

# *Suffolk Area Ramblers Newsletter Autumn 2007*

*Gordon Leverett attended the General Council meeting at the end of March and our thanks go to him for producing this detailed report which makes an interesting and thought provoking read.*

## **Ramblers' Association General Council held at Reading University, March 31<sup>st</sup>-April 1<sup>st</sup> 2007**

Because 'Waymarking the Future' is coming to a conclusion, Saturday afternoon of this General Council meeting was given over to discussion on the next strategic plan for the Ramblers' Association.

The questions to be addressed were: - How should we be structured? Where should our funds come from? Should we deliver services? What should we be campaigning on? Who should we aim to get as members?

To set the scene, on Friday evening a speaker from the Red Cross, whose hierarchal system of management it was said is analogous to that of the RA explained how that organisation had restructured.

From four areas, Structure and Governance, Aims and Issues, Membership and Recruitment, and, Type of Organisation and Funding, delegates had to pick three of the discussion groups they wished to attend.

Because we are at the ideas stage, no firm decisions were to be made at this General Council meeting. Membership of the RA is obviously catholic, thus during the discussions many and varied views and opinions were aired. And it soon became apparent that, there was to be no consensus of opinion among the delegates at the three discussion groups I attended.

Speaking to the annual report, Kate Ashbrook RA Chairman said, that change was on the way. The Association had made a lottery bid for 5 million pounds, which if successful, would be matched by Ramblers Holidays Charitable Trust over a five year period then the RA would move in a new and different way. That was not intended to be a criticism of the past. The challenges were to get the credit for our efforts, to become more inclusive and to get more support.

The interim CEO (Paul Wilkinson) also commented that although Council would this year concentrate on looking to the future, there was time to look at past achievements. He referred to the success in England of the 'Use your Paths' challenge which was proving highly successful. The introduction of Part 6 of the 'Walking – Keep Walking' project that had

been piloted to help people in deprived urban areas to go walking. The Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act had been a great victory, largely bringing to an end to the situation whereby a claim for motor-vehicular access over an existing footpath or bridleway can succeed on the basis it was once used by horse-drawn vehicles. He, also, referred to the re-designed 'walk' magazine and the '12,000 unique hits per month' received by the RA website.

The Interim CEO was questioned as to whether or not the 'ease of use' used as the basis of the Best Value of performance Indicator (BVPI) gave the impression that it was more difficult for people to walk in the countryside than it really was. The interim CEO replied that the BVPI is all that we have as a national measure of the network. The RA had fought to retain it, and to improve it. It is a measure of legal compliance tested through strict methodology and is of value.

The RA energy policy arrived at without consultation with members was also questioned. This criticism was rejected, and it was pointed out that the policy had been developed by the Board of Trustees (BoT), who had been elected by General Council

Speaking to the accounts the treasurer highlighted the fact that RA membership was falling and, although many people walked they took rights of way for granted and, did not join the RA. Last year the RA spent nearly 1.2 million pounds under the heading of rights of way. During questions on the accounts a member of the board of trustees said it was time to get tough on the question of funds being held in reserve by Areas and Groups. The following motions were proposed and carried at General Council:-

### **Toll Rides.**

Because landowners are legally permitted to allow horse riders access to their land for payment they can route a Toll Ride along a footpaths, such public footpaths becoming in effect bridleways, with attendant damage to the surface, this also raises Health and Safety issues. The BoT was instructed to investigate the legal and policy issues surrounding Toll Rides and to report back to General Council 2008.

### **Permissive Paths.**

BoT to examine the feasibility of establishing and keeping up-to-date a register of such path.

### **Semi-improved Grassland.**

BoT are to campaign for such areas to be mapped as open countryside under the CROW Act at the forthcoming decadal review.

