



**Front Cover** – Photograph taken by Sheila Smith  
Hinderclay Fen – Part of the Angles Way footpath. See Sheila Smith's article elsewhere in this newsletter.

# Ramblers Association Suffolk Area

Annual General Meeting – Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> March 2007  
The Village Hall, Westhall, Nr Halesworth

## Directions to Venue:-

From Bungay take the A144 Halesworth Road to Spexhall crossroads, which are clearly signed. Turn left and shortly after passing under the railway line turn left again. At the T junction turn left and the Village Hall is on the right just after the pub.

From Halesworth for those coming up the A12 or cross country from the Stowmarket area, take the A144 towards Bungay. Shortly after crossing the railway line turn right at the Spexhall crossroads and then proceed as above.

The map reference is TM408817.



## **Suffolk RA - Chairman's report Spring 2007**

The Area Committee has continued with the usual format of bi-monthly meetings in Stowmarket over the past year and they are regularly attended by members of all Suffolk's Groups which I hope ensures feedback to and from all members in the county.

In addition, a special meeting was convened in July, also attended by Group Footpath Secretaries and representatives from Central Office, to determine a strategy for future working relationships with Suffolk County Council regarding the updating of the Suffolk Definitive Map - a continuing struggle. (see elsewhere in newsletter)

As a break from the previous few years, when we have had a representative from RA Central Office, this year's speaker at the Area AGM in March will be David Barker, a local landowner with wide experience within the National Farmers Union, Suffolk Agriculture Association, Suffolk Wildlife Trust, the Suffolk Local Access Forum and a former Countryside Commissioner. He is also a Trustee of the East Anglian Air Ambulance. Other interests are local businesses and conservation. David seeks to balance all interests involved in access to the countryside." I hope as many members as possible will be able to attend to listen to a different perspective on the countryside and the Rights of Way network.

Thanks for varied contributions for the newsletter – keep them coming – and to the Editor, Tim Cavell, for brighter and more colourful magazines – I know they have been well received.

I would like to thank once again all members of the Area Committee for the many hours of valuable time they put in to overlooking various aspects of the RA's work in Suffolk to ensure the growth and maintenance of our paths, as elaborated upon in their reports in this newsletter.

**Ralph Brighton**

# **Ramblers Association – Suffolk Area**

**Annual General Meeting on Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> March 2007 at 10.30am  
To be held at the Village Hall, Westhall**

## **Agenda**

1. Welcome and apologies for absence.
2. Minutes of AGM held on 4<sup>th</sup> March 2006.
3. Matters arising from minutes.
4. Presentation of Annual Report.
5. Presentation and acceptance of the accounts for the year.
6. Election of Chairman.
7. Election of Officers.
8. Election of Representatives of the Affiliated Societies.
9. Appointment of Independent Examiner.
10. Any other business.

Following the meeting there will be a talk by David Barker a local landowner with extensive knowledge of countryside issues.

Coffee and tea will be available from 10am prior to commencement of meeting. There will be a short walk in the afternoon followed by tea.

Please bring your own lunch.

If anyone wants to stand for election to office could they please inform Philip Snelling (Area Secretary) on 01787 248079 at least one week before the meeting.

# **RAMBLERS' ASSOCIATION SUFFOLK AREA**

## **The Minutes of the Annual General Meeting Saturday 4<sup>th</sup> March 2006 at 10 30am at The Hyndman Centre, Hospital Road, Bury St Edmunds hosted by Bury St Edmunds Group**

### **1. Welcome and Apologies for absence**

Bury Group Chair, Rosie Perham welcomed 39 members and guests, including guest speaker Peter Ayling, from Ramblers' Association Headquarters, to the 2006 Annual General Meeting., which was then chaired by Suffolk Area Chairman, Ralph Brighton.

Apologies for absence were received from Roger Wolfe, Iain Taylor, Ingrid Kay, John Haseltine, Sue Prigg, Diana Bramer, David and Margaret Taylor, Tony and Jennie Eden. Dick Leech, Graham Blaxill, Gaye and Mike Hodges, Sheila Facer.

Ralph Brighton informed the meeting of the recent sudden death of Laurie Burroughs (Sudbury), and the illnesses of Tony Eden (Waveney) and David Holt (Bury)

**2. Minutes of the Annual Meeting held on Saturday 26<sup>th</sup> February 2005 -**  
The minutes were approved as a true record of the 2005 AGM.

**3. Matters Arising** – There were no matters arising from the minutes.

### **4. Presentation of the Annual Report**

Members were presented with copies of the report.

It was noted that the article on pages 11/12 was incorrectly credited to John Andrews instead of Geoff Pratt, Area Access Officer, who actually wrote it.

Ralph thanked all those who had contributed to the Area News and congratulated the editor, Tim Cavell on its production.

Adoption of the annual report was proposed by Trevor Arbon, seconded by Tony Buck and approved unanimously.

## **5. Presentation of the Accounts for the year ending 30<sup>th</sup> September 2005**

Area Treasurer Geoff Knight highlighted matters of interest to members in the annual statement of account. Geoff stressed the need for Area and Groups to reduce their balances by setting deficit budgets. It is planned that this year the Area's balance will be reduced by about £2,500. Geoff also explained the benefits of groups switching their accounts to Unity Bank.

Tony Buck queried the £500 provision for a footpath creation scheme. Geoff confirmed that the money was earmarked for a possible project with Suffolk CC, but nothing had happened to date.

Acceptance of the accounts was proposed by Basil Spicer, seconded by Brenda le Grys and approved by the members.

## **6. Election of Chairman**

The present chairman Ralph Brighton was proposed for re-election by Trevor Arbon, seconded by Rae Bullman and duly elected unanimously for the coming year.

## **7. Election of Officers**

There was only one nomination for each position on the Suffolk Area Executive Committee for the year 2006/7 as recorded below, and they were proposed en masse by Jim Richards and seconded by Neil Mahler and duly elected.

Secretary	Philip Snelling
Treasurer	Geoff Knight
Footpath Secretary	John Andrews
Membership Secretary	Dick Leech
Access Officer	Richard Tyson
Recruitment/Media contact	Tony Eden

Ralph Brighton thanked retiring Access Officer Geoff Pratt, for his many years of service to Suffolk Area.

## **8. Election of Representatives of the Affiliated Societies**

No nominations had been received.

## **9. Appointment of Independent Examiner**

Geoff Knight reported that Mr John Cresswell is willing to continue in this role.

## 10. Any Other Business

1. John Andrews requested help from members willing to assist him with claimed errors and omissions from the Suffolk CC definitive map. It was suggested by Basil Spicer that it may be possible to co-ordinate this with the RA challenge to walk and report problems on RoWs.
2. Area News editor Tim Cavell proposed use of colour photographs in the next edition. Tim asked to investigate costs.

