

A GENTLE STROLL FOR HINCKLEY RAMBLERS



Three members of the Hinckley Group have just attempted to walk the Pennine Way. Jean Davies, Glenys Gibbs, Tony Smith and Mike l'Anson set off from Edale just before 9:30 on a damp Monday morning, strolling to Upper Booth and onwards to the foot of Jacob's Ladder where the serious climbing started.

It was a much quieter group which reached the top and the mist-shrouded edge of Kinder Scout.

They were supported en-route by Tony Negus who brought his car, primus stove and tea bags along. The first day saw them go over Kinder and Bleaklow to overnight at Crowden sixteen miles into their journey. When they crossed the Snake road Tony had greeted them with a brew up.



Day two they struggled across streams boosted by recent downpours and made their way to Standedge and the following day crossed the M62 in improving weather with views over Manchester and Oldham, heading for the Calder Valley accompanied by numerous midges. Despite sore feet they summoned the energy to brave the steps up the monument on Stoodley Pike to take in the views.



That day had a sting in the tail as they climbed out and up onto Blackshaw Head for their nights rest.

The next day saw Tony drop out after a visit to hospital with an infected leg after an insect bite and after a night in the Old Silent Inn above Haworth, a depleted and subdued group set off leaving Tony to recover. Day followed day as they went over Malham, Fountains Fell and Pen-y-Ghent, over Tan Hill and Great Shunner Fell, crossing the Tees and Swale along the way.

The weather was mixed but in the better periods they took time out for a little sight seeing with a detours to see the Hull Pot limestone cavern and Hardraw Force. During these sunnier intervals they also had some fine views of the Three Peaks and the Ribbleshead viaduct and the mountains of the Lake District on the distant horizon. They also met several walkers travelling from Land's End to John O'Groats which rather made them feel like day-trippers.

After climbing out of Baldersdale they enjoyed some wonderful views over Lunedale in the best weather had on the walk so far.

As they followed the Tees upstream, they stopped for views of Low Force and High Force waterfalls before reaching Langdon Beck and their eleventh overnight. Next day they ended up walking over some boggy ground with the help of duckboards and scrambling over some large rocks. The first notable sight of the day was the impressive waterfall at Cauldron Snout, just below the Cow Green reservoir, before they followed Maize Beck to reach the spectacular High Cup Nick, undoubtedly the highlight of their walk so far.

After pausing to admire the views and chat with some fellow walkers they completed that day with the steep descent to Dufton.

The next day saw them head to Alston via Great Dun Fell, Cross Fell and Garrigill, the toughest day of the whole walk with 16 miles and over 3,400 feet of ascent. Then followed walking along the course of the River South



Tyne, a brief climb up towards Whitley Common where they paused to view the remains of the Roman Fort at Epiacum before continuing through Slaggyford and meeting up with Tony N for a lift to their digs. Sore feet and aching knees but less than 100 miles to go.

As their host dropped them all off back on their route, Tony Negus was able to take a day off from driving and join the walk. Climbing Northwards up Proudly Hill, they followed the Maiden Way, a Roman Road originally used as a supply line to nearby Hadrian's Wall. This took them over Lambley Common, with good views of South Tynedale to the East, Finally crossing the largely featureless, but thankfully not too boggy, expanse of Blenkinsopp Common before arriving at Greenhead.

Their route continued past Housesteads Fort in worsening weather making every step of the way a slog, - they battled our way over Haughton Common, through seemingly endless forest, getting wetter and wetter as the day progressed. Fortunately help was at hand; at Horneystead Farm they came across a Walkers' Refuge and were able to make a cup of tea and, believe it or not, dry clothes in a tumble dryer. they eventually reluctantly moved on, climbing Shitlington Crag before crossing Ealinghamrigg Common and descending to the village of Bellingham, their next stop. Fourteen miles walked and waded that day but it felt much longer.

Next day in better weather earlier incessant rain meant that the ground underfoot was frequently boggy with the path disappearing in the the peat bog, but a combination of GPS, mobile phones,

guidebooks and even a map and compass saw them eventually find the way to Whitley Pike and the steep ascent to Brownrigg Head before following several miles of forestry road through the edge of Kielder Forest to Byrness, where they welcomed back Tony Smith joining them for the last two days. Next day more mud; it started with a steep muddy climb up Byrness Hill and then onwards to Houx Hill.