### **Better Access to Access Land.**

Because much open access land has no, only one or a long distance between access points, the BoT are to investigate ways by which this situation might be remedied

### **Downgrading of Boats.**

Because of damage being caused to what were formerly RUPPS but now classified as Boats or Restricted Byways the BoT to pursue with the Government and local highway authorities the downgrading of BOATS to bridleways or footpath status as appropriate. In the meantime Areas and Groups are to seek greater use of Traffic Regulation Orders banning unnecessary vehicular use.

### **Climate Change.**

BoT to prepare a strategy on how the RA should address climate change for presentation to General Council 2008.

### **Payment of Fees.**

BoT to look at alternative ways of paying the membership fee, to encourage greater membership and implement as soon as practicable.

### **Action on Motions.**

BoT to reaffirm its assurances given at the time of the amendment to the Memorandum and Articles in 2005, that General Council motions would be taken seriously and not overruled or ignored unless there are exceptional circumstances.

### **Model Constitutions for Areas and Groups.**

General Council approved the revised model constitutions for Areas and Groups, subject to amendments proposed by Nottinghamshire Area.

### **Pedestrian Level Crossing Safety.**

BoT to liaise with Rail Safety and Standards Board and Network Rail to insist that a railway industry standard is issued for railway pedestrian (footpath & bridleway) level crossings to provide for a statutory minimum level of signing, equipment and maintenance in the interest of the safety of users.

## **Fifth Edition of the Icknield Way Path Guide**

The Icknield Way is unique among long distance tracks because it can claim to be 'the oldest road in Britain'. It consists of prehistoric pathways, ancient when the Romans came; the route is dotted with archaeological remains. It survives today in splendid tracks and green lanes along

the chalk 'spine' of southern England. The Ickniel Way Path runs from the end of the Ridgeway Path at Ivinghoe Beacon, near Tring, to the start of the Peddar's Way at Knettishall Heath, near Thetford, for 110 miles (177 km), split into eight suggested day walks. The route takes the walker over some delightful country, including the Chilterns and Breckland, often with striking panoramic views, through some charming villages, and along miles of beautiful green lanes. The Ickniel Way Association has aimed to find the most pleasant route for walking, as close as possible to the general line of the ancient Ickniel Way.

Since the fourth edition was published in 1998, towns such as Luton and Hitchin have expanded their suburbs.. This fifth edition of the Guide is based on experience gained with the previous editions, with substantial changes to the route near the start from Dunstable to Letchworth, to keep it generally in the open countryside.

The Association hopes that you will find much of interest and intrigue in this unexpectedly attractive lowland route along this part of the 'Great Chalk Way'.

Detailed route descriptions and clear maps are supplemented with notes on the geology, geomorphology, archaeology, flora and bird life, with backup information on public transport in the area. Two alternative routes allow a visit to the interesting village of Toddington, and a final destination at Thetford.

**Price £8.50 including post and packing from:**

*Mrs Sue Prigg, 1 Edgeborough Close, Kentford, Newmarket, Suffolk CB8 8QY.*

Cheques made payable to Ickniel Way Association.

Or order on line from [www.icknielwaypath.co.uk](http://www.icknielwaypath.co.uk)

## **Access Officers Report**

I recently attended a meeting about the proposed fencing of access land at Hollesley Upper Common. Suffolk Wildlife Trust proposes to fence a large area there for heathland restoration. Those attending included Kate Ashbrook (Open Spaces Society), with representatives of the Suffolk Wildlife Trust, Forest Enterprise, horse riding interests as well as myself. Because of travellers, motor cyclists, deer, nearby traffic and other circumstances a case can be made here for fencing the large area proposed. Kate Ashbrook and myself agreed interim (but not final) agreement to the pro-

posal provided that the fence is not topped by barbed wire, that the fence is screened by being among trees as far as possible, the existing, now unlawful, fence erected in 1992 is removed and additional access points are provided.

At Snape Warren RSPB new boundary fencing was being erected in April; five access points are provided two on the existing footpath and one on the Sailors' Path. The other two are opposite each other on a track leading to New England Farm but it is currently unclear from the signs if the track itself is available to walkers.

