

# South Cheshire Group

Newsletter No. 33

June 2011

## Notices

### Let us have your e-mail address.

It will help us to improve communication and reduce printing and postage costs. The Newsletter and Walks Programme are published on the website—we'll drop you an e-mail to let you know when they are available to download.

Newsletter articles and group notices are generally available on the website ahead of the Newsletter.

### Committee:

#### Chairperson

Philip Guest  
Tel: 07918 687683

#### Secretary

Bernard Stanway  
Tel: 07973 228886

#### Treasurer

Jenny Edwards  
Tel: 01270 620650

#### Footpath Secretary

Graham Taylor  
Tel: 07810 766094

#### Rambles Secretary

David Vernon  
Tel: 01270 569039

#### Membership & Web

Eileen Dorman  
07846 464736

#### Publicity

Carole Bentley

#### Newsletter

Bev Brady

#### Members

Julie Hayward  
Phil Keogh  
Ray Sellars  
Sally Nield

Dominique Dafour-Jackson  
David Smith

## Morecambe Bay Walk : Saturday 25th June

Janet Fallon has kindly postponed her walk on the above date in order that we can take part in a "Once in a Lifetime" walk across the famous Morecambe Sands.

The walk will be led by The Queens Guide to the Sands, the famous Mr Cedric Robinson MBE. It is expected that many 100s of people will be taking part as the RNLI has a sponsored walk on the same day. **We have been allocated 30 places.**

To book a place contact Andrew Franklin on 01270 665533 (after 8.00pm).

More details about this walk on page 6 .....

## Chairman's Chat

### Philip Guest

I'm writing this immediately before the May bank holiday. Over the weekend the group will holiday at Derwentwater in an HF hotel. This is a new venture for the group and with almost 30 walkers taking part shows that the number of active participants in our programme is continuing to rise.

I have to thank Robert and Judith Spowage for introducing the Thursday lunchtime walks. This, I am sure, has been a major contribution to our steadily increasing number of active walkers.

The walk leaders programme held in November last year was taken up in full. The combination of our regular and new leaders along with the increase in walkers we have experienced this year will provide the group on some weekends with a choice between a half day or a full day walk. Our active walkers include a mix of those wanting a moderate walk and those who want a longer challenge. We must try to meet the aspirations of all and I am grateful to David Vernon for assembling the next six month programme that hopefully will meet these requirements.

On the holiday front, we will be taking to Snowdonia again for the August bank holiday. David Vernon is hoping that we will have the opportunity of trying out a new three day linear walk making use of the transport available at Plas-tan-y-bwlch.

Under Graham Taylor's guidance the essential task of footpath maintenance continues with monthly well equipped and manned expeditions to the far flung outposts of our territory to 'open them up for tourism'. I believe we are very fortunate in Cheshire, where footpaths are well signposted and maintained. Neighbouring counties are far less well served.

Once again I can recommend Ramblers Worldwide Holidays. I have recently spent a week on the island of La Palma and the quality of the hotel, arrangements and the walk leader was excellent. I will be using them in the summer when I will visit Austria again.

Finally, please let me know if you have any suggestions or comments which you would want me to know about. In a year, I meet perhaps one third of our members during walks, but I am aware of a silent majority that also should have a voice.



Phil, Phil & David – Walk Leadership by committee

Photo: Paul Boniface

## Walk Statistics

David Vernon — Rambles Secretary



## Travel to Start of Walks : Fuel Share

David Vernon

The recent escalation in fuel costs has led to the need to re-establish a voluntary fuel cost tariff for car sharing. This will be per person for a round trip journey and is:

- 1 = £1.50 for up to 40 miles
- 2 = £2.50 for up to 60 miles
- 3 = £3.50 for up to 80 miles
- 4 = £4.50 for up to 100 miles

In the walks programme alongside the letter denoting the car park meeting place a number will indicate the tariff. This is a voluntary scheme; so please support your drivers. The distances are straight line distances so will be less than the actual mileage. Straight line round trip examples are Buxton 40, West Kirby 60, Church Stretton 80, Betws y Coed 100.

## Walk Leaders Workshop - Diane Birkenhead

A most enjoyable and constructive day was spent by all attending the Walk Leaders Workshop held in November last year. The workshop was a full day tutorial provided by South Cheshire Ramblers for South Cheshire Ramblers.

