



WORCESTERSHIRE AREA RAMBLERS

'RAMBLINGS'

Newsletter – September 2023



Latest news and fascinating articles from the Ramblers,
Worcestershire Area Ramblers and our five local groups
www.ramblers.org.uk/go-walking/ramblers-groups/areas/worcestershire-area

WELCOME

This is the second of what we hope will be a regular series covering news and events for Ramblers in Worcestershire Area. As you are probably aware, we have Ramblers groups in Bromsgrove, Evesham, Redditch, Worcester and Wyre Forest - as well as affiliated groups including Evesham Rambling Club and Malvern Hills District Footpath Society.

Obviously, the success of this newsletter will depend on us receiving some news - from you or your Group. In addition, we'll include news "snippets" from Ramblers Head Office and any county-wide events which the Area committee are organising. We can also let Area members know of vacancies on a future group holiday, requests for people to make up numbers on a coach trip etc.

Anything considered – so it's over to you! Please send your articles to me, ideally in Microsoft Word format with photos as jpegs. My email is glyn@gmthomas.co.uk

RAIL TRAILS UPDATE



We were hoping to get a full article into Walk magazine, but they have so far only included a small "snippet". Blink and you've missed it - it's on Page 11 of the magazine. We're hoping for a more detailed piece in the future.

Lyndon Bracewell of Worcester Ramblers, who has been the one of the masterminds behind this project has kindly provided the update below. Work continues, so stay tuned for further developments.

Progress With Rail Trails Worcestershire

All sections on the Malvern and Cotswold Line (Great Malvern to Honeybourne) and Wyre Valley Line (Worcester to Hagley) have now been completed and uploaded to the Worcestershire Community Rail Partnership website <https://wcrp.org.uk/rail-trails/> From the

website you can download for free an A4 map, written directions and a gpx track for the first 10 sections (73 miles). From the map QR codes also mean you can upload the gpx direct to your smart phone and obtain train information. The on-screen map also has interactive red dot buttons that provide details of facilities at each station and information about some of the main attractions the route passes.

The final 25 miles on the Salt Line (Droitwich to Barnt Green) and Arrow Valley Line (Barnt Green to Redditch) have now been mapped, test walked and written up in time for Andy Stevenson (Graphics lecturers at the University of Worcester) to produce the artwork and content for uploading to the website. Work will also soon commence on finalising promotional leaflets (part of a live student project) for the Trail and posters for display at stations and other venues.

Lyndon Bracewell would like to pass on his personal thanks to the many Ramblers in the County who have suggested and commented on routes before being finalised and checked the written descriptions are accurate and user friendly. If anyone has any other comments on what has been produced so far or there are volunteers to test walk the final sections he'd welcome you getting in touch lyndon.bracewell@btinternet.com

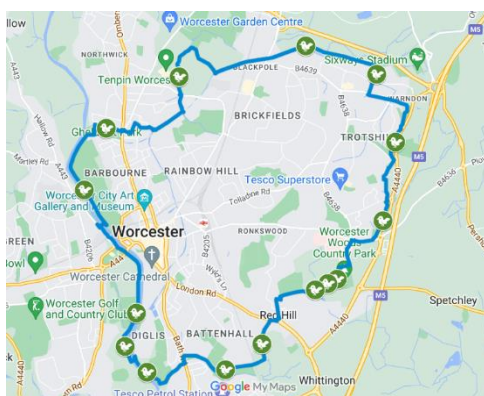
For 2024 Worcester Community Rail Partnership have already expressed interest in providing shorter circular walks from all or most of the 18 mainline stations in the County. If any local members are interested in suggesting potential routes (probably 2-5 miles) from their nearest station Lyndon would welcome you getting in touch.

WORCESTER RAMBLERS – WILD ABOUT WORCESTER

On Saturday 17th June Worcester Ramblers did a 12mile walk on the new Wild About Worcester Way from Worcester Countryside Centre. They were joined by walkers from Studley, Malvern – and even Leominster.

