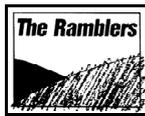


**THE RAMBLERS' ASSOCIATION
CITY OF BIRMINGHAM GROUP**

Registered Charity No. 1093577

Winter 2008
Issue No. 56



Footnotes



*A very happy Christmas & New
Year to all City of Birmingham
Group members!*



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Muddy Meanderings

Editorial by David Sutton

Well, another year draws to a close and another successful and productive year for our group. Our extensive walks diary has included regular weekly Sunday and bi-weekly Wednesday walking programme as well as the monthly Saturday Public Walks initiative and the Ridges and Tops hikes. As if that were not enough, our social secretary has taken us Pub skittling, invited us to our Annual Dinner, enabled us to visit to the RAF museum at Cosford, organised a royal annual day out to Windsor and a day at Trentham Gardens



and the Monkey Forest!

Not enough, you ask?

Well, we can add the annual holiday to Sicily, YHA weekends to Cheddar and Melrose and forthcoming as I write, a weekend in the Lake District and two social Christmas Rambles. And the whole process starts again, as you'll see from the programme for the first six months of 2009 included in this mailing.

A big thankyou to all members and committee who have worked so hard this year!

■

Millets

Social Scene 2008

From our Social Secretary, Derek Garfield

Our final WALK DAY OUT of the year, on Saturday 20th September, saw us journeying up the ever delightful M6 to the Stoke on Trent area where we visited the Trentham Estate. Here we either visited the Monkey Forest or were led on an interesting walk by Ceri. After lunch, the whole party then visited the wonderful Italianate gardens, cruised on the lake or possibly enjoyed a bracing ride on the miniature railway. Quite an action packed day in a mild sort of fashion. My thanks as always to Ceri for her ever valuable input.

Our SOCIAL EVENING featuring Millets on 14th October was quite well patronised and those that were there at the end enjoyed a fine drink at Bennets.

All the usual Christmas activities will be



upon us before we have time to say Ba Humbug and we can then look forward to the GROUP ANNUAL DINNER on Friday 27th February for which we return to The Eaton Hotel on the Hagley Rd. Put this

date in your 2009 planner now and refuse any other invitations for that evening! I can tell you we will be having a particularly interesting after dinner entertainment.

On a personal note, may I thank you all so much for your messages of sympathy on the quite unexpected death of Peggy. Your wonderful support at her funeral was, believe me, very much appreciated.

Happy Christmas.
Socially yours, Derek Garfield

Birmingham Arts Fest

Report from Ceri Dittrich

In mid-September Birmingham City Council held its annual Arts Fest and asked us to provide some walks leaders on 13th and 14th to guide members of the public unfamiliar with the city centre around the various venues being used for events.

I am grateful to Tony Holmes, Jean

Moss, Trevor Robinson and Wiebina Heesterman for being leaders. There was little take up from the public but I hope the leaders don't think their efforts were in vain because in return for their volunteering the Arts Fest organiser agreed to take several dozen of our publicity flyers

(Continued on page 6)

A Cretan coach ramble

By Christine Wood

Our last minute holiday destination was dictated by availability of flights from Birmingham airport rather than by walking opportunities. Thus we found ourselves on a late night flight for Crete on Friday 5th October. The holiday did not get off to an auspicious start. Around mid-day on that Friday, with careless disregard of all the safety precautions I impress upon the rest of the family, I managed to impale a sharp knife in my left hand. After spending a few hours in A & E, accompanied by Adam, I flung a motley collection of clothes and medical equipment into a suitcase and we set off for the airport, not in the most calm and optimistic frame of mind.

However, we were not disappointed in Crete. The weather was lovely, the hotel comfortable enough and the island had more that was interesting and scenically attractive than we could possibly explore in a week. In addition, we quickly discovered that there was a famous gorge walk. Our Cosmos Rep regarded it as quite challenging so we had to go.

The Samaria Gorge walk is 13 kilometres with a further 3 kilometres down to the village at the end, a total of 16km which, with our mathematical skills, we readily converted to 10 miles. We booked for Monday. It was to be a long day, starting with a 6.30 am coach pick up and a return scheduled for 6.30

pm. Having booked a packed lunch and a crack-of-dawn breakfast, we were only a little disconcerted when a note appeared under our door quite late on Sunday evening informing us of an earlier pick up at 6.10 am.

