

PATHWAY

Issue 78 Autumn 2024; Wycombe and District Ramblers

So, I have finally made it to the front of **Pathway** (and the end too), and just in time to wish you all the best as this is my last edition. My first issue was compiled in the autumn of 2017 when the then chair, Pat Endacott, noted the 35°C we experienced in June of that year; in 2024 it didn't reach that temperature 'til July. In the intervening years Pathway's contributor numbers have dwindled somewhat, but I am very grateful to all those who have sent me articles and photos, especially the "regulars", like Hamish and Brian. It's been interesting learning about the various walking holidays which they and others have enjoyed – and reading about members' experiences and memories and seeing their excellent photographs. I have sometimes felt like a travel magazine editor in fact! [Brian has uploaded some photos of his trip to our website and maybe this might be a way forward for the future?]

Hopefully I will see you walking and, or, at the **40th AGM, Sat 9th Nov, 2pm at Cedar Barn HP15 7BQ.**

Sheila Draper, Editor

Pat's and Ivan's Gate

The Committee has agreed that one of the best ways of spending our Self Funds is on the Donate a Gate scheme operated by the Chiltern Society. This allows our Group to recognize the effort, time and commitment given by individuals on a voluntary basis to the Group. This year we decided to acknowledge the contributions made by Pat Endacott and Ivan Rutter over many years. Both joined the Ramblers Association in 1993, immediately walking with the Group and leading walks including those on weekends away. Ivan walked 459 times with our Group and led on 30 occasions. Pat participated in 573 walks and led on 43 of them. Pat was our Chairman for five years where she was effective, involved and proactive, particularly in keeping us well informed on HQ, Area and General Counsel matters. Ivan was a major contributor to designing and updating the Group's website. The chosen location for their gate is on a path that goes through Middle Grove Farm in Hyde End. It is a metal kissing gate replacing a wooden stile which had fallen into disrepair and was becoming a potential safety hazard. The location is close to Pat and Ivan's home so they will be able to wander over to it as and when they wish.



Wycombe Ramblers Committee

Walking on Ireland's West Coast

In June, we enjoyed a wonderful two week holiday on the West Coast of Ireland using a walk book called *Ireland's Wild Atlantic Way* by Helen Fairbairn. We flew to Shannon and drove north and across the bridge to Achill Island in County Mayo where we stayed for 4 nights – our hosts were very friendly and it was a lovely unspoilt area. We walked on Achill Island two days and also further north in a Gaelic speaking area at Benwee Head from Ceathrú Thaidhg where we saw peat cut for drying and burning on home fires – wonderful cliff walking.



CLIFFS OF MOHER

From there, we drove south and around the lovely coast of Connemara in County Galway through Clifden and Roundstone into County Clare where we stayed at Clahane for three nights. There we walked the spectacular and famous and popular Cliffs of Moher from the southern untouristy end and went another day to Doolin to walk in the



ACHILL HEAD

Burren – a famous limestone pavement area but sadly lots of rain on that walk.

We then drove down to the south-west tip of County Clare to walk the Loop Head lighthouse walk and cliffs nearby where we saw spectacular numbers of birds nesting on the cliffs before catching a short car ferry across the River Shannon into County Kerry where we were staying for three nights at Cromane just off the Ring of Kerry. We drove the north Ring of Kerry to walk at Bray Head on Valencia Island across the bridge. We also explored the Dingle area walking along the shores of the Magharees Peninsula on the Dingle Way. We drove back across the very high, difficult and spectacular Conor Pass - sadly in thick fog - via Dingle. The next day we drove all of the Ring of Kerry and walked part of the Kerry Way at Derrynane en-route to Castletown-Berehaven on the Beara Peninsula in County Cork where we stayed for our last four planned nights. There we did a lovely walk on the sparsely inhabited Dursey Island reached via a nine minute six person cable car journey across the Atlantic Ocean – the only such cable car in Europe. We walked parts of the Beara Way both on the Beara Peninsula and on Beara Island which was wonderful reached via a 10 minute ferry.

