

# Ramblers South Cheshire Group



Newsletter No.31 – June 2010  
<http://www.ramblerssouthcheshire.org.uk>

“The Ramblers promotes rambling,  
protects rights of way, campaigns for  
access to open country and defends  
the beauty of the countryside”

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## Chairman's Chat

Six months in and still so much to learn. My initiation into this job has provided me with so many new and varied challenges all of which, I have to say, have so far been most enjoyable.

The time seems to have flown. The Annual Dinner was a great evening and we have decided to revisit the location next year. The photo display at Crewe library in partnership with East Cheshire Ramblers was, I hope, a success. Certainly, the photographs were spectacular and I must thank Ray Sellars for providing such a choice and Carole Bentley for coordinating so well with our 'eastern' colleagues.

The highlight of the year so far has to be the Baton Walk up Bosley Cloud to celebrate the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the formation of the Ramblers. Our party of thirty strong walkers was led by Peter Callery from Rudyard to the top of the Cloud. Once there, we met up with other groups in our area and enjoyed a celebratory lunch whilst posing for photographs taken by the local press. As a result, we have received much publicity for the Ramblers to make the whole occasion even more worthwhile.

With the help of David Vernon and Graham Taylor we have two weekend trips this year, to Snowdonia again but in addition to Eskdale in the autumn. Graham leads our contribution to keeping the footpaths open and is always happy to have additional help in this, frequently highly amusing, activity.

If you look carefully at the walk programme for the next six months you will find a new innovation for this group, midweek daytime walks. Robert and Judith Spowage have taken up this idea where a short walk will end at a local hostelry for lunch. Please support it when you can and I'm sure it will become a regular feature of the group.

Along with this newsletter you will find a self-explanatory letter from me. I do urge you to read and respond to it as soon as possible. We have to get our costs down and postage represents almost eighty per cent of our annual outgoings. We know we can communicate with you more effectively and frequently through e-mail and once we have your contact data we will do so.

I also encourage you to regularly visit both our own website and that of the Ramblers where so much

useful information on walks and walking can be found and I am grateful to our membership officer, Eileen Dorman, for the excellent work she is doing in expanding our web site.

Finally, please let me know your views on how the group is progressing and whether we are meeting your needs.

**Philip Guest**

## Rambles Secretary's Report

This is my last report as Rambles Secretary as David Vernon is taking over from me as from the next AGM (if elected!!). David has also helped me compile the new programme for which I thank him. I am sure he will have some interesting new ideas. I must also thank all the walk leaders who have provided the group with such an excellent walking programme over the last five years.

### Turnout for January, February, March & April 2010

03/01/10	17
09/01/10	10
17/01/10	23
31/01/10	17
Total	67
<b>Average</b>	<b>16.75</b>

07/02/10	28
14/02/10	11
20/02/10	9
<u>28/02/10</u>	<u>17</u>
Total	65
<b>Average</b>	<b>16.25</b>

07/03/10	18
14/03/10	20
20/03/10	12
<u>28/03/10</u>	<u>11</u>
Total	61
<b>Average</b>	<b>15.25</b>

03/04/10	10
11/04/10	30
17/04/10	12
<u>25/04/10</u>	<u>15</u>
Total	67
<b>Average</b>	<b>16.75</b>

Total 4 months 65  
**Average 16.25**

### Wales Weekend

Saturday May 1<sup>st</sup>  
2 walks 26 walkers

Sunday May 2<sup>nd</sup>  
3 walks 26 walkers

Monday May 3<sup>rd</sup>  
2 walks 24 walkers

I am sure you will agree that this is an excellent record and is a reflection of the enthusiasm generated by our new chairman.

David Smith

### Footpath Secretary's Report

The footpath maintenance group continues to combine the checking and upkeep of footpaths with compiling circular walks in a particular parish. We usually meet on a weekday so please contact me if you would like to come along.

Graham Taylor

### Down the Plug Hole?

I know many of those who joined us for the Figure of Eight around Faddiley in February were disappointed when we reached Spurstow GR SJ 578 548, Spurstow Spa (saline), not to be handed a fluffy white dressing gown and shown to the marble pool fed with warm salt water.

Had we read 'Spurm-Head-Stagsden', A Topographical Dictionary of England (1848)\*, we would have discovered that we had unfortunately arrived 162 years too late.

