

PATHWAY

Issue no 76 winter 2023/spring 2024 Newsletter for Wycombe District Ramblers

How long does it take you to read a book? In my case less than a week, and I cannot live without a stack of library books by the side of my bed and invariably the page of one of them open during any spare moments in the day. However, I have just finished Monty Don's "My Garden World" which I have hoovered up, cover to cover over the last three years. What took me so long, well further on you can discover why but for now it has left me wondering just how observant are we as ramblers of what is around us all the time as we walk along our beloved footpaths. Do we look, listen and breathe in as much as we should or are we too busy chatting to notice or allow ourselves too readily to switch off onto auto pilot. We have in the past been accused as group walkers of not stopping to take in the view but route march towards the one o'clock deadline to be at the finishing line. The busy, busy rush from one activity to the next! We are never alone in the countryside; the skies never empty, a myriad of insects, beetles and earthworms beneath our feet, the hedgerows rustling with small mammals and birds fearing our passing steps as they scurry away and of course a lesson to us all, the gentle cows, munching sheep and horses all taking life at an enviable pace.*



Our AGM took place this year on a very wet, chilly November day and as a consequence had the lowest number of participants for a long time, the morning walk only four and the afternoon meeting less than 20, which was a shame as our new venue in Cedar Avenue, Hazlemere turned out to be a bit of a gem with a light airy room, and excellent kitchen facilities. So, our fears of not having enough soup or cake were unfounded and our thanks go to Sally for finding this pleasant venue and to Brian for leading the walk for so few. One member of the committee retired at the AGM and tribute was paid to Alan Williams for 15 years' service to Wycombe Ramblers Group, 12 as treasurer and 3 as Social Secretary for which he has earned a brand new gate in Piddington with his name on the plaque. Thanks Alan.

By the time you read this, Christmas will have come and gone for another year but 2024 is new and fresh and there are many walks to be had in the new programme taking us through Spring to the cusp of summer. Take and Enjoy.

Angela Shipley, Membership Secretary

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*Following on from Angela's editorial and thanking her for her book review (see ahead), I note I have never read *The Walker's Guide to Outdoor Clues and Signs: Explore the great outdoors from your armchair* by Tristan Gooley, but I might get a library loan or 2nd hand copy of this 2015 paperback to educate and entertain me through the winter for the times when I don't want to walk! *Sheila Draper*

Committee Information

The AGM took place on Saturday 18th November in Hazlemere at The Cedar Barn. The Minutes of the 2022 meeting were approved and a Committee for 2023-24 was voted in.

Over the past year, Simon Kearey has acted as our Area representative, although he has not been a Committee member. This was not the best arrangement. Simon kindly offered to join the Committee and was duly voted on at the AGM. We are pleased that we are once again a Committee of 5 members. However, we remain a very small Committee and we would really appreciate members thinking about joining us. If someone would prefer to become a Committee member without a particular role or responsibility, that would also be helpful. The more people to share in the discussions and decision making the better. We have specific vacancies for a Chairperson, a Publicity officer and an Events Organiser. However, I am delighted to say that Lindsay Vale has since offered to consider arranging some events for us, so, read ahead here and your emails- we may have some exciting news in the New Year!



Do please think about joining your Committee, it is not hard work and it is a way of ensuring that we continue to have great walks with wonderful friends in superb countryside.

Sally McEvoy, Secretary

Walking locally and afar: options

Back in the year 2000 when I first walked with Wycombe Ramblers, I turned up on a 6 mile walk from Hambleden and set off not really knowing what I was letting myself in for...I enjoyed the conversation and the stunning countryside, but the hills were something of a shock as I hadn't realised how unfit I was !

I had signed up for a charity trek and quickly realised that this was what I needed to do, so I became a regular walker progressing to the full day walks after a few weeks. Sundays now had a new routine and over time, I went from being at the back of the group to being able to hold my own up even the steepest hills. As I got to know people and they became friends, I heard about the spring weekend away, and of holidays abroad and decided to give them a try.

They are usually held in HF houses and over the years I have visited their country house hotels across the country, and had some memorable trips abroad through Ramblers Holidays.

They provide well organised breaks in beautiful areas, with a choice of walks of different lengths and difficulty and they've been a highlight of my years as a member of Wycombe Ramblers. They are excellent for solo travellers or couples alike, but it is especially enjoyable to go as part of a group.

We have also had some delicious Christmas meals and the occasional Barbecue in the summer months.

As you will by now know, I've agreed to take on the role of activities coordinator and we are planning a spring walking weekend in the Lake District.

If you are debating whether to go, I have visited this HF country house and it's in a beautiful location right on Derwentwater and close to Keswick and it will provide a lovely base for our walks and any non-walking activities. To reiterate for anyone who has lost the email, it's **April 5th Friday-Monday and the deposit required is £ 75 per person.**

I'm also looking into a location for a meal out in the New Year which I will email about as soon as I have a good option.

I hope there is an appetite for both!

Lindsay Vale, events' organiser

More Thanks to the great work by Lyndsay Vale, we now have a firm proposal for a weekend away in the Lake District on 5th April. However I have also been contacted by Elan Valley Lodge who offer weekend walking breaks to various walking groups. Although it is quite a way for us, the Elan Valley is beautiful and what is on offer looks pretty good. For more details please go to the website, www.elanvalleyleisure.co.uk/walking, but here is a summary –

The Lodge is a modernised Victorian building with accommodation for 36 people in 24 rooms. 12 twin and 12 single, 14 rooms are en-suite with the remaining being “Jack and Jill” rooms where the bathroom is between a pair of single rooms. There are no single room supplements. The price includes bed and full breakfast, 3 course evening meal and packed lunches, with unlimited tea and coffee and home-made cake in the afternoon.