We had intended to fly back from Cork but due to a week-long pilots' strike we flew from Dublin 4 days later so we were also able to walk at Sheep's Head but sadly in low cloud, in



BEARA ISLAND

the Skibbereens and on the Wicklow Way in the Wicklow mountains and so we had to drive round the South and East Coasts.

We did lots of spectacular cliff walking on the Wild Atlantic Way which was mostly very unspoilt and beautiful. The weather was sometimes dry sometimes wet; there was low cloud on the hills most days and it was not at all warm –hats, gloves and waterproofs were well used.

Heating and log fires were needed on this holiday even in June and July! However, the scenery was often stunning and unique and the people were



very friendly there. We drove over 2000km on mainly quiet roads but you may prefer to try one of the Ways – Beara, Kerry or Dingle. A holiday that we shall remember.

Alan and Stella Marsh

It's a small world

Rambling is a great social activity enjoyed by millions around the world. However I and many others have found out it is a small world.

Back in 2012 I met a group of men on a trip in Knoydart. We have kept in touch and each year 4 of us meet up for a week of walking. During a recent walking holiday in the Derby Peak District our group was recollecting previous walks when a theme developed of how often we had unexpectedly met people from our past whilst on our joint walks.

One memory was in the Dolomites in 2014 while we were sheltering from the rain in a "refugio" where we met a couple who had been members of the same climbing club as one of our group had been a member of many years earlier. They reminisced on various climbing stalwarts in the club, climbs completed or attempted, post climb celebrations etc. They could have chatted for hours but we had to leave to make our way back to the gondola to take us back down the mountain.

In England and Wales there is a network of 144,000 miles of footpaths and bridleways with public rights of way. So the chances of meeting friends from the past should be rare. While in the Lake District in 2016 I met up with Andy with whom I worked about 15 years prior. He was with his wife and their two teenage children who I had last met when they were toddlers. It turns out he had always been an outdoors enthusiast and mainly used holidays to take family outdoor adventure breaks.

When we walked Hadrian's Wall in 2018, my friend Alan met a couple with a dog during a pub lunch stop. We had seen them several times in the previous days but had only exchanged basic pleasantries. It turned out that all three grew up on the same street in Nottingham.

In 2022, in a gap between Covid lockdowns, our group organised a trip to the Gower Peninsula. Whilst enjoying our lunch stop I spotted a couple approaching whom I recognised. Covid and their ill health had limited their walking and this was their first walking holiday for a while.

So, it certainly is a small world, rambling wise.

Hamish Ross

Ramble Worldwide holiday commissions

As you know we receive a commission from Ramble Worldwide on all holidays booked with them by our members. This provides us with extra funds. We receive £10 per member for a UK trip, £20 for Europe and £30 for worldwide. Our annual income from these has recovered to pre-Covid levels indicating that we are travelling in UK and to foreign parts again for walking holidays. In addition to generating extra income for our group the details also provides an interesting insight into where our members venture. In the past year our members have travelled with Ramble Worldwide to Barbados, Austria (snowshoeing), Menorca, Croatia, Austria, Greek islands, Italy and Orkney.



In previous years UK destinations travelled to included Derbyshire Dales, Anglesey, Wye Valley, Norfolk, Cotswolds, Lake District, Northern Ireland and Northumberland. Further afield our members holidayed in Tenerife, Gran Canaria, Greece and the Dolomites (snowshoeing),

Hamish Ross, Treasurer

A holiday in the Italian Dolomites - 23rd to 30th June



We were based at the Hotel Ladinia, in the small town of La Villa in an area known as Alta Badia. Our rooms were well appointed, with the only downside being the noisy main road we overlooked. The staff themselves were friendly and helpful and we soon settled in. We were booked on a half-board basis with a good choice of dishes, although translating the menu could be tricky, and on one evening we were offered local Ladin specialities. The food was beautifully presented, if prepared differently, and the challenge was not to eat too much!



After a successful holiday in Austria last year, we decided to book another Ramblers Adagio trip, this time to the Dolomites in northern Italy, and we weren't disappointed. Our flight from Heathrow to Venice was uneventful. There, our leader John Phelps met us, before a 3 hour coach trip north through scenic and winding roads. We were a total of 14, quite a manageable size for a walking group.

