

PATHWAY

Issue 77 Spring/Summer 2024; Wycombe and District Ramblers



We Brits are renowned for our obsession with the weather, first point of conversation for most small talk amongst friends, except perhaps in our age groups, their latest medical issues, arthritic joints, hospital appointments and competitive count of all the drugs they swallow. This year, I think the climate is justifiably top of the bill, this has been a depressing winter, and at the time of writing at the beginning of April we are still in the grip of its dying moments, its last hoorah. It does not go gently! February saw the wettest month on record, mild temperatures also breaking records, although John and I would dispute that as in our skeletal frames we have been freezing indoors and out for months. Then there is the wind, a constant presence lowering with wind chill the actual feel on the skin, grey days with dark clouds hanging with occasional bursts of sunshine which cannot be relied upon to last the course. Every season seems to have its challenges flood, heat wave, snow a foot deep in the north and toppling trees. We are lucky here in the almost certain knowledge that our homes will not be flooded, but the local rivers have been, (If you want a chuckle, read my article further down the pages) streets even in London awash with over taxed drains, outdated sewage systems reminiscent of the Great Stink in the Middle Ages.

It wasn't so long ago that the Chilterns were subjected to snow and ice on a regular basis and we very rarely cancelled a walk, slithering into frozen car parks come what may following unfortunate leaders who couldn't find the paths under a blanket of snow. This year we have had just as many cancellation due to weather conditions than in those frosty days of yore, especially if you dare to go near the Thames and sometimes during the downpours, the leaders faithfully turn up to find themselves cowering inside their hoods alone while the rest of the world decides to have a duvet day in the comfort of their homes.

Unfortunately HQ decided to update their Insight Hub (who dreamed up that grand title) whereby membership secretaries access the changes to their member numbers, updated on a daily basis. With a few precious moments to spare, I fired up the laptop and pressed all the right buttons to be greeted with some very fancy graphs and diagrams giving me the ongoing statistics for the Avon and Somerset Area. Nick was the unfortunate soul at HQ who got this mad woman on the end of his phone ranting at him. He said there had been a glitch over the Easter weekend and helpfully led me to a familiar page where I could see my data. I pressed the new members icon, No, none of those; nor had anyone moved, left or lapsed and the full list page was blank every single one of you disappeared. I was one of the unfortunate few apparently to be affected by this glitch and he promised to have it fixed by the end of the day. For two days I didn't go near the hub too terrified at what I might find. Anybody want my job!



We as a committee of 5 are delighted to welcome and co-opt Lindsay Vale onto the committee to organise our social events, already having achieved two excellent social meals and a holiday weekend. She is currently working on a BBQ for the summer. Thank you, Lindsay. Of course that still leaves the problem of no Chairman for a third year and a longstanding vacancy for a publicity officer. If any of you would like to apply for either position, please be aware that in the event of an over whelming response a second interview may have to take place. Only joking, but we really would appreciate a bit more help.

Angela Shipley, Membership Secretary

Wycombe & District Committee: Nov 2023-Nov 2024

For contact details see <https://wycomberamblers.org.uk/contacts.html>

CHAIR	VACANT
Secretary:	Sally McEvoy
Treasurer:	Hamish Ross
Membership:	Angela Shipley
Walks:	Angela Vasylenko
Events	Lindsay Vale
Simon Kearey	Area Representative

Other roles:

Brian Greenow, Footpaths and Web Manager
Sheila Draper, Editor of Pathway

Northern Lakes Spring Walking Break

Derwent Bank, near Keswick was the destination, and as the weekend drew nearer, the forecast for that area looked increasingly bleak, with storm Kathleen destined to hit it with a vengeance at exactly this time.

Ramblers have a reputation for just getting on with their walking whatever the weather but as our intrepid group of 10 assembled on Friday afternoon, we wondered what was in store for us. We hadn't had a walk that day because of the travelling distance, but everyone made it on time, include one member coming from abroad and having to rearrange their journey due to the train strikes.

It is a stunning area and as you drive up the M6, the scenery you pass through becomes increasingly impressive and reminded me that when you go further away, you really do have a different walking experience.

I knew Derwent Bank from a decade earlier and remembered the beautiful setting immediately on the banks of Derwent water, but since then, it has had a major refurbishment. The common areas are beautiful and stylish and the rooms are luxurious, although some single rooms are right at the top of the house so involved steep stairs which no refurbishment could change.

