

CHAIRMAN'S CHAT – SUMMER 2016

Phil Guest

I'm writing this in between our group holidays to Scotland and Yorkshire hoping that the latter will be as successful as the former.

Eileen Dorman's coach holidays are becoming legendary and I'm sure everyone who took part will want me to thank her through this column. Lots more places to visit Eileen!

The taster walk programme, again an initiative from Eileen, is already beginning to show that a ground up approach to the problems of recruiting members can only be resolved at the local level. Ramblers centre have for a number of years been trying to get the membership to accept a code of governance where the structure requires groups such as our own to be managed by an Area committee, which for us would be one based in Cheshire East and include our neighbours Congleton and East Cheshire groups. However, at the recent Congress our delegates rejected this proposal and now the Chief Executive has resigned. I believe that each of the groups in our Area is more than competent in running themselves and we should be left to do what we feel is right for us. The taster walks are giving some members of the public an opportunity to see who and what we are, we may not see all of them join Ramblers but we are fulfilling our responsibility of 'promoting walking'.

Once again can I appeal to members to see if we can increase our pool of walk leaders. I know some members who were adamant that they could never lead a walk but with gentle persuasion and mentoring are now accomplished leaders. We need more as our programme of walks seems to grow annually, think about it, we are here to help.

Again, another appeal, Bev Brady has given invaluable service in editing this bulletin. She would like to be replaced if at all possible and will give her full support and training to a volunteer if one comes forward, again CAN YOU HELP??

Finally, my own thanks to David and Margaret Smith for all their many years contribution to SCR. Bon voyage to you both and 'keep on walking'.

Committee

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AU REVOIR THE SMITHS

Graham Taylor

Oh no it can't be true but yes it is.

Margaret and David are leaving us to join their children Graham and Julia's families down south.

Needless to say their immaculate house and garden sold in a day and now they are on their way.

Guernsey : September 2015



The Smiths go back further than most of us in Nantwich. They are of course a team, the phrase Margaret and David rolls off the tongue.

Together they have served the community within Cancer Research UK, Nantwich in Bloom, the U3A and of course South Cheshire Ramblers.

David was an early Chairman of the infant South Cheshire Ramblers but in fact they have always contributed in some capacity as members of the committee or co-opted members and been a force in the growth of the club to the success it is today. Their encyclopaedic knowledge of what has and has not worked in the past is much valued.

David and Margaret managed, and filled, the walk program for many years during which time they encouraged many of us to experience the achievement and perils of leadership for the first time.

The statistics that David gathered on walks and their attendance, were always of use when devising the next program.

David could always be relied on to produce the relevant OS map from the group archive... and make sure we got it back!

In the trees at Tatton Park : October 2012



When it comes to walks, which is what we're about, they will always plan, reconnoitre and lead several walks for any program. Walks that meet Margaret's exacting criteria, dry, flat(ish) and 5 miles with a toilet at the start..... criteria that suit most of us.

The annual dinner is another opportunity to pick their brains on the many pubs and restaurants they have surveyed on our behalf.

A spirit of adventure is what rambling is about and you both have it. It will serve you well in your next big adventure.

We all wish you well, thank you for your contribution.

Please join us again when you are oop north...don't forget us...we won't forget you both.



Leading at Denford, Staffordshire : 8th May 2016

FROM YOUR COMMITTEE

Rambles Programme Co-ordinators - Carole Bentley and Rae Davies

Firstly, many thanks to the members who have submitted walk proposals for this next (July-December 2016) programme. We, as programme planners, are indebted to your continued support and enthusiasm for walking and we know our members appreciate the time you all take to recce and plan your walks!

We have a good balance of walks on our next programme, some gentle some rather more challenging! From the gentle meadows, meandering streams and hills of Cheshire, Staffordshire and Derbyshire on our well established weekend and lunchtime walks, to the more challenging "high altitude walks" like Edale, Derwent Edge, the Berwyn Range and Moel Siabod. There are some excellent evening walks too starting and finishing, as always, from a popular hostelry near you! The Christmas walk this year (Tuesday 27th) led, as always, by our chairman, Phil Guest, is to Hilbre Island, just off the Wirral peninsular. If you haven't yet experienced walking across the sea (ie the Dee Estuary when the tide's out) we'd highly recommend it.

