

Chairman's Chat – Christmas 2015

Phil Guest

How time flies, I'm here again musing on another year of rambling with South Cheshire.

This year seems to have been one where holidays almost interfered with the walking programme. In the spring a very large party set off by coach to Scotland to enjoy its countryside, then it rained and oh boy didn't it rain? However, there was walking to be done (and coach trips for those who wanted to see more of Scotland). I was suffering a severe bout of something horrid (man flu?) but I was able to join the 'hard ones' and climb what was almost a Munro - a great day out but at the end I was really exhausted. The views though of the snow capped peaks were well worth the pain. It was altogether a really good break and tremendous value.

The 'hard ones' then decided their next challenge would be to walk Hadrians Wall. It was obviously another success, as they all returned!

Then, in the autumn, a party set off for four nights in Guernsey. I'd had a short and most enjoyable break there in 2014 and felt that it was not too far to take interested members of our group. It was a bigger organisational challenge than the usual weekend away as it included getting flights and finding a suitable hotel. In the end it worked out well as the hotel sat on the coastal path on the beautiful but rocky south coast of the island. My only disappointment was that I failed to find the 'world's finest chippy' at The Bridge - it does exist but I guided some of the party to a fish and chip shop that hardly anyone would ever recommend!

Finally in November some of our walkers enjoyed a walking holiday in Spain, organised by and including members of another rambling group.

So it would seem that social activities are growing in the South Cheshire Ramblers. I therefore want to bring to your attention that our Annual Dinner next year will be a more sociable occasion. Rather than the usual sit down dinner, we are having a luxury buffet and a chance for 'social intercourse and games'. The idea is to give members a chance to meet in a relaxed format and have the opportunity to do more of what they like doing, which is to chat. It also gives an opportunity to those of our members who don't walk, to come along and meet those who do and get to know us. Also, it would be a good opportunity to bring along a friend or acquaintance who might be interested in joining our group. All the details are on the website.

Once again, can I appeal to those of you who still receive this newsletter and walk programme by post to let us have your email address so that we can cut our printing and postage costs. The best way for us all to keep in touch is definitely via the internet. And finally, I'm delighted to announce we have two new committee members - the Footpath Secretary is now Alan Edwards and Helen Lea has taken on the role of Publicity Officer. Please help them if you can.

With best wishes for Christmas and continued Happy Rambling in 2016.

Committee

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FROM YOUR COMMITTEE

**Rambles Programme Co-ordinators -
Carole Bentley and Rae Davies**

Calling all walk leaders - your group needs you! We are fortunate to have a core of regular walk leaders but the burden of filling the walk programme falls mainly on this small group. We don't want them to feel unsupported so we are appealing to those of you who sometimes lead walks to commit to a more regular contribution. It's the only way the group will be able to continue providing a varied programme of walks throughout the year. We are also always on the lookout for NEW walk leaders to bring fresh ideas to the group. If you are one of those people who would like to lead a walk but don't feel confident to offer, you will find that any of the regular walk leaders will be willing to help you plan, recce and lead a walk. You only have to ask. You will not be rebuffed - on the contrary, you will be welcomed with open arms. Every group needs to keep regenerating itself and this one is no different. So if you're looking for a New Year resolution we have just given you one!

Thanking you all.

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Membership Secretary - Hazel Wallis

Membership Report . April to October 2015

Since April we have gained 6 new members and 2 have reinstated. We have also lost some members and our total numbers are down by 9, the membership now stands at 199. We repeated the publicity session at Bridgemere on two Saturdays during September but interest was limited.

We are looking to enhance our publicity and hope this will attract more people to walk with us and so encourage new members.

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Footpaths Secretary – Andrew Franklin

Greetings fellow Ramblers.

It is amazing to think that I was appointed to the above position almost 12 months ago.

How much has happened during that time !!

I have been involved to a greater or lesser extent at meetings/conferences in the Lake District - Birmingham and with fellow Footpath Secretaries in Cheshire East plus of course with various public meetings and exhibitions with respect to planning applications, footpath diversions etc. for the numerous developments in our area.

In addition where problems of access etc., have specifically been brought to my attention I have visited such sites personally and where required have had meetings with the relevant Enforcement Officers within Cheshire East Council - all issues have been resolved and feedback has been given to those who raised such issues.

Where, for example, problems have been noted outside our immediate area I have not visited such sites but have talked to the local Enforcement Officers - such a recent example was in Wales - where the Officer concerned officially noted our members problem and promised action to remedy it - at the time of writing I understand the issue is still unresolved.

