



East Cheshire Ramblers Newsletter

Winter 2011/12

Editorial

Ralph
Atherton

I assume (or hope!) that most of you are reading this on our website as only one sixth of East Cheshire Rambler households opted, via the questionnaire sent out with the last newsletter, to continue to receive it by post. As Sandra Edwards recognised last time “not everyone has convenient access to a computer” and I know that a few of you who do, strongly prefer to receive the newsletter (and walks programme) by post. So please believe me when I say, that whilst thanking the five sixths for their help, I fully respect and have no argument with the positions of the one-sixth. We need you all.

Sadly, for budgetary reasons, the posted version of the newsletter has to be limited to eight pages. I have given priority in these pages to items likely to be of interest to all members whether they walk with us or not, namely the AGM and new committee members, footpath matters, and safety on the hills. I draw the attention of all of you who walk on the moors, especially if you do so alone (like me), to Ian Mabon’s sobering article on page 7 - we don’t want any of us to suffer that awful fate.

I have also devoted page 8 to a tribute to Joyce Blanchard, whose untimely death has come as a shock to many of us. Many readers who do not walk with us and did not know her, will have indirectly benefited from her good work for the club over many years.

The website (www.ramblerseastcheshire.org.uk) extended version of this newsletter includes Trips ‘n’ Tramps part 2 (coach trip to Church Stretton and weekend in Malham), the visit of a large party of Canadian walkers to the club, the Bollington Walking Festival, and our plans for the 80th Anniversary of the Kinder Mass Trespass.

I am pleased to see that the Thursday walks, started in January 2011, are proving popular (thanks to Lynda Shaw for her hard work), so our club has walks on 4 days every week - Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Saturday (or occasionally Sunday) - usually totalling 7 walks each week (and 8 during the summer evening walk period). We are fortunate to have so many walk leaders but new ones are always required, so please do volunteer if you can. Most leaders now post their walk details on the website.



Malcolm photographed his walkers below Mellor church on this beautiful November day (compare with the June day on page 6!)

Our annual day was fine and clear for the morning walk led once again by Malcolm Combey. So fast was his pace that there was time for an extra loop before returning to Mellor for the talk and slideshow. Angela Hilton spoke to us on behalf of the Campaign for National Parks, reminding us of the history of the Parks and showing slides of stunning scenery from almost all of them.

The meeting was well attended and the members generously supported the thanks given to the many members who spend time and energy organising our Group activities. Retirees included Peter Cummins after long service on footpaths and organising the Inspectors, Keith Hartley from many roles over the years most recently membership and recruitment, our chairman Sandra Edwards who has enthused us all for the last three years, Graham Walker who was a stalwart of both footpaths and the main committees, and myself as secretary. Everyone welcomed David Gylee as our new Chairman, David Bates as secretary, and Jane Gay, Mike Bull and Alan Catherall who joined the committee. They can be sure of all our good wishes and wholehearted support.

The meeting was well attended and the members generously supported the thanks given to the many members



The new committee photographed by Ian Mabon.

From L to R: Alan Catherall, Grenham Ireland (footpaths secretary), Brian Griffiths (membership secretary), Mike Bull, Ken Hobbs (treasurer), David Gylee (chairman), Jane Gay, David Bates (secretary).

Our new secretary David Bates introduced himself, saying that he was a recently-retired business analyst who joined the Ramblers only 18 months ago, and ECR as recently as May this year. In this short time he has already been helping with the footpath work on Alderley Edge where he also works one day a week as a volunteer for the National Trust.

The other new members of the Committee, Alan Catherall, Jane Gay and Mike Bull are well known members of ECR who have already given much service to the club in various ways such as serving on the footpath committee, compiling walks programmes, organising weekends and mid-weeks away, and leading walks.

Sandra Edwards gives us her thoughts on her 3-year chairmanship on page 9. It is an important “read”, and I regret not being able to fit it into the first eight pages. An editor’s role is sometimes difficult.

Your new chairman

David
Gylee

Following early retirement 6 years ago I joined the Ramblers. This was something that I had been intending to do for some time but had somehow never found time during my busy work and family life. I have never regretted the decision. With some trepidation I went on my first (long) walk, wondering if I could keep up and last the distance. I was delighted to discover a varied and interesting group of fellow ramblers and my fears of keeping up and lasting the distance were unfounded; although on one or two subsequent occasions I have been physically challenged. Both Win Hill and Kinder are two climbs that spring to mind.

