



**ramblers**  
at the heart of walking

# GLOUCESTERSHIRE AREA NEWS

February 2012

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**Area News** is issued three times a year in February, June and October. Items of news and suggestions or other features are always welcome.

**Deadline dates:** 6th January, 6th May and 6th September

## CHAIRMAN'S REPORT:

We are now into the New Year and we still have an Area. Indeed we can now look forward with some enthusiasm to the challenges, which face us, thanks to all those who stepped forward at the AGM to fill the vacancies and to those who spoke up in support. Also a big thank you to members who have taken on positions on group committees, to ensure that this vital part of our operations keeps going.

I have said it before but there is no job in our structure, which needs to be too onerous or take up too much time. Difficulties arise when one person is left covering for unfilled vacancies or taking on too many positions because nobody else will volunteer. One of our main objectives should now be to remedy these situations and look to reach the next round of AGM's with adequate cover in all positions and with volunteers coming forward to fill all vacancies.

The coming year will see many changes in Ramblers with a new CEO starting in February and a new chairman and treasurer for the BoT in April. However our main objectives remain as before, to increase membership, reduce costs, obtain more charitable income and to protect and improve the path network. The last item is of course taking on increasing significance with the changes for the PROW team at the County Council.

You can get some help towards meeting another of the objectives, and obtain funds for your group, from Ramblers Holidays. They have established 'The Walking Partnership'. Some of you may be aware of this arrangement and indeed, like South Cotswolds, some groups may have already signed up to it. Briefly, if a group supports walking in their area by organising group walks, encouraging people to get walking, helping to clear footpaths, providing equipment to help walkers, or some other contribution to walking in your area, you may be eligible to join the Walking Partnership and receive a contribution every time one of your members books a holiday with Ramblers Worldwide Holidays. Further information can be obtained from the website [www.thewalkingpartnership.org.uk](http://www.thewalkingpartnership.org.uk). If you want any help taking this forward please contact me.

I hope my brief report has given you something to think about and that we are all able to work together to increase the influence and presence of Ramblers in the county over the next 12 months.

*Richard Davis, Area Chairman*

## Area AGM: 3rd December 2011

Let's hope that this date marks the beginning of the upturn for Gloucestershire Area and the Ramblers as a whole, after a period of declining membership. We are back from the brink and looking forward to a great future!

I'm back as Area Secretary – for one year. I volunteered because it seemed no-one really knew what the job was and hence they were not going to volunteer. The Area Secretary is the lynchpin of the Area so it is an important role and crucial to the health and wellbeing of the Area.

Geoff Smithdale, Area Treasurer for 22 years, is back as Treasurer for one year also, but Sheila Constable, Footpath Secretary for Forest of Dean Group, has taken on the role of Assistant Treasurer in preparation to become Treasurer in December. So that's the really good news – and bravo to them both!

Coming back to Area Secretary, I should welcome expressions of interest from anyone who thinks they might like to know more about the job. I'm here to help and provide the support which a new person will need. It is an interesting job and a great opportunity! My email address is [mavis.rear@tesco.net](mailto:mavis.rear@tesco.net) – I look forward to receipt of your emails.

*Mavis Rear, Area Secretary*

## Area Publicity – in a few words...

Winchcombe Walking Festival. Our display boards will be at this growing event on 18-20th May 2012. Winchcombe is one of many towns signing up for 'Walkers are Welcome' usually due to local ramblers. Another member is Longborough near Stow on the Wold. The Echo carried our winter walks online – did anyone spot them? Events can be added to Ramblers main site too.

Don't forget to vote for the Forest in the Ramblers woodlands walks poll! Please visit: [http://www.facebook.com/ramblers#!/ramblers?sk=app\\_166353736780203](http://www.facebook.com/ramblers#!/ramblers?sk=app_166353736780203)

*Bernard Gill, Area Publicity*

# GLoucestershire AREA MID-WEEK WALKS

All walks usually start at 10am and are about 9-10 miles unless otherwise stated. Sorry, no dogs!

Map numbers: E = Explorer; OL = Outdoor Leisure; LR = Landranger.