*"SPURSTOW, a township, in the parish of Bunbury, union of Nantwich, First division of the hundred of Eddisbury, S. division of the county of Chester, 4¼ miles (S. E. by E.) from Tarporley; containing 508 inhabitants. It comprises 1718 acres, of which the soil is three-fourths clay, and one-fourth sand. A mineral spring called Spurstow Spa was formerly much frequented, and baths were erected by Sir Thomas Mostyn, for the accommodation of visitors; but the waters are not at present in repute. The impropriate tithes have been commuted for £130, payable to the Haberdashers Company, London."*

\*[www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?coapid=512903](http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?coapid=512903) pp.164-170

Graham Taylor

### New walks

The committee is constantly striving to provide a varied walks programme that appeals to a wide range of members.

You may have noticed that several Figure of Eight walks have taken place over the

past six months, such as Graham's described above. Leaders have noticed that some walkers who would not normally participate in an 8 mile walk feel more inclined to do the full distance because of the possibility of an 'opt-out' after 4 miles. More are to follow!

Another type of walk is being tried out by Robert and Judith Spowage. These would be mid-week morning walks with the option of lunch in a pub afterwards. 'Bon appétit' from those of us who will be working at that time!

The first of these takes place on Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> July, with the option of a **second** walk in the evening. Now there's a challenge...

As part of the Ramblers' Festival of Winter Walks, look out for the New Year's Day walk on the January 2011 programme (issued in the autumn).

Keep passing on your thoughts to committee members and we'll do our best to oblige.

Sue Sharpe

### Visit to Morocco and view of Djebel Toubkal

A recent visit to Morocco and, within it, to the High Atlas mountains allowed me to view, at close quarters, Djebel Toubkal which, at 4167 metres, is the highest peak in North Africa. It is also the peak which some members of our Group, enthused by their ascent of Mount Kilimanjaro, the highest peak in the whole of Africa, are proposing to climb next year.

My sight of Djebel Toubkal actually came at the end of the first of two successive tours of Morocco which I took, in late March-early April, with the UK-based

adventure holiday company, Explore! Having undertaken two previous lengthy tours, in fairly remote parts, with Explore, I was confident of their ability to deliver ones which properly matched the descriptions in their brochures and my trust was not misplaced. The first tour, 'Moorish Spain to Marrakech', included visits to the dramatically perched town of Ronda and the nearby 'white villages' in Spain, a first sight (for me) of Gibraltar and time in the major Moroccan cities of Tangier, Fes, Rabat and Marrakech. The second tour, described as 'Southern Oasis Cycling', was rather more arduous and, on one day, I resorted to one of the accompanying mini-buses after cycling some 35km into a strong headwind on a very hot crossing of a stony desert, devoid of shade or any change of direction. However this tour provided sight of a wide range of dramatic desert and mountain scenery, quite different from any which I have seen before.

The day visit to the area within which Toubkal lies was through rather more familiar types of mountain scenery, with the peak itself appearing very much like one from the Alps or the Lake District / Snowdonia and seeming intermediate between these in size. At the time of the visit snow was lying from about 3,200 metres upward but the peak is apparently free from snow during the summer months. As the winter had been very wet, with floods in places, the valleys were apparently unusually green and thus more akin to home scenery than might normally be the case. For much of the day we appeared to follow the likely route for those planning to ascend Toubkal, driving south from Marrakesh to the town of Asni and then on to

Imlil, initially a slow steady climb without much feel for what was to lie ahead and then ascents on narrower mountain roads clinging to the edges of steep-sided mountains.

Imlil is the last village en route with cafes and shops and from it we ascended on a good path to the smaller village of Aroumd, perched atop a local summit, where we had a Berber lunch before returning to Imlil by different paths. Aroumd affords excellent views of the rugged north face of Toubkal but I was assured that the route to the summit via the Tazaghart Refuge, which provides simple overnight accommodation, does not present any technical difficulties, being essentially a hill walk with a little scrambling in places. However the magnitude of the final day's ascent (some 1,000 metres) and to a summit altitude of 4167 metres is clearly not to be undertaken lightly, though I am confident that some members of our Group are capable of reaching this summit and wish them all the best in their endeavour.

### **Philip Lund**

#### **A walk with ruins and a shrine**

At the end of November we shall be in the Goyt Valley for a quick winter climb to the top of Shining Tor, Cheshire's highest point at 559 metres (1835 ft). But before we get there we shall ramble through the ruins of Errwood Hall and take a peek into a Spanish shrine.