On a more mundane note can we ask that you please ensure you complete the section of the "Walk Leader Form" which asks for the actual grid reference of your walk start. This is very important as it is one of the key pieces of information required from Ramblers UK which enables them to upload the walk directly on to our own South Cheshire Ramblers' webpage. Without this information your walk will not appear on our website. Many thanks.

Wherever and whenever you walkENJOY!

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Website Editor - Jim Eckersley

Into my second year as Web Editor and settling into the job. Perhaps the same cannot be said about the Twitter page. I find it difficult to raise enthusiasm for social media, maybe an age or gender thing. If anyone in the group would like to make our Twitter presence more interactive it would be very helpful and perhaps encourage other members to take part.

Treasurer - Philip Lund

Ramblers' Finances and Organisation

The work of the Group Treasurer follows a distinct annual cycle, with two important annual activities (budgeting and reporting of annual accounts). We are now near the time when the Committee needs to decide whether to accept a basic amount from HQ for 2016-17 (based on Group membership numbers) or bid for a higher amount in which case a definite budget has to be submitted. The choice is in the balance as the Group now has reserves which, relative to its most recent expenditures, are well in excess of the level which Ramblers HQ thinks is acceptable.

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Membership Secretary - Hazel Wallis

Since November 2015 membership numbers have remained stable at 200/202.

During this time we have had 10 new members, 4 members have been reinstated. 12 have lapsed and 2 have left.

There are a number of walking groups in Crewe and Nantwich, therefore to maintain our numbers is a success.

We launched our very well attended Taster walks programme this year which has raised an awareness of the group and given people insight into rambling as a hobby.

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Publicity - Helen Lea

After seeing our walks advertised in the Nantwich and Crewe Chronicles or the monthly posters that are published in "The Link" magazines, several new people have joined us on some of the walks this year.

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**Footpaths Secretary -
Alan Edwards**

At a recent meeting of the Cheshire East Rights Of Way Consultative Group I was disturbed to hear that Cheshire East no longer follow up any reports on footpath problems using the rambler's mobile phone footpath App.

The main problem was that the reporters' contact details were unknown to the Cheshire East footpaths team. So they started investigating the reports on the ground. This proved too costly due to the inaccurate reporting and positioning of the problems. Many other councils in the country found the same problems and also have stopped investigating.

Shortly after finding this out I had an e mail from ramblers' HQ saying how wonderful the footpaths App was. I then proceeded to educate HQ.

A new improved App is being developed taking on board the reporting problems caused by the first one. I will keep you informed.

Here is a very small part of the reply from Eleanor Bullimore who is Engagement Manager for the Ramblers HQ:

"It's fair to say we have learned a huge amount through the delivery of the Big Pathwatch – and if we were to launch again tomorrow, there are many things we would do differently. One of the elements that we would spend more time on is exactly that which you have highlighted: taking more time to work with local authorities to understand how they currently operate, responding to reports of problems, and how we could make the Big Pathwatch app deliver to this need.

"And, in fact, that is exactly what we're doing now. As we develop the next phase of the project and the new version of the app, we are consulting with local authorities and our volunteers to help develop approaches that make the journey from reporting, to responding, to feeding back to the reporter so much smoother. We might not get it right immediately – and we are told by experts in the industry that getting it right first time isn't the aim. This is new technology, and technology evolves over time. But we are committed to continuing to develop this area of work.

"Through the delivery of the Big Pathwatch we have gained a much better understanding of the local picture across England and Wales – something that we didn't have before. We have also developed links and relationships with local authorities that previously did not exist. And, perhaps most valuably, we have demonstrated that the Ramblers can identify where the problems are, and can help resolve them. This credibility at a local level will help us to continue to develop the mechanism for reporting and resolving problem."

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TASTER WALKS

Eileen Dorman

How can we support Ramblers objectives?

Thanks to our Footpaths Officers, Pathwatchers and Bramble Bashers we actively "protect and expand where we walk".

But what about promoting "- greater love, knowledge and care of the countryside and urban open spaces, by encouraging participation in walking for recreation and health. " ?

More importantly for our local group, what about increasing our membership numbers, expanding our pool of leaders, offering short weekend walks to new walkers?