Members may have seen items in the local press about fencing at Levington; these fences are along footpaths and no access land is affected.

Proposals on coastal access are to be published on June 19<sup>th</sup>; at the time of writing I do not know if estuary shores will be included as well as sea coast. Policy on the problem of paths destroyed by erosion is also unknown.

Richard Tyson

## **Alde Valley Group**

We are pleased to have noted a recent increase in the numbers of people on our fortnightly walks; we have twelve leaders in the current programme but newcomers are always welcome in our small and friendly groups. Destinations in the Summer Programme have ranged from both sides of the Deben as far north as the Blyth; we continued the series of walks using the revised booklet of East Suffolk Line Walks by making the walk from Darsham to Halesworth returning by Train. Walks and footpath work for the Winter Programme will be discussed at a meeting on September 1<sup>st</sup> (Great Glemham Crown, noon)

The footpath working party has been active in Blaxhall, Benhall and Dennington making steps and repairing waymarks. Surveys are planned for Iken (August 5<sup>th</sup>) and Cransford (August 23<sup>rd</sup>).

Jim Richards, Neil Mahler and myself with SCC and local representatives recently attended a tour of Bentwaters Parks to introduce proposals for new paths which will enable walkers to transit from the Rendlesham area to the forest on the east side of the former air base. On the negative side an appeal has been made about the new path at Snuff Lane, Snape Watering. Notes on access land at Hollesley and Snape are included

elsewhere. We have also written to SCC about concern regarding use of the riverside path at Walberswick by cyclists.

Finally could I ask members to send in the campaign cards recently received and also to look at the website [www.useyourpaths.info](http://www.useyourpaths.info) and report on any grid squares where they have walked all the paths. Thank you.

Richard Tyson.

## **Newmarket Group**

The year has been a strange one for a variety of reasons, principally the weather. We had such a warm April we were all prepared for the hottest summer ever. On the strength of this I put forward a walk at Diss to accommodate the hot weather expected; only to find that now the walk is imminent one of my chosen paths through Roydon Fen is under water! Following the wettest June on record it is not surprising that the number of walkers has not been great but we are still managing to offer a high quality programme of walks. We still need more leaders to maintain our programme; if you don't get to the programme meeting let Phil or Sue Prigg you would like to help.

We have to say farewell to Derek Stratton who is stepping down as treasurer of the group as he is moving away from the area. Our grateful thanks go to Derek for all his hard work in keeping our finances in order and paying all the bills! John Morris is taking up the baton to continue Derek's work. Thank you very much John. I would add that John has been serving the committee for some time. Your committee goes to great effort to act on your behalf. However we need more committee members. So ask yourself again if you can help by joining the committee. This is a direct appeal.

The main walking event of the year was our day trip to France in May to walk with our friends from Maisons-Laffite, Newmarket's twin town. This was supported by the Newmarket Twinning Association to the tune of £500 for which we were very grateful, and proved to be a great success. In spite of almost losing my other half at the Eurostar terminal and delays due to problems with points, we met up with the French party at Cap Gris Nez, the agreed meeting point, at 11.40am (French time) having left Newmarket at about 6am. The walk was eleven miles along the cliff top to Cap Blanc Nez via Wissant. There were 87 walkers altogether; it was an amazing sight seeing them stretched out along the cliff top. It was a beautiful day with a strong wind in our backs and despite the language

problem there was plenty of talking and laughing. We stopped for a picnic in the sand dunes and I was particularly taken with our French hosts breaking out bottles of wine to help wash the sandwiches down; I began to wonder if we would ever get going again. We stopped at Wissant which appeared to be the wind surfing capital of France; the sea was full of wind surfers enjoying the strong wind. Wissant is a nice little seaside town; some of our walkers finished here and were met by the coach. The rest of us walked on to Cap Blanc Nez along the beach. Here we all met up and after a big farewell took leave of our French hosts and made our way back to Calais and the hypermarket for a bit of shopping. We arrived back in Newmarket at about 9 o'clock after a really wonderful day.