The trail, which was fabulous terrain, included a small section of the Worcester & Birmingham Canal and River Severn. The WAW Way was full of interest with carvings of wildlife and short messages on wooden benches special carved for the walk. Lots of green spaces and woodlands too.

This Way was launched this year on 13th May so Jane Vickers of Worcester Ramblers, who led the walk, was very excited to take a group round to see the new trail in its prime. To



make the walk even more special they bumped into the man with the vision for this Way - Paul Snookes.

For those seeking more information about the trail –

Website: <https://www.theweg.org.uk/wild-about-worcester>

REDDITCH RAMBLERS WALK THE AMAZON

Recently, a group of walkers from Redditch Ramblers explored the footpaths and landscaping work around the Redditch Gateway site. Many of you may have spotted the huge Amazon building at the site just off the A435 in Redditch. Perhaps surprisingly, the site includes a number of enhancements to the local PRow network carried out by Amazon as part of the development.

The efforts made to preserve and enhance the natural environment and existing biodiversity in the area are proving worthwhile and have created a very enjoyable circular walk which was then used to access paths to Bransons Cross, Carpenters Hill and back via Holt End.

Restoring and re-routing the local footpaths required the collaborative efforts of Amazon alongside Worcestershire Countryside Service and Warwickshire Rights of Way and an awful lot of specialised expertise. Further work is still under discussion and Simon, our Area Footpath Secretary is on the case!

The ramblers saw new wildlife ponds and dense planting alongside the diverted brook (great crested newts resident in the area had to be moved and protected during the build). Tree and shrub planting will create an integrated sheltered environment alongside Amazon's hi-tech operation in years to come.



The ramblers thanked Amazon for the welcome they were given (in particular, car parking for the occasion) and looked forward to a future of continued co-operation for the benefit of the

countryside and the people of Redditch. While we recognise that such developments have a major effect on the locality, it's nice to find that there are some "upsides" too.

MORE WALK LEADER E-LEARNING FROM RAMBLERS

Following on from the basic introduction course "Walk Leadership Foundations" featured in the last newsletter ***Preventing and Managing Incidents***, a new e-learning course for Walk Leaders, is also available online. Please encourage your Walk Leaders to take a look if they haven't already done so.



"Easy to follow & understand, good use of real life incidents and good examples of the different leadership styles a leader should adopt in different situations."

Whatever types of walks you lead, from urban adventures to high mountain hikes, occasionally things can go wrong. And while incidents are rare, you can think in advance about how you might handle different scenarios, what you can do to help prevent something happening, and the skills or knowledge you might need to manage the situation.

Preventing and Managing Incidents is the Ramblers' e-learning course for all Walk Leaders. And as it's hosted online, it means you can learn from the comfort of your own home.

Whether you are new to the role or have many miles under your belt, this course will help you plan and lead walks with confidence, knowing you have done everything you can to prevent and plan for any incidents.

The e-learning is available to all Ramblers group volunteers but is especially relevant to Walk Leaders. You can access the course via the training tab of your Assemble record. If you have any questions, please contact anyone from the Area Committee.

"Plenty of tips not just for new walk leaders but also more experienced ones too..."

FOOTPATH WORKING GROUPS FEATURE IN WCC NEWSLETTER

It's not a mass-circulation publication, so many of you may not be aware that the Public Rights of Way team at Worcestershire County Council send out a regular newsletter to all volunteers who work on footpaths in the county. As well as Ramblers groups, there are a wide range of others who volunteer – local self-led groups, Parish Path Wardens and others. The newsletter also features some of the “heavier” maintenance work carried out to keep our local path network in shape. The newsletter is circulated by email and is quite a big file, but if anyone is interested, contact me as editor and I may be able to send you a copy. Here are a couple of extracts which feature some faces who may be familiar to your group. Apologies if your group does not feature this time.

Public Rights of Way Volunteer Newsletter



Volunteer Work Party Tasks

Volunteer work party update – Paul Watmough

The Redditch Ramblers group has recently been very active around Bentley Pouncefoot. The parish offers lots of fantastic walking opportunities within a stone's throw of Redditch itself. The group has been busy improving access throughout the area over multiple work parties.