David Vernon, the groups' Rambles Secretary and an experienced walker, keenly organised the study day, having done so he was then readily able to demonstrate his expert knowledge in a first class manner. Assistance to David on the day was given by Carole Bentley, Paul Stone and Peter Callery, all experienced walk leaders and long standing group members.

The main aim of the day was to hopefully recruit additional future walk leaders, but also to benefit current walk leaders wanting to improve or refresh their skills.

Topics covered included: Map Reading, Use of the Compass, and Navigation Skills

Later in the day the attendees completed a practical exercise, being split into groups, each group then set out to plan and execute a two mile walk in the surrounding area.

The day proved to be very successful and an extremely popular event, with attendance at maximum capacity. We have walks included in the next programme, starting in July, being led by members who attended the workshop in November, myself being one of them. Our plan is to make more walks available to the groups ever increasing numbers

## Carry on Rambling - Paul Boniface

Firstly I would like to say a huge thank you to all my fellow walkers and especially to the walk leaders for a most enjoyable introduction to walking in South Cheshire and beyond.

### My First Walk

I'm new to the area having moved up from Kent last year and my first walk came about after looking in Nantwich library for something to do one weekend. As luck would have it I saw an 'advert' for the South Cheshire Ramblers which invited me to contact Sally for details of that Sunday's walk to Tideswell. There I met some of the characters who form the group. People like Penny who kindly gave me a lift, Bernard with his seemingly boundless energy, Sally herself and many others who were to form the 'cast' of Carry on Rambling.

(The cast rest before the next scene)



I had never been a 'group' walker before and to be frank the biggest challenge for me was not so much the physical aspect of the hills and dales as was the prospect of walking and talking at the same time. I needn't have worried – SC Ramblers have some very interesting tales to tell – not all of them connected with walking. I've learnt a lot about cooking, sewing, gardening, history, geography, anthropology, philosophy, chemistry, economics and nearly everything else I should have learnt at school. As a recently re-instated bachelor, the cooking tips have been most useful!

The people I met during my first few weeks will always shape my memory of the SC Ramblers. It would not be possible to mention you all but in the early days I met Andrew (very generous with the sweets and compliments to the Ladies), Bev, David, Ray, Diane, Anne and John. Oh and Phil. Phil who? Well that's a good question and I'm not sure yet whether I have actually permanently remembered which Phil is which. Rule number one for new people is if in doubt and you're talking to a man call him 'Phil' - you won't often be wrong.

My first walk to Tideswell was followed by Wenlock Edge and Dunham Massey. All expertly led and for someone like me who had only ever wandered out into the great outdoors in the vague direction of the next pub, sans map, sans compass and sans water, to have the absolute luxury of being guided by such competent walk leaders has been exactly that – great luxury.

## Carry on Rambling continued

### Photos

Is it my age? Or is it my butterfly mind or goldfish-like memory? Whatever it is I find myself increasingly unable to recall the details of my life for more than a few weeks. And so, I take photos when I go out walking. They remind me of the beautiful scenery and fauna and flora of the countryside. Some of my pictures have been up-loaded to the website and whilst I'm no professional photographer I immodestly think that one or two have captured the moment or the view.



### Pace

I like to walk at a steady pace, probably faster than the average pace of the group. I know that I am not alone in this and one of the tricks in enjoying a walk is to manage the pace and the breaks. I've found that by tracking back and forth through the meandering human crocodile, stopping to take photos, hanging back and then sprinting forward, Lewis Hamilton-like, weaving in and out, overtaking on the inside and outside I can satisfy my own desire for a bit of pace but not get ahead of the leader (a very important rule). So please excuse me if I seem to disappear in the middle of your latest episode of Cheshire Life.

### Pubs

Some people like quarries, some prefer mills or churches or stately homes but for me there is no finer man-made edifice than the British Pub; and whilst there will be those who make a case for champagne or cocoa, to me there is no finer drink on God's Earth than a pint of English Beer. Wave the flag, belt out Jerusalem, admire the mighty English Oak, enjoy a full English Breakfast before you set

off if you wish – the crowning glory of any walk is a taste of England's finest product in its finest setting: the country pub. Cross Keys at Selattyn was my personal favourite – many thanks to Robert and Judith for including this on your walk.