The group has received an invitation to spend the weekend in France being hosted by the French.Ramblers I need expressions of interest please I do not have dates at this point, but need to know in principle who would wish to go. Please call me on 01359-250263.

The weekly walks programme is as full and interesting as ever thanks to Phil and Sue who devote so much time to organising it for us. The trip to London was well supported with a full bus and waiting list.

Jan Cavell. Chairman Newmarket Group

## **Dr John Bellamy.**

It is with great sadness that we have to report the passing of John Bellamy at the age of 63 after a lengthy illness. John started walking with the Newmarket Group in 1990 having previously been a Bury Group member. Phil Prigg believes his first walk with the group was from Barley to Royston in March 1990. Soon John was a regular walker and married Margaret, a Newmarket Group member, on 27<sup>th</sup> October 1990.

John was brought up in Norwich and after university worked as a bridge designer on major highway schemes in Yorkshire. He moved to Suffolk in 1986 to join Marlows, leading a team of timber design engineers working mainly on roof trusses. John developed software to speed the design process and eventually set up his own business with an office in Newmarket.

John became one of our walk leaders and organised a number of coach trips and longer walks for the group. John was always on the outlook for something unusual; probably the most outrageous being the 46 mile, all

day walk along the Peddars Way in 1996; just one member managed to complete it! A circular walk in the countryside around Newmarket, giving members the opportunity to walk up to 20 miles, was devised by John in 2004, and it is hoped to revive this walk in his memory in spring 2008.

Phil remembers 'A Fine City Walk'- a visit to Norwich- appearing on the programme. Phil recalls; 'Who can forget, certainly not the Tractor Boys and Girls amongst us, John's delight in leading the party around all four sides of the Carrow Road Football Ground. Although he did not attend regularly, John's interest in the Canaries enlivened many a Sunday walk. John's professional background regularly led us to pause on walks to study timber framed buildings, bridges and other structures. Even the design of the humble fingerpost did not escape his attention.'

John always declined the post of Group Chairman but was for some years Deputy Chairman (he didn't like the title of Vice Chairman), and represented the group at Area level, until work commitments made this impossible.



John was a great supporter of the initiative to forge links with ramblers from Maisons Laffitte, Newmarket's twin town in France, and had, with Margaret, taken part in exchange visits. While the ramblers from Maisons Laffitte were here last may; John, while talking to Janice and Guy Desfrancois, the leader of the French Ramblers, suggested a day trip to France. This made the actual day trip a little sad knowing that John was not with us. Guy and the French walkers were so sad to hear that John had passed away and Guy's first comment was to recall that conversation with John about the trips potential. We did however feel that John was watching over us as we walked in breezy conditions with beautiful sunshine. Our conclusion could only be that John must have had a word with the big fella.

It is also impossible to think about the French walkers without thinking and smiling about leeks. John was a keen allotment holder and so it was not surprising that he should

bring along a fine bunch of leeks as a raffle prize to the annual dinner. Little did we know that the French visitors were desperate to win them and take them home. How wonderful it was that the first draw ticket belonged to a French lady, who jumped for joy, almost ran to the prize table and carried the leeks back to her table, holding them aloft to a great round of applause.

It was further evidence of John's thoughtful nature to have gone back to his allotment on the Monday morning, before the French visitors left and dug enough for everyone to take some home.

It is without doubt that we will all miss that tall figure of a man, head down listening to someone, making a joke and always being good company to walk with but not to have known John would have been a much greater miss.

## **Bury St Edmunds Group**

Those who attended the Area AGM chaired by Ralph Brighton in March will remember what an interesting talk we had from our guest speaker David Barker MBE of Lodge Farm, Westhorpe.