One of the improvements made was the large ditch crossing replacement over Swan Brook. The structure crosses the brook on a well-used path that runs parallel to Pumphouse lane and had definitely seen better days, with half of its timbers rotting, cracking and falling into the water. Being a nonstandard structure, the repair of the ditch crossing may have slightly strayed into the “winging it” category but our team were eager to meet the challenge and we were all very happy with the finished article.

Volunteer Work Party Tasks

Volunteer work party update – Heather Bainbridge

Worcester Ramblers

In August, the Worcester Ramblers met to improve a popular route in Powick parish, by replacing some wobbly, high stiles with kissing gates and a pedestrian gate. Powick 672 forms part of a circular walk linking Frog Lane, Court Farm Leisure Park, the Old Hills and Bush Lane.



The weather was lovely and dry without being too hot, good digging weather – which was just as well as the team encountered a large chunk of concrete which would have to be chiselled away and some very compacted soil! With a sterling effort and determination, and a late finish, 2 of the 3 gates were installed, which were appreciated by the landowner and local walkers. We hope to return soon to replace the third stile.



RAMBLERS NEWS - Managing safety on group walks

News from Assemble – in case you missed it!

“Over the coming months, a group of staff and volunteers will be developing a new approach to managing safety on group walks, which will be more streamlined, consistent and proportionate than our current one. This means that we will be reviewing the support, tools and guidance for walk leaders so we can ensure we are providing the skills and knowledge they need to confidently lead welcoming, safe and enjoyable group walks. We will be refreshing our training and creating a handbook of best practice.”

The volunteer group held a “webinar” recently to give an update on their work which I attended as Area Chair. There is much still to be decided, but the following slide gives an indication of what may happen – and when. We’ll keep you informed of developments – or, if you are registered as a volunteer, keep an eye out for further news on Assemble.

Next steps

Phase One showed us that we need a proportionate approach to meet our duty of care to our walkers.

To achieve this, we will be updating our guidance and training to produce a core walk leader journey which supports all group walk leaders and Ramblers Wellbeing Walks to manage walks safely.



EVESHAM WELCOMES WALKERS – SUCCESS FOR EVESHAM RAMBLING CLUB



Well – we did it!

Having collected well above the 1300 required signatures, we submitted the full application for Walkers are Welcome status for Evesham at the beginning of May. On 7 June the application was unanimously endorsed by members of the Walkers are Welcome National Executive Committee. We were informed by the Chairman of the Committee that they were most impressed by the information in the application and took very little time to approve it.

A new website is now under development and we are hoping to launch this by the end of the year. We are working to promote local businesses in and around Evesham, targeting those in the hospitality sector and retailers close to the routes of the seven Circular Walks that we have in place. In return for a payment of £25, each business receives a Walkers are Welcome window sticker and promotion on our online Circular Walk routes.

The Evesham Welcomes Walkers Steering Group has now taken over the organisation of the Evesham Walking Festival. Next year's programme, which will run from 26-30 June, is already taking shape with walks being led by Evesham Rambling Club, Evesham Ramblers, Evesham u3a, Evesham Civic Society, Evesham Festival of Words and Kemerton Wildlife Trust.

This year's Festival, organised by Evesham Rambling Club, was a great success with around 400 ramblers taking part in the eighteen walks over the five day period. We were again blessed with fine weather and it was pleasing to see so many familiar faces - people from all over the country who return each year to join our annual event.



Many of the walks were fully booked and highlights included a visit to a recently restored mill in Wickhamford (in full working order for the first time), three railway walks, a visit to Stanway House and Fountain, a literary walk from Alderton to Dumbleton and five walks around the North Cotswolds.

Ramblers near Stanway on a festival walk

EVESHAM RAMBLERS WELCOME NEW WALK LEADERS

WOW! Evesham Ramblers have enjoyed a fantastic programme of walks over the summer months. As well as the usual Tuesday and Sunday walks, there's been a monthly Wednesday evening walk followed by a meal too.

