



ramblers
at the heart of walking

Footnotes

RAMBLERS CITY OF BIRMINGHAM GROUP

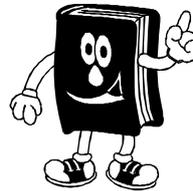


Issue No. 58 Summer 2009

Muddy Meanderings

David Sutton

No doubt you will all have seen the recent re-branding of our national organisation. The new logo is modernised and, behind the scenes various new design elements have been made available so that even our humble local publications and documents can reflect the new image. So as you will see, both this issue of *Footnotes* and the Birmingham Group's



Summer programme, have had a change of look. We hope you like it.

Unless I'm very much mistaken, our weather has been improving lately and we've not had to scrape mud off our boots quite so often these past few weeks. Perhaps we can hope this Summer's not as wet as the previous two have been! ■

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Social Scene 2009

From our Social Secretary, Derek Garfield

Our trip to Bletchley Park on Saturday 25th April saw a full coach heading down the M1 for an enigmatic Social Day Out. Our Guide was an ageless lady who had actually worked there during the war and this fact added a

special dimension to the fascinating story she told us. How the work going on here was kept a secret is fascinating in itself. As a number of you will know, Sir Edward Elgar's Enigma Variations were largely inspired by a secret visit he made to Bletchley Park in 1941.

Next up is our Annual Day Out, this year to London on 6th June, to see the dress rehearsal of Trooping the Colour. This, of course, features a lot chaps rambling very smartly up and down in splendid uniforms, looking a bit like our 'A' Party on a good day. This will be followed by a varied afternoon in the Capital and a meal on the way home. Should be a memorable



day.

On Tuesday evening 21st July, we are having an Evening Walk to Birmingham's Catacombs via St Paul's Square and The Jewellery Quarter and is indeed an action replay of the walk I led after the Area AGM. It will,

however, feature a visit to a very interesting pub in the Jewellery Quarter at the end.

Saturday 1st August sees us off on a Walk Day Out to The Bus and Transport Museum at Wythall. We will actually be travelling on a vintage bus from and back to Colmore Row. Just imagine the thrill of that...

Enjoy the Summer,
Socially yours,

Derek Garfield ■

Easter at Blaxhall

Report by David Sutton

With a landscape that featured extensive reed beds and lagoons, marsh and river, heather and gorse heathland, shingle beaches and open woodland, the group's Easter YHA weekend provided a diverse and very different landscape to our Midlands environs. Our location was Blaxhall in Suffolk, with half the walkers staying in the youth hostel and the rest in B&B accommodation.

Steve Brittain was our top-notch organiser and the three days' walk leaders were John Chapman, Ken Cooper, Michael Earp, James Greig, Jane Hartley, Pat Holmes, John Penny, Sandra Sutton, and Steve Brittain.

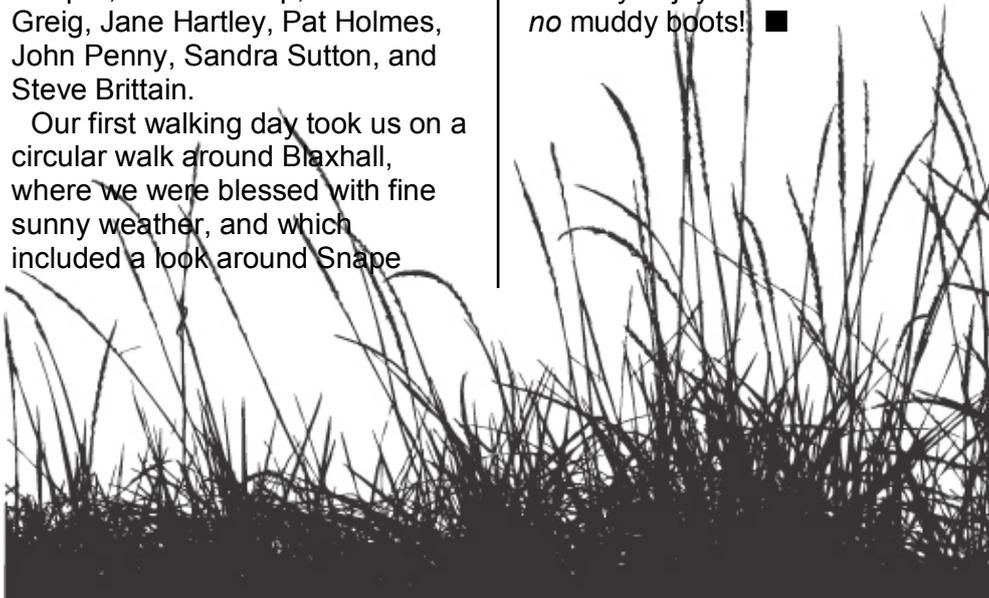
Our first walking day took us on a circular walk around Blaxhall, where we were blessed with fine sunny weather, and which included a look around Snape

Maltings.