This was a Ramblers Grade 3 holiday but taken at a leisurely pace, hence Adagio, giving us plenty of opportunities for photo stops. Scheduled walks were between 3 to 5 miles, but with options to extend, so we were averaging 7 miles per day, with ample time for lunch and coffee breaks. The alpine paths were often broken or uneven, with ascents/descents of up to 270 metres so good boots and poles were essential, as well as being regular walkers. Layers of clothing were also needed due to the drop in temperature at higher altitudes.

Our walking itinerary over six days had to be adapted somewhat to take account of weather conditions. We had hoped to visit the Marmolada glacier but due to heavy snowfall the cable car was not running, and we had to content ourselves with viewing it from a distance. However, our walks in the alpine meadows, covered with carpets of wildflowers, more than made up for this. To reach the higher altitudes we travelled in gondolas, chairlifts and cable car. We had to learn the technique for climbing quickly on and off chairlifts but were expert by the end of the week. The experience of soaring high above the ground was amazing and afforded us some stunning views of the surrounding mountains. A visit via cablecar to Piccolo Lagazuoi, at 2,778 metres, was a highlight.

The Dolomites are located in a region known as 'Sud Tirol', which was before the First World War part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. We saw evidence of the bitter battles between the Italian and Austro-

Hungarian forces in the caves and tunnels carved high in these mountains at Lagazuoi, Cinque Torre and the Tre Sassi Fort (now a museum) at Passo Valparola. After the fall of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the Sud Tirol became part of Italy. Despite this, it continues to have a distinctly Tyrollean/Austrian feel in the houses with steeply sloping roofs and colourful window boxes. Town names are shown in three languages: German, Italian and Ladin, the local dialect. The cuisine is also influenced with, for example, Linzer torte, Sachertorte and Apfel Strudel (delicious!), dumplings in broth, and veal with sauerkraut, etc.

One of our memorable pleasures was to have coffee in a mountain cafe, with sunshine, good company and surrounded by panoramic views, a real holiday treat!

PS A final tip for future travel is to check in on-line in advance, as British Airways had overbooked our return flight and two of our group were obliged to wait an additional four hours for a later flight.

Alison Hales, Norma Fazey & Shelagh Wells



Recognising bird songs



Experienced birdwatchers are able to recognize birdsongs and thus identify birds that are unseen but nearby. As I am tone deaf and have not mastered this skill, I rely on a mobile phone App called *Merlin Bird ID* to recognize and try to identify birdsongs. This App, developed by Cornell University, is easy to use and does not have an annual subscription or usage charges. The programme can identify several birds singing at the same time and shows for each recording all of the birds identified in that period. I use this App in the garden and when out walking. I have even used it to identify the members of the choir waking me at 4.30a.m. on a summer's day with their Dawn Chorus. Recently whilst walking in the Derby Dales I turned on the App during a stop when it showed that it had identified a Common Redstart, a bird I had never seen before. After checking the direction I saw it in a nearby tree. I watched it for several minutes before it flew off, its red tail quite distinct in the sunshine. Without the App I would have missed that sighting. The only negative I have found is that it does use a lot of storage on your mobile. It is also likely that given the nature of what it does, there may be occasional mismatches. If you have not tried it, give it a go as it will add an extra dimension to enjoying your rambles. Other Apps are available for identifying birdsongs.

Hamish Ross

Congratulations: Kate Ashbrook

2024 marks 40 years since vice-president of Ramblers GB & Wycombe & District Ramblers member, Kate Ashbrook, took up her post as general secretary at the Open Spaces Society. The Society put together a short video highlighting some of her achievements at <https://www.oss.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/AGM-video-powerpoint.mp4>

Walking the Gower Coastal Path

I was born and brought up near to the Gower and was familiar with most of the beaches along its southern coastline but I'd never walked between them so for our next long distance(ish) walk Jane Hough and I decided, with two friends, to walk the Gower from Mumbles to Llanmadoc over four days. We rented a cottage where my wife could come down and see her relatives and friends and we car shuttled to and from the start/end of the walks as there was no practical public transport.



Day 1 Mumbles to Three Cliffs Bay.