So, after 6 years membership and with Ian Black’s request for “fresh blood” I thought that I could offer something of my IT management experience to the ECR committee. A casual comment in response to a question one day on a long walk has resulted in me becoming Chairman. I am honoured to follow such a long, distinguished and illustrious line of previous Chairmen, adding my own thanks particularly to our previous Chairman, Sandra Edwards, for all of her hard work in moving the group onwards.

My home is in Bollington with my wife Shirley (not a member of ECR). Shirley, however, is keen on the dining and social aspect of the group, so you will no doubt meet her at one of the many meals on offer.

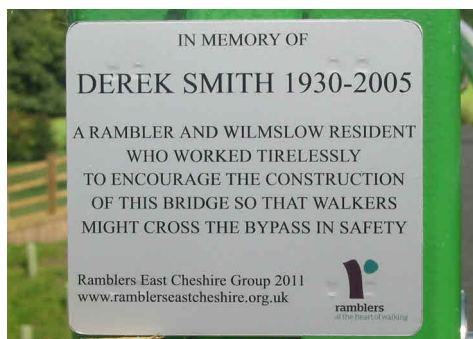
Having walked with a number of other groups of Ramblers, I am particularly impressed by the organisation of ECR, and by the number and wide variety of different walks on offer. Being a member I have certainly visited some wonderful places that I would otherwise not have had the privilege to see. I would certainly like this variety to continue and to be enhanced if at all possible, taking in more members of all ages.

Typically I walk mid-week on Wednesdays, covering both long and medium walks, although there have been other days and occasions when I have been out and about. I will be endeavouring to broaden my contact with more ECR members in order to listen to your wishes in making this excellent group even better.

I would like to start by expressing the sadness the whole Footpath Committee felt that Joyce Blanchard is no longer with us. She had been a member of the Committee for many years and indeed the only female member. She always provided us with good advice and had willingly undertaken work on behalf of the Committee as well being a respected walk leader and companion.

I am very grateful to all our inspectors who have again completed a 100% survey of the over 1200 paths in our area. Peter Cummins, who coordinated the inspectors' work on behalf of the Committee, is also a major factor in this achievement. We are sorry he is now stepping down from this role after doing such a great job for many years. Overall only 4.7% of our paths were reported as 'obstructed', a similar figure to last year, and most of these can actually be walked. The detailed survey data obtained from the inspections is being entered into the survey database by Committee members via a new interface which Roger Fielding has been developing. This data will be used to press the Cheshire East Council Public Rights of Way (PROW) Unit for action on new problem paths. In July, we visited the PROW Unit at their new offices in Crewe, raised the problems with 20 existing paths and got satisfactory solutions for at least some of them.

Considerable efforts have been expended by committee members and inspectors to try and ensure that remaining problems with footpaths affected by the Alderley Edge bypass were addressed. Indeed, many issues were resolved. Work on the access to the new footbridge across the Alderley Edge bypass was completed and this allowed two memorial plaques in memory of Derek Smith, who campaigned for the footbridge, to be officially unveiled by his family on Friday 14 October. This event was covered by the local press as member Roger Norton issued a press release which included these two



photographs taken by him. The right-hand photograph shows our then chairman Sandra Edwards (*centre*) with Derek's widow Rosemary (*2nd left*) and their two sons. (*Editor: In the Winter 2010/11 Newsletter I discussed the Alderley Edge By-Pass Event organised by Roger Norton.*)

Our waymarking improvement project in Alderley Edge woodland, jointly with the National Trust, was finally begun recently. Roger Norton, Ken Hobbs, Ian Black and David Bates started to install new waymarking posts and, when complete, this will eventually make it easier for walkers to navigate through the woodland by identifying public footpaths from the many informal paths with which they are currently entwined. A number of other projects, of a more challenging nature, are being discussed with the PROW Unit for which estimates will be obtained from contractors. Several of these projects were suggested by Joyce and so we are keen to complete them in her memory and I'm grateful to the Main Committee for earmarking funds to be spent on future footpath improvements projects.