Day two saw a cloudy and misty day turn, late on, to better weather as we went to the village of Dunwich to start a circular walk which included Dunwich Heath and the outskirts of Minsmere bird reserve. Dunwich used to be a thriving city and port, but coastal erosion has left most of the buildings under the North Sea.

The last walking day, another cool and misty one, took us to Orford, and a very atmospheric walk along the estuary.

A very enjoyable weekend—and *no muddy boots!* ■



Snow Shoeing in Iceland

Ceri Dittrich

I should first describe snowshoes. No longer are the old “tennis rackets” used. (Raquettes in French.) These days they are made of sturdy plastic and metal, not wood and animal gut. They do vary in design but the ones we had on this holiday were about two and a half feet long, curled up at the front, and about fifteen inches wide.

We were a group of thirteen, plus guide, mostly people who did not previously know each other, but we got along really well (three Ozzies, one Belgian, one Canadian, one Scot and seven English). We were met at Reykjavik airport by our Icelandic guide, Huskoldur, who studied Tourism in Birmingham and is a young outdoors chap who was also our cook for the first three nights (though we all pitched in) and our driver for the week. He drove us around in a bright green minibus, which I thought owed a lot to Tonka in its design.

The cliffs behind the guesthouse were home to hundreds of fulmars. Iceland is famous for its wool and Icelandic horses, which have one more gait than most breeds and

are more comfortable to ride. The horses are exported for this reason. They also keep cattle but it's far too windy for arable crops to survive. Vegetables and salad crops are grown in extensive greenhouses.

Day one was sunny and had us with crampons strapped to our feet and roped together walking on the Myrdalsjokull glacier. One or two with climbing experience also had a go at an ice wall. Although no experience was required, I should say that this was a holiday for those capable of maintaining at least a strong B plus walk performance – there was a lot of ‘up’. During our journeys each day Huski, as he said we could call him, taught us about Iceland, everything from geological formation to history of the Norse settlers.

Day two saw us stuck in snow, trying to dig out the bus and having to phone for help from the lady park ranger who pulled us out with her ATV. We could drive no further and had a five mile walk to where we were supposed to snowshoe but we had very little time to try it before a blizzard appeared,

so we had to walk out before driving became impossible. Iceland has very fickle and extreme weather.

Day three was the day we moved to Reykjavik and our 'tourist' day when Huski drove us around to see waterfalls (including one very dramatic one, Gullfoss), hot springs and geysirs. "Geysir" is an Icelandic word but the famous one rarely performs now because an earthquake, frequent in Iceland, changed the course of the water source. We saw water spouting up near one of the waterfalls and thought we'd found a small geyser, but the plumber in the party diagnosed a burst pipe. We also did a short walk in the Atlantic rift valley which runs SW – NE through Iceland and separates the North American and European continental plates. In so doing we saw the site of the old outdoor parliament, the Althingi, which the early settlers held for a few days each year to make laws and settle disputes.

On day four at last we snowshoed in earnest in beautiful sunshine and achieved a height that gave magnificent views of snowy mountains and with the sea in the distance in two directions. I thought this was wonderful and easy to grasp. (I'd done a very

little snow shoeing before.) If you can ramble you can snowshoe. Before we snow-shoed we visited a geothermal power station which drills the ground for sources of steam, processes it to produce electricity and also hot water.

Our last 'activity' day was spent walking in order to see Iceland's tallest waterfall, Glymur, which was frozen into one giant icicle. This stood out in an area which had had very little snow. We saw Arctic fox tracks (the only native wild mammal) and signs of ptarmigan. To get there we drove along the side of Iceland's longest fjord where in World War 2 Atlantic convoys assembled and U boats snuck in to attack. Now there were flocks of peaceful eider ducks. The old whaling station is here and is about to be re-opened.

So that was our week. I suppose most people go in the summer, but I enjoy playing in the snow and the scenery seemed more dramatic than in the summer photos. Huski said that in May lots of wild flowers start blooming and even early in March a few buds were ready to burst and the redwings were returning. Would I recommend this trip? Definitely. ■



Research participants wanted

Have you been on or are planning to go on a Sustainable/Ethical/Responsible/Eco/Green holiday in the UK or abroad? If so, would you be willing to talk about your experiences, thoughts and feelings in relation to your holiday? If you agree to take part in this research you will be asked to meet with the researcher for a one-to-one discussion (or web-chat via Skype) regarding your recent Sustainable/

Ethical/Eco/Green holiday. You will be asked to bring to the interview between 10-15 photographs you took on holiday and feel are interesting/important. It is expected that the one-to-one discussion will last approximately 1 hour. If you are interested please contact: Paul Hanna, School of Applied Social Science, Mayfield House, University of Brighton, Brighton, BN1 9PH, UK. E-mail: ph67@brighton.ac.uk Tel: +44 (0)1273 – 644544 ■

**A ramble for all abilities
SATURDAY 11 JULY 2009
SANDWELL VALLEY - 4.5 miles**

* Wheelchair users and buggies welcome * Bring clothing suitable for the weather, drinks & snacks plus stout footwear or trainers for walkers.