Editor

3. Neil Mahler reported on the loss of common land at Thorpeness. Jim Richards suggested a joint approach between RA and Open Spaces Society through Kate Ashbrook.
4. John Dowding suggested the RA consider becoming an affiliated society to the Open Spaces Society.

AEC

5. Richard Tyson raised question of subscription rates. Treasure explained new method of allocation of funds by need (approved budget) rather than capitation.
6. There was a wide ranging discussion on open access land, signage, identification on maps, closures, monitoring by Local Access Forum and Countryside Agency.

The Chairman thanked Bury St Edmunds Group for hosting the AGM.

Following the AGM, **Peter Ayling** RA Trustee gave an interesting presentation covering;

- News from RA head quarters including the new chief executive
- Recent RA successes including open access land, rights of way improvements, formation of under 30s groups
- Areas for improvement; volunteer structure review
- RA's charitable status
- RA in the future; waymarking the future programme ending, coastal access targeted, aim to increase membership, improve image with the public
- European ramblers overview.

A vote of thanks to Peter Ayling was given by a member of Bury St Edmunds Group.

## **Access Officers Report**

Recent progress has included erection of missing notices on partly blocked access land near Westleton and movement of a recycling centre wrongly placed on common land at Thorpeness. However, John Andrews is still awaiting promised erection of access gates at Icklingham and Tuddenham.

The R.A. campaign for a right of coastal access hopes to see recommendations from Natural England by March.

Of more local importance are proposals by Suffolk Wildlife Trust for fencing parts of the Hollesley Commons so that heathland can be restored. Similar fencing at Westleton by SWT and at Snape Warren by the RSPB seems to have resulted in fences topped with barbed wire with a minimum of access points. At Hollesley opposition has come from local interests and the Open Spaces Society. As well as the diminution of real open country the effect on walkers might be that rights of way end up being between fences with the byways churned up by horses and local traffic. R.A. Headquarters suggest that it may be possible to influence the situation by approaches to Suffolk CC and the Local Access Forum.

Richard Tyson.

## **Suffolk Area RA Treasurers Report for 2005-2006**

The grants from Head Office to Area and the allocations to the 7 Suffolk Groups from the area are on a different basis this year. Groups and Area each produce a budget and request the amount they need after income and any planned change in reserves are considered.

Accordingly Groups asked for £2840 from Area (previous year £3513) and Area requested £3200 from Head Office (previous year £8885). This did not affect direct expenditure but did allow reserves to move closer to the level acceptable to the Charity Commission, under whose rules we operate.

Other income was £381 – reimbursement by SCC of past footpath expenses and £195 interest.

Other expenses largely balanced with the previous year, except that Area News, in its new format now costs £888.

The deficit of £1753 was close to that on our budget and the continuing balance of £6440, looks likely to be reduced further by the ROW Campaign costs we have agreed.

Presented to Executive Committee by Geoff Knight  
Agreed by Executive – 15/11/06  
Signed:- R. Brighton

**Geoff Knight Treasurer**

**Ramblers Association - Suffolk Area**

**Income & Expenditure Account**

for year to 30/9/06

04-05	<b>Income</b>	05-06
8885	Request / Grant from Head	3230.00
106	Donations	77.51
0	Reimbursement SCC	331.11
168	Interest	195.68
25	Other	
<u>8184</u>	<b>TOTAL</b>	<u>3854.30</u>

**Expenditure**

3513	Allocations to Groups	2840.00
23	Special Grants	0.00
	Exec Committee:	
31	Room Hir	71.00
272	Travel	351.49
142	Officers	223.89
	<b>ROW expenses</b>	<b>646.38</b>
842	Area	769.34
447	Local FS	325.61
122	Publicity / Conferences	77.77
569	Area News	888.00
2000	Donation to HO	0.00
30	Other Donation	0.00
80	AGM	60.00
<u>8071</u>	<b>TOTAL</b>	<u>5607.10</u>

1113 surplus (deficit) #####

**Balance Sheet as at 30/9/06**  
04-05 05-06

7080	Accumulated Fund	8153.28
1113	Surplus / deficit for year	#####
<u>8193</u>	<b>Balance at year end</b>	<u>6440.48 #</u>

Represented by:-

6343	Bank Balance (Unity Trust)	6469.48
1850	Debtors & prepayments	0
8193	sub-total	6469.48
0	less: creditors	29.00
<u>8193</u>	<b>TOTAL</b>	<u>6440.48 #</u>

# Of this sum £2000 is designated to a campaign regarding Rights of Way in Suffolk

Presented by Geoff Knight, Area Treasurer  
signed: #####

Independently examined by John Cresswell, CTA, MAAT

signed: Date:

## **Report from the Area Membership Secretary**

Since the formation of the Suffolk Area in 1977 membership has steadily increased until 2005 when there was a slight reduction in numbers. Membership declined further during 2006 to the present figure of 2108 down 21 on last year.

The table below shows the figures for the eight groups in the Suffolk Area. Numbers in brackets are the figures for the previous year.

Alde Valley	156 (161)	Bury	367 (369)
Ipswich	606 (605)	Newmarket	153 (166)
Stowmarket	199 (205)	Sudbury	242 (233)
Waveney	351 (355)	Stour	29 (29)

The decline in the Suffolk Area figures would seem to be in line with the current national membership which is now 137,883 compared with last years figure of 139,515, down 1632.

**Dick Leech**  
**Area Membership Secretary**

## **John Andrews, a Ramblers' Association Legend**

You will all now know that John Andrews is leaving Suffolk in the spring to move to Scotland with his wife Jean – after more than 35 years dedicated work for the Ramblers' Association. (*see John's own report in this newsletter*)

The extent of his involvement, I suggest, is one that is unlikely to be matched. John has been the backbone to the RA's campaigns in Suffolk for so long, as the following recollection indicates.

“I recollect John’s enthusiasm many years ago to open up paths across a huge local Estate in West Suffolk where there were then no public Rights of Way on the whole Estate.” He had historical information concerning the Norwich to London coaches coming across the land. I was delighted to eventually see signs going up indicating that he had won a long struggle.”