### Recent Events

As a newcomer to the area I have been mightily impressed with the scenery of the Peak District and other National Parks we've been to and there were three stunning walks in the Autumn that will (notwithstanding earlier comments) live long in the memory: Axe Edge, Helsby and Teggs Nose – again all expertly led by Phil (Guest), Bernard and Paul respectively.

### The Future

What next? I know that the group have been quite ambitious in its Away Fixtures with Kilimanjaro sounding as though it was a particular highlight. Having missed out on the Lake District weekend last year I am especially looking forward to helping celebrate the royal marriage in April by walking with the group around Derwentwater.

Thanks to David Vernon who organised and led a super day's walk-leader training in November. Not only am I now even more in admiration of those who so generously give their time and effort to organise and lead walks but I may even find the courage to do so myself in the latter part of next year – Sevenoaks anyone?

**Finally.....**if the title of my article appears irreverent, the sentiment is affectionate. I've had a smile or two during the year with SC Ramblers. Thanks for welcoming me into the fold and I hope that the group and I 'Carry on Rambling' for many years to come.

## Hilbre Island - Hazel Wallis

Just after Christmas, thirteen of us headed off from the slipway at the north end of the lake at West Kirby on the Wirral. The weather had turned milder and the temperature was in the + s, not seen for a couple of weeks, but the ice covering the sand for the first 20 metres was testament to the low temperatures we had been experiencing. The route we followed was the one recommended by The Borough & official sites of knowledge.

We headed straight to Little Eye (the smallest) round the back of it to the Middle Eye then over to Hilbre Island (the largest.). This route is advised as the tide sweeps in creating a deep gully in front of Hilbre and the sands here are 'risky' at all times, this said the walk can only be done if tide times have been checked.

Little Eye is very small, nevertheless there was an important land mark on it (the stone base of which can still be seen) which helped to guide ships through the sand banks

and onto Wales. We continued onto and over the Middle Eye, to Hilbre Island.

At the entrance to Hilbre, there is a path and retaining wall built in the 1890s by the Mersey Docks and Harbour Board. Though nobody lives on the island permanently now, there were several families residing on the island in Victorian times, and monks from the



then Abbey in Chester (now cathedral) lived on the island until the dissolution of the Abbey by Henry

V111 1538.

At the far end of the island is the remains of the lifeboat station which operated from 1839 - 1939, used due to the inability to launch the life boats from shore at low tide. The members ran or rode on horse back from Hoylake and the Telegraph Keeper would have the doors open ready to launch the boat which was powered by oars or sail only. In a bricked off part of the Lifeboat

station is the Victorian tide gauge which is still used to plot the height of the tides, information used by large ships entering the port of Liverpool.

Standing in the lifeboat station we watched several grey seals, watching us! They were part of a colony which spends most of its time lying on the sand bank behind Hilbre Island. Their numbers increase in the summer to over 500 reducing in the autumn when the adults go to breeding areas in West Wales.

Hilbre Island is a nature reserve and is very popular with ornithologists who come to observe the significant number of bird species who visit the island and the sands around.

After a coffee break we retraced our steps back to the shore & finished with a walk round the path which encircles the lake, & off to the pub with the cobwebs well & truly blown away.

## A trip to Morocco to bag Toubkal

Graham Taylor

Although it is billed as the highest mountain in North Africa at 13,750ft Jebel Toubkal is a trek not a climb. The walk in Morocco gives the added bonus of walking in wild exotic mountain scenery without the long and expensive journey that a trip to the Himalaya would entail. Oh, and a last night in Marrakesh!

The proposal is that we go with Explore, to ensure the protection of ABTA bonding, the week 2-9th October.

Cost is £700.

See <http://www.exodus.co.uk/holidays/tmm/overview> for lots more info.

Please contact Phil Guest or myself, with the aim of making a block reservation and then paying Explore individually.