Photograph by Roger Norton, (included in a press release) showing Ken Hobbs (left) and Ian Black with the first of 17 Alderley Edge waymarkers.

Trips 'n' Tramps (part 1)

Bob's New Stile (by June Mabon)

When Bob Bland realised that a new stile was needed on a footpath he was walking, he didn't waste time in getting it built and installed. The fact that the footpath was miles from our ECG heartland and in another country was not a problem. It all began when Bob was reconnoitring his short walk for the ECG summer 2011 Bala Coach Trip. As he climbed up to a vantage point overlooking Lake Bala, he noticed a line of fence posts marching across the line of the path. "Fence posts today; fence tomorrow" he thought and alerted the coach trip organiser June Mabon to a possible threat to the coach trip's walks programme. A few weeks later, sure enough, a strong fence topped with barbed wire very effectively barred the way along the footpath. Time for action, coach trip day was drawing nigh. The Snowdonia National Park Rangers were informed, photographs and grid references of the fence were sent together with a request for help. Although the actual site of the obstructing fence was not within the NP boundary, the NP Rangers worked on behalf of the local Gwynedd Council on countryside maintenance in that area. Just for good measure, the local Ramblers Group were informed as were Gwynedd Council Rights of Way Department and Lake Bala Tourist Information Office – soon it seemed as if the whole of North Wales was on the job. Within 24 hours of learning about the problem, the NP Rangers had made a site visit, spoken to the landowner, commissioned a step-over stile to be built and reported back to ECG. A week elapsed and another email arrived from the NP Rangers with a picture of the new stile *in situ*. A

magnificent piece of work, complete with yellow topped tall hand-hold pole and yellow waymarkers. The rest as they say is history. On coach trip day (25 June) Bob led his group of walkers up to the view point above Lake Bala and crossed the new stile. Photographs were taken with Bob proudly positioned on “his” stile. By the time you read this many hundreds of walkers will have passed over that stile, little knowing they have Bob Bland, East Cheshire Ramblers and a very efficient team of Snowdonia



National Park Rangers to thank for keeping open Public Right of Way 02 Llangower.

(Editor: Our thanks to June Mabon for organising this coach trip which we all enjoyed despite the less than clement weather; to walk leaders Bob Bland, Malcolm Combey and Keith Bridgett; and to Irene Walsh who dealt with the bookings.)

Incident Training Course **Roger Norton**

East Cheshire joined forces with the Congleton group in September for an Incident Training Course at the Hollowford Centre in Castleton which enabled participants to gain practical advice of dealing with an accident, including first aid, what equipment to carry and how best to manage in an emergency.



Considering that one quarter of the incidents attended by Buxton Mountain Rescue Team last year involved organised walking groups, there is no doubt that the course - the second of its kind to be organised by ECR secretary Ian Black - was a timely and valuable experience for everyone taking part.

Roger's photograph shows two "casualties" being treated as other trainees pay close attention.

Trapped in a Bog

Ian
Mabon

The recent tragic death of an experienced rambler trapped in a bog, alone on Saddle Fell (Trough of Bowland) for a week in September, prompted me to pen this report.

(Editor: Google "trapped in bog bowland" for the horrifying details, where you will also see that Bowland Mountain Rescue saved a walker sunk in to his thighs on the same moor in June.)

I first started thinking about how to get oneself out of a bog after June got trapped in one on Brown Knoll while doing a recce. She was lucky as a couple passing called out to her and were able to help her out of the mire.

First why is a bog (or quicksand) so dangerous? Scientists call it a two phase medium. It is mixed liquid and solid, and it can be stable under static conditions but motion can change this to an unstable state.

So if you are trapped in a bog up to your knees what do you do?