I was invited to share my thoughts with the Committee. The outcome was to launch for 2016 a programme of **Taster Walks**, to run alongside our, already varied and expanding, regular Walks Programme.

Taster Walks – Just Turn Up on the first Sunday of the month at 2.00pm, meeting in a local area and join a short led walk of not more than 4 miles.

Well, I "recruited" leaders, prepared the publicity and waited for the first Sunday in February. Our Chairman Phil was leading. It was raining. Was anyone really interested in walking with Ramblers?

It seems they were – more than 20 people meeting at Haslington; new walkers and some group members, promoting and sharing a love of walking. Quite a success, and so it has continued.....

A **BIG THANK YOU** to all the **Leaders**, it wouldn't have happened without your support, to Helen and everyone who helped to publicise the walks and to the public who Just Turned Up. Some of whom are welcomed as new Members!

RAMBLERS IN SCOTLAND : 4th – 8th APRIL 2016

Day 2 – Liz Taylor

Walk 1. A walk from the “Pitlochry Hydro”

April 5th, 2016

A large group set out from the hotel, fairly early, about 9-30 am, with clean boots and fresh legs! The sun wasn't shining but at least it wasn't raining and spirits were running high. We walked along a path to the beautiful little village of Moulin with its picturesque pub and brewery, and stone cottages. The gardens were ablaze with opening daffodils and snowdrops. Nestling in some spots were the wonderful pale blue and white star-like flowers of chionodoxa sometimes called “glory of the snow”. What a joy!

After leaving the village our path slowly started to ascend winding up to moorland. With every step the view started to improve and very soon we were able to look down and back onto Pitlochry nestling in the valley. The expanses of moorland were dark brown, the heather not yet awakened after winter and maybe a blanket of snow. In no time at all we were stopping for our coffee break and sitting on rocky outcrops to take in the views of the hills. We were conscious that very soon the paths of the “A” party and the “B” party would diverge so it was good to have this big gathering! Sure enough within about ten minutes after we set off again the “mountain” party left us and walked straight on towards their goal – “Ben Vrackie”- a cone-shaped mountain looking quite steep!



We veered off to the left and continued to climb to what looked like the shoulder, but it was quite a distance away and the top never seemed to come. The temperature started to fall and many of us stopped to put on our jackets or extra fleeces! At last, we reached the shoulder and the path swung gently to the left and started to go down. However, it was windy and there was a slight drizzle, but at least we were descending!

After a while we decide to stop for lunch and we had an excellent view of the hills. We feared that the “mountaineers” may have their peak shrouded in mist, but at least we had a good panorama below. We'd recently climbed a style over a wall, which provided an excellent retreat for a toilet break!! So, fortified we journeyed on. The path now was a little stony and we contoured right round to our left towards Killiecrankie. We had wonderful views of the Blair castle at Blair Atholl in the distance – a white edifice with round towers and pointed roofs amid a forest of green. It was a perfect Scottish scene!

On our way to Killiecrankie



At last we reached a road and the Killiecrankie Visitor Centre – an opportunity to read about the wildlife, buy some postcards and watch the coal tits, chaffinches and bluetits flitting around the bird feeders. Things were looking good, but..... What were all these warning notices?? Oh dear.....

Catastrophe! The footbridge near Soldier's Leap which we had planned to use to cross the River Garry had been washed away in the floods!! Disaster! This meant that we would have to make a detour to the Garry Bridge. This was a set-back, but off we went again climbing and circling round to our left. We eventually reached the road which was to take us back to Pitlochry and the plan now was to walk along the footpath on the banks of the river. But, where was the access? We kept thinking that we would come across it, but somehow we missed it. It was a long walk back to Pitlochry – about three miles along the busy road – at least there was a pavement but it would have been more pleasant walking the path under the trees on the bank. Still, eventually we made it wearily! The sign as we entered Pitlochry was very welcome! When carefully calculated we'd walked just under eleven miles. It was certainly a good walk and we had been ably led by Helen, so thanks to her for all her encouragement along the way.

Day 3 – Brian Gillott

Walk 2. Walking in Glen Tilt

On Wednesday the whole group travelled to Glen Tilt, most to do a 10 mile walk and a smaller group to do a 7 mile walk.