Fortunately, flagstones had been placed to help them through the worst of the peat bogs. Passing the remains of the Roman Camp at Chew Green, they had wonderful views, climbed Lamb Hill but then on the top of Beefstand Hill, the weather suddenly changed from July to January and they found themselves battered by high winds and icy rain as they climbed the aptly-named Windy Gyle



Their final day saw them following the Scottish border along the high ridge past King's Seat to Auchope Cairn enjoying fantastic views, especially northwards into Scotland. At this point Jean took the optional excursion to the summit of The Cheviot, rejoining the rest at Auchope Mountain Refuge. Pressing on they crossed some boggy moorland before reaching the summit of The Schill and descending to Black Hag, where we officially crossed the border into Scotland.



From here it was a two-hour descent to Kirk Yetholm, which was easy on the eye but hard on the knees. Finally they staggered into the bar of The Border Hotel, the official end of The Pennine Way, to be rewarded with complementary half-pints of Pennine Ale and of course certificates of completion.

Editors note - With their site seeing detours and walk outs to pick up points for lifts to accommodation they probably walked 300 miles in all. Not unique but a remarkable achievement. I know the sort of going and weather they faced having walked all but about 40 miles of it at different times and I take my hat off to them. The logistics of organising this would have been challenging and the support they received from Tony Negus invaluable.

LUTTERWORTH ON TOUR

After weeks of heavy rain 22 members of the group had the most glorious sunny weather for their Spring Walking Weekend at Whitby in May, and walked, ate, drank and enjoyed each other's company in one of the most scenic areas in England, the majority staying at the Angel Hotel on Whitby quay (now refurbished as a Wetherspoons).

Arriving on the Friday afternoon they indulged in a Dracula walk around this most interesting town, taking in the history of its ship building, fishing and jet industries; viewing the famous whalebone arch and the memorial to Captain James Cook and, of course, learning about Whitby's connection to the Dracula story by Bram Stoker.

On the Saturday they completed a circular walk from Robin Hoods Bay via Ravenscar with the contrasting scenery of the Cinder Track and the cliff tops and sea views of the Cleveland Way. As the tide was out they even managed to finish the walk back into Robin Hoods Bay, along the beach, stopping for an ice-cream on the sands.



Don't let anybody tell you seaside areas are flat.

Sunday's walk, by contrast, started at Goathland station (Hogsmead in the early Harry Potter films) and covered moorland, riverside paths, waterfalls and steam trains. Goathland was 'Aidensfield' in the television series 'Heartbeat' and there are plenty of references to this in the village.

A memorable weekend that was enjoyed by all.

BESIDE THE SEASIDE

Most people would think that Bournemouth would not be a great place to go for a Ramblers walking weekend. How wrong could they be? It was terrific! We may not have got the sand between our toes but the weather was easily good enough if we had wanted to. Instead we found some wonderful countryside and interesting places just a stone's throw from the beach.

We left Coalville at the leisurely time of 9.30am on Friday and then on to Loughborough to pick up the rest of the 'crew'. Heading south in our luxury coach and with no traffic problems we made very good time before stopping for lunch at Newbury. Some headed off for the nearest 'Spoons' while others enjoyed a more pastoral location by the side of the scenic Kennet and Avon Canal. Then on to Bournemouth where we arrived in plenty of time for a stroll down to the prom and a cup of tea in the sunshine. For those wishing to take part the evening entertainment at the hotel was of a very good standard.

Up with the leisurely lark on **Saturday** and after a hearty breakfast we mounted our carriage and headed for the Purbeck hills. There were two walks on offer – a circular walk adjacent to the coast which is only available at the weekends because the route goes through a military firing range plus the deserted village of Tyneham (photo left) and a linear walk from just south of Wareham to Swanage on the coast via Corfe Castle. Both were very enjoyable with great views over the hills and out to sea.

Sunday was very different. Once again the weather was kind with one walk starting from our hotel and the other a circular route in the heart of the New Forest.

The 'seasiders' went down to Bournemouth Pier and then set off in an easterly direction along the promenade with views out to the Needles and the Isle of Wight and on to Hengistbury Head (the site of an iron age settlement) and the picturesque town of Christchurch before catching a public service bus back to base.



The second group of walkers were bussed out to the beautiful town of Lyndhurst and circumnavigated the town passing through ancient woodland and clearings peppered with grazing ponies.