The Samaria Gorge, the largest in Europe according to our guide book, starts in the White Mountains at a height of 3,352 metres. The coach journey through the mountains is spectacular – and hair-raising, particularly in the face of on-coming vehicles. Entry is by tripartite ticket, one section to get in, one to check out and one to keep as a souvenir. Five hundred people went through the gorge on the day we were there. It was an unusual experience to walk with so many ahead and behind. Fortunately there were no stiles and even some sections where the other 498 disappeared completely from view.

The gorge itself is lovely. The terrain is varied with steep, rough, rocky, dirt tracks, areas of smooth-stoned river bed and stepping stones across the river. Sometimes the sides of the gorge form high stone walls.

There are ancient shady Cyprus trees, olive trees that were introduced when part of the gorge was inhabited, and a fair amount of vegetation surviving in the rocky terrain. An endangered species of wild goat, peculiar to Crete, called the agrimi or kri-kri, lives in the White

Mountains. It was easy to spot in the Samaria Gorge; several had assembled in the abandoned village, also called Samaria, where there is a warden's post and large picnic area. The goats intimated that they would be happy to share a picnic though they were not as enthusiastic or numerous as the wasps that appeared as soon as we unwrapped the first sandwich.

Straying from the trail is not really a viable option. Most of the way it is well defined, sometimes by stone cairns to which numerous tourists have not very helpfully added cairns of their own. The gorge, of course, follows the river bed. There are stopping points with fountains through which the clear, pure river water runs, so that carrying large quantities of liquid is unnecessary. It is difficult to get lost though possible, as I discovered, to get on to the wrong side of the river. At the time I was following some fit young Germans. It was only when they started leaping from rock to rock, with an agility I couldn't hope to emulate, I realised that I must have missed the stepping stones. However, it was easy to recover. I retraced my steps until, inevitably, I met someone else. Together we found the correct route.

The start of the walk has wooden balustrades and the path drops steeply by 1,000m in the first 3 kilometres. Our guide, of whom we saw nothing in the

gorge, told us to expect several days of aching muscles resulting from the walk. Adam and I took little notice. After all we're seasoned walkers, aren't we? - and habitual 'A' walkers at that. However, our smugness was unjustified. Our calf muscles reminded us of the steep descent for several days afterwards.

As we went through, the walk didn't seem particularly demanding though we could appreciate that it would be quite gruelling in the heat of the summer sun.

From the gorge, the track leads down to the beach and the crystal clear Sea of

Libya at Agia Roumeli. There are no roads out of Agia Roumeli. The way out is by ferry to Chora Sfakion where there is a road and parking for coaches. We had a lot of time to kill in Agia Roumeli - and there is not much there except a few tavernas - before

catching the 6 pm ferry. This meant that we didn't get back to the hotel until nearly 9.30 pm and it was only a party of late arrivals still eating dinner that saved us from starvation.

However, we were agreed it had been a splendid day out. With hindsight our recommendation would be to use local buses or taxis to and from the walk's end points. If you visit Crete, the Samaria Gorge walk is as unmissable as the palace at Knossos. In our view it's more fun and a lot easier to find. ■



Photo: Adam Wood

Koala at Hanging Rock

By David Sutton

For a walking experience, Australia's Hanging Rock must be one of the weirdest. First, because of its unusual structure, and secondly because it was made famous by the Peter Weir film *Picnic at Hanging Rock* (1973). The film was based in Joan Lindsay's novel, which, although a work of fiction, has taken on the trappings of a true story. It concerns a party of schoolgirls taking a picnic on St. Valentine's Day in 1900.

Four of the girls and the schoolmistress wander off and some are never seen again. A search is organised, and the youngest girl is found in hysterics. Later another of the girls is found. Yet the mystery remains, conveyed by powerful

storytelling, and it's no wonder the novel was made into a feature film.

The "rock" is in the state of Victoria, Australia, about an hour's drive from Melbourne and stands about 100 metres above the surrounding plain. Originally named mount Diogenes in 1836 by Major Thomas Mitchell when he travelled through the area, the rock is a volcanic feature known as a mamelon (literally a nipple), a rounded plug caused by lava being forced up through a narrow vent. Since its formation six million years ago, erosion has caused considerable weathering, creating the strange pinnacles and features seen today.