1. Stop struggling as movement will only sink you further into the mire.
2. Use your whistle to call for help. The international distress signal is 6 blasts of the whistle. The reply is 3 blasts. *(You do have a whistle handy don't you?)* If you get a reply you are in luck. Wait a few minutes and give 6 blasts again. You want to guide your expected rescuers to you and until they can see you they only have the sound to guide them.
3. If you have no success from the whistle, then you have to try and extricate yourself.
4. Remove your rucksack and put it close by you. Lie down on your back (**not** on your rucksack) on the peat. Spreading the load in this way will minimise the chance of sinking in. You can still use the whistle to call for help so keep it handy.
5. Move one leg only to try to loosen it. Do it with your stronger leg. Gradually try to ease it out of the bog.
6. Having got one leg out, lay it flat on the surface and try to extricate the other leg in the same way.
7. I assume you are now free of the bog but are still lying on the surface. Roll over until you reach sound ground when you can stand up.
8. You can now make your way back, hoping not to meet anyone you want to impress! Any other company would be most welcome! You will realise that appearance is the least of your worries, and if you feel you could not subject yourself to the described process, then **do not** go out on your own.

One final thought, you did tell someone where you were going didn't you?

Joyce Blanchard

Ralph
Atherton

Margaret and I were in the Isles of Scilly when we received a mobile call from Peter and Georgie Everson to tell us of Joyce's sudden and unexpected death on 12 July. We had known her since we joined ECR in February 1988, over 23 years ago. Many of you will have known her for much longer as she joined ECR soon after its formation in 1973. Joyce was the kindest, most conscientious, unselfish hard-working person you could know, and always with a ready smile and welcome. Not only was she a tireless worker for our group as chairman, treasurer (at least twice), footpath committee member, trip organiser, walk leader (several every year); but she was always ready to help members and their families with advice of all kinds (I speak from personal experience). Indeed, after her retirement from the Inland Revenue she gave freely of her time to the Citizens' Advice Bureau, and so helped innumerable people.

Joyce organised a wonderful 60th birthday tea for 60 of us at Sutton Hall on 17 April 1999, to follow her walk which started from Teggs Nose in a blizzard that lasted five hours. I was soaked to the skin. I threw my Goretex away, went to Base Camp and asked for new waterproofs stipulating that they should be better than Goretex. Paramo was recommended and that was what I bought - I am still wearing the same Paramo jacket and trousers. Each time I wear them, I am reminded of Joyce. She will be sadly missed by all of us who knew her. It still seems strange on long walks to have no Joyce.

I have been sent many recent photographs of Joyce and have chosen two of them for this Newsletter as being illustrative of her cheerful disposition and her love of the hills. That on the left was taken by Alan Catherall at Elterwater; that on the right by Geoff Huddart was taken at Helm Crag.



Looking back over the last three years as your Chairman, a few general thoughts come to mind. This is certainly a job which gives you the full picture of what we do.

And what a lot we do! Our walks are at the heart of it all and our regular programme is truly impressive. We have added Thursday medium walks to our programme this year, and yes, leaders have come forward to support it. Long walkers have been generous in this regard and it is much appreciated by we medium walkers.

Our recruitment drive of 2010 significantly increased our membership at a time of national decline in the Ramblers. But it did involve a lot of work on the part of a few stalwart volunteers, such as taking our fine photo exhibition around the local libraries.

That extra burden can only be maintained for a limited period. Still, new blood is essential for us even to maintain our walks, as inevitably some people are hanging up their boots. So we have thought a lot this year about encouraging new leaders, mentoring, training and supporting people who are prepared to take on this responsibility. So look out for new leaders on your walks and give them a warm thank you!

The social events and the trips are great back up to our walks. The trips give variety to our regular Peak District walks but they do take extra time in receiving and organisation, which stretches us. I assure you that it's not always easy to find volunteers to take this on.

The social events such as meals and slide shows are ever popular and are easier to organise. We have plenty of pubs and restaurants to choose from and we can usually negotiate a really good deal for a group too. And the slide shows are ever popular, giving us a view of other people's expeditions, and catching up with members that we haven't seen for a while. It seems to me that these are the things that make us feel like a club.

One area of our activities that I had known little about before, was the work of our Footpath Committee. It was good to learn about this committed band of quiet workers who spend their time dealing with footpath problems and issues so that the rest of us don't have to! For me they are at the core of what makes the Ramblers special and different from other walking groups. We have a wonderful record of our Footpath inspections in East Cheshire and that is really something to be proud of.

