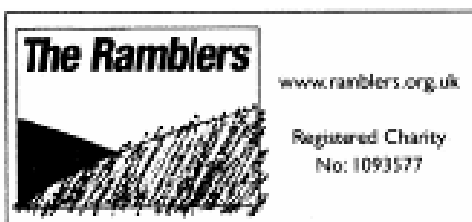


Ramblers Association

Suffolk Area

Area News

Summer 2005



Issue No 26

Report from Suffolk Area Executive Chairman – for Summer 2005 Area Newsletter

First of all I would like to welcome our new Area Newsletter Editor, Tim Cavell, a member of the Newmarket Group, whilst at the same time expressing the thanks of everyone in the Area to John Haseltine for his many years in the role.

Tim needs articles or anecdotes (serious or light hearted) on any aspect of walking or the countryside from group members in Suffolk so I hope these will be flooding in!

The Suffolk Area AGM was held on 26th February 2005 at Stratford St. Andrew, hosted by the Alde Valley Group.

After the presentation of the Annual Report and the election of the Area Executive, we were lucky to be given an address by Kate Ashbrook, a leading figure in the RA for many years, having been a member of the National Executive since 1982 and Chairman from 1995 to 1998. She is currently Chairman of the Access Committee and, contrary perhaps to popular belief, all the work she does for the RA is voluntary –she works full time for the Open Spaces Society, of which she is General Secretary. Somehow she also finds time to be a member of The Countryside Agency Board!

Kate is very much involved with the implementation of the Countryside and Rights Of Way Act and is now looking further forward to promoting and obtaining access to the coastline for all.

Kate mentioned other issues such as the continuing fight for the maintenance of the footpath network, with still one-third in the country being difficult to use. Kate was hopeful that the new subsidies that are becoming payable to farmers would further encourage them to maintain footpaths over their land. Perhaps surprisingly, she highlighted that there are also many examples where the RA and other conservation groups such as English Nature and RSPB come into conflict over certain issues. It was hoped that a new body would be appointed would promote co-operation.

She said that membership was of constant concern when it was realised that, although The Association recruited 19,000 new members last year, the overall growth in membership was only 2,500, - meaning that 16,500 had left the RA! In addition we had to attract younger members and those with lower incomes and from ethnic groups – an aspect under review at HO.

Dave Hodgkinson, a representative of the Bury Group on the Area Committee has recently set up a new website for us (www.suffolkramblers.org.uk)-many thanks Dave. It is planned that this Newsletter and many other features will be available there in the near future –“Watch this Site”.

Turning to my own Group - On 7th June around 25 Newmarket members, including founder members and many who have known him since he joined the Group, helped Don Mayhew celebrate his 90th birthday. After a great pub meal we were treated to birthday cake and champagne. The cake featured a picture of Snailwell church, near Newmarket, where Don had attended his first walk on 1st.



January 1988. He was presented with a personalised calendar featuring a dozen photos of him and group members on various walks over that 17-year period –a very novel and welcome present that Don says he will treasure.

Ralph Brighton
Chairman, Suffolk Area Executive Committee

Ipswich Ramblers Trip To Yorkshire.

The annual trip to the Yorkshire Dales took place in April this year, the minibus picked up 15 members of the Ipswich Group from home and after a coffee stop at Grantham we stopped for a picnic on the top of Ilkey Moor in the early afternoon. The weather was good and the groups first views of the Dales stunning.

We take over the old coaching inn in the centre of Malham for this week and received the usual warm welcome from Juli and her family who have run the inn for many years. To work up an appetite for the first of many huge meals we had to walk past Janets Fosse to Goredale in the early evening drizzle.

Our first day turned out to be our only wet day and was spent exploring the Duke of Devonshire's Estate on the banks of the Wharfe at Bolton Abbey, an 8 mile walk took in the Abbey, the village, the Strid and Barden Towers, by lunch time the weather was dry and we were rewarded by good views of this very pretty part of the Wharfe valley.

Tuesday saw us head over to Three Peaks country, although our walk of about 10 miles was reasonably flat. We set off from Horton in Ribblesdale along the flanks of Penyghent before crossing the valley floor to reach the high pastures of Inglebrough via Alum Pot and its associated caves – which gave us a great excuse to “poke around” with our torches. We were all fairly tired after today but the views and limestone scenery were well worth it.

Talking of views the next days walk gave some of the best. Walking in Upper Wharfedale from Conistone to Kettlewell, then Hawkswick and Arncliffe we not only visited some of the Dale's prettiest villages but walked high above the dale.