All too soon it was Monday morning and time for home. After another excellent journey we arrived back at Coalville in the early afternoon.

Many thanks to Gwen for all her effort on our behalf – she is already working towards September 15th 2017 when our destination will be Ilfracombe.

Graham Morrison

Snippets

Trains

Following our recent articles about bus and train travel I have had a number of comments on personal experiences and Steve Crane of the Leicester group has made a couple of useful contributions - to quote him "If you are going to Ipswich then split your ticket at Ely! I've travelled first class from Narborough to Burnley cheaper than second class. Be careful some sites have a booking charge and different rail providers have self interest. I mainly use Cross Country and London Midland as it is much cheaper to travel to London on that line than the Leicester line". I found a similar example quoted on a web site. For a London to Durham return, the cheapest ticket was an open return at £301. Yet the train stopped at York, so instead if you booked four singles it cost £82, a saving of £219 and you did not need to leave the train.

Another good tip which has come my way involves signing up for ticket alerts at <https://www.thetrainline.com/ticketalert> - this allows you to list a trip you have in mind and tells you when the cheap tickets become available. Another tip from Dave McMahon identifies two websites raileasy.co.uk and trainsplit.com which do the job for you.

Paths

The County Council web site is going through a period of change. You should still be able to report footpath problems through the site but alternatively they can be sent in by email to — highwayscustomerservices@leics.gov.uk

All change in the countryside

We are very fortunate in this area with Charnwood Forest providing wildlife havens and the developing National Forest lots of new habitats. Species fairly rare in the rest of the UK are doing quite well here. Climate change gets a lot of the blame for problems elsewhere but a good part of the cause is man's activities. A recent study showed that a fifth of all impact on species populations was due to modern intensive agricultural practices. We are a heavily populated country but it is worth noting that three quarters of the country is still used for food production.

Climate change does have an effect. It is extending the area suitable for species previously only found in the south and they are spreading northwards and new species are making their home here from the continent. Unfortunately there are species that favour conditions further north and at higher altitudes And these may have nowhere to go unless they are birds and even with birds, if they go to countries further north they will be lost to us. One serious problem with warming seas is a massive reduction in plankton and sandeels in our seas having a dramatic impact up the food chain.

Enjoy what you can see when out walking - it may not be there in a few years.

Rain forests under threat

No not the Amazon although that is as well but much closer to home.

Temperate rain forests are now quite rare and getting rarer. Pockets remain along the coasts of New Zealand and South America, but in Europe much of what is left is actually in Britain and are usually largely of Oak. The oakwoods are restricted to the Atlantic coastal fringes of Britain, France, Ireland and Spain. The UK has about 170,000 acres, clinging on largely in Scotland and west Wales with small pockets in Cumbria and Cornwall.

Often these are to be found in tight valleys and gorges facing into and catching the prevailing rain clouds. In Scotland, Atlantic oakwoods are found clinging to the rocky, exposed west coast and along the south-facing slopes of some highland glens. In Wales, they are found in the western coastal areas where the climate is mild and wet with some in Snowdonia National Park.

One Welsh example is Llennyrch, along a ravine cut by the fast-flowing River Prysor, a few miles inland from Porthmadog

If you get an opportunity to walk these areas do so slowly and take good rainwear. They team with wildlife of all sorts and are probably the most bio-diverse habitat we have. It also teams with rain. Literally hundred of plant and insect species thrive, many rare including butterflies and migrant songbirds like redstart, pied flycatcher and wood warbler take refuge in them as do great spotted woodpeckers and jays. Buzzards and red kites use the them for nest sites.

Deer, badgers and squirrels abound and in Scotland, Pine Martens.

Attempts are being made to reintroduce these creatures into Wales. One pocket of rainforest in the Rheidol Gorge has seen releases with more to follow.

Walking there can be a very mysterious feeling. For a start it can almost be like walking on a trampoline as the mossy and spongy ground does put a spring into your step. The trees themselves are smothered in worts and mosses, lichens and all sort of dangling add-ons. Often shrouded in mists when not actually raining these are places that challenge your imagination

New Chief Executive

The Ramblers has a new chief executive, Vanessa Griffiths.

Vanessa joins the Ramblers from National Trust Wales, where she is responsible for leading the trust's North Wales team of staff and volunteers.