Although I have only been involved with Area matters for the last six or seven years I have seen many examples of John’s successes - and frustrations; I attended a Public Enquiry in Stansfield in 2002 concerning the reinstatement of a footpath – greatly contested by the landowner and his solicitor. Whilst the RA was represented by our own Honorary Solicitor, Gerry Pearlman, it was the manner in which John presented his evidence which particularly impressed me – he was a match for both advocates with his detailed legal and local knowledge. (Over the years John has brought several important cases to the RA’s Legal Panel which, thanks to his thorough research, were able to be taken to the higher courts)

How many people have the knowledge, expertise, courage and perseverance to challenge and confront the MOD, as John did, over their handling of footpath closures around the Mildenhall and Lakenheath air bases following ‘9/11’?

How many have his tremendously detailed knowledge of the various pieces of legislation available to promote his innumerable Rights of Way claims, e.g “section 53 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, or s.56 and s.130 of the Highways act 1980 and of course the Countryside and Rights of Way Act (CROW) 2000? And how many of us would have been able to resort - but only when necessary and after attempts at persuasion and negotiation had failed - to Appeals to the Secretary of State to get the County Council to implement Orders confirming Rights of Way?

With this encyclopaedic knowledge at his disposal John has succeeded in getting a once highly deficient definitive map of Suffolk into “something approaching a proper order”.

He acknowledges that he has received much help and cooperation from numerous Council Officers in dealing with these claims and, more

recently, with his heavy involvement with the Council's Rights of Way Improvement Plan. Many of them have been impressed with his unstinting dedication and determination.

John reported to the Area Committee in February 2006 that "during the past few years over 130 Rights of Way with a total length of over 100 miles have been rescued from oblivion and added to the Suffolk definitive map as a direct result of the work of the RA - some of these paths had been 'lost' for over 100 years". During the past year more routes have been opened to walkers, but many more claims are still outstanding. The majority of these successes were of course attributable to John but in his typically modest way he often sought to pass the credit for his part onto others.

Apart from his reputation in Suffolk, John is highly regarded at Central Office; Kate Ashbrook, the RA Chairman said, "John is greatly respected by kindred organisations, local authorities (who both fear and admire him), our own members and among the legal profession. He knows more about footpath law than most lawyers! He can feel proud to have made such a difference to the paths in Suffolk and to have taught and encouraged so many others to fight the cause. I wish him all the best, and I know we shall miss him."

A former RA Chairman, Brian Reader said, "John has been one of our most dedicated, persistent and conscientious footpath volunteers anywhere in the Association. Only recently he e-mailed his thanks to the Honorary Solicitor and the Central Office team for their work on a case, but they would not have been involved at all had John not brought the case to our attention - and done a great deal of work on it himself".

One senior official of twenty years experience told me "We have many dedicated volunteers - but John stands out as one of our legendary heroes'. Another spoke of "his dedication to the cause of protecting and preserving our precious network leaving the rest of us in the shade".

During the past three decades John has also found time for other walking-related activities outside the RA including a number of books on walks in Suffolk, contributions to other publications such as Byways

and Bridleways Trust and his regular and much followed short circular walks printed in the weekly Bury Free Press –accompanied by delightful pencil drawings by Jean. I am reliably informed that somehow time has been found for gardening!

His efforts have greatly benefited not only our own members but also, in the true spirit of charitable aims of The Ramblers' Association, the whole community, which owes an enormous debt of gratitude to him. Few of us are indispensable but John surely comes as near as anybody can to being so in his chosen field. He will be sorely missed.

On behalf of Suffolk Ramblers, past and present, and Central Office, I offer our most sincere gratitude and our heartiest best wishes to both John and Jean for a wonderful new life in Scotland.

(But, I wonder, will he be able to resist turning his hand to helping the RA there?)

**Ralph Brighton, Chairman, Suffolk Area Executive Committee**

## **Bury St Edmunds Group**

At the time of writing our last report we were in the process of putting together a special interest day at Horringer in September, to inspire and encourage new walks leaders and to increase confidence in leading walks. It was a really good day all-round, with table-led group work in the morning – which included map-reading skills both for beginners and for the more experienced – and then coming together as a large group after coffee to pick up on themes and discussions, and aspects of leading a walk, which we were then able to put into practice back in our small groups for a walk in the afternoon. Following tea at Ickworth House we finished with a review of the day which was very positive. Thank you again to all who contributed so much to the success of the event, and a special thank you to Mike Clare who has compiled a really

useful hand-out which he has put together using RA material and personal local experience. (If any group would like a copy just send an A4 s.a.e. to Mike at Red Herring Cottage, Heath Road, Norton, B.St.E. IP31 3LT)

On a personal note I owe a huge debt of gratitude to Dave Chandler for his support whilst I've been 'grounded' with Plantar Fasciitis! and he will be leading the delightful Eight Parishes Walk for me on 10<sup>th</sup> March. It's been quite humbling for me not even to be able to manage the shortest walks recently (having been so used to participating in or leading the longest walks on the programme!) and it's certainly given me new insights from a different perspective!

As a Group we are committed to equal opportunities for walking and concerned to extend the range of walks available – to ensure there's something for everyone. We now have regular short walks on the programme of about 2 ½ - 3 miles, usually on or as near as possible to the first Friday of each month. These are already proving very popular and are generally well-attended, and they also give people who are uncertain perhaps about their capabilities the opportunity to discover what they can do. (I'm hoping to manage one soon)!

It has also been good to maintain our links through Chris Barker with the Millennium Farm Trust which seeks to provide work opportunities and enhance the quality of life for people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities in a rural environment, and another very happy and successful joint event was held in October when Chris led a walk in the morning followed by lunch together at Rede and an invitation for a tour of their farm and workshop. We do thank them again for their enthusiasm, and their commitment to conservation work, and for the warmth of their hospitality, and we look forward to our next shared event later this year.

On a sadder note, although we are delighted for John and Jean and wish them a very happy move to Scotland, we will be losing our 'local living legend!' to whom all of us owes so much. Always so very unassuming, John Andrews epitomizes the essential spirit and aims of the RA – and he never gives up does he?! As witness by a recent brief e-mail which

must surely be a model of restrained understatement: “28 years – and two public enquiries – since it was first claimed, the old Packway from Thurston Great Green to Stowlangtoft is at last going on the Def. Map.” Thank you John... and thank you Ralph for your tribute to John, on behalf of us all, published in this Newsletter. I was going to say that it says it all – but of course it couldn’t possibly could it?!

**Rosie Perham    Chairman    Bury St Edmunds Group**

## **Alde Valley Group News**

At our AGM in Leiston on November 29<sup>th</sup> we were pleased to note that 20 new members had joined recently. Our Treasurer Will Gesler has left the district and has been replaced by Karen Mountford.