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- Wed 7 Mar 10:00**      **10m**      **North of Bredon Hill**      **Geoff & Janet - 01531 650349 or 07933 737891 (walk morning)**  
Eckington Wharf Picnic Place (just south of Eckington Bridge on B4080) (E190/LR150) SO 922422 Walk River Avon, Strensham Lock, Woollas Hall, Banbury Stone, Gt. Comberton, Nafford Lock, Birlingham Church (spring flowers?). Picnic.
- Tue 13 Mar 10:00**      **10m**      **May Hill**      **Catherine - 01452 615382**  
Huntley Church; park in road signposted to Garden Centre beside churchyard. (OL14/LR162) SO 716196 Walk over May Hill summit, through Aston Ingham & Cliffords Mesne. Picnic.
- Wed 21 Mar 10:00**      **12m**      **Hazleton**      **Roy - 01242 245488 or 07766 413176 (walk morning)**  
Parking just off A40 north of Hampnett (OL45/LR163) SP 097164 Walk Hazleton, Turkdean, Cold Aston, Notgrove, Salperton Park, Hazleton Grove. Picnic.
- Wed 28 Mar 10:00**      **10m**      **Minchinhampton Fig 8**      **Hazel - 01242 254105 or 07884 094365 (walk morning)**  
Bell Lane CP, Minchinhampton (E168/LR162) SO 872009 Walk (am) Cherington, Avening; (pm) Brimscombe, Chalford Bottom, Hyde. Picnic, pub or café in Minchinhampton.
- Wed 4 Apr 10:00**      **10m**      **Leckhampton & Coberley**      **Derek - 01242 678655 or 07710 339297 (walk morning)**  
Brownstones Quarry CP, Hartley Road Leckhampton (E179/LR163) SO 951179 Walk Leckhampton Hill, Seven Springs, Coberley. Picnic.
- Wed 11 Apr 10:00**      **9.3m**      **Guiting Power**      **Peter - 01242 524575**  
Lay-by at Lower Harford X-roads (OL45/LR163) SP 129229 Walk Huntsman's Quarry, Guiting Power (pub lunch), Aylworth.
- Tue 17 Apr 10:00**      **10m**      **Malverns**      **Catherine - 01452 615382**  
West of England CP (£3.00) on right of B4232. (E190/LR150) SO 765449 Circumnavigation of Worcestershire Beacon; Beacon Viewpoint passing close to St Anne's Well and along the side of the hill to pond, passing Mathon lodge to Cockshot Hill. Picnic.
- Wed 25 Apr 10:00**      **10m**      **Newnham**      **Shirley - 01242 524031**  
Station road, Newnham, alongside playing field (OL14/LR162) SO 690120 Walk Dean Hall, Blaize Bailey, Lower Soudley (lunch at Dean Heritage Centre café or picnic), Bullo.
- Tue 1 May 10:00**      **9.5m**      **Cranham**      **Susanne - 01453 757212**  
Park by side of common, near school. (E179/LR162) SO 896125 Walk Saltridge Wood, Foston's Ash, Whiteway, Sheepscombe, Picnic.
- Wed 9 May 10:00**      **10m**      **Winchcombe**      **David - 07787 710187**  
Back Lane CP Winchcombe (OL45/LR160) SP 024284 Walk viewing the mosaics at both Spoonley and Wadfield Roman Villas, then Waterhatch Mill and Belas Knap, Picnic.
- Wed 16 May 10:30**      **10m**      **The Blorenge**      **Derek - 01242 678655 or 07710 339297 (walk morning)**  
Llanfoist CP on B4246 half-mile off Heads of the Valleys road (OL13/LR161) SO 286133 Energetic. Starts with long ascent of The Blorenge, reaching the Punch Bowl, then Fox Hunter and Keeper's Pond. Return along lanes and canal path. Picnic.
- NOTE LATER START.**
- Wed 23 May 10:00**      **10m**      **Painswick Circle**      **Heather - 01242 245070 or 07742 050385 (walk morning)**  
Park on side of unfenced road that crosses golf course 400m SSW of Painswick Beacon (E179/LR162) SO 867117 A circle around Painswick; to the Edge and the (valley) bottom to (pass) Paradise. Picnic.
- Tue 29 May 10:00**      **10m**      **Rodmarton**      **Diana - 01242 578777 or 07528 697023 (walk morning)**  
Park considerably in Rodmarton village & meet by church. (E168/LR163) ST 943981 Walk Hazleton Fox Covert, Yew Tree Plantation, Avening Court, Ridge's Farm, Tetbury Common, Ashley, Culkerton, Picnic.
- Wed 6 Jun 10:00**      **10m**      **Adlestrop**      **Jane - 01242 235214 or 07790 412223 (walk morning)**  
Adlestrop Village Hall CP (OL45/LR163) SP 242272 Walk Evenlode, Little Compton, Chastleton. Picnic.
- Wed 13 Jun 10:00**      **12m**      **Stow**      **Roy - 01242 245488 or 07766 413176 (walk morning)**  
Public CP at Tesco's, Stow (OL45/LR163) SP 191262 Walk Stow Well, Broadwell, Lower Oddington, Bledington, Oxfordshire Way, Icomb, Mangersbury. Picnic.
- Wed 20 Jun 10:00**      **10m**      **Coaley Peak**      **Martin - 01249 720809**  
Coaley Peak CP (E168/LR163) SO 795014 Walk Woodchester Park, Selsley Common, The Stanleys, Gipsy Lane. Picnic.
- Wed 27 Jun 10:00**      **12m**      **Symonds Yat Plus**      **Andy - 01453 885498**  
Speculation CP (1 mile on left off B4234 Lydney road, south of crossroads with A4136 Monmouth road) (OL14/LR162) SO 613134 Walk Symonds Yat, Lydbrook, Pludds. Picnic.
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**LEADERS** - Offers of walks for the next programme (July to October 2012) are requested as soon as possible.