Only two weeks later, by an extraordinary and happy coincidence, Bury group – led by Dave Chandler and including Ralph – were on a walk, which had been arranged a long time previously, in the vicinity of Westhorpe. The group were able to meet up with David and his son Patrick at part of the One Hundred Lane Network – the routes which David had referred to at the AGM, where he had expressed serious concerns about objections by a national trail-riders group, to a proposed Traffic Regulations Order to protect these green lanes and ancient tracks, only recently placed on the Definitive map thanks to the commitment of John Andrews. We were delighted to learn subsequently that the volume and calibre of our shared concerns had helped to influence the subsequent decision in favour of a permanent TRO. Thank you for your support.

Interestingly, there were 336 letters and e-mails supporting the proposal for the TRO, almost all from Suffolk residents; of the 338 objections received only 14 identified themselves as resident in Suffolk, the other 324 objections coming from outside the area!

It's good to know that Jean and John Andrews are settling happily in Scotland, but John manages to stay in touch with Suffolk footpaths at a distance! We had a recent e-mail from him informing us of new delay in

opening up the Packway (Bridleway from Thurston to Norton) Oh well, after 28 years...!

One of the gaps that John left in Suffolk was as a regular contributor of walks for the East Anglian Daily Times Saturday supplement 'Rambling On' page (now simply headed 'Walk') but we are delighted that Chris Barker has stepped into this slot on the first Saturday of each month – joining Lotte Sherman, Cyril Francis and Geoff Pratt in putting walking on the map!

Chris has retired this year from his role as our Programme Secretary – after 14 years, and 28 programmes for which we are indebted to him. We are so pleased though that he will still be leading walks for us, and his regular Carol Service event at Lawford which has become a firm favourite will be on 9<sup>th</sup> December. It's always lovely to join with so many other Ramblers, after our walk and lunch, at this very lively but meaningful service which has become an institution in itself.

Dave Chandler's walk at the end of March was from Sunnyside to High Pastures, but most of our walks since then have been far from on the 'sunny side!' – although always full of new interest and enjoyment thanks to all concerned (including a fascinating visit to the Burston Strike School near Diss with a walk along the Candlestick route of 1914) but our disappointing summer so far, locally, is nothing compared with the extreme weather in some areas and, in closing, our hearts go out to all those affected by the devastating floods of recent weeks – and to our farmers working hard but faced with an uncertain harvest here after one of the wettest summers we have known.

Rosie Perham    Chairman    Bury St Edmunds Group

## **Ipswich Group**

Where does the time go these days? Is it really six months ago that the editor was chasing me for notes and now he is doing it again!

With a choice of 66 walks in 6 months our members continue to be very supportive and groups vary in size from 6 to 33. We have been lucky with the weather in this part of the county, in that most walks have been completed in the dry, although recently there have been some boggy conditions.

Taking up the point raised by the Waveney Group in the spring edition of this magazine; we have noticed a similar trend in the member-

ship. With just over 600 registered members, there is a nucleus of about 100 who actually participate in walks. The rest one has to assume maintain their subscription to support the aims and principles of the RA; or they have forgotten to cancel their direct debit! I would have to agree that there are very few younger members joining in our area. Is this because they have so many other activities to choose from or with the responsibilities of family life, where often both partners go out to work, their free time is spent keeping their children happy? I would go as far as to suggest that the majority of our members join on retirement. This is when they find that they have the time to pursue the pleasures which they have only had limited time for in earlier life. It is a fact that overall, membership of the RA is not making much headway.

Back to our own walks, we have such a plethora of footpaths in this area and our leaders find such diversity of habitat, that those of us who do walk out regularly find it such a pleasurable pursuit, with beautiful scenery and excellent company that we wonder why more people don't make the effort.

*Gareth Evans*

## **Waveney Group News**

“Are there any nominations for the post of .....?”. “Is there anyone prepared to do the job just for a year?” .

That is the plea that we have probably heard time after time at AGMs of various organisations we belong to, accompanied by an embarrassed looking away of the assembled company afraid of catching the chairman's eye and becoming ensnared in the trappings of office.