The programme of walks on alternate Sundays is continuing. Recently we have visited Orford, Knodishall and Tunstall Forest. On December 18<sup>th</sup> we walked in Rendlesham Forest followed by a Christmas lunch at the Elephant and Castle Inn, Eyke. The winter programme includes Framlingham, Wenhaston, Parham and Shottisham as well as continuing the East Suffolk Line station to station walks using the booklet partly sponsored by the RA. The booklet has recently been republished and should be available from tourist offices, etc. Up to 15 members and friends have participated in the Sunday walks which usually cover 4 to 10 miles at a moderate pace. We now have about 9 leaders but more are always welcome especially if able to cover new areas.

The footpath group has continued to meet in between the walks. As well as clearing vegetation and renovating waymarks we also visited the Bentwaters area to look at the proposals for new and altered footpaths across and near the former USAF base; our comments have been forwarded to the authorities. Neil Mahler has been active regarding access land infringements at Thorpeness and near Westleton and we are pleased to note a new right of way (Snuff Lane) near the railway at Snape Watering.

**Richard Tyson**

## **Stowmarket Group**

Our group has once again had a busy session. The footpath group have completed surveys at Athelington, Flowton and Thwaite and these have been handed to Suffolk County Council for action on a number of issues. Due to organizational changes we are looking for extra help to cover our large area. If you are interested and can help please contact me.

Our AGM was held in September and it was good to see Doug and Mary Brett in attendance after Doug's illness. The evening concluded with a cheese and wine party. Since the AGM Colin Baker has been co-opted onto the committee and his interest in the footpath network will be of great help. Turn out for the walks has been good with thirty four attending the Carol Service at Lawford, Les Gaskin once again had it all well organized with a good meal at Lawford Kings Head.

enda has been busy on the social front organizing ten pin bowling, a barn dance and the Christmas Dinner. The change of venue for the Christmas Dinner to the Magpie, Combs Ford, brought forth favourable comments.

Tony Craighill will soon be collating the summer walks programme and will be looking for leaders new and old.

Keith Ager reports that the group holiday at Leyburn, Yorkshire in May is fully booked so we once again keep our fingers crossed for fine weather.

A vote of thanks to Martin Watson who provided sherry and mince pies on a very foggy morning at Toft Monks when seven of our members joined the Waveney Group in a joint walk. Last but not least please make a note of the group AGM which will appear in the next programme.

**Tony Buck**

## Ipswich Group News

Just because we didn't make an appearance in the last edition of Area News it doesn't mean that no one is walking around the footpaths of Ipswich area. We are still very active and have just over 600 members but luckily for our leaders, all of them do not come walking at the same time! Our current programme has 57 walks and like Heinz, has as many varieties; from 3 miles to 15 miles and the majority are well supported with between 12 and 36 members. Twice a year we enjoy our soup lunch walks, where we do a 4/5 mile walk then meet up at a village hall for soup, rolls and apple pie lunch. This is an opportunity for those older members who can no longer enjoy our walks to return and have a social lunch with old friends.

Having disposed of the business side at our AGM we took the "risk" of inviting Charlie Haylock, the well known Suffolk writer (*Slightly on th' Huh!*), humorist and raconteur to talk to us. Well, I haven't heard a group of ramblers laugh so much in a long time and he gave us a good evening of entertainment.

It seems to be a common trait these days that trying to get people to volunteer to serve on committees has become quite arduous, as I feel sure most other groups find. That being said, after a mere 13 years in the job, Doreen Leech our Membership Secretary has decided to stand down and will be a great loss to the group. We have however, been very fortunate (with a little arm twisting) to secure the services of Hazel Glassock to continue the good work.

As I write these notes we in Ipswich have seen the first light fall of snow for the year but in the past 3 weeks we have already seen snowdrops, primroses and aconites in full flower on walks! How does Mother Nature cope? If we come for a walk near you and your own group hasn't got a walk that day, then we would be delighted to have your company. You can check our movements on the website [www.ipswichramblers.co.uk](http://www.ipswichramblers.co.uk).

*Gareth Evans*

## Newmarket Group News

I feel that time is passing very quickly. It does not seem possible that the 9<sup>th</sup> October saw my second AGM. This year has seen a great deal of work taking place by the committee on behalf of the members. I would like to thank all of the committee members for their hard work and dedication. Sue and Phil Prigg have continued to develop the ideas that come forward at the walk's meeting, and via the program, get us all to the right place at the right time. I would like to formally welcome Tim Cavell to the committee. Tim is the Editor of this Newsletter. I would add that we do still need 2 more committee members and I would reiterate my previous appeal to those who may be interested. We are now meeting in very comfortable surroundings and of our 6 meetings per year certainly do not expect 100% attendance. So please do think about any support you may be able to offer.

The Newmarket group continues to offer a very varied program with walks across the county and into Norfolk to enjoy the Peddars Way. We have to thank John Morris for the well run coach trip to Canterbury on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of July which was well supported.

Please be reminded about the annual dinner which is on the 21st April, 7.30 for 8 pm. Details of which were circulated with the winter news letter. The location is the Rosary in Exning. Three course meal with coffee for £16.95. More information from John on 01284-723684.

The day trip to France is booking well and we are able to make any remaining seats available to members of other groups. The date is Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> May leaving the Park and Ride car park, Newmarket promptly at 6.30 am. Please ring John on the above number to check availability. You will need a current passport and suitable travel insurance and don't forget your picnic. Cut off the slip below:-

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Name.....

Address.....Tele.....

Deposit of £10 required each person refundable at committee discretion.

Please book.....places at £30. Balance due by 29<sup>th</sup> April 07 to:-

John Morris, 66 Denham Close, Bury St Edmunds, IP33 3XY.

## **Sudbury Group**

Things have gone very well with our Group since the last Area News. The number of people coming on our walks averages about 15 although at times it has been nearer 30. That is to my mind, about the maximum; allowing stiles to be climbed without too much delay and members to migrate up and down the group for a chat. Let's face it; going on a ramble is as much a social event as anything else. Gentle exercise probably comes second and walking footpaths and other aims and objects of the RA, for the majority of members, probably comes last.

Anyway, the group's walks have been a varied mixture, from the Flich Way in Essex, another section of the Coastal Path from Shotley to Nacton, a car free walk by taking the bus from Sudbury to Sicklesmere; walking back to Lavenham and a bus to Sudbury. Many walks have been in the near locality to Sudbury.

One of our leaders Leslie, failed to order the proper weather for her annual coach trip to Norfolk when it rained on and off for most of the day but we forgave her.

On 13<sup>th</sup> October, 6 members of the Group set off at an ungodly hour to catch the 7.10 flight from Stanstead to Copenhagen where we were met by members of the Nordsjælland Group of the Dansk Vandrelaug (Danish RA). Please see below the separate article about this visit. There will be a return visit by the Danes from 21<sup>st</sup> to 23<sup>rd</sup> September. A full programme will be laid on for them and details for Sudbury members will come sometime next near year.