New leaders are particularly welcome!

Please contact Geoff Smithdale (Tel: 01531 650349) email: [gsmithdale@freeukisp.co.uk](mailto:gsmithdale@freeukisp.co.uk)

Walks details required by 30th April 2012, please.

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**REMINDER - GRWalks** lists all the led walks from the seven geographical Gloucestershire groups, the Gloucestershire Walking Group (for 20s 30s & 40s) and the Area Walks in convenient date order. See [www.gloucestershirearearamblers.org.uk](http://www.gloucestershirearearamblers.org.uk)

**NO COMPUTER?** Send one or more 9x6 inch SAEs to editor Mike Garner (GRWalks), Southcot, The Headlands, Stroud GL5 5PS.

## GROUP ACTIVITY REPORTS

**CIRENCESTER:** The Group have been very active during the winter with a varied programme of walks, ranging from 5 to 11 miles all around the Cotwolds and further afield into Wiltshire, Worcestershire and Oxfordshire. Highlights included a Christmas themed walk on 11th December when we made quite a colourful spectacle parading through the countryside around Sherston with Tinsel clad walking poles and Singing Santa hats ! This was followed by an excellent Christmas lunch on 18th December at Ingelside House in Cirencester, which was attended by 40 members, 20 of whom took part in a short walk in the countryside around Cirencester beforehand.

We started the New Year with our usual 1st January walk in the Northleach area, after which some members and their visitors had lunch in the Sherbourne Arms. Our annual 'Start of the Year' walk on 8th January took place on a beautiful sunny day with a record 30 members in attendance. Steve and Katherine ran their usual lively quiz in January which was enjoyed by all.

Membership continues to increase in small numbers and we have a good coverage of walks in our local paper. The AGM on 26th October 2011 was well attended and we hosted the Area AGM at Chedworth Village Hall on 3rd December.

We have plenty to look forward to in 2012 with a fully booked Devon walking weekend in March and an 'Away Day' in May with a 15 mile walk in Chepstow. The annual Strawberry Tea in June has also been finalised. International Secretary, Stuart Dyer, is planning an 8 day trip to Itzehoe in Germany in 2012 over the August Bank Holiday.

*Pat Beckley, Group Secretary/Publicity*



Cirencester Group on a Christmas themed walk

**GWG:** This year the GWG has managed to schedule walks on most Sundays, as well as Thursday evenings during the summer – thanks to all those who volunteered to lead walks. We have also enjoyed weekends away to Pembrokeshire, the Peak District and Shropshire, as well as Snowdon, where our hardy members made the ascent despite a summer blizzard ! On the social side, we continue to thrive, with activities including ceilidhs, pub quizzes and canoeing.

