is no conflicting evidence the path has to be added to the DMS.

A few years ago I claimed ‘The Harborne Walkway’ and I hope that it will soon be declared as a PRoW. In this case defined as a ‘Restricted Byway’, this to enable it to be used by both walkers and cyclists. The route runs from Summerfield Park to Harborne, try it

sometime, a bit muddy in places but a lovely little walk.”

How often do you discover that queries about a public footpath lead to serious problems, such as blockages or, more seriously, building developments completely eradicating parts of a rights of way?

“A problem that Birmingham has, in common with most cities, is PRoWs being gated because of misuse and the difficulties this causes to local residents. So on the one hand we are working to expand and keep the network in good order but at the same time there are many people asking for the paths to be closed. I am also consulted on problems which our members encounter when they are walking out in the countryside. Footpaths blocked, difficult stiles, missing waymarkers and even aggressive animals. I can usually help by passing on the information to the footpath secretary for that particular area or by getting touch with the Local Authority Footpath Officer. So if you need advice on a local path or you are having problems with a path on a recci give me a call.” (See the current programme of walks for Bob’s number).

Finally, Bob, where is your favourite walking area?

“For local walks, I still think that the Clent Hills takes some beating. Further afield, I love coastal walking. Having spent some time in Pembrokeshire, especially around St. David’s Head, I think that if I had to choose a favourite area it would be here.” ■



Ridges and Tops

Peter Cummings

After thirty-five miles they staggered up to the peak of Corndon Hill and dropped, exhausted but fulfilled. At least, I hope they were, but that was back in the 60's when people were much fitter and harder to please. The walk or 'challenge', at it might be referred to nowadays, was devised by Michael Bird's father and included six Shropshire peaks over 1500 feet – although it was whispered that Corndon Hill is, strictly speaking, in Wales. For the final walk of last season's Ridges and Tops programme, we managed Corndon Hill and a few other ups and downs, were pleasantly tired and told each other so afterwards over a cup of tea in a peaceful pub in Brownlow. We were in the beautiful Shropshire hills, paying the third visit in a year to the Stiperstones by the Saturday and Sunday groups. A veteran walking friend says to me fre-

quently, "We are so fortunate to have such wonderful walking country so near to Birmingham."

It's true, of course, and Derbyshire, Shropshire and the Welsh Borders are seeing more of the Ridges and Tops group as we eschew the three-hour minibus marathons to the north and west. Having said that, there is no doubt that the moors, ridges and peaks of the Yorkshire Dales, Snowdonia and the Lakes still provide the ultimate uphill fix.

We shall be at it again this season already having completed the Staffordshire Ridges (March 29th), 'South Wales' Best Kept Secret', (April 19th) and forthcoming, my favourite, Snowdonia (17th May) and on until October. Come and join us but don't forget to book! (Contact Honor Dixon, on 0121 472 2286). ■



Photo credit: Ron Cohen

Seen on rambles...

In a change from our regular 'Heard on Rambles', this time a note of seriousness was considered to be appropriate. So here we offer a recent picture showing the importance of sticking to the path, using the map and compass responsibly and avoiding obstructions. Oh, and how to embarrass our secretary and treasurer! Sobriety forbids us from revealing their names! ■

Climate Change Festival Report

Group Publicity – Ceri Dittrich

At the time of writing I am preparing for the Climate Change Festival, which will have taken place by now. Birmingham is one of seven cities internationally chosen to host this event. The committee recognised that it may be a controversial issue but decided it was an unmissable opportunity to have a free stand at such a high-profile event. Organised by Birmingham City Council each day is to have its own theme. We plan to staff our stand on these June dates : 3 – Schools Day, 4 – Transport & Green Technology, 5 – World Environment Day, 8 – Built Environment Day. In addition to having a stand, on the last day we will be offering some short city-centre walks to the public. We hope that the publicity given to the event will help us to attract more people to walking and in particular to joining our Group.

I am grateful to the Get Walking Keep Walking Team, locally based from Central Office, for taking responsibility for the first weekend (31May & 1 June)

because I will be returning from the Group's trip to Sicily then. I am most grateful to the 21 members (at the last count) who have agreed to help. They deserve a mention in despatches – Phil Barnes, Alan Barker, Pat Holmes, Margaret Norcott, Jim Sutton, Brendan Behan, Joan & Henry Oxenham, Chris Wood, Bob & Libby Hunt, Derek Garfield, David Sutton, Gil Humphreys, Iola Kavanagh, Maddy Bennett, John Smith, Barbara Carlton and John Hawkins. Aart & Wiebina Heesterman will be helping the GWKW team as may other members. And all without twisting a single arm! Many thanks – Ceri Dittrich.

NEW POSTER

To spiff up our image the committee agreed we needed our own eye-catching poster design on which to advertise our activities. I would like to offer our thanks to JANE HARTLEY for her professional expertise. You will see her design when we advertise our new programme and future events in libraries, community centres, visitors' centres etc from July onwards. ■

Toward the Definitive Map for Birmingham

Footpath Secretary – Bob Hunt

As part of our ongoing campaign to persuade the City Council to produce a Definitive Map & Statement (DMS) for the footpaths of Birmingham, Steven Wallsgrove (the Area Footpath Secretary) has researched all the ancient (pre 1949) paths in the city. The plan is to

make 'claims' for all these paths. This will oblige the City to investigate each of these 'claims' and if proven then they will have to be put on the DMS.

Before Steven can proceed, he needs to gather evidence as to what is actually on the ground and not just on an old

map! This is where you might be able to help.

I have over 100 paths to check out and I would welcome some help. It is a fairly simple task, find the path, which is marked on a map I will provide, and fill in a straightforward survey sheet.

Several volunteers have made a good

start but I still have fourteen paths in the Bartley Green area, five in the Sheldon area, ten in Tile Cross - Garretts Green area and four in the Brandwood End - Highter's Heath region. Local knowledge of these areas is not necessary and surveying even one path would be most helpful.

Bob Hunt, Footpath Secretary. ■

Millets

Millets have a super selection of clothing, equipment, footwear and accessories for all your needs for leisure, camping to trekking or travelling. Our staff are always on hand to help with your requirements. You can find us at:

35 Union Street, Birmingham B2 4SR
Tel: 0121 6431496

10% Discount

**for the Ramblers Association
City of Birmingham Group**

On full price merchandise on production of a valid club members card

The Ramblers' Association is a company limited by guarantee, registered in England and Wales. Company registration number: 4458492. Registered Charity in England and Wales number: 1093577. Registered office: 2nd floor, Camelford House, 87-90 Albert Embankment, London SE1 7TW.

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