We started at Mumbles pier and walked through the more seashore part of the Gower, Limeslade, Langland and Caswell. Most of it on tarmac paths. But it still had dramatic views between the beaches. Then we walked on towards Three Cliffs Bay which is generally rated as the prettiest on the Gower. Unfortunately, the sign posts disappeared as we walked through the high sand dunes above the cliffs and we wandered about for a while looking for a not too steep way down to the beach. Climbing sand dunes is hard. We finally found one and then walked along the river to where we had left our car. This was sort of what I expected. Views, cliffs, perhaps not the sand dunes above the cliffs.

Day 2 Three Cliffs Bay to Port Eynon

This section had two big beaches, Oxwich and Port Eynon. We had to walk up from Three Cliffs Bay to the headland above it and then around it until we came across the view to Oxwich Bay. We walked down to the bay and lunch and then up the other side. This was steep. Then a steep down to about 10-20 feet above high tide and all the while we were walking through an almost temperate rainforest. Large ferns, lichen covered trees with waves crashing just below us. Then another headland and another beach. A lovely day and I did not know about the woods. We were slightly embarrassed on the down slope towards Oxwich when we were left standing by a 60+ woman carrying a chair and provisions on her back while wearing flip-flops.

Day 3 Port Eynon to Rhosilli



This was perhaps more what I was expecting. Walking along the cliff edge with the waves below. Some up and downs but a lot on the top of the cliffs. But the highlight was Worm's Head. This is a tidal island that has a causeway between the mainland and it at low tide. The whole trip had been planned so that we would get to the causeway at low tide and we managed to get across (and back) while the tide was out. I have always wanted to do this. But it was much, much harder to cross than I imagined. I thought sand and shingle, but it was wave cut rock and stones.

Day 4 Rhossili to Llanmadoc

This section was again different. We crossed Rhossili beach, which is very long, then rounded a few headlands before we went up and down a large spit, about two miles long and two hundred yards wide, sticking out into the Loughor estuary. The spit has the seaward side as a sandy beach and the river side as a pine forest. Unfortunately, there were a lot of fallen trees and we so we missed a large section of the forest as we had to cross the sandy side for part of it. This was also the longest walk, about 13 miles, as where we had planned to have lunch was closed (never trust the internet) and we had to divert to get something to eat.

All in all a lovely trip with lots of views, climbs, beaches, wild flowers, orchids, sheep, cattle, horses, ice-cream and good weather. The going was difficult in places with very uneven paths but we had plenty of beaches to walk on, and not very busy (except for Worm's Head).

Brian Greenow

Ed: you can see more of Brian's photos at <https://wycomberamblers.org.uk/gallery/gallery-member-holidays/event/Gower2024.html>

AGM

AGM

Our 40th AGM will be on Saturday 9th November at 2pm at Cedar Barn, Barn Lane, Hazlemere, High Wycombe HP15 7BQ. See you there! *Sally McEvoy, Secretary*

New Members & Walks' Leaders

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

Jackie Collins

Marie Griffiths-Fournier

Tomislav Golik

David Hawkins

Elaine Hawkins

Julie Luckett

Keya Mukhopadhyay

Steven Parker

Gerry Sheppard

Delia Sheppard

Heidi Werner

n.b. The Hawkins' have been walking with us for a while & have now transferred to our branch.

Angela Shipley, Membership Secretary

Condolences re: Tricia Dibling

We would like to convey our belated condolences to Laurie Dibling whose wife, Tricia, died last May. They have been group members since January 2007 and Tricia completed 208 walks travelling some distance from their Oxfordshire home. Tricia was a quiet, dependable friend and walking companion, never making waves, whose death took us all unawares. The onset of her illness coincided with Covid restrictions and put paid to her regular walking but before its unexpected return, she was out and about with those of us doing easy paced walks and is very much missed. We wish Laurie all the very best during this difficult period of adjustment.

Angela Shipley

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
Vacancy, Editor of Pathway

End Note

RED warning: As readers know, this issue is my last: It's been fun.....

"No passion in the world is equal to the passion to alter someone else's draft." — H.G. Wells

"Some editors are failed writers, but so are most writers." — T.S. Eliot

Sheila Draper, Editor