Now as most of you know I have recently become a member of the Caravan fraternity which means that apart from enjoying *Eileen's Wednesday Walks I am hoping to be away for 3 weekends in the month.

Therefore it is with regret that I have resigned from this position in order that a fellow Rambler who is more involved can devote the time and attention that is required to this very interesting and rewarding post.

Needless to say I will be pleased to offer any help and assistance I can together with the box of tools I have to whoever is able to take on this role.

Oh yes the only exception is that my "FOOTPATH SECRETARY" badge stays with me!!!!

So for the final time, goodbye and please don't blow your horn as you pass the caravan !

Enjoy your walks !

* - the Wednesday walks are not all mine and my thanks to those who have contributed to the programme. If any new leaders would like company or help to recce one of these local and easier walks, let me know – the walk will be yours to lead – I'll be right behind you ! **Eileen**

Website Editor - Jim Eckersley

Twitter Update

Having attended a Ramblers Seminar with Phil Guest and Andrew Franklin, it fell to me to attend the Workshop 'How to promote your Ramblers group'. An item which the Ramblers publicity officer had found from experience was quite effective at gaining new members was a Twitter account.

Having consulted with the committee it was agreed that we should give it a go. Subsequently a Twitter account has been set up for the group and can be accessed by left clicking on the two little blue birds on the SCR home page.

I, like many members are not exactly in the zone for getting into the twittersphere, but our site has a few posts coming through. Should members like to try their hand, I can supply any SCR member with the details for logging in and tweeting.

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Ramblers' Finances and Organisation – Philip Lund Treasurer

As I was unable to attend the recent Group AGM I feel incumbent to write something, as Group Treasurer, for this issue of the newsletter. I realise that most readers of the newsletter will probably not have got this far in an article with such a title but, for the dedicated minority, here goes.

As all members are probably aware your annual membership subscription is paid to the Ramblers organization at national level and not to your local Group or the one with which you most commonly walk. This is primarily because Ramblers is both an umbrella organization for lots of walking groups and a pressure group forwarding the interests of all walkers. Thus much of your annual subscription goes to pressing the case for more walking opportunities (e.g. coastal paths and National Parks) rather than the activities of local Groups. At this stage it is worth noting that although a member is strictly a member of the national Ramblers organisation members are allocated to a particular Group on the basis of their home postcode unless they express a wish to be allocated to a different Group.

What are our local Group funds spent on? Well primarily on matters such as producing and distributing walk programmes, paying the expenses

of some walk leaders when they 'reccy' walks, holding and publicizing meetings and various administrative matters, including the maintenance of the Group website. From time to time there are also other expenses such as for the training of walk leaders.

Those who attended the AGM will know that our finances are now in a fairly healthy state – indeed they are now at risk of being too healthy as HQ does not like Groups holding reserves which it considers large relative to the Group's size and annual expenditures. Due to pressure to reduce our reserves in past years they had, by the end of the 2013-14 year, fallen to a relatively low level and so it was decided to increase them by seeking and obtaining financing for 2014-15 in excess of our expected expenditures in that year. As it happened our actual expenditures were only about half the budgeted level and we got a large total payment from Ramblers Holidays. However it is clearly difficult to predict what may happen next!

South Cheshire Ramblers Annual Gathering.

Friday 5th February 2016, 7.00pm
at the Hunters Lodge, Crewe

An evening of social intercourse will be followed by fun and games. There will be a luxurious hot and cold buffet at £20 per person.

If you wish to attend, please confirm to:
Philip Guest - Tel/Text: 07918 687683,
e-mail: philipguest1@sky.com

We look forward then, to an evening of food and fun in February, see you there!

Walking through an Island's History

Robert and Judith Spowage

In September twenty-two ramblers flew from a manic and overcrowded Manchester Airport to explore Guernsey; to experience some of its history and walk along some of its paths and tracks.

Set in the south of the English Channel and close by the coast of Normandy lie the Channel Islands and in particular Guernsey. It is the second largest island with Jersey being the largest. Geologically the island is made up of a number of "granite" type rocks which gives the West and south of the island coastline its rugged character. In population terms the island's history stems from the Bronze Age through the Iron Age, Romans, Franks and Bretons.

In 933 AD the island became part of Normandy, bringing with them the Norman language, their laws and other institutions that remain to today. The French captured Normandy from the English in 1204, but the Channel Islands remained under control of the English 'Crown'. The Napoleonic wars of the 18th century threatened Guernsey and considerable efforts were made to protect the island. Fort George was created at St Peterport to house an increased garrison and fifteen Pre-Martello Towers were built at strategic places.

