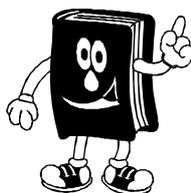




Seasons Greetings

## Muddy Meanderings

Editorial by David Sutton



Well, it's the last issue of *Footnotes* for this year and as usual we are having a prize competition—the very sought-after Birmingham Ramblers' embroidered

badge! But this year we have giving away *two* badges. See pages 10 and 11 for a puzzle and photo caption competitions.

I was looking at our chief executive's blog the other day. His October 2<sup>nd</sup> piece was headed 'We're the Ramblers – Standing still is not an option'. Tom Franklin's comments were in response to a perception that some of the new initiatives in regard to new walkers and encouraging families, has led to a neglect of our traditional work.

In defending the Ramblers position he went on to say, "it's not a choice between doing 'traditional' work or 'new' work – it's all about achieving the same goal. We're the national walking charity for Britain – and we campaign for better places for people to walk (footpaths, access land, rights to the coast, good walking routes in cities or along rivers). We also get people out walking – either through our fantastic programme of group walks or

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## Social Scene 2009

From our Social Secretary, Derek Garfield

Of course, every ramble is actually a 'social event' but our last formal one was a presentation on 25th September at the Grimshaw Room by The Birmingham Astronomical Society. Our illustrious

Chairman, John Penny is a member of this Society and as on occasion we see him with that far away look in his eyes, he is merely doing a little virtual star gazing. Anyway, this year is The International Year of Astronomy so it seemed the right time to learn a little more about our universe. The evening was very well attended and we had an entertaining presentation and heard all about the various telescopes in use. Unfortunately, it was a cloudy night and we were not able to actually view the heavens as planned but at least we had longer to enjoy the



wonderful buffet supper put on by Janet Gibbs, helped by friends and featuring Sylvia Hickman's celebrated apple pie. Looking at a twinkling star is all very well, but I personally find a slice of Sylvia's apple pie more satisfying!

All the usual Christmas activities will be upon us before we have time to say Baa Humbug and we can then look forward to The Group Annual Dinner on Friday 5th March, again being held at the Eaton Hotel on the Hagley Road. Put this date in your 2010 planner now! I can tell you we will be having a most entertaining After Dinner Speaker.

Happy Christmas Ramblers,  
Socially yours,

Derek Garfield



## Letter of comment

I was interested in the archive material by Roger Gibbs in *Footnotes 59*. I joined the Merseyside Group somewhere in the 1950s and our walking areas were the Lake District, Yorkshire (three peaks area), Derbyshire, North Wales (including Snowdonia and more local Clwydian Hills) and Shropshire. In 1959 I went on my first holiday abroad with the Ramblers. Train from Calais to Basle, then on through Switzerland. "Flums/Hochsölden" was the holiday title and the full fortnight cost was the princely sum of £46, including packed lunches from our guesthouses!

Came down to the Midlands in 1964 and joined the Birmingham group. My first ramble was led by Vivian Bird in the Kerry Hill area. Had our group mug shot by the Cantlin Stone and this appeared in the *Sunday Mercury*. I recall Jane and Norman Timmins from that era.

Went to Cogne (Vall D'Aosta) in 1972. Ramblers HQ phoned me when I was at work – looking for illustrations for the 1973 brochure – did I have anything suitable? I did and they paid me six guineas – you could almost buy two rolls of transparency film for that amount. Thereafter, if on a mid-Summer holiday, back in time before the brochure was finalised, I didn't wait to be asked, just sent a small selection of pictures and in due course, was published. Andorra, St. Jean/Lescon, Aegean Islands etc. Then, the leaders got in on the act. Still, it was good while it lasted.

I was on a plateau of C-C+ hols for many years, now in the age of the free TV licence, have settled for more modest grades. Recently returned from Ramblers' "In Cézanne's Footsteps", a week in Provence. After fifty years it was back to trains, although Eurostar and TGV, with increased speed, avoided overnight travel and couchettes.

So, many years of improved quality of life thanks to involvement in walking at club level and holidays abroad.