We are grateful to four new leaders who have joined the team: Robert, Donna, Paul and Brian. That's good news as we are always looking for new volunteers to help ensure we can maintain a full programme.



Leaders meeting in July

In July, Simon our Walk Coordinator held a meeting for walk leaders at St Andrews Centre, Pershore where he demonstrated the new Ramblers Walk Manager. As a result, some leaders are now using the system to directly input their own walk details.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO BROMSGROVE RAMBLERS

Bromsgrove Ramblers celebrated the 50th Anniversary of the Group's foundation in 1973 in real style. A hardy band of Ramblers walked a 50k route over 4 days in July around the



Council Boundary line. Each stage of the walk was roughly 8 miles in distance and entailed walking from Wychbold to Lydiate Ash by way of Chaddesley Corbett; and then Lydiate Ash

generally stayed fair but sadly many stiles were found to be in a poor state of repair – work now for their volunteer working parties!

An Anniversary Party was later held at Hillscourt on Rose Hill, Lickey, to which many past members of the Group were invited. Amongst the many photographs from across the years members could reminisce and recount stories of past adventures and forays. The event was topped off with a toast

to the future of the Group and the cutting of a magnificently decorated celebratory cake, complete with walking boots and rucksack!

HILLS, HISTORY, WOODS AND CANALS - REDDITCH TRIP TO TALYBONT ON USK



19 intrepid walkers spent a great weekend walking the wonderfully varied paths around Talybont on Usk. As a base we made use of a great self-catering accommodation at Gilestone Farm, in an ideal location to explore the area. Some camped and some stayed the excellent youth hostel. For many the Pen y Fan circuit starting from Neuadd reservoir was the highlight. Though it was a hard slog on a warm day, the views were spectacular for

the whole walk. A completely different walk the next day using an old miners track road alongside Talybont reservoir, through the forest and over the hill to pick up the Brecons way to drop down to return via the Brecon canal. Shorter walks at Llangors Lake and up Sugar Loaf mountain made this a brilliant weekend in great weather, with excellent company.



DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Ramblers' Area Carol Service Saturday 9th December 2023



A Ramblers' Area Carol Service is to be organised once again this year by the Bromsgrove Group and will take place at **St Godwald's Church, Aston Fields, Bromsgrove at 3.00pm on Saturday 9th December**. Refreshments will be provided after the Service in the Church. There will also be a retiring collection.

Bromsgrove Group will lead a short 4 - 5 mile walk starting at 11.00am from the Church Car Park for anyone wishing to join an organised ramble. Please bring your own packed lunch and a change of footwear for entering the church for the service.

This walk will include a stop at The Cross Inn, Finstall (which is about a mile from the Church) at about 1.30pm where cheese or ham rolls can be obtained. This would also be a convivial meeting point for those not doing the walk.

Alternatively, Bromsgrove Railway Station, other Pubs and cafés are all only a short step away from the Church if visitors are making their own arrangements.

All Area Walking Groups are cordially invited. It would be much appreciated if visiting Groups could give an indication at least two weeks prior to the event of numbers attending in order to assist with the catering. Please contact **Peter Davies** on **07772458130** if there are any other questions and, ultimately, with numbers.

SAVE THE DATE – AREA AGM

Put in in the new 2024 diary now folks! February 10th 2024. An excellent new venue (watch this space), a walk, a talk, a chance to meet fellow Ramblers ...and **FREE FOOD!!**

WHO'S WHO

Just so you know who's who on the Area Committee and in case you need to get in touch -

Area Chair – Glyn Thomas (also Newsletter contact!) glyn@gmthomas.co.uk

Area Secretary/Membership Secretary – Noelin Mallatratt hawkinsnoelin455@gmail.com

Area Treasurer – Sue Johnson suej_wellfield@hotmail.com

Area Footpath Secretary – Simon Mallatratt paths.worcsramblers@yahoo.com

THE END

THAT'S ALL FOR NOW FOLKS – THE REST IS UP TO YOU

Please send any articles, photos etc to me for inclusion in the next edition – my email is glyn@gmthomas.co.uk