[philip454@btinternet.com](mailto:philip454@btinternet.com)

[graham.richard.taylor@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:graham.richard.taylor@hotmail.co.uk)

## The Annual Dinner

Dominique Dafour-Jackson, Sally Nield

Our 2012 Annual Dinner will take place at:

**The Thatch Country Inn at Faddiley**  
on the  
**27<sup>th</sup> January 2012 at 8pm (for 8.30 pm)**

Priced at £19.95 per person for a three course meal with tea or coffee.

Details of the menu will be published nearer the time.

For reservations and any further information please contact :

Sally on 07971458871

E-mail [sallynield@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:sallynield@tiscali.co.uk) or

Dominique on 07971603057.

**Book early: Numbers are limited to 40 places.**

## Footpath Maintenance

Graham Taylor

A small but dedicated team seem to have settled into a monthly expedition on a mutually convenient Friday morning from a meet at 9:30am to entering a watering hole at say 1pm.

In the meantime the objective is to explore one of the many parishes in the old CNBC area, devising a circular route and clearing any vegetation obstructing the way in the process. We make a record of the route and report any problems back to Cheshire East Public Rights of Way Department (CE PRoW). Useful and often amusing work. These routes are finding the way into the walks program, the Wrenbury figure of eight was a recent example.

Needless to say, with budget cuts, the authority are interested in how they can use volunteers as big society bramble bashers. They are currently agonising over insurance. We pointed out that Stone Ramblers seem to work effectively with Staffordshire covered by the authority insurance whilst they repair stiles etc.

The authority is also keen to seek volunteers help them complete their PRoW asset register. I have commented on this stressing the need for it to lead to action.

As for action we understand that the CE policy is only to action dangerous PRoWs up to spend of £500 and thereafter to close them.

Please let me know of any issues that concern you and I will report at subsequent meetings.

The Cheshire definitive map has improved of late in that when you open up the footpath tab, the identity of the footpath appears alongside it.

<http://maps.cheshire.gov.uk/cheshirecc.interactivemapping.web.internet/Default.aspx>

It is important to know this when reporting problems.

The Ramblers National Office has arranged to give a teach-in on Public Enquiry procedure on Thursday 26 May 2011 at the Quaker Meeting house in central Manchester. This has been on our website and strictly places are now open to all and hence it may be full but if you wish to attend please let me know.

Finally please come and join us on a Friday, let me know, and I will put you on our email circulation.

## Bush lands, Battles and Mountains : A South African Experience

Robert Spowage

In late February 2011 after a delayed overnight flight to Johannesburg we finally arrived, in darkness, at Bonamanzi Game Park in Kwazulu Natal. We were greeted by the eyes of Impala that lit up in the headlights of the coach as we entered the Game Park. It was getting interesting ! Dinner then to our thatched accommodation, to a chorus of Cicadas. Then followed four days of animal spotting in a variety of settings; Late evening, early morning, whole days in game parks or on the St Lucia River and iSimangaliso Wetland Park. A wide variety of animals and birds were seen including: Elephant, Hippopotamus, Rhino, Giraffe, Water buffalo, Crocodiles, Warthogs, Impala, Nyala and many different birds.

We also saw an example of the Zulu way of life with it traditional homes and facilities. One place we were fortunate enough to visit was a secondary school for local children. The conditions were less than ideal but this did not deter the enthusiasm of the staff and pupils.

Then on to Dundee, across the rolling hills and grasslands of Kwazulu Natal, stopping off to see the site of the Battle of Blood River where the Boers inflicted a major defeat on the Zulus. Dundee was a centre for coalmining and was our base

for seeing the battlefields of Isandhlwana, Rorkes Drift and Fugitives Drift. We were fortunate to have the services of a military historian guide who was able to bring the history alive. We visited a major museum on the site of the battle of Talana. This comprises 17 buildings in parkland, dedicated to subjects as diverse as war and agriculture, the mining industry and domestic life. An interesting interlude. On our way to our next location we called in at Ladysmith which was under siege by the Boers for 118 days; the siege museum gave insights into the origins of the Boer War and the participants involved.

As we journeyed on we called in at Spion Kop, a high hill, that was fought over by the British and Boers. Although the battle was won by the British it was at great cost of lives. This was supported by the many memorials and a mass grave.