Walking in the Autumn of 2006 has been a sheer delight with ideal weather, beautiful colours which seemed to go on for so long. If this is global warming, long may it continue.

**Iain Taylor**

## **A Weekend in Denmark** **13<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> October 2006**

A little over a year ago and as a result of initial contacts by the Sudbury Town Twinning Association, a delegation with a number of interests from Fredenborg-Humblebaek came over to make contact with similar organizations in Sudbury. Amongst them was Anne-Lise Lemche of Dansk Vandrelaug, the equivalent of the Ramblers Association.

As a result of this meeting on Friday 13<sup>th</sup> October 2006, six members of the Sudbury Ramblers flew to Copenhagen to be met by our hosts at 10am and taken by train to their houses. By the way, Danish trains are clean, fast and frequent.

The Sudbury Ramblers and their hosts met at Anne-Lise's house to be treated to a traditional Danish lunch which included two different types of pickled herring and several types of schnapps. Then it was "on with our boots" and off by train again to Helsingør for a look at the palace, the for Shakespears' "Hamlet" and along the shore, through some woods and parkland down into the town of Helsingør for a short tour around the town. As Sweden is only 20 minutes away by ferry, clearly visible across the Sound, and as drink is cheaper in Denmark, Helping is the Swedes equivalent of a day trip to Calais.

On Saturday we all met up at Hillerød Station together with more members of the local groups of Dansk Vandrelaug for an all day walk to Fredenborg Castle and through the formal gardens into the vast, most beautiful woods studded with lakes that formed the original hunting grounds to the castle. These are now all open to the public and it is hoped that in the near future they will be dedicated as a National Park. After 9 miles the walk ended with a brief tour of Hellerød before catching another of the excellent Danish trains back home.

Still aching from yesterdays' walk, bright and early we caught a train into the center of Copenhagen, deposited our main luggage at the HQ of

Dansk Vandrelaug (fancy visiting a foreign RA before your own)! We then set off for a tour on foot. Russell Morris, an ex-pat, acted as guide for us and other members of the local groups. He told us that we were going to see some of the more unusual sights of Copenhagen (and I do not mean the Museum of Erotica in Kobmagergade )! Russell took us via the Tivoli Gardens over the Long Bridge and around the old city ramparts that were very green and rural, past a house that had featured in a Danish TV series in the seventies to Christianshaven and the hippie colony of the Free City of Christiania. This is populated by a gentle group of artists and craftsmen who do not quite fit into modern society but make a living there. They also have a great sense of humour because over the archway was the inscription “You are now entering the EU”. Russell then led us down to the water to catch a waterbus past the new Opera House, paid for by the owner of the Maersk Shipping Line, up to the Little Mermaid. There we all had a well-earned break for lunch before going to the big fortress of Copenhagen then via a number of unusual and interesting places to the Royal Palace. The palace is basically four big buildings set around a big square where pedestrians and traffic are able to pass through. We were lucky enough to arrive for the Changing of the Guard.

Russell then guided us to the Town Hall Square and left us to our own devices for a couple of hours. Not many of the shops were open as it was Sunday and fairly late in the afternoon. Luckily some might say! Around five o'clock we all met up at the Dansk Vandrelaug HQ to find that the ladies had arranged a wonderful meal for us. This was typical of the standard of welcome that we had and Sudbury has a lot to live up to when the Danes come over in 2007.

To sum up, the weather was warm and sunny, everybody spoke very good English, and we were made very welcome and had a fantastic time

The return visit by a party from Denmark will take place from 21<sup>st</sup> to 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2007. A programme of activities/walks will be organized and it is hoped that members from other Suffolk groups will be able to come along. Details will follow later. It is hoped that we can find enough volunteers from the Sudbury Group to act as hosts.

**NB They all speak good English**

**Iain Taylor**

## **Waveney Group News**

A review of the Groups' activities between November 2005 and October 2006 would indicate that it is healthy and providing members with a good return for their subscriptions. There were 71 half-day walks and 75 full day walks. Fourteen social events were organized, including slide shows, a treasure hunt, the annual quiz and a coach walk. Members had access to a variety of holidays – self catering on Dartmoor, a hotel in the Haute Loire, self-catering or B & B in West Cork, Rent-a-Hostel at Blaxhall and back packing around hostels on the Norfolk Coast Path and in the Lake District. Six more holidays are already planned for 2007.

Other pleasing developments in this period were the training of new leaders and the creation of an imaginative scheme to cover the work of the Footpath Secretary.

However there are causes of concern. Great efforts are made through the programme to offer something to all our 300+ members; but there are many members we never see. If an event attracts 60 people it is regarded as a great success. *Walking for Health* has increased the numbers on half-day walks but the numbers on full-day walks are static or declining. In fact the situation is almost one of two sections within the Group; they meet at social activities but rarely on walks: and strangely it is from the full-day walks that most of the officers come. While some of our founder members remain active and lead walks, younger members are not being recruited. The dozen who backpacked in the Lake District had an average age of over 60. The efforts to secure the C.R.O.W. act were of great interest to leaders but did not arouse much general enthusiasm; it will be interesting to see whether the campaign for coastal access elicits a greater response.

So are we in a period of terminal decline thirty years after our foundation – and does it matter to the RA as a national campaigning organization? Clearly every subscription is Valuable and vital. Clearly

with so many walks on the programme lots of our footpaths are under frequent supervision. Clearly the members who take advantage of these varied activities derive great physical and social benefits from doing so. But I wonder what Waveney Ramblers will look like in ten years time; and whether other groups are experiencing a similar evolution.

## **B. E. LeGrys**

### **Angles Way**      *See our front cover picture*

Around about the mid 1980s a small group of Ramblers from Norfolk and Suffolk Areas of the Ramblers met to discuss the possibilities of creating a new long distance path along the Norfolk/Suffolk borders. Initially it was the idea of Basil Swatman from Waveney Group who devised a route from Yarmouth to Knettishall Heath and with a few friends succeeded in walking it – just to see if they could.

During the next few years support was gained from the two County Councils, the Broads Authority, the Upper Waveney Valley Project and bordering District Councils. The first Ramblers' guide book, with George le Surf as editor, was published in September 1989 to coincide with the official opening, which was reasonably quick compared with the timescale for similar projects – especially as so many organisations were involved! We have now reached the 8<sup>th</sup> edition of the guide, published in December 2005.