The Second World War saw Guernsey occupied by German forces. They created many fortifications around the island which can be still seen today. One particular fortification was an underground set of tunnels that housed four massive oil tanks. It was built as part of an abortive attempt to create a U-Boat port. However the tidal movement was too great for this to work. It is now a museum of the occupation and was visited by some of the Ramblers. The Liberation of the island took place on 9th May 1945 and is commemorated each year.

Modern day Guernsey has a strong tourist industry but has developed a strong international finance industry as its mainstay.

Our transport from Guernsey airport was a public service bus. It was rather crowded with our luggage seemingly taking over the bus. There then followed about a 1 mile walk to the hotel which was located in the parish of St Martins in the south of the island.

The Blue Horizon hotel was a compact medium sized place with good views of the sea. Good food and rooms and staff that made us feel welcome.

One of our major concerns was the weather. The forecast was for rain and strong winds. As it turned out there was little rain; mainly short showers with the exception of a thunderstorm one lunch time. However the winds were strong coming off the Atlantic Ocean, but it was not strong enough to daunt our intrepid ramblers.

The hotel's location was close to a number of walks and three groups set out on our first walking day. Two groups went to the East along a coastal path which led to St Peter Port. One group took a more inland route after first visiting the Doyle Column towards St Martins Point. By using this route it enabled the walkers to see the high quality housing whilst also being able to enjoy the pleasant Fermain Bay and to visit the military cemetery by Fort George. The other group took a more direct route along the coast but both arrived at the same point at the entrance to St Peter Port.

The other group went to the West along another similar cliff walk aiming for Petit Bot Bay. Although this walk continued to Fort Pezeries at the end of the southern coast it was possible to turn inland at a number of points to one of the main roads where a local bus facilitated a return to St Martins. Some of the group turned inland at Petit Bot Bay and before returning the hotel visited an Occupation Museum with its large collection of German Army equipment.

All of the walks consisted of well signposted paths along high cliffs (often well wooded) and down to pretty sandy/rocky beaches. They also had many ups and downs with steps.



For those who wished to go further afield boat trips to the islands of Sark and Herm were options and a number made the trip. There was some concern about the weather as at one point some eight out of ten trips had been cancelled the previous day due to high winds. The wind did relent and the visits were made without difficulty.

Other places to visit were, Manor House and gardens and several nature reserves. St Peter Port was also a fascinating visit with its substantial harbour and marina. For those who wished there was a good range of shops, restaurants, bars and coffee shops. One particular place of interest was the museum with an exhibition of the history of the island.

In a nearby building a tapestry had been exhibited to mark the Millennium. Ten panels, produced by the residents of the ten Bailiwicks (parishes), were on show; each covering a different aspect of the history of the island. All visitors were provided with an audio device providing an excellent commentary of each of the panels.

One of the most impressive features was the W.W.II memorial. An obelisk had been erected close by a long curved granite bench. Each year, on 9th May the tip of the shadow of the obelisk passed along the bench, as the earth rotated, marking the time of a number of events on the day of liberation. The idea came from a local artist but the actual layout was calculated by a local professional astronomer.

Our short stay meant that we could not fully explore the island and not to visit some of the places so it was with a little regret we flew back to Manchester.

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My Guernsey Diary – 13-17 September

Eileen Dorman

Armed with a little advanced research, free maps from the airport and a bus timetable the world that is Guernsey and Herm can be your.... Lobster..... We had a most enjoyable and sociable group holiday.

Sunday – flight from Manchester to Guernsey.

Bus from Airport and short walk to Blue Horizon Hotel, St Martins.

Very sociable evening: dinner, drinks in the bar, maps and plans for next day's walks – Ramblers took over the small lounge!

Monday - Good breakfast, complimentary bus tickets, courtesy of the Hotel.

Coastal walk East to St Peter Port picnic lunch, met some of the others near the Castle.

Tourist info and Sark Boat Office – poor weather forecast for tomorrow “will we - wont we”, then rain.

Back to St Martins on the around the island anti-clockwise bus. Good trip to make sense of the geography of the Island. Bev pointed out useful landmarks from recent wedding trip

John O's birthday surprise – a well kept secret until dinner!

More drinks and planning in the bar.

An early start for the boat to Sark – if it sails...