Our AGM in November saw some new members voted onto the committee, enabling Catherine and Rodney to step down as Chair and Treasurer – many thanks to them both for their hard work for the group over the years.

Our Christmas meal this year was, as usual, very well-attended and a chance for our members to change out of walking boots and into their glad-rags – thanks to Andy for organising. Thanks go to Catherine for organising our now-traditional New Year weekend, this time in Bath, where we saw in 2012 with Greek food, fireworks and some of the muddiest walks we can remember ! We look forward to another packed programme in 2012 and welcome suggestions for future activities – contact us via [www.gwg.org.uk](http://www.gwg.org.uk).

*Geoff Cochran, Chairman*

**FOREST OF DEAN:** The Forest of Dean Group continues to offer a wide variety of walks, we have eight walks most months except for February 2012 when we have nine ! All easy to find on our new website [www.fodramblers.org.uk](http://www.fodramblers.org.uk). We had an average of 22 people on each walk in the winter programme so far. The highest number on a single walk was 42. This walk was most enjoyable and interesting not to mention varied, taking the group from Ledbury towards the Malverns, through Eastnor Park where we had lunch by the pond and back through Coneygree Woods.

The length of walks varies from 4½ miles, mainly 'Winter Walks' in the Forest of Dean, up to a length of 12 miles, which was one of the Cotswold Way circular walks. The group is steadily working its way along the Cotswold Way but using one day circular walks rather than linear. The Cotswold Way has provided the group with stunning views and plenty of variety as well as a few challenges.

Unlike last year, on the whole the weather has been mild and fairly dry. A recent walk from Llangrove, though Lewston to Welsh Newton, was enhanced by a hard frost, mist hanging in the Wye Valley and the sun, all providing a changing, dazzling display and enhancing the views.

The group has also been on the starting blocks and had its first Olympic event with 31 people participating. It was a short walk round the Sculpture Trail in the Forest of Dean. Prior to the walk everyone entered a 'guess the timing competition' and at three points round the trail, a bronze medal, a silver medal and a gold medal were presented to the person closest to the correct time. It made for hilarious discussions along the way !

We are planning another quiz night at a forest hostelry in the near future, please watch the website for further details.

*June Burden, Group Secretary*

**MID-GLOS:** Walking The Gower Peninsula. Between 11th and 14th September, 24 members attended our Weekend Walking Spectacular in the Gower, staying at The Oxwich Bay Hotel, organised by Mike and Margaret, (fourth and fifth from the left) and our wonderful Chairman, Anne (eighth from the right). Walk leaders were Mike, Geoff and Des for the three days. Day one, Mike and Margaret led; the weather could have been a little bit kinder to us as it did blow up a bit! (see photos on our website). Day two was a vast improvement and Geoff led a terrific walk along the coast towards Rossilli. Steph and I led the walks on day three which was sunny and calm and the group enjoyed a figure-of-eight day out in the Rossilli Beach area. Shorter, more leisurely walks were led by Anne on days one and two which were much appreciated.

Christmas Dinner: The group joined with the Cotswold Club to host a very successful event at the Brickhampton Court Golf Complex. Many thanks to Vivien for her efforts on the group's behalf.

25th Anniversary AGM: Sunday 6th November saw us celebrating 25 years of The Mid Glos Group. The sun shone and we enjoyed a super walk led by Vivien, followed by the AGM. Cakes and coffee followed in the Swindon Village Hall – plus a free raffle where lots of great prizes were distributed.

*Des Smyth, Chairman*



Mid-Glos Group at Rossilli

## GROUP ACTIVITY REPORTS cont/d...

**NORTH COTSWOLD:** 2011 was a busy year for the Group. We published a new edition of the 'North Cotswold Diamond Way' and are virtually ready to press the 'print' button on a revision of The Diamond Way as 30 Sparkling Walks. The proceeds from the sales of these guidebooks have been used to provide financial support to PROW for improvements in the Diamond Way footpaths.