Over the years the route has been improved, one quite large improvement (eliminating about a mile along a busy main road) resulted from the creation of a short right of way, and others resulted from critical reappraisal. Some changes have been necessary to fit around improvements to the A140 and A143. The route was 77 miles when it first opened, it is now 78 miles. It does not closely follow the River Waveney or the Little Ouse, but could be said to follow the river valleys, many parts of these rivers do not have rights of way along the banks – it would be far too wet! In 2003 our route was selected by Waterscape (a part of British Waterways) as the “Best waterside walk in Britain”, we always knew how special it is, but it was good to have our view confirmed. But in spite of this not very many people walk it and

we do not sell as many guide books as we should. The route is marked on the relevant OS maps, but is not up to date, even on the latest editions. The choice of accommodation, listed in the guide, is far better than it was in 1989 as quiet tourism in the area has been promoted in recent years.

Now the two County Councils and the two Areas of the Ramblers' Association are planning a relaunch of the route in 2008. There will be improvements to waymarking etc, but above all the intention is to publicise the route, we all want more people to enjoy it, there is much of interest on the way and it is both varied and attractive. It leaves Great Yarmouth along the southern bank of Breydon Water and goes via Fritton and Somerleyton to Oulton Broad then follows the Waveney to Beccles, through the town and then continues to Shipmeadow. From thence it takes the "high" route, close to Mettingham and on to Watch House Hill, Wainford and Ditchingham. It just misses Bungay (but a short diversion into the town is an easy option) to follow the route via Bath Hills to Earsham. From there another high route, skirting to the south of Flixton and then meeting the Waveney again at Homersfield. Then along the edge of the water meadows to Target Hill and Mendham, west to the edge of Harleston, then south again and back to the Waveney near Shotford Bridge, from there the route to Brockdish is fairly close to the river. Around Brockdish is one of the places the OS map is out of date, however both routes have a little loop round to the north, then back to the edge of the water meadows, eventually meeting the river again before turning north to cross the A143 and skirting to the north of Billingford, then via Scole Common and Frenze into Diss. The route goes through the middle of Diss then out via Fair Green and Royden Fen to Wortham Ling and meadows to Wortham Church. Then there are field paths and tracks eventually leading into the Redgrave and Lopham Fen Nature Reserve and joining the upper reaches of the Waveney. Shortly after leaving the Fen the route passes to the south of the sources of the Waveney and the Little Ouse, one on the east of a road and the other on its west, flowing in opposite directions away from one another. The route passes through Hinderclay and Thelnetham Fens and, apart from a section around Hopton, is never more than about half a mile from the Little Ouse until it reaches the end of the Way at Knettishall Heath. Although there is now a waymarked Angles Way

Link path to Thetford where there are good transport links – this only connects with the river again when it reaches Thetford. This adds another 16 miles, not the shortest route to Thetford, just the nicest way for walkers.

The small committee which first met in the 1980s still exists, albeit most of its members have changed over the years. The guide book produces a small profit and when we have surplus funds they are divided between Norfolk and Suffolk Areas. If you would like a copy it costs £2.70 plus 30p post and packing and is available from Sheila Smith, Caldcleugh, Cake Street, Old Buckenham, Attleborough, Norfolk, NR17 1RU – cheques payable to “Ramblers’ Association” please. Brenda Le Grys (Waveney Group) also holds some stock, so you may be able to save on the post and packing!

**Sheila Smith**

## **Moving on - and moving forward**

We arrived in Suffolk in a snowstorm, just after Christmas 1970 - a typical British family: mum, dad and two young children. In Yorkshire, although in reality we were town-dwellers, we had lived on the edge of the built-up area and had been able to wander more or less at will across the neighbouring moors. I, however, was very much a southerner and had acquired my walking habits in the unfettered freedom of the New Forest and the open spaces of the Hampshire downs.

It was a quite unexpected shock, therefore, on coming to live in a village near Newmarket, to discover that the one place where you simply could not go for a walk in safety was in the local countryside. For the very first time we were compelled to pay more careful attention to the rows of little red dots on our OS map which were supposed to represent public footpaths - and to buy larger scale maps to discover exactly where these so-called rights of way went. What a hope! There were one or two passable stretches along the river bank in the village centre, but if you tried to venture further afield you were immediately lost in a world of barbed-wire, ditches, ploughed soil and crops. If you were lucky enough to find a real path, then it was quite likely that some

farmer or landowner would challenge your right to be there. One of my earliest experiences was an encounter with a gamekeeper at Barrow who pointed his gun at me - when I was walking along a public footpath with 4 young children.

I found out that the County Council was supposed to deal with obstructed rights of way and wrote to them, but it took ages to get a reply and nothing else happened of any practical use. I went to the offices of the District Council in Mildenhall to look at a copy of something called a 'definitive map' that they were supposed to be able to show me on demand, but they had never heard of it and it took them 3 weeks to locate it - 'in a box in the attic'. Maybe that was why, as I quickly discovered, they had built their nice new planning office over a public footpath!

It wasn't long before I realised that I was going to need advice and sent a request for information to a body called the Ramblers' Association. Back came a few leaflets, application form etc. and a letter which said *'I am interested to know that you have taken the trouble to write to your local council; would you like to become our Local Footpaths Secretary for your area ?'* If only I had known where this was going to lead me!

The subsequent 35 years have flown by and it is difficult to recall just how dreadful things were in the 1970s and 80s. It's with a sense of disbelief that I now recall that one of the County Council's two Rights of Way Officers (yes, only two !) had to discreetly warn us not to use a bridleway near Polstead because a prominent county councillor would threaten with his gun anybody who came in sight and that I was physically assaulted at least 5 times in those early days by farmers who took exception to my presence on footpaths across their land - on one of those occasions by a man who claimed to be an RA member himself! When we complain about problems that are not attended to very quickly, it may be no bad thing to reflect on just how vast an improvement there has been in the degree of commitment shown by our local authorities and in relationships between rights of way users and landowners.

Something I quickly discovered was that the footpath network in many parts of the old West Suffolk was remarkably 'thin'. So few paths and 7-8 parishes that had not a single right of way between them.

There's not space here for even a brief account of the nature of my investigations into the reasons why so many historic public paths had been left off the original Definitive Map. Suffice it to say that this was the result of an unholy mixture of political interference, feudal control, extraordinary incompetence, wilful sabotage and behaviour ranging from improper to downright criminal on the part of some of those involved.

Some 30 or so years since Suffolk RA gave me the responsibility of working to get as many as possible of these missing paths on the Map we can take great satisfaction from the fact that the unflagging support from the local committee and RA Central Office has helped to produce the addition to the Suffolk Map - as a result of our efforts - of over 150 routes.