Tuesday

Heavy rain and strong winds at breakfast time. Bev and I decide to take our time and catch the later boat going to Herm.

We'll meet the others for dinner at best fish restaurant on Guernsey, if Phil can book us all in.

Dominique joins us. Rain eases and we explore St Martins – figure 8 walk *ruettes tranquilles*: Parish Church, *La Gran'mère du Chimquière*, the Grandmother of the Cemetery, Sausmarez Manor, Ogiers shop (sale on in the women's department ☺).

Bus to St Peter Port, Victorian Parlour. Coffee stop and all aboard ferry to Herm.

Tractor transport, one hotel, one shop, one pub, one cafe; disappointed Dominique hoped for plateau de fruits de mer or a lobster, but settled for a tuna sandwich!

Yeah...! walking in sunshine all around the coastal path, picnic on the top, paddling and rock-pooling, beer at the pub, last boat back to St Peter Port – no news of fish and chips, so we go in search of lobster, via the cocktail bar! Lobster and monk fish found at the Crows Nest overlooking the harbour. Nice wine too.

Raining. Missed last bus back, met Carole and Rae at taxi stand. Back to Blue Horizon, greeted by the others with tales of Sark, fish and chips, more drinks in the lounge and planning for tomorrow.

Wednesday

Heavy rain – culture today; Castle Cornet and museums. Walk if it stops. David, Dominique and Sally left Bev and me at the castle. Meet later at bus stop for Pleinmont if it stops raining. Castle is 3 museums, in time for midday gun ceremonial, historical re-enactment on the high seas! Survived the scurvy and made our fortune! Coffee and cake.

2.00pm bus to Pleinmont. Picnic and plan coastal walk around the headland as far as time allows: views out to Hanois Lighthouse, foreboding watchtowers, gun batteries, nature reserve. Walked down to Torteval Church for bus back to hotel in time for dinner and packing. Another sociable evening in the bar !

Thursday

Luggage dropped off at airport, bus back to St Martins with Bev and Dominique for a lot of trying on and some shopping at Ogiers.

Bus to St Peter Port for gift shopping and lunch on the Pier. Seafood – what else ?

Bus back to airport and flight to Manchester.



As Robert and Judith say in their article, a short stay and more places to explore and visit – perhaps another time. You will notice from my diary that it is very easy to get about by bus on Guernsey. All journeys cost £1, even around the Island ! If you want to see more, Jim has put more photos on the Ramblers Flickr website.

Friday – laundry and more packing. Bev and I are off on a Ramblers holiday to Puerto de Soller, Majorca tomorrow !

It was great, Soller is a perfect bay, lovely sea and we enjoyed hot dry weather. Good challenging walks in the Serra de Tramuntana, with stops for almond cakes and coffee and evening cocktails – bit of a theme going on..?

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The Long Walk Andrew Franklin

Now ok possibly I have trouble with numbers !!

It seemed to me that to have a full days walk on the longest day of the year was a good idea - well it was at the time on the assumption that the sky would be blue, the sun would be shining and rain was something that only happens on other people's walks.

Mmmmm well was I a little optimistic ??

My little band of NOMADS met and we left Bollington at 08.30am even before the Park Ranger was there to open the toilet - maybe he had seen the weather forecast - and there was slight drizzle - apparently "White Nancy" was somewhere but nobody actually saw it.

So on we went, the walk became a little harder but unfortunately so did the rain but did we turn back - NO - we were determined to reach our goal of Eccles Pike from where on a clear day you could look down on the Whaley Bridge - sadly we had to use our imagination as that town had also disappeared in the rain.

The mood of the group improved when we eventually arrived in Whaley Bridge - I didn't quite know why but then it dawned on me that we were sheltering from the rain in a bus shelter and for some reason it was assumed that Bus Driver David had organised one of his friends to take us back to Bollington.

Oh how they laughed when I said it was only another 10 miles before we got back.

It was during the return up to the ridge of Lyme Park that something approaching a miracle happened - we looked behind us and on the horizon we could actually see Eccles Pike - the rain stopped and whilst nobody started dancing at least people began to talk to me again ha ha!

Well we were on a roll now and even though there were some rather rude comments directed to me as we passed Andrews Knob I felt that all was going to be well as there, like a beacon to welcome us back, we could see " White Nancy" !!!!

So we eventually returned after 11 hours and whether it was 18 - or - 20 - or 22 miles I am sure my happy band cannot wait till mid - summer day 2016 when I will have another surprise in store !!!!!