My best wishes to any friends in the Birmingham Group who may remember me. **Peter Underhill.** ■

## Sign up for the e-newsletter...

The Birmingham Group now have an occasional email Newsletter. News and reminders about forthcoming social events, walk changes and information, and other items of interest to group members direct to your inbox. To sign-up, simply email the editor: david.sutton986@btinternet.com

## Crackers at Christmas

### Derek Garfield seriously considers walking...

The trouble with Rambling is that it involves walking. Not just walking as in a pleasant stroll to the pub in casual gear, but laden down like a commando on manoeuvres.

Carrying a large rucksack is obligatory; this is full of things one seldom needs. Boots with large treads are also necessary to collect the mud and strain the calf muscles. A map in a plastic case slung around the neck causes slow strangulation, quicker on a windy day. A stick is favoured by some, mainly to keep badges on but useful for poking friends or even fellow ramblers. A little decoration, say, a compass or a funny hat, completes the ensemble.

All in all, it is something of a mystery as to why people go rambling. They will mutter about fresh air, seeing the countryside, getting exercise, etc. but it is all pretty unconvincing stuff. It is



really a drug that people get hooked on. Ramblers need help. It could be a long term project to treat individual cases. It would involve considerable public expense, not to mention undesirable withdrawal symptoms. But this has become a national problem and

needs decisive action by the government. In the meantime some possible solutions to just one or two of the problems ramblers have to contend with. Stiles really are a nuisance. It is alleged that they are there to keep sheep and cattle in, but many have obviously never restrained any animals other than ramblers. Stiles are part of a plot to deter ramblers,

particularly the ones that lean backwards and are covered with slime (the stiles that is, not the ramblers). But no, let us be fair. A few stiles do actually prevent the movement of animals; a gate would be better if only ramblers could be relied on to close it. Or

are gates really needed? Why not teach sheep to read and then farmers could simply put up a notice saying 'No Exit For Sheep'. We have a lot of spare teachers these days. They could go on a sheep conversion course and help the unemployment figures. Perhaps to help the less intelligent sheep, signs could be erected showing a sheep in a red circle with a red diagonal line.

One of the benefits claimed for rambling is that you 'see the countryside'. Most of the time this simply isn't true. What you usually see is the square yard immediately in front of your feet. For, be sure, if you do not look where you walking, you will either tread in something or on something. Walking with a cow pat stuck to one's boot is difficult and smelly. But probably preferable to a sprained ankle and bruised behind. The more dedicated rambler derides walking along tarmacked roads but, at least, you can hold your head high and actually look at the scenery. It would indeed be nice to see all footpaths tarmacked over but no doubt a lot of cranky environmentalists would complain.

So, the problem is how to walk confidentially and peer about you at the same time. In short what is needed is somewhere to tread which, if it cannot be tarmac, is at

least relatively level. One thinks of a building site, uneven and boggy. And how do the builders get about on a building site? They walk on duckboards! Ramblers need portable duckboards. The trouble is that carrying a great plank of wood on your shoulder, whilst solving the problem, would, to be realistic, cause Laurel and Hardy type problems, not to mention the weight.

Let us then consider a giant circular mobile huge drum. Groups of, say, six ramblers would stand inside it and in the manner of mice on a treadmill, propel it easily over any terrain. It could furthermore be fitted with plastic sides and thus solve the rain problem.

There could be Family Drums, Smoking Drums, Vegetarian Drums. There could be A-Party Drums built for speed, B-Party Drums for a more leisurely roll; in fact varieties to suit all groups.

The Ramblers Drum could as easily become part of the English countryside as the steam train of yesteryear.

More imagination is required by the Ramblers Association. What is needed is more lateral thinking. I think I will go for a lateral lie down before they take me away. ■

*(This article first appeared in Footnotes no. 4, in December 1995. I think a reprint was well overdue!).*

## 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 Mid-land 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 1980's

20. Birmingham Group created from the old Midlands Area, which evolved into the Warwickshire Area – coach fare £2.

21. Socials held at the Ladywood Community Centre at the invitation of Ray and Beryl Watts, who also prepared the cheese and wine.

22. 1983 Christmas Lunch Rambles started.



Programme cover from 1986

23. "C" walks and evening walks introduced in 1987. (Evening rambles discontinued in 1992).

24. Two coaches needed for up to 100 or so that turned out for the first part of the "Cotswold Way", led by Harry and Sylvia Hickman in 1987. The "C" party coach was "commandeered" to accommodate the overflow.