* Lunch at Sandwell Park Farm café.

Start - 10.30am. Finish - approx 2.00pm. Leader – Horace Marsh.

To get there: - either drive to Forge Mill Farm car park, off Forge Lane, or bus 451 from West Bromwich bus station to Sandwell Crematorium and walk to above car park.

Enquiries – Steve Brittain 0121-749-1227

Contribute to Footnotes:

Your walking experiences, general articles associated with walking and the countryside are welcome: David Sutton, 194 Station Road, Kings Heath, Birmingham, B14 7TE. (Phone: 0121 444 6188).

Email at: david.sutton986@btinternet.com.

Group history

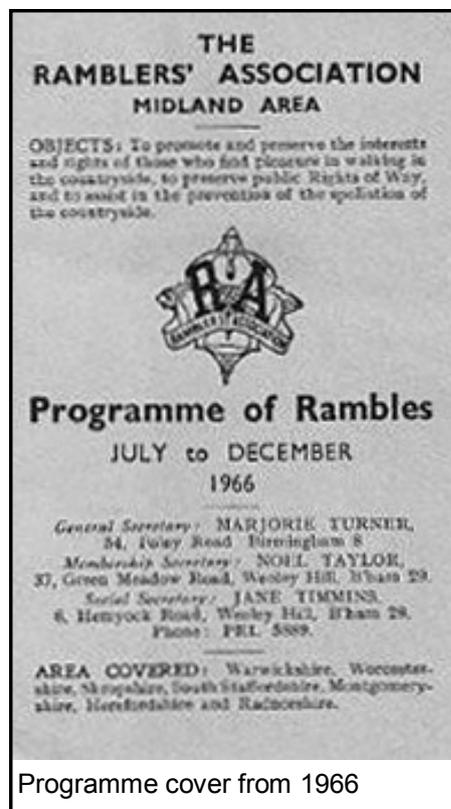
Roger Gibbs scours the archives.

Thanks to our President, Arthur Foden, we have access to programmes for the Group since its formation in 1980, and for its immediate predecessor, the Midland Area, which was managed from Birmingham and covered a large area of activity, namely Warwickshire, Worcestershire, Shropshire, South Staffordshire, Montgomeryshire, Herefordshire and Radnorshire.

Despite this, the Area Committee still controlled the local walking and social programme for Birmingham! Here are some tit-bits that may be of interest and could bring some memories to our more mature members.

The 1960's—Extracts from the Programme:

- Ramble Programmes – 6d each.
- Teas will be booked on all coach rambles.
- Maps can be borrowed at 6d each for three weeks, then 6d per week plus postage.
- 1967 Ordinary subscription 10/6d. Life Membership 10



Programme cover from 1966

guineas.

- April 1st 1967, RA National Council Dance, 7.30-11.30 pm, 7/6d, M.C. Howard Castle; Film shows, social evening, and other attractions. City of Birmingham

College of Education,
Westbourne Road, Edgbaston.

- 15th June 1967, Corve Dale and Wenlock Edge, 9.05am, 10/- coach fare, Leader Fred Willits, Teas available 4/6d.
- July 1967 - Cost of borrowing a map increased from 6d to 1/-.
- Lake District Weekend, October 1967, Coach fare and accommodation £5. Coach departs the Hall of Memory at 6.00pm on Friday evening, Bookings close August 9th. £1 deposit with booking.
- June 23rd 1968, Derbyshire Well Dressing, 9.05am,

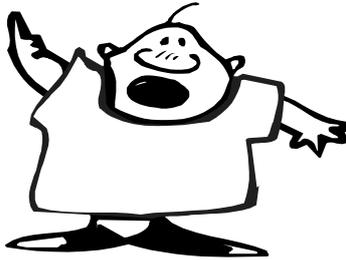
Cambridge Street, Coach fare 11 shillings, Seats must be booked and paid for at least 9 days in advance. Tea may be left on the coach.

- July 7th 1968, Leader Arthur Foden, Water-Wheels, 9.10am, Fare 9/6d. Hot pies available for lunch if booked 11 days prior to ramble. Teas available if booked.
- 13th July 1969, Derbyshire Ridges, 8.30am, 12/6d coach fare, Leader Fred Willits.
More from the archives in a future issue! ■

Heard on rambles...

Dave: "I think this might be a deer fence."

Steve: "No, I think it's a cheap one." ■



Harry's personal attack alarm goes off unexpectedly.
Ceri: Is that to frighten off the squirrels?" ■

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



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