It was certainly the position we in the Waveney Group found ourselves in following the retirement of our long-serving and vastly experienced footpath secretary, John Sayer, some time ago. Two members did commendably take on the job for a short while each, but each had to stand down from the job. And then – the embarrassed silence at the AGM. So we struggled on for a while in piecemeal fashion until we got to the point where something had to be done.

In true international diplomacy style our then secretary, Lionel Hardy, called a conference of concerned members from which a suggestion was put forward that helped to solve the problem. All those that attended the conference were prepared to help, but no one felt able to take on the full workload of a footpath secretary. How then to split the job up?

It was agreed that the Group area be split into six sections with two people taking on each section, reviewing proposed changes, investigating problems etc. But of course someone had to act as the point of liaison with outside agencies.

I had not been able to get to the conference, but had offered what help I could in a minor role. But after a very persuasive phone call from Lionel I found that I was, to my surprise, that point of contact – the footpath secretary in fact.

And it has worked (at least no one has told me it doesn't work). I receive the various mailings, phone calls and emails that a footpath secretary can expect to receive. If they need action I will pass them on to the members responsible for the appropriate areas. They then do the necessary foot-slogging ground work and pass their comments back to me so I can make the necessary replies. Nobody is overloaded with work, and the footpath secretary certainly doesn't feel isolated, as could be the case.

No, I don't have and never will have the expertise of a John Sayer (and thank goodness he is still around to give advice when needed). But I do feel able to cope. And – I think the big advantage – when I step down there are twelve members who will have gained some footpath experience and who will know it really is a job that most of us can tackle. Who knows, we may yet see an AGM where we have to hold an election for the job of footpath secretary. That really would be something.

John Daynes

## **Stowmarket Group News**

When our group heard that John Andrews would be leaving the area, it was not only a big blow for the county but also for this group, as John covered the west area of Mid-Suffolk for us as our footpath secretary. The group sent out a request to members of the group for a person to come forward and take on this role and I am pleased to report that Alan Cordon, who has previous experience with Northamptonshire RA, has taken on the job. Alan will also be joined by Bob Boardman, who has spent a lot of his time planning long distance holidays by footpath. Both footpath groups have met Gordon Levenette, the new County Footpath Secretary, and this meeting was very productive.

Our walks as usual have been well attended with many members stopping for a pub lunch at the end of the walks. The walk at Chalkney

Woods, Earls Colne was highlighted by a grand show of bluebells and wild garlic. A record 34 attended the annual trip to the Norfolk Coast for a walk from Gunton to Sheringham via Overstrand and Cromer. Although the sun was shining when we left Stowmarket Station, it was a different tale when we arrived in Norfolk with cool and cloudy weather greeting the party, but the day went well and we managed to keep dry. It was raining on the first walk of the group's holiday at Leyburn in the Yorkshire Dales, but luck was on our side, although bad weather was forecast, we kept dry over the next two days and finished the last day in drizzle.

Thanks go to Keith for once again organizing the event and it was a unanimous decision at the last committee meeting that we would arrange a group holiday next year.

Dates for your diary are as follows: - Barn Dance 27<sup>th</sup> October. names to Brenda by 14<sup>th</sup> October. AGM 13<sup>th</sup> September 7.30pm at Thorn-tree Centre, Milton Road, Stowmarket, which will be followed by a cheese and wine party. Please make every effort to attend this meeting.

Tony Buck. Chairman, Stowmarket Group

## **Travels in Greece**

As we leave for our destination far, far away; I watch England's White Cliffs dramatically dematerialize into the white Saxon mist. Their great white flanks standing tall and proud; a bastion of Olde England's greatness. A pang of emotion lodges somewhere within my heart along with a desire to turn back the wheel of time. Lithe, slender and potent the ship slips quickly up the English Channel; the crescent moon is visible, hanging as if by a single thread. Finally the darkness, the rushing of water and the rhythmic throb of the engine lull me into a deep doze.