We had the usual welcome cream tea and introduction from both the HF leaders and the manager of the house; both of which were warm and welcoming.



The forecast didn't change but what happened was that the 'heavy rain' component was downgraded to occasional light showers... which of course didn't disrupt our plans at all. It was also warm, both indoors and out, which was a welcome change from some of our chilly experiences of late.

However, the strong winds definitely did arrive and provoked comments such as 'interesting', 'challenging' and 'something to tell the grandchildren!' A couple of the walking groups couldn't summit as there were winds which could blow you over (70 mph) , but on each day, three levels of walks were provided by our friendly, knowledgeable and very competent leaders and we certainly experienced some stunning Lakeland scenery , as some accompanying photos will show..

Our group came together in the evening and shared their experiences of the day as some had walked in each of the three grades. The atmosphere at the evening meals was very sociable; HF visitors from other parts of the UK and from abroad joined in and some ongoing friendships were formed. The entertainment provided (a quiz and some indoor curling) was fun and relaxed, and a replacement for Dingbats and the more energetic games we used to play on our breaks away.

Would I choose to have a walking break during a named storm? Probably not, but in the event, we had a very happy and successful trip and some photos of our trip are shown below and overleaf. Please keep an eye out for the offer of our next weekend away, you won't be disappointed.

Lindsay Vale



Walking along, singing a song

We are all aware of the health benefits of walking. These benefits can be enhanced by sometimes singing as you walk along. Hence the many songs with walk or walking in the title or lyrics.

There are songs and lyrics for all weathers. These include 'I'm walking in sunshine' (occasionally in UK) by Katrina and the Waves and "Walk on through the rain, walk on through the rain" from "You'll never walk alone" by Gerry and the Pacemakers. On a dry sunny day after some fresh snow in the Chilterns you can sing "Walking in a winter wonderland". And for most of this winter it has been "Mud, mud, glorious mud" although most of us had other opinions on that topic.

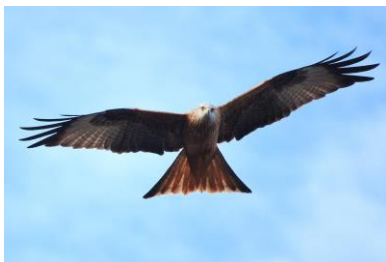
Sometimes I silently rate other walkers on their greeting. Walkers are by their nature friendly and courteous and it is rare for me to resort to singing a verse or two from "Walk on By" after muttering under my breath if a walker coming in other direction does not smile or acknowledge my hello. Maybe they were having a bad day or were lost in a contemplative moment so I try to give them the benefit of the doubt.



Sometimes as I wander I reminisce on my youth and my music memories turn to "Walk on the Wild Side" (Lou Reed) and "Walking back to Happiness" (Helen Shapiro).

And of course "500 miles" by the Proclaimers is a favourite no matter where I am walking (also great for weddings and other social events).

When walking in the Cairngorms my default tune is "I love to go a wandering along the mountain track, and as I go I love to sing, my knapsack on my back, "valderi, valdera, valdera, valde ha ha ha ha ha ha, valderi, valdera, my knapsack on my back".



We are never alone when out rambling and it is good for the soul to stop and appreciate the wide range of bird song. In the Chilterns there is always the powerful voice of the tiny wrens, the melodic song thrushes, the various finches and the rat a tat of woodpeckers. In recent years we have become used to hear the callings of the red kites that now populate the local area.



Keep walking, keep singing and with a song in your heart in the words of Sir Harry Lauder keep right on till the end of the road.

Hamish Ross

Hazards – with kind permission of all the participants!

Not being a resident of Marlow I am naïve when it comes to the antics of the River Thames when it has been overfed, so I innocently planned a 4.5 mile walk along its banks for April (after all, it is Spring, Winter gone, surely) with our small group who meet to go as slow and steady as is required. They are hardened walkers who cannot manage programme walks anymore but these outings are not under the umbrella of the RA. John and I set out to check it out with Easter sandwiched between it and the real walk, heading almost to Marlow and cutting back to Little Marlow, from Well End. The path along the river was rutted from recent flooding but if you picked your way across the boggy bits perfectly doable.