To the Drakensberg mountains, also known as **uKhahlamba** ("barrier of spears"). We spent nine nights at two centres. The first being the Cathedral Peak hotel; lately being featured in Julia Bradbury's South Africa Walks. It was a high quality hotel nestling in the mountains at 5000 ft above sea level, with Cathedral Peak itself dominating the horizon. The weather was hot and humid, thus the walking was challenging but interesting. The second was further north, close by the Royal Natal National Park. The walking was equally challenging but offered opportunities to experience the terrain and discover some of the San Bushmen's images painted on the walls of shallow caves.

Both locations had fantastic views in all directions.

Finally we travelled to Cape Town. Our hotel was almost on the South Atlantic sea front with a backdrop of Signal Hill and Table Mountain. We travelled on the hop on hop off tourist bus to explore the Kirstenbosch Botanical Gardens (a must for all visitors to Cape Town); up the cable car to the top of Table Mountain with its views of the city and south towards the Cape.

A tour of the Cape peninsular offered a wide range of experiences with highlights being Hout Bay, Chapman's Coastal Drive, Cape of Good Hope Nature Reserve and the Cape itself (Next stop South Antarctica!). We witnessed the thieving nature of the Cape Baboons at first hand, with one tourist being pursued until she dropped her bag and lost all the goodies inside. Finally the long flight home and a chance to reflect on our experiences.

South Africa is a place of extreme contrasts. The ghosts of apartheid still sharpened perceptions of wealth and poverty. Crime was widespread in the cities but often we were left with vision of beauty and progress. Yet one cannot doubt the friendliness of all we met but all the time we were reminded that danger lurked around any corner for the unaware. Major cities sat in a vast wilderness of grasslands, mountains and game parks. Some roads were excellent but often suddenly turned into dusty tracks and back again.

The sense of history is profound and persistent that came alive in the battlefields and museums.

## Colourful Cuba !

**Eileen Dorman**

In March I travelled on a Ramblers Worldwide Holiday - and I do mean travelled! During the flight from Gatwick to Havana, fellow Ramblers made brief introductions as we were grouped together with our UK Leader. We became more familiar during the slow queue through immigration and passport control at Havana Airport.

We arrived late evening Cuban time at our first Hotel in Vinales. In all there were 7 hotels during the 2 weeks. We were led to the restaurant for dinner (difficult to enjoy when our bodyclocks were at 3.00am UK time!) and then to our rooms, old colonial style, heavily shuttered, substantial furniture, clean bathroom, comfortable bed and curiosity as to where we were.

What joy on opening the shutters in the morning! We were neighbours in a terraced row, each room with a patio. Some had, it seemed, shared their bathrooms with frogs or lizards! Cloudless blue sky, swimming pool, immaculately manicured gardens. The hotel nestled in the valley of Viñales. Breathtaking views of round topped mountains and limestone pillars. Later we learned they are known as 'mogotes' formed by tectonic eruption and erosion. We walked in the National Parks, through farmland, tobacco plantations and shared cigars, freshly rolled on the kitchen table by a farmer's wife ! This was just the start of a wonderful and fascinating holiday.

From this northern province of Pinar del Rio, we flew south to Baracoa, in Guantánamo Province. Christopher Columbus landed at Baracoa on his first journey to Cuba. Originally inhabited by Taino, indigenous native American Indians, the Cuban guides say aborigines. Here begins the history of Cuban occupation, struggles for independence and revolutions. A complete subject in itself.

The landscape of Baracoa is dominated by El Yunque, a table mountain and National Monument. We travelled by open truck to start a walk along the River Toa. In this region we swam in the Atlantic Ocean and walked in tropical rainforest and mangroves, uphill walking here was wet and slippery underfoot. We also enjoyed walking through banana, coffee and citrus plantations. We were served guava, mango, oranges, coconut and coffee by local people who supplied our lunchtime picnics. We sampled local food: callaloo (a thick vegetable broth - served in half bamboo bowls) followed by rum inside grapefruit skins.

Oh haven't I mentioned the rum yet ? Cuba libre, mojito, rum Collins, pina colada. And then of course there was the dancing in the Casas de la Trova (Troubadours' Houses). More like social clubs. If you like the music of Buena Vista - it's there. If not you'll find classical or Spanish flamenco, or grand piano. Regardless of your taste music will certainly find you !