How we deliver information about our walks is currently occupying the Committee's attention and that is because we are a forward looking Group always seeking to improve the way we do things. We also have the considerable advantage of a top class website which is a continual encouragement to us. But for me our most important characteristic is described on the home page of our website, that above all we are a friendly and welcoming group of walkers.

Trips 'n' Tramps (part 2)

Weekend away in Malham 15-16 October (by Jane Collocrick)

Saturday dawned as a still and cloudless day with a brilliant blue sky. Our weekend organisers Jane and Frank Gay led the short and medium walks themselves, and Sue Munslow led the long walk, all three groups starting from the Information Centre in the sleepy village of Malham in the midst of the lovely Yorkshire countryside. The first stop was at the waterfall at Janet's Foss in a leafy dell and then on to admire the more magnificent waterfall at Gordale Scar and the surrounding lofty crags. One or two intrepid walkers were tempted to climb up the gorge, but were quickly dissuaded by the fact they were not insured!

The walk now took us upwards passing the remains of a medieval village, until we reached the impressive limestone pavements above Malham Cove with its clints and grykes eroded and sculptured at the end of the ice age by the powerful river and waterfall passing over it. Here we discussed the geological and geographical evidence of such a phenomenon and our leader Jane proved to be a fount of knowledge!

The next part of our travels took us to Water Sinks where the babbling brook suddenly disappears beneath the limestone to reappear several miles down the Aire valley. Here, the medium walkers continued their ascent to 1686 feet heading to Langscar Gate and Nappa Cross before descending by Pikedaw Hill, while the long walkers ascended to 2054 feet and skirted Malham Tarn before completing their 13-mile hike.

The route for all groups then took us back to Malham via the magnificent Malham Cove with its majestic curved rock face rising sheer to 260 feet above the valley.

Back in Malham the local pubs and tea-rooms were very welcoming after a memorable day. Later we all joined together to enjoy a meal at The Lister Arms.



Photographs by Ken Edwards of members on Malham Cove foot-bridge and of Malham Cove itself.

On Sunday, Malcolm Combey, Ken Mayer and Gwen Sproston led the short, medium and long walks. Malcolm's short walk of 7 miles headed south down the Aire valley

to Kirkby Malham where we visited the church and were invited to join the parishioners for a cup of coffee. After lunch in the picturesque village of Airton we had a quick stop at the Quaker Meeting House before walking back to Malham along the muddy but attractive River Aire.

The 9-mile medium walk started from Gargrave and followed the Pennine Way to Airton and returned along the Leeds-Liverpool Canal. The long walkers headed north crossing Ewe Moor and the side of Kirkby Fell to Scaleber Force and back via Crake Moor and Kirkby Malham.

Everyone agreed it had been a most successful and interesting weekend, thanks to the organisers Frank and Jane Gay and the walk leaders.

Coach trip to Church Stretton Sat 20 August (by Ralph Atherton)

This trip was ably organised by Roger Norton and included a 7-mile walk on Long Mynd led by Mike Bull, a 9-mile walk on Caer Caradoc and visiting the charming village of All Stretton led by Lynda Shaw and Roger's own "head banger heaven" (to use his own words!) taking in Ragleth Hill, the sides of Hazler and Helmith Hills and culminating in a final assault on Caer Caradoc. Non-walkers took advantage of a free (with bus pass) minibus tour of the hills followed by a self-guided stroll around the town for which Roger provided the routes. Although rain clouds loomed quite near, the weather was kind. An excellent trip ended in the various tea-rooms of Church Stretton, which were very good - except for the one visited by your editor and his wife!



Photographs by June Mabon of the long walkers with their leader Roger Norton on Caer Caradoc



Photograph by Ralph Atherton of some of the medium walkers descending Caer Caradoc led by Lynda Shaw.

Canadian Capers

Roger
Norton

Members of a Canadian walking club were keen to examine the charms of traditional English pubs during six days of walks in the Lake District and Peak District National Parks in September which were organised by Roger Norton following a chance encounter with one of their number on an ECR walk in Cheshire 12 months previously.

Although he initially understood that a score of so members of the Esso Annuitants' Hiking Club in Calgary might take part, as the months went by the number continued to escalate and ultimately 81 people made the trip, including a small percentage of non-walking partners.

As a result, four walks of varying distances and degrees of difficulty had to be arranged in each National Park each day to suit different levels of ability - or 24 walks in total!