25. First YHA weekend 1986 – Margaret Norcott (who was to do them until 1999).

26. Christmas Dinner at Franzl's - 1987 (until 1996).

27. Six Shropshire Summits 1987 (25<sup>th</sup> anniversary) – continues to this date.

28. Chairmen: 1980-82 Ron Galliers, 1982-85 Reba Smith;

1985-88 Bob Jones, 1988-91 Roger Gibbs

29. Long Distance Paths Completed: Staffordshire Way -1986, Cotswold Way - 1987, Beacon Way - 1987/88, Offa's Dyke - 1988, Worcestershire Way - 1989. ■

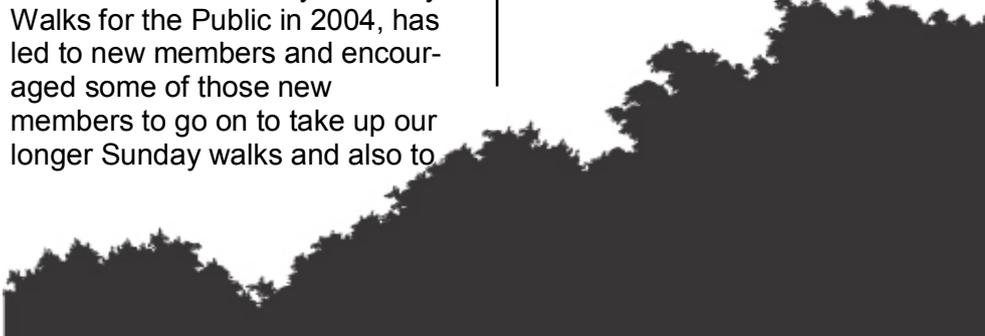
*(Continued from page 1)*

through special projects like Get Walking, Keep Walking. It is not a question of either/or. We need to do new *and* traditional. And we need to attract funding from new sources – including from grants – to help us do so. Standing still might sound attractive at first – but it is not a realistic option. We need to attract new members, new volunteers, and we have new campaigns to wage. We have to keep moving forward”.

Thinking of our group, certainly the introduction by Pat Holmes, of our monthly Saturday Walks for the Public in 2004, has led to new members and encouraged some of those new members to go on to take up our longer Sunday walks and also to

lead walks for us. But there has been a feeling around the country that Central Office have moved away from the Ramblers' core principles. This and other issues are being debated upon and no doubt we shall see if there are any policy changes to me made in due course.

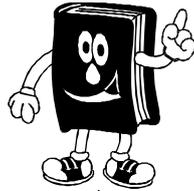
Recent sad losses to our group are Doug Marpole and John Hawkins. John's Widow, Rosalind, has written to thank the group for members' attendance at the funeral and for the donation collected. ■



## Leading walks

**R**amblers' central office have recently issued a nifty little Walk Leader's Checklist, in the form of a folded A5 size glossy printed card. This will be a useful item for our walk leaders to carry with them and it includes 'before', 'on the day' and 'on the walk' points to note, as well as a section on treating injuries and basic first aid. Our group have obtained a supply of these and we will be handing them to any of our walk leaders who want one over the coming weeks.

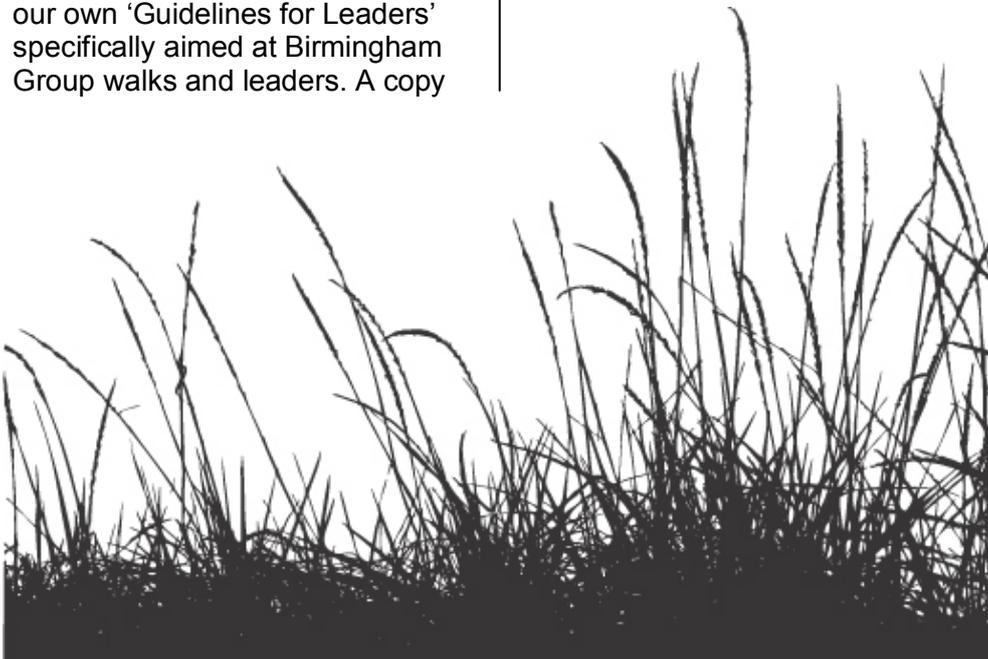
Of course, we have always had our own 'Guidelines for Leaders' specifically aimed at Birmingham Group walks and leaders. A copy