Errwood Hall was built between 1841 and 1851 by the Lancashire industrialist, Samuel Grimshawe. It was an imposing residence incorporating Italianate and Norman features. The hall

faced east across the valley and was surrounded by impressive gardens, the legacy of which can still be seen today in the array of rhododendrons, which now look unnatural in this moorland setting.

The Grimshawes lived lavishly and the hall had its own coalmine, school, farm and burial ground. The family owned an ocean-going yacht named The Marquita, whose captain is buried in the graveyard. They also employed a Spanish aristocrat, Dona Maria Dolores de Ybarguen, as governess for their children but she died whilst only in her 40's.

Samuel Grimshawe had a stone shrine built in her memory just up the hill from the hall and it still stands today with its slate roof and small door which is usually open. Inside is a small altar and fresh flowers are often to be found there.

Errwood Hall passed into the hands of Stockport Corporation in 1930 when the Grimshawe line died out and for a while was let to the Youth Hostel Association. It fell into disrepair after 1934 and was subsequently mostly demolished. Much of the stone was used in the building of the water treatment works connected with Fernilee reservoir which was built in 1938. Errwood reservoir was completed in 1967. It is said that when the level of Errwood Reservoir drops significantly, the remains of the lower part of the driveway to the Hall and the old packhorse bridge can be seen.

### **Carole Bentley**

#### **Annual Dinner**

The Annual dinner was held at the New Horseshoe public

house in Lawton Heath, Alsager. The choice of menu and food were fantastic and we had a private function room to ourselves. The tables were laid beautifully and the service was second to none. There was a good turn out. Nice to see people dressed up for the occasion, as noted by Phil in his speech.

A big thank you to David Vernon and Margery for all of their efforts in the organising of the event as it was **perfect**. So much so that by popular demand, the venue will be the same in late January/early February 2011. So watch this space!

**Julie Hayward**

## **Plas Tan-y-Bwlch Weekend**

This was a great success once again and members of the group have shared the highlights below.

### **Moel Hebog Sat 1<sup>st</sup> May**

'Strenuous' proved to be an accurate description of this walk which was ably and sympathetically led by David Vernon. Nine of us set out in a total of four cars, as some juggling was required for all the party to reach the starting point and then get back to the cars from a different finishing point: the centre of Beddgelert. The West Highland Railway runs through this town and the walk afforded regular sounds and sights of the steam locos pulling long sets of coaches along this line as well as regular views of the Snowdon range.

The walk was not long, some 6 miles, but it took us to an altitude of some 2,600 ft, with the total ascent being rather more than that. The initial climb through woods to the summit of Moel Lefn (638m) was followed by a relatively easy one onto Moel yr Ogof

(655m) but then came a sharp descent to below 550m before a stiff and unrelenting climb to the summit of Moel Hebog (782m). However the hardest part of the day was the long and steep descent from this on a mixture of rock and scree. Fortunately the forecast rain held off until all had completed this, though some took much longer over this leg of the route than others who went ahead to collect the set of cars. This was certainly a walk to sift the 'men from the boys' (though the actual division took no account of gender or age differences) and it was consequently a rather smaller party which tackled the Nantlle ridge on the next day.

**Philip Lund**

### **The Nantlle Ridge**

After leaving one car in the car park at Rhyd-Ddu, at the east end of the Nantlle Ridge, five of us piled into a second car and drove the eight road miles to the west end near Glangors. Graham led the walk, with two Philips plus Norma and Ken making up the party.

We started comfortably on a fairly level first half mile to stretch our legs gently for the effort to come. This was the only section that was flat, the remainder of the walk being a succession of very steep ascents and descents, often on shale that skated underfoot and demanded careful attention to placing one's feet. The weather was fine but windy, with the wind sometimes from behind but occasionally swinging to be full into our faces, making care essential on some of the more precipitous sections.

In the early stages we were overtaken by a young local Welshman who satisfied our curiosity as to the pronunciation of Nantlle (try

'Nantktthla'). It being Bank Holiday Sunday, there were other walkers around and we exchanged greetings with many. The nicest meetings, however, were with young lambs on the descent towards the finish. With our legs weary we reached Rhyd-Ddu after some six hours and drove back over the morning's route to pick up the other car en route to Plas Tan-y-Bwlch, pleased with our strenuous but satisfying day out.