You may be wondering about the motive for this harking back to times past. The reason is that my wife and I have decided to part company with Suffolk and to move to Scotland - some time in the spring of this year, so, if all goes to plan, this is my last 'report' of the things I have been up to. Enough, however, of looking back, there is still a considerable challenge to be met in completing the task of restoring historic rights of way to the Definitive Map.

My most recent estimate is that there are still approximately 170 claimed rights of way that need to be investigated by Suffolk CC - and, for a large proportion of these, the evidence is quite strong. However, we have a Council administration that has created a serious situation by drastically reducing the staffing of the Rights of Way section and a growing disinclination on the part of both members and officers to finish the job because of the often contentious nature of the process and ill-founded perceptions that it is not cost-effective.

In the coming months Suffolk RA will need to exert its influence and demonstrate once again its strength of purpose and the Area Committee will need the support of all the membership in whatever action it takes. I will continue to follow the course of events with interest - but at a distance!

**John Andrews**

## **Don't neglect the treasure chest!**

Hencote, Posters, Darney and Snugs - a strange quartet of names. Is there a connection ?

Gypsy, Tittle Hall, Spooners and Wood. Can you spot the common theme?

Featherbed, Kiln, Primrose and Pound. What links all of these?

If the mystery remains unsolved - search around here for some visual clues. Yes, you've got it: a handful of Suffolk's glorious collection of old green lanes. Actually, there's another aspect to this common theme. All of these ancient unsurfaced highways and more of them - over 40 in total - have been rescued from oblivion and restored to public use during the past two decades because of the success of Suffolk RA in proving that they are indeed historic public routes. As a result, they have been put on the County's Definitive Map and thus safeguarded for the future. The latest one to have 'made it to safety' in this way is splendid old 'Fir Lane' at Hoxne. We can and should be proud of this achievement.

When I leave behind my walking days in Suffolk I shall miss more than anything else the many delights of wandering along these lovely green corridors - all of them different, but sharing several characteristics. I shall carry away memories of their welcoming cool shade on stifling summer afternoons, the cosy warmth of shelter from cutting January winds, the bounce of the leaf mould beneath my feet, the glimpses of primroses, wood anemones and violets amongst the tangled roots - centuries old - on banks and ditches, the scurrying and flitting of the creatures whose home this is and - especially rewarding to a walker - the very real sense of history and connection with the past that comes from treading where countless unknown others have done since time immemorial.

To my mind, these are some of the greatest treasures of the Suffolk countryside and we should cherish and protect them. Of course, there has often been opposition to our attempts to have the public right of way recognised and re-established and we can understand and

sympathise with the worries about the possibility of excessive use by motor vehicles. However, that kind of problem can be overcome.

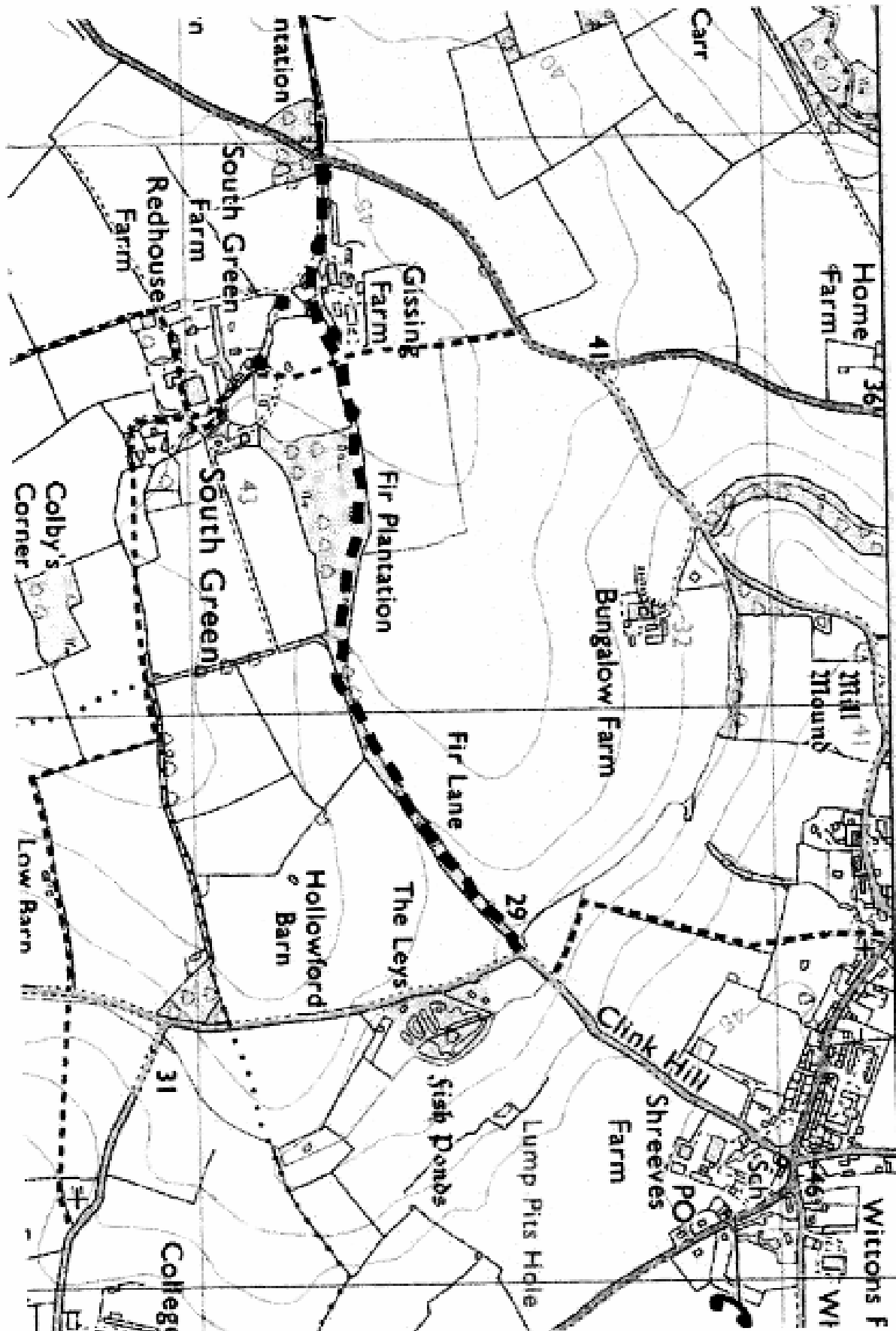
What we must reject outright are the frequent strident accusations from landowners or local residents that allowing walkers to once again enjoy the use of these ancient ways will 'destroy the countryside' and have 'disastrous consequences' for the natural environment. The best way to answer this kind of self-serving nonsense is to point to the reality, to visit lanes where this has happened and see just how wide of the mark such assertions are.