Monolithic mountains gaze majestically out to greet us, forming a long canal. The light is resplendent as Greece opens up to embrace us. I can smell the heavy, drowsy, scented Mediterranean air as I walk through vast tracts of pine trees that seem to stretch out endlessly through the white sun-baked soil. A goat munches idly on the sparse vegetation, a shepherd boy stops and gazes; 'A traveller' he shouts in Greek. Walking onward an ancient city comes into view sacked and partially razed by some awesome underground cataclysm. Threading our way through timeless relics we descend into the ruined remains. The charm of the Greek terrain is inexhaustible, ethereal azure blue mountains shimmer as if stark naked sunning themselves like Greek Olympians. Walking towards the south we are fol-

lowed by a plume of white dust, the savage sun is at its zenith, this is the true ancient Greece.

As we arrive at our accommodation dusk begins to fall bringing with it the romantic shadows of the velvet night. Lanterns wink their welcome, ships are secure at their moorings, and evening strollers nod as they pass. A fortress looms above us; fearsome battlements repelling all invaders.

After a supper of calamari, pitta bread, feta cheese and grapes washed down with retsina. We recuperate and prepare for our quest.

At daybreak we set out for the fortress. The track ascends through a valley of lush olive groves, vineyards and slender cypresses. Colourful butterflies and droning bees flutter to and fro delighting the celestial eye. Looking aloft a golden eagle floats and drifts upon the heated thermals. Grasping my binoculars I focus on a group of herons frantically flapping about in the shallows of a vast turquoise lake. Amidst a profusion of colourful wild flowers Dionysos, my guide clambers powerfully up the steep gradient, pausing I drink from a bubbling spring and my eyes fall upon the tranquil village below. Thrusting my body upward I swing restlessly up the hewn stone steps towards the summit.

Lizards wriggle and snakes slither away from our exertions as loose shale of rock rattles away behind us. "Be careful," says Dionysos, "it's a long way down." The harbour opens up below us; the sparkling wavelets glisten in the meridian sun. The day is slightly cloudy almost precipitous, the trees are beginning to turn red, bunches of grapes hang from trellised vines, must reeks in the still intoxicating air. I must bid farewell to the safe confines of the village below, I may not prevail in this precarious terrain. I have no wish to join the Gods just yet.

**Greg Walker**

Join Greg for more adventures in Greece in the next Newsletter.

**Carry on Walking**

Carry on walking as it could save your life. It sounds dramatic but it is true. As a regular walker with the Newmarket Group some members will know that in 2006 I was diagnosed with prostate cancer. I was told that getting rid of the cancer was straightforward but the method of treatment was up to me. The options appeared to be surgery, radiotherapy, or in extreme cases, doing nothing; the so called watchful waiting approach. After a number of tests and discussions with consultants I elected to have surgery. I then had to choose the type of surgery from open surgery, key-hole surgery or the revolutionary Da Vinci robotic assisted surgery. The claimed benefits from this revolutionary procedure were less blood loss, less pain, minimal nerve damage and speedier recovery.

I duly had the robotic operation in Addenbrookes (one of only three NHS hospitals in the country with the robot) on the 7<sup>th</sup> August. I was told the operation was uneventful and successful and anticipated going home the next day. However shortly after the operation I developed complications in the form of a lung infection. This caused my left lung to collapse and my kidneys started to fail. After fifteen days in hospital including four days in intensive care I was allowed home and have now fully recovered and am free of cancer.

On discharge my consultant said that it was a good thing I was fit as the outcome could have been quite different. The point of my story is therefore; keep walking as one day it could save your life as it did mine.

Brian Poolman, Newmarket Group

### **Angles Way – continued.**

In the Spring edition of this Newsletter reference was made to a re-launch of the Angles Way in 2008. There may be an opportunity for Suffolk Ramblers to combine with Norfolk Ramblers to walk this linear route without the complications of arranging their own transport.