With more than ten years' experience in the charity sector, Vanessa has also led Groundwork North Wales - a social enterprise which works with disadvantaged individuals and communities to help them to improve their own lives through the creation of green spaces, green jobs and green energy. Prior to this, Vanessa was a senior civil servant within the Welsh government, where she was responsible for economic development and business support.

Walkers forum

The area executive is exploring the possibilities of participating in a walkers forum. There is much of concern for walkers at present. Financial pressure are threatening maintenance, Network Rail and HS2 want to see numerous footpath diversions not least to do away with at-grade crossings. There is also the problem of the thousands of local paths which have doubtful or limited or indeed no legal protection.

As we have common problems we see a need for a forum to discuss how best to resolve or mitigate them.

If all goes to plan we expect to invite representatives of all walking group to meet for this purpose and a number of groups have already agreed in principle with the idea. The meeting will probably be sometime in January or February.

Welsh improvements

Natural Resources Wales with the help of EU funding is to introduce or enhance active management and restoration of a large number of sites to act as key reservoirs of biodiversity, mostly in Special Areas of Conservation and Special Protection Areas.

The total cost to deliver the actions across Wales has been calculated at £120 million over five years but it will have to be spread thinly as protected sites cover around 7% of the land area of Wales and about a third of Welsh seas. An analysis has identified priority ecosystems, which include peat lands, sand dunes, woodland, rivers and, in the marine environment, estuaries and salt marsh, lagoons and shingle.

It should make Wales an even more attractive country to walk in.

Biodiversity hot spots

There is much talk of the remarkable diversity and range of species to be found on coral reefs and in rain forests, but the humble hedge can give them a run for their money.

Classed as a priority habitat, their importance for wildlife is often understated. Many studies show that they are vital for insects, small mammals and farmland birds. Arable farmland relies on pollinators living in these hedges and they in turn rely on the wild flowers along hedgerows and the blossoms on some hedging species.

One hedge less than 100 yards long has been found to contain over 2000 species that could be seen with the naked eye and the true figure is probably nearer to 3,000. It probably also included over 10% of all insects known to be in the UK.

The great majority of these creatures are finding food and a safe haven in the hedge. Many breed there and find shelter and protection from bad weather and others will be using the hedge as a safe flyway through the countryside, bumblebees and bats especially.

So as you walk alongside that hedge keep your eyes open.

Kinder project

Those of us who like to wander across Kinder have seen areas fenced off recently which can cause diversions of some distance. The five year project to restore Kinder is progressing well though. The moorland had been badly damaged by fires, pollution and over grazing, not to mention the effects of thousands of feet but £2.7 Million is being spent on restoration.

So far 80 hectares have been replanted with a further 191 hectares having been spread with seed.

6,000 small dams have been created to stop run off and over 14k of sheep fences have been erected.

The moors are returning to their former state as lush wet bogs which helps prevent lowland flooding, improves the quality of the water finally escaping the moors and provides a habitat which is encouraging the return of numerous native species

Ratty returns

After an absence of 50 years you should soon be able to catch a glimpse of water voles in Malham Tarn if walking that popular area..

This year after work to restore the tarn and remove pollution the National Trust is to release sixty or more to try and re-establish a population with another release planned for next year.



The National Forest Company is celebrating its first 25 years and has succeeded in showing that a healthy natural environment can stimulate economic growth and regenerate whole communities. It has been pioneering new approaches and promoting innovation and the challenge of the next 25 years is to move on as a now fairly mature forest in a different financial climate. The first step along this road was taken last spring when they became a charitable trust.

8.5 million trees have been planted; forest cover has more than tripled; we have miles of new paths, bridleways and cycleways and the 75 mile National Forest Trail. Over 200 hectares of new wildlife friendly habitat has been created; nearly 100km of new hedgerows and 150 ponds.

As part of the celebration, residents and visitors to the Forest are invited to submit material to show what it means to live, work and spend time in The National Forest. They want to get a snapshot of what the Forest means to people; is it where you socialise? Is it where you take your child to playgroup, walk your dog or stroll with friends or family? Does your sport or leisure activity bring you to the Forest?

They're looking for the personal and quirky, photos and stories of the landscape, the people, the environment - anything that illustrates what you love about the Forest. Do you regularly go past a tree and watch it through the seasons, or walk down a street and see the woodlands at the edge of the village? Do you have video clips of your kids having fun in the Forest? Share it with them and it can be part of the My National Forest project and become part of an online gallery.