The rock is pretty densely wooded with eucalyptus trees, with rocky peaks and clefts and a strange feeling of isolation is never far from one's thoughts. In 1988 when Sandra and her sister Lynne and myself made a visit, the park was quiet, not many visitors around, and our party of three had the rock virtually to ourselves. The day was hot, with the shade of the trees a welcome relief as we

struggled up along paths strewn with the dead white limbs of gum trees, their desiccated leaves rustling as our feet stepped on them. Then up through towers of rock, twisted formations weathered by heat and rain.

We had spent five weeks in Australia, visiting various places

and seeing some of its wildlife, but Sandra was miffed that in all that time we had not seen a koala bear in the wild. Hanging rock is apparently stuffed with many species of birds, three or four species of reptiles and about eight of mammals, the koala being the scarcest. But as our day at the rock – and our holiday – drew to a close, high in a eucalypt, an unmistakeable grey furry ball was seen, fast asleep – and clinging to it another furry ball, its baby! We had had our one and only koala sighting during our extended holiday Down Under! ■

(Continued from page 2)

for distribution to the public and there were none left at the end of the festival.

It will be interesting to see if any queries result from these flyers, which are also available in the city's tourist bureau in the basement of the Rotunda (facing New Street station).

Our next publicity venture will be to expand our Public Walks programme to take in the Festival of Winter Walks. Posters will be sent to the usual local libraries etc, and information will appear on our website and the national Walks Finder run by our London Office. Pat Holmes will be organising these walks. ■



THANK YOU! The committee would like to say Thank You to members who have made donations to the group this year: They are, Joachim Auerbach, Andy Bates, Eric Fairclough and John Smith.

The City of Birmingham Group invites you to the Warwickshire Area AGM

On Saturday 7th February 2009, 10.00. a.m. for 10.30. a.m.
at The Grimshaw Room, St Chad's Cathedral,
Shadwell Street, Birmingham.

The guest speaker will be the new RA Chief Executive -
Tom Franklin

After a **free hot buffet** there will be a choice of
three very different walks.

1. A longer walk via canals & green corridors to a hidden gem.
2. A "Blue Badge" walk around places of interest in the City Centre.
3. A visit to Birmingham's Catacombs.

All trains to Snow Hill & New Street Stations will be met by our members, who will lead "walking busses" to the venue.

We look forward to seeing you there.
Libby Hunt, on behalf of The City of Birmingham Group.

Puzzle Corner. Try out this brain-teaser...

Cocktails:

The Ye Olde Rustic Rambler Pub & Cocktail Bar is famous for its choice of different cocktails - each named after a UK county. Five friends are each having a different cocktail (one is a Nottinghamshire Knockout). The drinks are shown lined up on the bar. Can you match each cocktail with its position (1-5) and the person who ordered it?



- 1. The Clwyd Kick cocktail, ordered by a woman, is No 3 and is between Agatha's drink and the Worcester Whammy.
- 2. The Staffordshire Slammer is pictured immediately right of Dick's cocktail.
- 3. Cordelia's cocktail is someway right of Sabrina's drink (which isn't immediately next to Gavin's cocktail which is immediately left of the Cumbrian Cliffhanger).

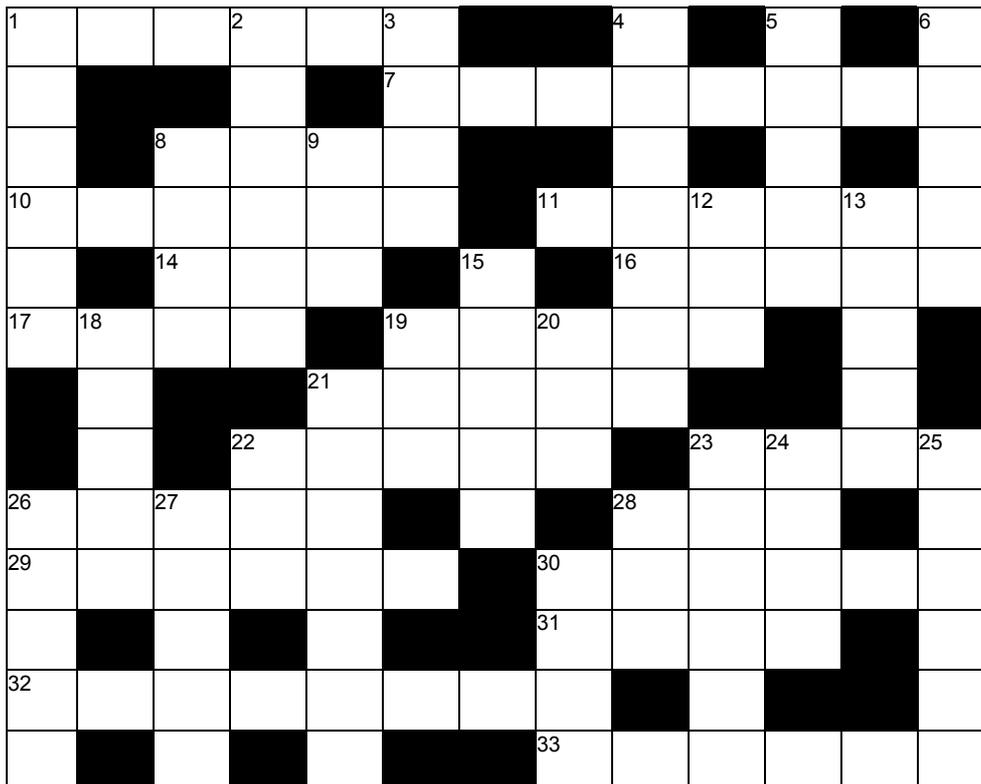
Answers at bottom of page.