"I have to admit that with such a large group it was a huge responsibility," he said. "Fortunately, I was able to call on the assistance of other East Cheshire members as leaders and backmarkers, as well as members of the High Fells Walking Club in the Lake District, and all went well." *(Editor: Although some horrendous weather in the Lake District caused Roger a few logistical problems and headaches!)*

The Canadians were welcomed to the Peak District by ECR Chairman Sandra Edwards, who is pictured here with Roger and a party of medium walkers outside a pub near Cromford. Other locations in the Peaks included Castleton, Eyam, Bakewell, Ashford-in-the-Water and Chatsworth.



The visitors went on to spend three days in the Cotswolds and two days sightseeing in London before flying back to Calgary.

"The Canadians hope it might be the start of a long term relationship with the East Cheshires, possibly leading to a trip to the Canadian Rocky Mountains as time goes on," Roger added.

2nd Bollington Walking Festival

Sandra
Edwards

We knew that the first Bollington Walking Festival was a success partly by the number of people who said at the time, “I hope you will have another one next year”!

So we agreed to put on another one this October, but were also very clear that another 2 week Festival was too demanding for the volunteers who organise it to repeat. So this October, instead of 32 walks in 2 weeks, we crammed 30 walks into the 1 week and two weekends of half term. This worked very well, providing an intense week of walks with a choice of three walks of different lengths and types most days and with a more concentrated Festival feel as well. (*editor: Phew! less demanding?*)

We haven't yet collated all the walk numbers from all the contributing organisations, but it is already clear that the majority of walks were as well or better attended than last year's. Most ECR led walks attracted between 25 and 30 walkers. We recognised walkers who had enjoyed last year's walks and returned, often from some distance, to walk with us again.

One man had found the Festival on the Peak District website and come up from Sussex to spend a week's holiday walking with us every day. Festivals do attract people who would not otherwise have ever heard of a small place like Bollington.

It is certainly easier to work from a previous plan. Our attractive brochure was once again provided in the same format by Cheshire East Council, with links to their website and our own. Similar social events took in Bollington during the week, such as the Ceilidh, Pub Quizzes, and this time a very successful Fashion Catwalk auction that raised £2000 for the Bridgend Centre. New walks were also devised and enjoyed, including a Canal walk, an Art walk and a Photography walk.

Our ECR walks attempted 2 linear walks using regular buses, one of which attracted over 20 people and went smoothly, whereas the bus failed to turn up for the other walk! Undeterred, our leader put the smaller number of walkers into family cars and carried on. Our 20 miler turned out to be a little longer and returned home in the dark!

One bonus this year was the balmy weather. There was only one short shower the whole week and some mist on the hills another day, very unusual for Bollington. We could enjoy the autumn colours and excellent views at our leisure.

Let me finish by thanking the ECR leaders who planned such enjoyable walks. Several walk group leaders brought walkers over to join our walks this year. They were full of praise for these walks and many of the walkers not already in the Ramblers took leaflets having had such a positive experience with East Cheshire Ramblers.

Kinder Mass Trespass

Brian
Griffiths

The 24th April 1932 was a seminal moment for British walking. On that day several hundred, mainly working men, from Manchester and Sheffield went on a mass trespass of Kinder Scout. Five of the men were subsequently jailed, but the ensuing outcry ultimately led to the opening up of vast tracts of previously closed countryside to walkers. <http://kindertrespass.com/>

A series of events is being organised by several groups, including Manchester and Sheffield Ramblers, for the week of 23rd April 2012 to commemorate the 80th anniversary.

We ourselves are organising 3 walks that day, with the long and medium groups going up Kinder, and the short group probably walking part way up.

Please try and join us for what promises to be a very enjoyable day.

Silly Signs



Taken by Neil Collie. I wonder how many of these signs the NT is going to erect nationwide. Taken to its logical (or illogical) conclusion, the cost of these signs would exceed the NT's total membership income.

Taken by your editor on 21 September on Alan Catherall's walk from Brinscall. I facetiously wondered if this point is continuously monitored for passing HGVs by CCTV cameras, and if one does pass, how long it takes to get the sign amended, and why should anyone want to know.