On our final full day walking half the party climbed Buckden Pike – discovered snow on the top and the real meaning of peat bogs – and the other half walked in Langstrothdale, a beautiful little dale at the head of Wharfedale – we then all joined up for tea (or nettle beer) and cakes at Buckden!

Friday saw us having a final walk in the morning over Malham Cove before returning to East Anglia via Hawworth taking with us memories of great walking, fabulous countryside, good company, companionship and accommodation – not to mention those Yorkshire breakfasts!

We hope to return to the Northern Hills in the Spring of 2006 - if you would like details give John Laycock a call on 01473 831236.

John A Laycock
Group Secretary
Ipswich & District

Newmarket Group.

I realise that the term “time flies” is as old as the hills, but it does, especially of course when you are walking in beautiful countryside and enjoying the company of fellow walkers. The combination of chatter between the walkers and that sense of history that is attached to many of our footpaths provides the type of days out that just cannot be beaten. Sometimes I think we walkers have got it cracked. The trick now is to make sure we share this with others. So don't forget the “Welcome to Walking Week” planned for the 17th – 25th September and make sure you tell all your non-walking friends!

The Newmarket Group has been busy as ever and our October to March Program contained 39 walks, 6 of these being the ever popular Wednesday morning walks. Our thanks go to all 21 leaders who enabled us to enjoy these winter walks. Ralph organised the East Bergholt walk which we combined with the Bikers and Walkers Carol Service at Lawford Church. Special thanks to Elaine for volunteering to

lead the walk on New Years Day at short notice. It seems amazing to be sitting in the heat we have had this past week and writing about last Christmas but the Christmas theme was very much revisited when John Morris lead our walk at Santon Downham in February as we had heavy snow, making the riverside setting quite magical. Later in March Ralph led us again this time on a walk from Cambridge to Newmarket. This was a distance of 12 miles using footpaths the entire way and a bit of help from the local transport system to get us to Cambridge. Our special thanks go to Kath and Pat for taking care of the Christmas Social Evening.

Our committee continue to work hard to represent our group which has now grown to 171 and I am very much aware that as I learn the job of "Chairman" I could not do it without them. How nice it is to sit down with a cuppa, cut the cake and work our way through the agenda. Just imagine me on my own with just a fruit cake for company! In the past months we have considered matters as diverse as the group finances to a footpath in Haverhill affected by a well known supermarket. We are also engaged fully in Suffolk Area matters and have taken steps to be involved in the Forest Heath Local Development Framework. I would like to thank all of those on the committee I know it takes commitment to attend following a days work. Thank you!

The Newmarket Group were able to take up an offer of spending time in France with walkers from Maison Laffitte in France in 2003 as part of the twinning arrangement with Newmarket. I have spoken to the members who were able to go and they have told me about the positive experience they had. The walkers from Maison Lafitte are keen to come here and contact has been established with them. We are hoping to arrange a walking weekend for them in 2006. The proposal is that the group from France arrives on Saturday the 29th April mid afternoon by coach and are met by hosts. On Sunday the 30th a full days walking with the hosts providing a picnic lunch. In the evening we will arrange a dinner in a restaurant with them where the hosts can practice their French! Given the proposed date of the visit this could possibly coincide with the annual dinner which is usually held at around this time. On the Monday the 1st of May which is a Bank Holiday the plan is

to have a morning walk around Newmarket before the visitors leave after lunch. I am looking for offers of accommodation from within Newmarket group. You do not have to live in Newmarket to be a host the important thing is for visitors and hosts joining together for a weekend of walking.

I have spoken to members who have expressed an interest in being a host to the visitors and I hope that these dates are convenient. I would like to hear from any members who would like to be a host, also ideas for the Sunday walk or venue for the dinner. I would hope that this could be a weekend of walking with everyone feeling able to be involved as much as they would wish to be. I will certainly be brushing up on my schoolgirl French and be hosting 2 people.

I can be contacted on 01359-250263. Please call if you are able to help.

Happy Ramblings!

Janice Cavell

Chairman Newmarket Group

Bury St Edmunds

The group once again has had a busy few months including a number of changes on our committee. Both our chairperson Sheila Linke and our treasurer Basil Spicer stood down at our A.G.M. We thank them both for all they have done for the group over the past years.

We welcome our new chairperson Rosie Perham and treasurer Sheila Facer and wish them well in their new posts. We also welcome onto the committee Dave Chandler and Dave Hodgkinson who is running our own and the area website.