The truth is very different. It is a sad fact that the real destruction - of many miles of Suffolk's green lane network - was caused by the intensive agricultural practices of the 20th century when surfaces went under the plough, hedges and trees were uprooted, and ditches were filled - leaving bare earth in their place. Some of those only recently restored to us, e.g. Kiln Lane at Westhorpe, Darney Lane at Hartest and Wood Lane at Euston, have suffered this kind of fate to a dramatic and distressing extent.

We can be thankful that the recognition of the existence of the public right of way has the bonus effect that there can be no more of this destruction, but should we be content with that? Our green lane network presents us with two continuing challenges: - Firstly, to keep up the pressure on the County Council to finish the job of putting them on the Map - there are about another 20 in their files of claimed rights of way that still require investigation. Secondly, to challenge landowners, conservation bodies etc. to implement schemes to 'repair', re-plant, and restore the damaged lengths of our old lanes, so that they can be returned to something like their former splendour. What could be more worthwhile?

**John Andrews**

**HOXNE** – This Green Lane is the latest ROW to be added to the Definitive Map due to the efforts of John Andrews which included an appeal to the Secretary of State.



## **Walking in Madeira** *Another good article on walking abroad.*

Madeira is a walker's paradise with a variety of scenery from mountains to forest, upland plateau to glorious sea views. Although there are no beaches, Madeira has an equitable climate, historic sights, good food and wine – what more could you wish for? The island's climate has led to the development of small canals to channel water from the wetter north side to the more populated drier south side. This comprehensive *levada* network is ideal for leisurely walks though some can be vertiginous.

Funchal, the capital, is a large sprawling city with hotels constantly being built at the ever-expanding peripherals. However this does mean there is plenty of reasonable accommodation to be had, either through a packaged holiday company or booking direct over the Internet. Ramblers Holidays also have trips to Madeira as do several other walking companies. There are many good bus services, especially around Funchal, so an early visit to one of the tourist information offices to buy a timetable is recommended. The road network has been greatly improved in recent years enabling faster access to all parts of the island. Taxis are reasonably priced and can be used to reach more remote areas and there are a number of local guided walking companies.

There are a number of useful guides to Madeira but I like the Rother and Sunflower guides the best. The Discovery walking guide was too tame for me but they also do an excellent map. My favourite walk to date is Pico Grande, which gives excellent views of the central mountains as well as the coast. We took a taxi to Boca da Corridas (a viewpoint) and contoured on a good path around several mountains to reach a col - Boca de Cerror. Here we left the main path to ascend Pico Grande, using some fixed ropes and requiring scrambling to an exposed summit so not for the faint hearted. We descended back to the col to continue on the main path down to Currel des Freiras (The Valley of the Nuns) to catch a bus back to Funchal. Whilst we were waiting at the bus stop a local lady told us the bus wouldn't come there but to go up to another bus stop where a bus was due in 15 minutes. Full of misgivings

we trudged uphill but she was quite right and the bus came along dead on time. This was not the first time a friendly local helped us out this way and probably won't be the last.

Sheila O'Brien

## **The Essex Night Ramble**

The chill night wind blowing bleakly of the Thames Estuary carried with it the smell of snow from the cold, grey and lonely North Sea. The sky was studded with bright stars and there was light enough to see the swirling of the Dust Devils mischievously dancing around me. In the blackness paper and assorted detritus blew about every which way adding to the feeling of drab, dreary emptiness all around. Squalid dilapidated buildings added to the miserable mood. The strong powerful silhouette of oak trees rose starkly against the dark night sky.

Reflex- like I hastily pulled my collar up around my neck and shivered in the icy cold wind as my breath condensed in the chill air. In the gathering gloom a pin prick of light becomes discernable in the east. Taking a shortcut through the marshes of the bleak Essex coastline, I walk through empty lanes shrouded in banks of cotton wool damp, white mist. Thank God for my quartz halogen torch as I narrowly avoid stepping into large water filled pot-hole.

Walking onward through puddled lanes with the grey streaks of dawn; my adrenalin begins to pump, my scalp bristles at the nape of my neck as a bat circles around me. Presently a fine gossamer drizzle begins to fall adding to my isolation. Soon the fullness of the sun cracks upon the horizon and lends a calm still to the new dawn. The mackerel sky is changing to a crimson hue and the white moon is fading into invisibility. Quickly the rising sun burns away the remaining cloud and I begin to feel the full force of its warm power upon my cold weary body.

Looking around I see that the terrain is bright and good, punctuated with gorse. Suddenly it is done; I have arrived back from whence I came. Thoughts of warm summer evenings and sizzling BBQs

spring to mind. As I slip into the cockpit of my black car and begin my drive home, I slide back the steel sunroof and a welcome surge of air wafts into the interior, reinvigorating my senses and sharpening my appetite as I seek out Freds Transport Café.

**Greg Walker**

## **Fonnereau Way**

Footpath waymarker at the junction of paths on the outskirts of Ipswich, near Westerfield Railway Station. The Fonnereau Way links the town center with the as yet undeveloped countryside to the north of the borough. It is also the first stage in the East Suffolk Line ‘Station to Station’ walks project, linking Ipswich with Woodbridge, Saxmundham, Halesworth, Beccles and Lowestoft. The second edition of the booklet also includes circular from stations at Westerfield and Brampton and is available free from TICs, libraries, etc. A web version (with updates) is in preparation. Suffolk Area has contributed to the production of the booklet and Ipswich Group has sponsored the Fonnereau Way information board in Christchurch Park.



**Roger Wolfe**

## **From the Editor**

The observant amongst will have noticed that we have changed the wording on the front cover. The newsletter will now be Spring and Autumn instead of Summer and Winter; a closer reflection of when they are published. To the spring edition will be added Annual Report as it contains the reports for the AGM.

I would like to thank everyone for wishing me a good trip to visit my son in Australia. My wife Janice, came with me this time and we had a great time. Only down side was the comments we had to endure over the cricket disaster!

Thank you also to all the contributors, we have another article on walking abroad so keep those coming. Waveney Group news is food for thought maybe someone would like to comment on what is clearly a subject of concern for some.

I would also like to say how much I shall miss John Andrews help and support since I became editor of this newsletter. Much is written about his impending departure elsewhere in this newsletter but from my point of view I know the newsletter will be the poorer without John's contribution.

Please keep your contribution coming in for the Autumn edition. See you all at the AGM.

**Tim**