I watched the weather forecast like a hawk and saw only little clouds with drops hanging from them and with a light bulb moment of inspiration got out the map to plan an alternative going the opposite way if necessary. On the day, showers were forecast and John and I arrived in the car park

half expecting no one would turn up but we had 4 enthusiasts in the shape of Simon, two Pats and Cuxham Anne. Hazard number 1, we got separated by a train which trundled at a snail's pace towards us as the green light turned red stranding John and I on the wrong side. Hazard 2 came in quick succession as to our right, there was water right across our way from river to field boundary and the original walk was consigned to the waste paper basket within the first five minutes.

So, plan B, we turned left to make for the Bourne End railway bridge and the far side towards Cookham, the theory being it was higher ground over there, so in spite of me not having reced it and to stick to the distance we can manage, a return path that I had only glimpsed on the map and never walked. What could possibly go wrong!! All went incredibly well for a short time and we headed over the river's swirling waters, and off to Cookham through mud but firm under foot. Until, that is, ahead a mirage of over the boot water appeared where the bank had breached, 10 feet across. As the children's book says, "we couldn't go through it, we couldn't go round it and we couldn't go over it." It fed a little stream in a ditch that ran back beside the path totally cutting us off. As leader, I was waving the white flag, but Simon and Pat E were off scouting back along the path to find a solution (there is never a dull moment when Simon is around.) Sure enough, someone had helpfully placed a jumble of planks and a tree trunk across the little stream amongst the trees. There was no going back now! Unencumbered by ramblers H&S regs and form filling we could do as we pleased and like children of old who could climb trees, play conkers in the school playground and set off who knows where on their bikes unsupervised until hunger drove them home to unworried mothers for tea. So, we followed suit!! Pat E was the only sensible one to wear wellies so while she stood in the water on the far side, I clung on to John and we inched him across hazard number 3, to the outstretched hand of Simon to haul him up the bank, closely followed by Anne and Pat A.

We took the squelchy diagonal route to Cookham Moor car park, where, long before we got there, eagle eyed Pat A spotted an ice cream van and just had to have her second Mr Whippy of the week. In fact, the vendor sat in his cab with engine switched off and freezer getting no power, window closed, contemplating gloomily a profit free day. He must have been ecstatic to sell 4 99s, oozing creamy delights with flake embedded. Better than any banana break! Now came the tricky bit, I hadn't a clue where I was going but my smile was full of bravado and confidence to, very soon, hazard number 4 a fallen tree blocking our way. Undaunted, Simon clambered up on the tree roots and somehow we hauled John over the obstacle, Simon pulling and me pushing from behind, and we all arrived on the wrong side of a lake between the path and us forcing us through paddy fields of surface water. Eventually we managed to get back on the path at the bottom end of the John Lewis golf course and on under a railway bridge I had spotted on the map. By now Simon was declaring me the best leader ever and everyone agreed this second childhood was so much fun, we put the golfers off their stride with our laughter and chatting but they were gracious.

We now found ourselves skirting the bottom of Winter Hill and I hoped to cross the old airfield back to the river but before that we came across a sturdy wooden flood bridge, a few feet from the ground and about 100 metres long so we thought we would try for that. Sturdy it might be but its planked floor was mangled and twisted as if it had been through some earthquake. By now I was sniffing the air for direction but we ended up at the back gate of the Bounty pub which sported a stern notice saying it was not a right of way, hazard 5, but by now John was tiring and so sending Simon ahead to suss it out, we were beckoned forward and stealthily trooped through back to the river, the railway bridge and a thankful return to the car park.

Our brains were flooded with endorphins that day, the happy hormone, fuelled by a sense of adventure that we should be careful not to stifle.

Angela Shipley

Watlington Hill walk April



Juliet Weale was encouraged by Angela to send in some photos of spring, for which my thanks.



After the wettest winter on record it's good to see nature ignoring the weather and doing what it does best!



New Members & Walks' Leaders

We would like to give a warm welcome to the group to the following new members:

Members

Jennie Belk

Pam Dell

Anthony Chapman

Jane Hough

Michael and Jackie O'Brien

Louise Seymour

Pete Wilkinson

Anthony Wu

Leaders

Roselle Beard

Alan Phipps

End Note

3-2-1 – **Go!** Future copy deadlines: Autumn 2024 - **15th August**

Amber warning: As I announced last issue, after 7 years it's time for someone else to produce Pathway and this issue is my penultimate one, so the next will be my last. I am happy to chat to anyone who wants to take it on in whatever way they and the Committee decide. *Sheila Draper, Editor*