It can be posted via the website; videos and music can be posted to YouTube and the link shared, and your stories and anecdotes about the Forest will be part of the My National Forest blog.

Go to www.nationalforest.org/mynationalforest to find out more.

Changes to our Footpath Network since the last edition of Write-of-Way

Charnwood.

I48 Cossington.

A small diversion around a sports pitch at Ratcliffe College.

I84 Syston.

Extinguishment of a section of path running parallel to Millstone Lane. This part of the path has not existed for at least 40 years..

J53 Wanlip.

Diversion to put path around northern field boundary to make way for Severn Trent site expansion.

J110 South Croxton.

The addition of a small path in the centre of the village linking School Lane to footpath J3a that has been in use for many years.

Harborough District.

B11, B14 Tur Langton.

Small diversion to B14 putting it onto a track instead of cross field. This order also move the line of path B11 which has been blocked by two silos' for many years.

Hinckley and Bosworth.

T95 Peckleton.

Small diversion around Meadow View Farm School. The diversion addresses security relating to the farm and resolves long standing mapping issues.

Melton Borough.

G52 Harby

Small Diversion to take path onto line used for many years (definitive line ran through the middle of a house)

G21 Plungar.

Two small diversions, one onto a track and the other around a new menage.

F72 Bottesford.

A small diversion which was confirmed by the Secretary of State back in 2015 but which has only just come into force.

North West Leicestershire.

N49, R22, O22, N110 Bardon.

Confirmation of the latest alterations around the Bardon Quarry site.

BEST KEPT FOOTPATH

This is an annual competition to thank those landowners making an effort to keep our footpaths in good condition. We are excluding paths maintained by local authorities as they have a duty to properly maintain them. The arrangements have been agreed with the National Farmers Union and nominations are welcome from landowners and members or the general public. Each constituent group in the Area is asked to nominate at least one each year.

Nominations should be advised as discovered but will close each year on Jul 31st to allow time for judging during the growing season and before the weather closes in.

Please make your suggestion either direct to our Footpaths Officer or via your group

In addition to the landowner / manager of the winning path receiving a framed certificate and notices to go on the path other paths may be given Highly Commended certificates

The winner is announced at our AGM at the start of the following year

John Blunt and the Staunton Harold Estate have been presented with the award for 2015 for the Staunton Ridgeway

We have had a good number of nominations this year and the judging is now underway.

The picture is of Tony Smith, the Chairman of the Area presenting the framed certificate

The Ridgeway is a permissive route opened in 1994 and the judges said it was still maintained in an excellent state.

On receiving the reward John said he was delighted to receive it and would always encourage walkers to come and enjoy the wonderful countryside they have to offer. They now have seven walking routes starting from the area of the hall and the Ferrers Centre.



The Ridgeway itself is about 3k long but links up with a public footpath to Melbourne and a number of interesting circular walks can be undertaken. The excellent tea rooms in the Ferrers centre are very welcome on your return.

You can walk between Staunton Harold and the nearby Calke Abbey, owned by the National Trust. Thousand of people visit Calke which can sometimes be unpleasantly crowded and the Ferrers centre and the estate can give a more relaxing experience with the lakes and lovely countryside.

The Ferrers Centre has several skilled craftspeople working under one roof including a blacksmiths' shop, and there is also a large Gallery and a Gift Shop

Staunton Harold is in the extreme north west of Leicestershire, and lies in a beautiful area of wooded rolling hills with several outstanding historical and scenic features. It overlooks two lakes and includes a church, former stables (now converted to craft shops, workshops, gallery and tearoom) a nursery and estate cottages.

Harold was a Saxon owner, but William the Conqueror gave the estate to Henry de Ferraris (later Earl Ferrers) and in 1423 it passed by marriage to the Shirleys. Charles II made Sir Robert Shirley a baron, and Queen Anne restored the Earldom. The present house is of about 1770, but includes parts of two earlier houses. The church appears to be 15th century, but was actually built in 1653 during the Commonwealth and is unique.

In more recent times the house was saved from demolition by Leonard Cheshire and became eventually, a Sue Ryder home before being bought by the Blunts in 2003. They already owned much of the surrounding estate. The Church and the historic 'Golden Gates' are owned by the National Trust.