of this is always kept in the green folder which is circulated every week on the Sunday coach rambles.

Copies are also available from the editor (see page 12 for contact details).

We also think a First Aid Kit is a good idea and would encourage leaders to carry one in their rucksacks. ■



✱ ANNIVERSARIES ✱

Events to look forward to in 2010

The committee of the Birmingham Ramblers hope you will be as excited as we are in anticipation of celebrating:

Our Birmingham Group's 30th anniversary;  
The Ramblers' Association's 75th anniversary;  
and the 80th anniversary of the  
Ramblers' Association's Midland Area forerunner, the  
"Federation of Midland Ramblers"

During 2010 our celebrations will include our group annual dinner, some special walks and other events.

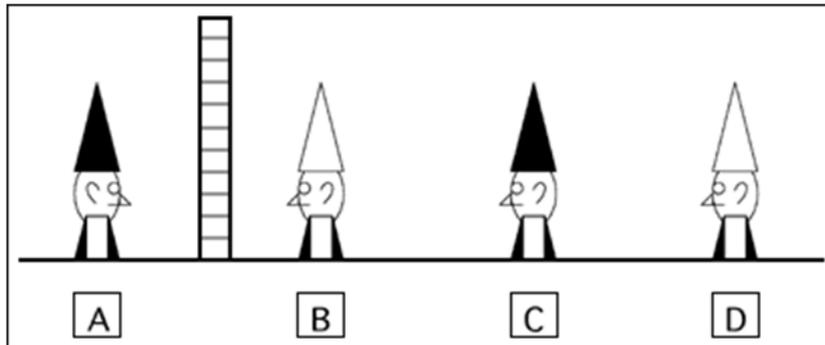
Look out for our six-monthly programmes  
(issued in December and June),  
which will include full details



## Prize Competitions

**W**e are giving away two of the Birmingham Ramblers' embroidered badges to the winners of this season's competitions. There's a puzzle and a photograph caption competition. You do not have to enter both, of course. First correct puzzle answer out of the postbag wins one of the badges, and the other goes to the caption (to either photo) deemed most amusing by the editor of *Footnotes*.

### 1. Puzzle: Men with Hats



There are 4 men each wearing either a black or a white hat. They are standing in rising water, cannot move and can only look forward. Between A and B is a brick wall which they cannot see through.

They know that between them are 4 hats of which 2 are black and 2 are white, but they do not know which colour they are wearing.

In order to stop the level of the water rising and all four drowning, one of them must call out correctly which colour hat he is wearing. They are not allowed to talk to each other.

To win, you need to say which one of them calls out, and how does he work out which colour he is wearing?

## 2. Caption competition

Think of an alternative caption for this photograph, taken near Cornakey Farm, Gooseham, Cornwall, or the picture shown below, taken in Bewdley. Use the reply coupon on the next page to send in your answers!

These ramblers must be as deaf as a post...



Photo: Adam Wood



Photo: Sheila Clarke

## Competition entry form

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

1. Answer to 'Men with Hats' puzzle: .....

.....  
.....  
.....

2. Caption to Finger Post photo: .....

And/Or Caption to Bewdley photo.....

.....

Send your entry to the address below, or enter by email to:  
david.sutton986@btinternet.com. Remember you do not have to enter  
both sections to win a prize. Closing date for entries is 31st January 2010.

### ***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.

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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