Both groups initially started together from the car park at the 18th century Old Bridge at Tilt in the stone built village of Old Blair. From there we followed the road uphill, passing stone built cottages, before turning off onto a track passing farm fields full of sheep and lambs. On this section of the walk the weather decided it would try and spoil things by raining; but by the time we had donned our waterproofs it had stopped and stayed away for the rest of the day.

After walking along a rather muddy path through trees we arrived at Gilbert’s Bridge and we crossed the River Tilt from East to West, the river flowing quite fast over rocks of all shapes and sizes.

At this point the two groups separated and went their own ways; the 10 milers went north up the glen and the 7 milers went south down the glen.

On leaving Gilbert’s Bridge the 7 milers took one of the Atholl Estate tracks which gradually climbed and contoured across the side of a steep hill rising to



our right bringing us to the Atholl Rifle Range; fortunately, the red flag wasn’t flying so we didn’t need to divert. Along this track we crossed three stone bridges over burns rushing downhill to feed the river. We stopped for lunch at a viewpoint at the end of the rifle range, sitting on two log seats we had a fabulous view to the top of the glen.

After lunch we continued on the track which was now going downhill and taking us away from the open ground and into the trees. After about half a mile we turned left onto a path leading through tall conifer trees until we reached the track taking us back to the car park. On this last part of the walk we thought we might get a glimpse of some deer or red squirrels as we were close to the Atholl Estate, but it was not to be.

10 milers



We completed the walk by continuing half a mile down the road to Blair Atholl where there was a nice cafe where we refreshed ourselves whilst waiting for the transport and the 10 milers to arrive.

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Day 4 – Bernie and Tony Heath

Walk 3. Pitlochry to Grandtully – Approx 6 miles

It is not hard to find themes that link the walks on our Pitlochry break. The first was, of course, good company. The second, unexpected, was good weather. The third was historical: war memorials. As in England, every little Scottish village has its monument to the fallen of that parish.



As they were all commissioned and paid for by local communities, each is different. For example, the large slab of native stone erected in Blair Atholl compared to the brass plaque on the wall of a small wayside chapel near Killiecrankie.



The third of our walks was along the final section of the “Rob Roy Way”.

This took us from the imposing memorial on Pitlochry high street to the small and poignant “shrine” by the bridge of Grandtully.



The walk started across a bridge over the river Tummel - one of those pedestrian suspension bridges that bounce as you walk over it. They never feel quite safe, although this one had been around since 1913. From there was up. Gradual up, moderate up, and steep up, but UP. Through pasture, along farm tracks to the edge of a forest. Looking back there were splendid views over Pitlochry and rising above it, “Ben Vrackie” where we had our first walk. The grassy track took us up through the damp forest with shafts of strong sunlight slanting through the trees. There was some hope of seeing a rare Scottish crossbill or a red squirrel, but no sightings, although we did startle a deer which leapt among the trees and quickly disappeared. As often happens in woodland the temperature went up, and the layers came off.

Emerging on a forest track we crossed a bleak section of high moor, diverting off to take in a circle of black standing stones.



At this point we were hit by a squally shower – so back on went the layers – to be quickly followed by clear blue skies which stayed with us for the rest of our walk. Our lunch spot, at the edge of a meadow, had grand views across the valley and the hills towards Aberfeldy.

Descending through meadowland and copse we saw whinchats and pipits and some sort of bird that waited until you were almost on it before taking off with a squawk.

The path became a track, which became a minor road. Just before the Victorian bridge over the River Tay linking Strathtay with Grandtully we came to a small, simple memorial set on the side of the road. It was puzzling in that their names were listed neither by rank nor alphabetically.



Apparently, some memorials replaced informal village “shrines” where names had been added as the war ground on and the “we regret to inform you” telegrams had arrived.

Over the bridge into Grandtully we enjoyed a



second lunch at “The Inn on the Tay” before getting a local bus back to Pitlochry.

A splendid walk with lots of variety, easy underfoot and lovely views.

A big thank you to South Cheshire Ramblers for making us so welcome as your guests and of course to Eileen who organised the trip.

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Another **BIG THANK YOU** to the Walk Leaders who readily accepted their role on the spot! Helen, Graham, Steve, Brian, Jim and everyone else who consulted the maps and offered reassurance. A great group effort. Thank you for your support.

Eileen