The scheme would follow a pattern tried, tested and honed in Norfolk over several years as a partnership between the Ramblers and the County Council; basically the Ramblers provide the leaders and the Council provides transport for a modest fare. The CC provides publicity material and administration tasks are shared by agreement as convenient. The walks are open to the general public and offer an opportunity for membership recruitment. Norfolk Ramblers and NCC are proposing to “do” the Angles Way anyway in 2008, but there are thoughts to involve Suffolk on an equal basis with return transport available from Ipswich (and maybe elsewhere?). Nor-

folk provides transport with pickup points in Norwich, Eaton and Wymondham.

The Angles Way divides conveniently into 8 sections of about 10 to 11 miles, with parking places at the staging posts for those who can more conveniently travel direct and transport is provided back to the beginning after each day's walk. We would start in April and continue at monthly intervals until November, probably on the second Sunday of each month.

Walkers divide into four groups, each with a leader and backmarker, to ensure that no group need be too large and offering a range of pace from fast to very modest. Of course more than four groups can be offered if justified by the numbers and if leaders and backmarkers are available.

The return transport has to be booked in advance and this is a part of the administration best handled by a Rambler, simply because they can be contacted up until Saturday evening - each Area would provide their own volunteer. For participants using the other option, meeting on the route, they can just turn up on the day and buy their ticket on arrival, so another volunteer is required for this task, but it could be conveniently shared between the two Areas.

Suffolk County Council has expressed an interest in the scheme, but has not yet made any commitment to participate. In the meantime it would be most helpful to know if **you** are interested – just as a participant or helping in any way. Please contact your Group Secretary by 30<sup>th</sup> September to enable planning to commence if SCC decide they are willing to support the idea.

*If you have questions about how it actually works please contact Sheila Smith on 01953 861094 or sheilasmith@clara.co.uk – Sheila has been closely involved in the Norfolk scheme since the beginning.*

## **After the Rain the Sun.**

To walk or not to walk, that is the question when the weather turns iffy. Walk leaders are naturally expected to turn up whatever the conditions. Take for example an instance that happened to me some two years ago. I was due to lead an evening walk at Somersham. By mid afternoon dark clouds had rolled in, the sky turned the colour of a switch off TV screen. Just as I started out the heavens opened. Driving on dipped headlights and trying to avoid cascading water, by the time I crossed Barking Tye, thunder and lightning quickly accompanied the sheeting rain. Elsewhere, radio Suffolk was reporting flash flooding and hailstones breaking glass in greenhouses. Ah well! I thought people must be mad to turn out in

these conditions; no one is likely to turn up. Shall I just turn around now and go home. No, I concluded, the leader has to be there just in case.....

I finally pulled into the car park with no other car in sight. As far as I was concerned the walk was a non event. I'd heard all about metal zips and lightning strikes, plus the inherent danger of sheltering under trees. However, 5 minutes later a car appeared and pulled alongside. A fellow walker open the window and I expressed surprise that anyone else had turned up. 'They have just restarted at Wimbledon' said fellow walker. 'The sun will soon appear, mark my words.' And she was right. Minutes later the dark clouds parted and a patch of blue sky appeared. Meanwhile, another two cars turned up and I just knew the walk would have to go ahead as arranged, despite my misgivings. Just as we were departing another brave soul arrived, delayed by road flooding elsewhere.

Every cloud has a silver lining, or so they say. In the event I decided to cut the walk short. Cattle, including the possible presence of a bull, had been moved to pastures elsewhere. The long grass, which I feared would give our legs a soaking, had been cut and baled. The walk was finally completed and all present expressed satisfaction; blissfully unaware that at one time the walk leader had almost decided to turn round and head back for home.

After thought: do we really get any enjoyment when walking in adverse weather conditions? Alternatively, what is the point of purchasing expensive weatherproof clothing if we are not prepared to use it?

Cyril Francis, Stowmarket