CHARNWOOD FOREST

The Charnwood Forest Regional Park steering group are developing a new Landscape Partnership bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund by 1 June 2017.

If successful, it will deliver around £3 million worth of projects to protect and celebrate the natural and cultural heritage of Charnwood Forest between 2020 and 2025

A number of your RA officers are assisting with the preparation of the bid as if successful it should protect an area we love to walk and protect it from encroachment

The money will need to be spent on projects which meet HLF criteria:

Charnwood's heritage, which will be:

- better managed
- in better condition
- identified/recorded

People, who will have:

- developed skills
- learnt about heritage
- volunteered time

Communities, which will have:

- negative environmental impacts reduced
- more people and a wider range of people engaged with heritage
- a better place to live, work or visit

The Partnership want your views:

1. What do you love most about Charnwood Forest's natural and cultural heritage? (see below for what HLF mean by "heritage")
2. What would you like the project to do in Charnwood Forest?

Please e-mail your responses to: charnwoodbid@nationalforest.org

or post to:

Charnwood Bid, National Forest Company, Bath Yard, Moira, Derbys DE12 6BA

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We would consider ancient rights of way to be historical features and will be pressing that projects reflect this and where possible get them reinstated. We also consider that a major part of the bid should be to encourage more people from more places to visit more of the Park. If people are to care about it and protect it first they have to know and enjoy it.

If anybody can suggest any missing links in the the network worthy of some research please let any area officer know and if possibly interested in searching old archives please make yourself known

In responding to the bid partnership you don't have to give them your details but it might help them develop your idea further if they can talk to you about it.

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What is Heritage? (according to the Heritage Lottery Fund)

Heritage includes many different things from the past that we value and want to pass on to future generations, for example:

- 1 natural heritage including habitats, species and geology;
- 2 surviving or lost historic features and buildings;
- 3 archaeological sites, earthworks, features and deposits;
- 4 cultural traditions (stories, festivals, crafts, music, dance and costumes);
- 5 histories of people and communities
- 6 histories of places & events and features created to commemorate them;
- 7 traditional and local heritage skills and industries;
- 8 the heritage of languages and dialects;
- 9 semi-natural and designed landscapes and gardens;
- 10 people's memories and experiences 'oral history' or spoken history);
- 11 objects, books or documents in museums, libraries or archives; and
- 12 places and objects linked to our industrial, maritime and transport history.

WALKING ENVIRONMENT UPDATE

COASTAL ACCESS

The provision of the right to access the length of the English coast is progressing nicely. Natural England has a statutory duty under the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009 to improve access to the English coast. The duty is in two parts: one relating to securing a long-distance walking route around the whole coast: we call this the England Coast Path; the other relating to a margin of coastal land associated with the route where people will be able to spread out and explore, rest or picnic in appropriate places. The most valuable and unusual situation with this coastal 'path' is that the area would be able to 'roll back' as the cliffs erode or slip, solving longstanding difficulties with maintaining a continuous route on this stretch of coast. They are establishing a 2,700 mile continuous path around the entire English coastline targeted to be finished by 2020. Work is already under way on more than half the path.

Natural England has set up eight delivery teams around the country to work closely with local authorities, land owners and occupiers, communities, interest groups and others to ensure the best and most appropriate alignment for the new coast path.

Back in March 2016 Natural England submitted to the Secretary of State a coastal access report relating for the 8 mile (13km) stretch of land between Newport Bridge and North Gare, Teesside. The Secretary of State has announced her approval but the formal order is still awaited. Similarly and not quite as advanced, in July Natural England submitted its report and proposals to the Secretary of State for coastal access for the 61 miles (98km) stretch of the coast between Gretna and Allonby, Cumbria.

Also in July the new right of coastal access was opened on a 42 mile (67km) stretch of the coast between Camber, East Sussex and Ramsgate, Kent and on a 68 mile (110km) stretch of the coast between Filey Brigg and Newport Bridge, North Yorkshire and Teesside.