Our walks programme continued in the same format of 2 walks per month with a high proportion of 'Figures of 8' to allow maximum flexibility. In general, attendance on walks during 2011 has increased. The winter programme has focussed on 'local' walks mainly in our own region, but Group members enjoy venturing 'abroad' to explore non-Cotswold landscapes.

Our last walk of 2011 on 18th December took us on a Diamond Way 'Sparkling Walk' around Blockley. A warm glass of mulled wine and festive cheer awaited the hardy band of 15 walkers and provided our non-walking Chairman with a chance to catch up with Group members before Christmas.

This year our linear walk (with minibus support) will take us from Kemble to Abingdon on the Thames Path. We are very fortunate to be able to use the local 16-seater Villager bus and to have a Group member, David Bell, able to drive it for us. We are assured by our leader that the route starts at an altitude of 100 metres and finishes at 50 metres – so it is downhill all the way! We also hope that the route finding is easier than it was last year on the Wysis Way.

*Sue Salmon, Group Secretary*



The author, Liz Bell, with a copy of the new edition of the Diamond Way.

**GLOUCESTER:** Long Distance Paths – A couple of years ago a number of group members completed the South West Coastal Path and having had a rest for a year we got itchy feet again. We decided to walk one of the National Trails which was supported by a baggage carrier and chose St Cuthbert's Way from Melrose to Lindisfarne. It's a great feeling each morning to leave the B & B in a village by the trail side and walk into the 'unknown' to the next B & B. Different volunteers led each of the days walk which gave everyone a shared experience. It's lovely quiet countryside and the weather was dry for most of the journey except for paddling across to Lindisfarne just after the tide went out mostly in bare feet. Having a rest this year but watch this space!!

*David Sanderson, Group Secretary*

**SOUTH COTSWOLD:** In October 2011 we began our new Monday 'Start the Week Walks'. These are held every fortnight and are strictly never more than 4 miles in length. ALL WELCOME and membership not necessary for your first three walks. This series of short (no more than 4 miles), easy paced sociable walks are suitable for:

1. Those who are new to Ramblers and wish to build up their confidence and fitness;
2. Those who have been on Health Walks who want to move on to slightly longer walks;
3. Existing members for whom our normal walks programme is becoming too strenuous;
4. Anyone who wants an amble rather than a ramble, stopping to admire the countryside, walking and talking, and possibly finishing up with a half of shandy or perhaps even a light lunch.

There were 45 walks in our last programme with attendances of almost 40 at times, but averaged 20–25. The Autumn holiday at Betws-y-Coed in September was enjoyed by 21 members, whilst our Group Christmas Lunch, held at Minchinhampton Golf Club, was attended by 40 people and was thoroughly enjoyed by all!

The Group have purchased 18 Kissing Gates over the last 4 years and so far 15 of these have been installed. The group have cleared several blocked paths and reported a number of faulty stiles/gates to PROW, with some success in having new stiles installed.

The Group website has received 93,436 hits in the last 10 years and has visitors from 60 countries since February 2010. The Group is continuing to recruit new members and some of these are now leading walks.

*Bernard Smith, Group Secretary*

\* Apologies on this occasion – no report available for Cleeve group.

## JOURNEY'S END ??

Not for everyone, but it can be for anyone who has difficulty with stiles like this one (see photo right). The lower step is broken and could be loose. The upper step is narrow, perhaps too high and there is no hand rail to hang onto whilst negotiating this rural rustic creation which is masquerading as a stile.

Not a problem for the fit and agile but for many older people who love to walk in the country it could be journey's end.

If you find one like this – or more in need of some tender loving care – what do you do about it? You could climb over and leave it for someone else to report it but as a Rambler, please do your bit and report it to one or more of the following: your Group Secretary, RA Central Office ([www.ramblers.org.uk](http://www.ramblers.org.uk)) and send either an email or fill in the footpath report form) and / or report by letter or email to Public Rights of Way Dept, Shire Hall, Gloucester.

Please give as precise a location as you can, ideally a grid reference and better still, email a photograph of the problem to Shire Hall.

**Unreported problems do not get solved. Please be vigilant.  
Don't leave it someone else. Report it!**

*Mavis Rear, Area Secretary*