And so we went on .... travelling back northwards we stayed at Santiago de Cuba, Camaguey, Trinidad and Havana Vieja. In Old Havana, our hotel was Ambos Mundos, famous for Ernest Hemmingway, his room is retained as a small museum. If you are counting, after Vinales we stayed at Soroa. A small resort in the mountains in unusual pseudo Art Deco cabanos.

In Trinidad we travelled to and from our walk up in the the Sierra d'Escambray mountains in old Russian army trucks - clunky crunchy syncro-mesh gears and double-declutching, not sure about the brakes! We walked along the Sendero La Alfombra Magica (Magic Carpet Path): wobbly bridges, caves, air-plants, orchids and local birds. The flora and fauna is fabulous. A bit disconcerting when pigs and piglets emerge from the undergrowth, but you get used to it and we had already learned not to stand under roosting turkey vultures.

When not in the mountains, or by the sea, Atlantic and Carribean, our guided walks were in the old Spanish Colonial cities full of history. Our talks were of the battles for independence, both political and physical and religion. There are lovely churches and cathedrals. Fidel Castro and Che Guevara are almost idolised with posters and iconography everywhere. Other famous freedom fighters have also shaped Cuban culture. There are statues of Carlos Manuel de Céspedes and José Martí who fought for independence from Spain and America. Every city or town has a Revolution Square. Eventually you forget which Revolution. The religion of Cuba is traditionally Catholic, which through the influence of African slaves has been modified to Santeria. We were invited to visit a Santeria meeting house in Trinidad. There was a very ornate black virgin (Mary ?) statue, offerings of water and flowers. Restrictions on religious practice following the Communist revolution of 1959 have been eased and in 1998 Pope John Paul II was allowed to visit Cuba.

Yes, there are old American cars, not just in Havana. Mostly they are hybridised with Russian Lada engines. Every type of transport is valued and cared for; trucks, bicycles, bicycle taxis, yellow school buses, pony and trap, tractor and trailer. Travel is the biggest challenge for Cubans and hitchhiking is legitimate and the main means of transport. We were fortunate to travel in air-conditioned, Chinese manufactured tourist coaches. Great as we had 3 very long full days travelling northwards, stopping off at places of interest on the way. We did occasionally provide lifts to people working at tourist locations.

Colourful Cuba exceeded my expectation of the holiday. The scenery, walking, colonial buildings, museums, churches, music, history and culture is fascinating. There is so much more, not least of all the revolution of 1959 which has influenced the political and cultural landscape in the last 50 years or so. The Cuban people are charming, resilient, resourceful and educated. Characteristics which were well demonstrated by our tour guides, each of whom contributed to a wonderful and interesting introduction to Cuba.

## **Morecambe Bay Walk : Saturday 25th June**

- **Andrew Franklin**

Janet Fallon has kindly postponed her walk on the above date so that we can take part in a "Once in a Lifetime Walk" across the famous Morecambe Bay Sands.

This will be led by The Queen's Guide to the Sands, the famous Mr Cedric Robinson, MBE. It is expected that many 100s of people will be taking part as the RNLI has a sponsored walk at the same time.

**South Cheshire Ramblers have been allocated 30 places.**

The 8-10 mile walk leaves Arnside at 12.45am and will take approximately 3½ hours to our destination at Kents Bank.



We have been advised that "old shoes", plimsoles and shorts, etc should be worn and NOT walking boots as we will be wading across the Kent Channel and will certainly get wet !!!

Upon reaching land we will return via a bus service from Grange-over-Sands station (the viaduct is closed to trains until the end of July) unless non-walking members have driven over to cheer us upon our arrival and can take us back to Arnside.

Whilst there is no official cost it is suggested that to assist Mr Robinson with his Public Liability Insurance and his expertise a figure of £5 per person be donated.

Now as "time and tide, etc" .... We will not know until the evening of Friday 24th if this walk will actually proceed as the sands will only be checked for safety during that day so PLEASE, PLEASE be understanding if it is cancelled.

If you are interested, please book a place by contacting Andrew Franklin (after 8.00pm) on 01270 665533.

You will also need to contact Andrew on 24th June to confirm that the walk will go ahead.

**Meeting place for this walk is Haslington Village Car Park, leaving at 9.30am.**