Earlier in the year some of Somerset's most spectacular coastline opened to the public for the first time – 58 miles of new and improved coast path from Brean Down to Minehead. Walkers can enjoy several new sections of path between Watchet and East Quantoxhead, which opens up spectacular new views over the Bristol Channel. Somerset Wildlife Trust has also provided seven new interpretation boards along the stretch, to reveal more about the stunning wildlife and landscape features that walkers will be able to see and enjoy along the Somerset coast. This new access joins existing coastal footpaths to create a stretch of high-quality, well-signposted coastal National Trail

More detail of progress and the parts now open with maps, can be seen at;
<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/england-coast-path-improving-public-access-to-the-coast>

There is some confusion about what can and cannot be done on this open access land around our coast.

In simple terms people can access these areas to walk or run, climb, watch the wild life and generally sightsee. They cannot ride a horse or bicycle, drive a vehicle (unless it is an invalid carriage), bring an animal, other than a dog, camp, play organised games, hang-glide or paraglide, light, cause or risk a fire, leave litter, use a metal detector, remove, damage, or destroy any plant, shrub, tree or root with intent, damage hedges, fences, walls, crops or anything else on the land, leave gates open, that are not propped or fastened open, disturb livestock, wildlife or habitats with intent or post any notices. Some of these activities may be permitted with the landowners consent, or if allowed by the law on footpaths, bridleways and other public rights of way, or the right to do something exists already.

There is a general rule that visitors using their open access rights must keep dogs on a short lead of no more than 2 metres between 1 March and 31 July each year (except in the coastal margin) and at all times in the vicinity of livestock. In the coastal margin, dogs must be under effective control at all times. In some circumstances landowners may be entitled to exclude people with dogs completely from small lambing fields.

AREA WALK

Thanks to the Lutterworth Group for two excellent walks.



32 souls set off in cool and overcast conditions and walked little used paths round the Foxton and Gumley areas. For those of us familiar with walking in the Himalayas it brought back memories. No, not the tremendous summits nor the grand scenery, the elevation or the long treks in. But a very creditable imitation of a monsoon.

Walks of 5 and 8 miles set off together to walk the flight of locks and head off into the countryside before splitting up into the two groups

There were members present from a number of groups



HELP!

We are now in a position to start serious research for unrecorded ways in danger of being lost for ever

Together with members from The Leicestershire Footpaths Association, The British Horse Society, The Leicestershire & Rutland Bridleways Association and the Ramblers Association, the Leicestershire Local Access Forum has set up a working group to delve into old records for those paths which have fallen into disuse but would enhance today's network if restored and given legal protection.

If you feel you might wish to get involved please contact any Area Officer. We can initially discuss possibilities over the phone or face to face but are to set up a meeting early next year for all interested parties when the various ways members can help will be explored and a demonstration given of what it could entail. If you make yourself known we will advise further details as they are finalised

We have identified thousands of unprotected paths but have narrowed down the list to those which will rely on historic evidence and which would be of real value today. Finding evidence to support a claim may well involve online research and / or going through the old files at the Leicestershire County Records Office and other archives. These include old Inclosure Act papers and Tithe and Inland Revenue maps etc.

A number of tasks could be done in your own home, e.g. comparing old and new maps

For background see following pages

After several years of preparing the ground we now need help on specific cases. There are lots of tasks which can be done. Some are easily done at home and many in bite sized chunks but if you get the bug there are opportunities for fascinating deep research.

We have now laid out a programme to handle this. It is being overseen by a committee of the Leicestershire Local Access Forum where we are well represented and which has co-opted members from other organisations.

Having identified likely routes from gaps in the network and applied a 'public benefit' test to prioritise our next task is to find an indication of a possible route from historical sources.

When we start acquiring evidence we have a check list for researchers to use when doing detailed research and a spread sheet on which the information will be collated. We will probably introduce some form of brownie points system to score the weight of material and those routes coming out highest are the ones where expect to be able to submit a claim (Map Modification Order application) We are starting a list of people who might be interested in helping even if in only a small way and possibly only working from home. We then hope to arrange a gathering and training session when we will explain in more detail the various tasks required. This meeting will hopefully be in April 2017.

Our work to date has suggested top targets to start on including the Vale of Belvoir, Stathern, Cotes, Isley-cum-Langley, Waltham, Kibworth Beauchamp, Thurmaston, Woodhouse, Scalford, Somerby, Colleorton and Sutton Cheney. There are likely to be many more but we intend to ask volunteers to just tackle bite sized bits. If you would like more information or might be interested please also indicate any area of the county where you would be especially keen to research. We will then retain your details and contact you when we are ready to set up the meeting.