The group enjoyed a treasure hunt in April. Jane Patten and Catherine Buchanan set a wonderful course around the town, unfortunately after the hard work the ladies put in the turnout on the day was very disappointing. Congratulations are in order to the winners of the hunt the dream team pairing of David Chandler and Brian Milner.

On a glorious summer evening we had our first pub walk (part two next year) when we strolled around the town and learnt about the history of Beer Houses and Inns. It was hard to imagine the town in the mid 1800s when there were around 150 Beer Houses and Inns etc. In fact in recent years we have lost such hostelries as the Everards the Suffolk and the Castle to name just three to be replaced by Pizza Parlours book shops and Café/bars progress some might say!

Finally a date for your diary, as the group will be hosting next years area A.G.M. It will be on the 4th March 2006 at the Hyndman Centre, Hospital Road, Bury St Edmunds. Full details will appear in the winter edition of the area news.

Trevor Arbon.

Stowmarket Area News

Our group had a varied programme during the spring and summer period.

We visited a farm at Wantisden in conjunction with LEAF (Linking Environment and farming) our guide provided us with a superb guided tour explaining the link between growing crops and creating wildlife areas, the bluebell show was one of the best I have seen. Our yearly trip to the Norfolk coast on the train attracted 31 walkers. The weather was cold and dry and the nine mile walk from Cromer to Sheringham had a half way stop at Felbrigg Hall for coffee and cakes. Walk attendances have been high during the period which is encouraging for Tony Craig hill and the walk leaders.

Buxton was the venue for the group holiday; it must have been the coldest week-end for along time. We spent three nights at the Old Manse, Buxton and we had first class treatment from Mr and Mrs Cotton. If any other group is planning a holiday in the area I can recommend this establishment. The walk programme was as follows:

Day 1

Ashford on the Water – Monsal Head

Day 2

Tideswell and Cressbrook via Litton

Day 3

Hathersage and Stanadge

Day 4

Youlgrave – Middleton and Elton

Once again Brenda organised a ten pin bowling night at Ipswich and once again this was well attended. Brenda has indicated that she will organise the Christmas lunch and we hope to be going to Gislingham Six Bells again.

Helen Rowells footpath committee meet on a regular basis and will soon be taking on parish surveys: if any member is willing to help please contact me.

Last but not least London Blind Ramblers visited us on the 2nd July and it was a pleasure to guide our visitors around the Suffolk countryside.

Tony Buck

Stowmarket Chairman

Stowmarket Group -Walk with London Blind Ramblers

Stowmarket hosted a group from the London Blind Ramblers on Saturday 2 June, a commitment they undertake annually. The group of seven and a dog, travelled up from London by train and were met at Stowmarket Railway Station by volunteers who took them to the start of the walk by car and accompanied them on the walk.

Unfortunately the train was some 35 minutes late and due to a commitment that evening for the London group, time was a little short. However, the planned walk commenced at Needham Market, a circular route of about 5 miles around the town, taking in some beautiful countryside, with stops and a picnic lunch, finishing off at Alder Carr Farm shop for tea and delicious ice-cream.

The London group were very grateful for the opportunity to walk the fields of Suffolk again, but I think the volunteers, especially myself as it was my first time, gained more from the experience. Many thanks to the walk leader and other volunteers.

Tony Craighill

Programme Secretary

Sudbury and District

During the first half of 2005 we managed twenty one walks ranging from nearby Newton Green to far off London's Thames towpath. In January, our annual Town Walk took us around the medieval streets of Lavenham. Later that month saw us around Nayland and Polstead with blankets of snowdrops and crocuses.

In February it was wet underfoot for walks along the Box Valley, the Stour Valley and Thorrington Street. Four huge Suffolk Punch horses proved awkward to move through a path through Wayland Farm!

March was a bit warmer and the mud had dried up for walks around Wattisham and nearby Brundon. In April we saw primroses while out for walks around Cockfield and Clare and finished with a lovely spring walk around Brettenham.

A busy May saw our third London walk along the Thames towpath from Hampton Court to Kew Gardens followed by a relaxing cruise along the Thames to Westminster Bridge. The Turners coach back up proved invaluable to some of our walkers wanting a rest between bridges! We had a guided tour around the new country park development in Arger Fen and saw many bluebells at their peak. May also saw us around the tracks of the Hedinghams with the trees now in full leaf, the Constable country around Nayland, with a lunch at Leavenheath's Red Lion and finally around Bradfield through meadows and woods on a cool day after a few very hot days.

We started June with the first part of the Stour and Orwell Path, this year from Brantham to Shotley along the Stour Estuary. The coach back up was useful again in picking up the walkers to Alton Water for a lunch stop and return to the path.