Position	Cocktail	Person

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.

Answers: 1. Nottinghamshire Knockout - Gavin; 2. Cumbrian Cliffhanger - Agatha; 3. Clwyd Kick - Sabrina; 4. Worcester Whammy - Dick; 5. Staffordshire Slammer - Cordelia

Prize Crossword—
Win a Birmingham Ramblers' Embroidered Badge



Across

1. A Ravel composition sounds like the life in France (6).
7. Late greed has no right to be representative (8).
8. As time goes by, wine is included (4).
10. Give birth – confused? I've been excluded – clever! (6).
11. Hasten to change! Capital! (6).
14. Shelter – the Conger's returning! (3).
16. Bad hairdo – not hot, but lots of waves (5).
17. These do's sometimes involve sleep (4).
19. Tony the Tiger's description of Britain..... (5).
21.creates havoc almost when it's so loud (5).
22. An instrument played seated?... (5).
23. ...in a musical with well arranged acts (4).

- 26. Gathers the jumbled fruit.... (5)
- 28.but not this apple (3).
- 29. Appoint from Stratford, Aintree, or Worcester (6).
- 30. Many of us do this every Sunday (6).
- 31. Did that constable say "Agave, Agave, Agave"? (4).
- 32. Many of us are here every Sunday – it's 19 (8).
- 33. Writing, out west, becomes wearying (6).

Down

- 1. It sounds like you did this in the Spring. Bedlam....chaos! (6).
- 2. Governess gives water in Russia, but Ern is excluded (6).
- 3. Tide has turned. Carry on David! (4)
- 4. Midland accent rally? Must be included somewhere here (7).
- 5. Cedar? Change it. Others have hurried to do so (5).
- 6. Coldstream, the Tweed – the answer's to go 240 degrees for 9 miles (5).
- 8 What troubles you, Lisa? (4).
- 9. This is the definite article! (3).
- 11. Tee off – that tops everything! (3).
- 12. This is the thing, but you'll have to change – it's getting dark. (5)
- 15. Wales? We hear so, but to approach may kill us (5).
- 17. First at the bar, repeated in the House (5).
- 18. How warm is your duvet? Put it the other way up! (3)
- 19. Dermaptera without the wig (3).
- 20. Welcome on 3 rambles (7).
- 21. Droitwich – not in Spain (3).
- 22. 28 receives our letters – is that a blush? (6).
- 23. Is that Rod on the wheel? (4).
- 24. No wigs needed for the Spring or Autumn distribution (6).
- 25. Jasper Carrot or Lenny Henry hold the answer – it involves doing a turn! (5).
- 26. Staid, composed, show the way in (4).
- 27. The officer's brief – find the pass (3).
- 30. Quickly lose weight (4).

Send your completed crossword to *Footnotes*, 194 Station Road, Kings Heath, Birmingham, B14 7TE, by the closing date of 15th January 2009. The first correct entry 'out of the hat' will win one of our embroidered badges.

NAME _____ ADDRESS _____

Heard on rambles...

Roger and Harry are mulling over their position on their maps. Roger: "I think my map's older than yours."



Steve, (interrupting), "Yes, it says 'Roman Road' there—under construction!"

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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:

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Tel: 0121 6431496

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