The walking guides will offer a range of options at the start of our break to ensure that the walks suit us and the weather. Many of the routes start and finish on the doorstep and offer a varied terrain; lakes, woodland, mountain and moors.

The rate for Friday and Saturday night for 2024 is £235pp; for 3 nights including 3 days walking it's £350pp and for 4 nights with 4 days walking, £470. The minimum size of group is 15. A non-returnable deposit of £30pp is required to confirm a booking, the balance being due during the stay.

When we discussed this at the AGM an estimate of 4.5 hours driving time was given. Arrival is after 5 on Friday and rooms must be vacated after breakfast on Sunday (for the shortest break), so there would be a longish drive after the walk on Sunday. However, it is a stunning area, quite wild and I would agree with their website that it is a walkers' paradise.

Before any further work is done, it would be great to gauge interest as we need a minimum of 15 people. If you are interested in a weekend in the Elan valley, possibly in September or October, please could you email me by 31st January, including whether you prefer a 2 or 3 night stay. At this stage you are not making a commitment, just an expression of interest.

Thank you.

Sally McEvoy mcevoysally@gmail.com

New Members

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

David and Libby Clayton
Clarence Chikusu
Nichola Connelly
Jennifer Daykin
Elizabeth Flynn
Caroline Keegan
Lynn Kirk
Nathan Lloyd
Keya Mukhopadh
Elizabeth Rogers
Ian Stokoe (by transfer)
Robert and Helen White

Book Review

My Garden World by Monty Don

Lockdown allowed Monty Don to produce this book using sixty years of meticulous note taking and research long before he gained fame as a gardener and broadcaster. This 400 page masterpiece is really a dictionary, but not in alphabetical order, of every thinkable living thing that shares or trespasses in Monty Don's beloved home, Longacre in Herefordshire and the derelict farm on the Black Mountains boundary with Wales, he bought with the intention of moving on to a new project when the TV programme Gardener's World put paid to that for the foreseeable future. It teems with every conceivable plant, creature and living thing known to man and I gained so much from his vast knowledge and powers of observation but it is not just a list. It is cleverly readable and at the same time, a story of his life, his love of nature and his dogs, not least Nigel, adored also by his TV fans, who he publicly mourned when he died a day after Monty finished the book when the nation was clamped down by Covid, romping in the sunshine one day and gently put down the next to relieve his suffering of overnight seizures. His tribute to that dog sums up the book, Monty finds joy equally (I am haphazardly flicking through the pages to ensure fairness to all included on the 400 pages!) from finches to foxes, brambles to deadly nightshade, mink to stoats and all in between, birds, bees and butterflies. They are all in there and I shall keep the book as a reference but equally for the warm comfortable feel it engenders of life lived side by side with nature, in an idyllic setting where England meets Wales.

Angela Shipley

Walkers' awards

Walking certificates were awarded at the AGM to the following (and see overleaf the photo of John being presented with his certificate by outgoing Committee member Alan):





Alan Williams – Donate a Gate

Alan gave 12 years' service to the Committee as Treasurer and then a further 3 years as Events Organiser. He has also been a regular walker and has led many walks over the years. Earlier this year he indicated that he would discontinue his events' role. The other Committee members, without his knowledge, arranged to purchase a gate in recognition of his contribution to the Group. After seeking out a suitable location with the help of the Chiltern Society we selected a location near Piddington. The chosen location is on the path leading from Ham Farm up to Green End Farm. The gate replaces a stile which had become wobbly after having been repaired several times. Both the landlord and Bucks Council agreed that we could replace the stile with a kissing gate. The location has superb views and makes a good spot for a break. The gate was installed on 15th November. We announced the gate at the AGM on 18th November, taking Alan by surprise and testifying to our ability to keep a secret. The grid reference is SU806 950 if you wish to visit the location or incorporate it on an upcoming walk.



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
Area Representative	Simon Kearey

Other roles: Brian Greenow, Footpaths & Web Manager, Sheila Draper, Editor of Pathway; Lindsay Vale, Events' Organiser.

Walking in Alsace

In September this year, Stella and I enjoyed a week's self-guided walking holiday in the Alsace now in France but Franco-German in culture. It is situated between the Vosges mountains and the River Rhine. It has many attractions - good walking trails often well waymarked, hilltop castles and outstandingly pretty villages with half-timbered houses in pastel shades and medieval walls with arched entrances. The terrain is often forested or vineyards and grapes were being picked as we walked. We flew to Basel and caught a train to Colmar and then a taxi to our first hotel at Eguisheim with its lovely village streets. Then we walked to and around the picturesque villages of Turckheim, Kayserberg and Bergheim. Also we made a visit to Colmar by bus - a tourist town of pretty houses with a Little Venice and a museum - worth seeing. Two tips for your trip – 1) reserve a table on arrival at a village in Alsace - if you leave it to the evening you will be too late and perhaps no supper! 2) while walking on a steep downward forest path, don't look at your GPS on the phone - otherwise you may end up as I did with an ankle injury for a few months!



Alan Marsh

End Note

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

This is my antepenultimate issue. It is time for someone else to produce Pathway; my last issue will be autumn 2024 (my first was in autumn 2017, so I accede to the 7 year itch). I am happy to chat to anyone who wants to take it on in whatever way they and the Committee decide. *Sheila Draper, Editor*