We also walked another estuary – The Colne – that month and later on the hottest day so far (86 degrees) saw us around Wepstead with prolific shows of Elderflower bushes and dog roses. We finished with a walk around Newton Green on a sultry evening followed by a good meal at the Saracens Head.

Laurie Burroughs
Programme Organiser.

Alde Valley Group

The Area AGM, hosted by our group, took place on 26th February at Stratford St Andrew. After the formal business we heard an interesting talk from the guest speaker, Kate Ashbrook, who has campaigned vigorously for rights of access.

In the afternoon some members enjoyed a walk led by Tony Broster, an Alde Valley member. Thank you, Tony. Thanks also to all those who helped with this event, both on the day and beforehand. Especial thanks to our secretary, Mary Perry, who put in a great deal of work booking the center, which turned out to be an excellent venue, and also serving coffee on the day and clearing up afterwards. Thanks also to Anne Hubert-Chibnell who accommodated Kate Ashbrook on the Friday night.

We are enjoying a full programme of walks, attended by an average of 10 walkers. We would welcome visitors from other groups, details of our walks can be found on the national website Walks Finder and also in the East Anglian Daily Times ‘What’s On’ at the weekend.

A full programme of Footpath Working Parties continues throughout the year; in the summer we make use of the light evenings during the week, finishing with refreshment at the local hostelry.

Wendy Robinson

Waveney Group

Have you tried this yet?

In October 2000 the Waveney Ramblers added two additional aspects to their walking programme. For the first time a holiday was offered that not only consisted of overnighing in Youth Hostels, but also involved backpacking between each hostel. This first venture only attracted eleven of our members, but so inspired the participants that we have since made much more use of the Youth Hostel network. This has included renting a complete hostel for our groups' use in the winter months, as well as several other hostelling holidays. Demand and enthusiasm for these holiday breaks has escalated in the last five years.

If other groups are interested in using Youth Hostels for the first time Waveney can recommend it. It is possible to take out group membership of the YHA, so holiday participants do not have to be members in their own right. If the group consists of over ten persons having full board it is granted a free leader place (which we have distributed back as a discount to participants). However the real benefit is the pleasure of staying as a group in the wide variety of buildings the YHA has to offer.

David Butcher

Waveney Group

Food for thought from John Andrews

Just a Dream?

I had this amazing experience. I was walking in beautiful countryside where there were footpaths to take me anywhere I wanted to go - to

every town or village around or in whatever direction I chose. All along the paths - at every junction - were signs telling me where each path leads to and how far or how long it takes to get there. It was all so comfortable too; never any doubts about whether I was trespassing or obstacles in the way and not a single nettle to make my journey unpleasant or impossible.

So easy to get about from one area to another. Buses, trains and even, where the river was big enough, boats were in regular and frequent supply - with bus stops at the ends of lots of the footpaths. For the happy walker a car was quite superfluous. When I was hungry or thirsty a pub or cafe seemed to appear almost magically, even out in the countryside miles away from habitations - halfway up a mountain it was no surprise to find a place of refreshment.

No wonder that I was not alone in this paradise! The paths were alive with people of every age and variety - families, groups of teenagers and pensioners. It was all so safe and welcoming too, so it seemed quite natural to find - more than once - a young mother with a toddler in a pushchair - miles from anywhere. Did I find 'Private' notices all over the place? Scarcely ever, but, if so, then accompanied by helpful advice explaining that the path only led to a house or was in some way or other of no use to the general public. 'Keep Out' signs? Not a one did I behold.

At this point in the story - usually - comes the punch line "and then I woke up!" But this was not a dream and every word or it was true - true of the part of eastern Germany, close to the Czech border, where I have just been on holiday. I know the Germans have always been passionate about walking - the German word is 'wandering', which seems so much more descriptive of the habit, but should there be such a vast gulf between what one finds there and our normal experiences of walking in Suffolk? In my part of the County and in the height of summer, if I am lucky enough to find a path to take me where I want to go, then - 10 to 1 that it will be a nightmare journey and that I will return home scratched, stung and exhausted by the unequal battle against head-high vegetation and a selection of the nastiest species to be found. If a bus back would help - or a cooling drink would ease the pain - what chance of that?

Must this be so? Clearly it need not be. Are we setting our sights high enough? Can the Suffolk County `Rights of Way Improvement Plan` starts to bring about the huge cultural change that it would require? Is it pure, misguided fantasy to hope that our decision makers, the guardians of the public purse, might actually have the vision to believe that - as the experts all now say - a good recreational network is a major factor in sustaining the rural economy?