**Norma and Ken**

### **A Family Walk in the grounds of Plas Tan-y-Bwlch**

Eleven of our group and I made our way via Plas Halt and a couple of stops to the spectacular viewpoint where we had a coffee break; this being the highest point on the walk and attained by a very steep 50metres at the end. We then descended, crossed the railway line and had a lunch stop at the side of Llyn Mair. A short discussion followed and unanimously it was decided to carry on to Tan-y-Bwlch station for our obligatory ice cream. This duly consumed, we made our way back to Plas Tan-y-Bwlch, a truly relaxing walk through this very interesting estate.

### **Thanks from the weekend's organiser**

Thank you all once again for your kind comments; the organising is made all the easier when I know I am with friends.

Thanks particularly to the walk leaders, you know who you are: to Julie for her Kilimanjaro presentation and Philip for his Moroccan slides, all expertly computer controlled by Eileen. Last but not least, thanks to Phil for

his kind donation of copious quantities of white & rosé Château Keogh!

**David Vernon**

### **Want to be a Walk Leader?**

We're hoping to stage another Walk Leaders' Workshop later this year if enough members are interested in attending. It would be a free one-day event and would take place at Reaseheath College, probably in November. Experienced walk leaders would take sessions on map reading and using a compass and would run a practical walk planning and map reading exercise. Other topics to be covered would include planning your first walk, managing your walk and dealing with unforeseen circumstances. There would also be time for a question and answer session and the day would include lunch. Previous workshops have been well received, have resulted in increased confidence and have produced new walk leaders for the group. Members who are interested are asked to contact **David Vernon**.

### **Carole Bentley**

P.S. Could walk leaders continue to send me a brief outline of their walk for the Chronicle?

### **Leading a Walk**

I've been a member of South Cheshire Ramblers for 6 years and have finally been press-ganged into leading a walk.

Having been impressed by how many of the Leaders find such interesting places, I felt my approach should be accurately "coordinated". Armed with a good map and

a compass, plus Phil Guest and his GPS device the walk has been well recc'ed on several occasions!

### **So mine is a circular walk around Flash.**

It starts from the village of Flash, in a northerly direction over Oliver Hill and down Wolf Edge to Knotbury. We will make our way to Three Shires Head. From there we travel south passing Turn Edge towards Spring Head, further south still to Little Hillend. On the homeward (or Flash-ward) leg we walk above Ann Roach Farm with lovely views of the Roaches. After that we descend to Flash Bottom then make our way along a quiet lane, returning to Flash and the New Inn.

**About Flash** - at an altitude of 1,518ft (463m) the village of Flash proclaims itself as the 'Highest Village in Britain'. Winters can be cold in this rather windswept location. It's said that once, during wartime, it got so cold that the vicar had icicles on his ears when he ventured from his house to the church!

Did you know that the expression 'Flash Money' arose after a group of peddlers living near the village initially bought goods for hard cash, but having established their creditworthiness would take more goods and disappear without trace. The expression grew when Flash counterfeiters made coins using button presses. They chose Flash because of its proximity to Three Shires Head, where three counties met and they could easily elude pursuing police officers by hopping over the boundaries. Not all of them escaped and several were hanged at Chester.

### **More Press-Ganging**

Must have taken place as after the last AGM, I found myself with two Committee jobs!

### **Website Editor**

The first thing I was asked was "can we have photos?"

Well we now do. I've included some pictures on the website itself and aim to change them regularly. We also have a Flickr Photo-site for South Cheshire Ramblers and thanks to the many contributors have sets of photographs for nearly all of this year's walks.

Other than that, I wanted to update our website with more information about our group and its activities. Again thanks to my colleagues on the Committee who have been a great help.

Any member can send me information on forthcoming walks and events to add to the website.

Website address:

[www.ramblerssouthcheshire.org.uk](http://www.ramblerssouthcheshire.org.uk)

### **Membership Secretary**

It has been most interesting to learn that we have over 220 members. Do you receive your Membership Card and quarterly magazine? If not, please make sure that Ramblers HQ has your up-to-date details. This information will in turn be passed from HQ to me and that's how we manage our mailing.

### **About improved communication:**

These days most people use e-mail. Please let us have your e-mail address so that we can communicate more effectively and also save cost.

**Eileen Dorman**

Chairperson  
**Philip Guest**

Secretary  
**Roni Hurst**

Treasurer  
**Jenny Edwards**

Footpath Secretary  
**Graham Taylor**

Rambles Secretary  
**Graham Taylor**

**Committee Members:**

**Eileen Dorman  
Peter Callery  
Sue Sharpe**

**Carole Bentley  
Phil Keogh**

**Julie Hayward  
Paul Stone**

**<http://www.ramblerssouthcheshire.org.uk>**

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