At present we are suffering the consequences of the very opposite - a slashing of the County Council's rights of way maintenance budget that is leaving walkers in frustration all over Suffolk as our paths succumb to the natural growth which, in the worst case, compel people to turn back and/or much more disturbingly, to escape from the impenetrable jungle of the footpath by taking to the nearest road.

Perhaps we should invite some of our Councillors to come along with us - first into the Suffolk countryside in June - and then to Germany?

Just an ordinary waymarker at a junction in the woods.



Obituary from Janice Cavell, Newmarket group

It is with great sadness that I have to report the passing of Sheila Rich after a long illness. She had been a member of the Newmarket Group for many years and is fondly remembered by everyone who had the pleasure of walking with her. Sheila was a bubbly and amusing companion and whenever she was on a walk there was always lots of laughing. She also loved her animals and Phil Prigg remembers her having everyone in stitches telling them stories about two ducks called Ronald and Donald. Sheila particularly enjoyed our evening walks and was often accompanied on these walks by her mother Joan.

Raie Wilman remembers Sheila as a happy go lucky person who always looked younger than her years. Raie recalls a holiday in 2002 as the picture here shows, Raie, Joan, Shelia and Dave Dare a narrow boat owner, were jumping on a peat bog while walking the canal paths from Whitchurch to Llangollen.

Our thoughts are with Joan and her family at this time.



Obituary from Helen Rowell, Stowmarket Group

I am sad to report the death of Molly Kershaw. She died in May, a week before her 99th birthday. She was one of the founder members of the Stowmarket Ramblers Group in 1974 and was still walking a little way with the group up until her 90's.

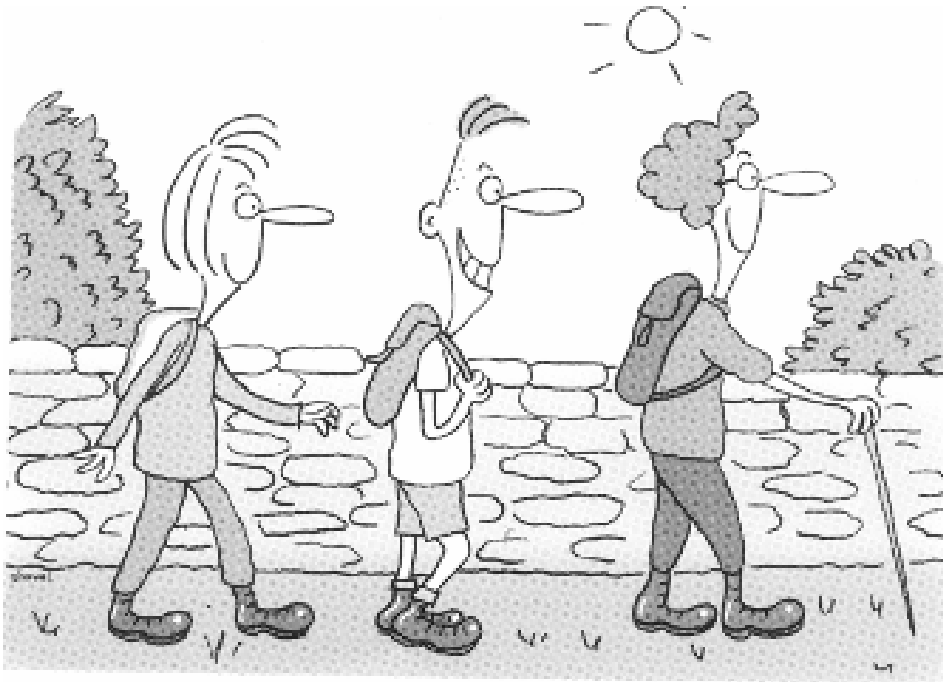
She had such a wealth of information about the countryside and would always know the names of the flowers. It was always a great pleasure to walk with her.

She introduced several of us to the group and I for one gained a lot of pleasure from being a member of the group, even though she took me to the first committee meeting when I joined and I ended up as secretary! (a job very easy to aquire).

Molly was a remarkable lady and did much for Needham Market, where she lived. I am sorry that so many of the new members did where not able to know her.

Helen Rowell

And Finally



The farmer allows you to cross this field for free.

The bull charges !!!!

Items for the Winter 2005 issue should be sent to the editor please by **31st Dec 2005**

Email to: cavell709@btinternet.com or post floppy disc or hard copy to:
Tim Cavell

The Maltings, Low Street, Bardwell, Bury St Edmunds. IP31 1AS