Many of the prioritised routes are dead end paths where there is an implication they must have continued and some are just connections where common sense suggests there would have been a route.

Three of the Committee have just attended a national meeting in Birmingham which was rather a disappointment. Nothing being done or suggested elsewhere was new to us and we appear ahead of the field. Certainly our IT support and recording system devised locally by our team is way ahead of anything being used elsewhere and apparently beyond the capacity of Central Office to roll out for the whole country.

Working with the Local Access Forum we now have a committed core team but there will be hundreds of little jobs where more help will be very welcome. Volunteers can do as much or as little as they wish; can do some jobs at home or on the ground or by visiting the archives. Those who have delved into the historic archives can get hooked. - Be warned it is fascinating and addictive

BACKGROUND TO RESEARCH ON HISTORIC ROUTES NEEDING PROTECTION

Section 53 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 provides that footpaths and bridleways in existence on 1 January 1949 but not on the definitive map by the end of 2025 will be extinguished, subject to possible safeguards yet to be agreed but probably including claims made but not yet determined.

That seemed a long enough period of time but the task has proved enormous and almost half that time has been spent just deciding how it could be tackled and 2025 will be on us before we know it. Our late lamented President the former MP David Taylor once said “ If it weren’t for the last minute, nothing would ever get done”. Well as far as this project goes if we are to get the work done, the last minute is upon us!

It is imperative that we now carry out research to enable us to make applications for unrecorded paths to be put on the definitive map of rights of way if we are not to lose them for ever. Many of us will not see the benefits but if our children and grandchildren are to enjoy a network of off road routes we need to be acting now.

Few people realise how many paths are not protected. Thousands of alleyways in urban areas are technically at risk as are paths shown on OS maps as ‘ORPAS’ (other routes with public access). We are treating these as low priorities as by their usage a claim could be made on different grounds and the cut off date will probably not affect them.

There are hundreds of definitive map anomalies which Highways Authorities are slowly working through such as the actual path being the other side of a hedge or stream than is shown on the legal map or a house having been built and a path ‘informally’ re-routed around it. There is normally a route in actual use so again they are lower priority. Some of the anomalies are of concern though, often where paths both approach a parish boundary from both directions but as drawn, do not actually quite meet. Some recorded paths exit onto what appear to be private roads with no formal public access and if these are not claimed the official path ceases to have any purpose. Paths do exist which follow a stream which is a boundary but where just a short stretch it switches banks into a different parish, that parish never recorded that bit.

There is a National Gazetteer and all authorities should have ‘lists of streets’ and anything appearing there may have protection although that is not entirely clear. We have been checking these lists of streets to see whether routes are recorded there and if they are, again they are low priority.

Our major concern however is paths not only not protected, but not visible on the ground and therefore not used. Paths fall into disuse when their purpose ceases. Old paths to churches, mills or ferries that no longer exist, stopped having a purpose and vanished.

As new development spring up however, many of these would be of great use today. Other gaps in the network would just greatly improve that network as a whole and it is often obvious from the line of two paths that at one time they must have been joined.

Given the 'Once a path, always a path' rule these still legally exist and unless there was a specific statute extinguishing them they can now be claimed on historic evidence but only until cut off date. Hence the need to search for the evidence which is where volunteers can help. There are numerous places where this may be found. We have set up a database where notes of what is found can be stored and attached to maps we have already created showing where we think paths probably existed. These maps and notes can be provided to researchers. We have also allocated reference numbers to these routes to ensure we all know what we are referring to.

Many old records are in the County Archive at Wigston. These include Enclosure Acts which defined what were then paths, and the documents produced for the Finance Act 1910 which allowed the Inland Revenue to tax increases in value of land when it changed ownership. Each property was numbered with its boundary shown on an Ordnance Survey map and these plottings were known as valuation maps. They were normally at a very useful 1:2500 scale and detailed in 'field books'. This is invaluable to us, as where there was a footpath, they could claim a discount against the value and that is good evidence that they acknowledged that there was a path there. Also these maps had blanks where land was unvalued, as exempt from taxation. The 1910 act exempted highway authorities and so if a track on the map is unvalued, it is probable it carried vehicular rights. All white roads can be checked against a modern map, and any that are missing can hopefully be claimed.

There are lots of other old documents which can help. Quarter Sessions minutes, railways and canal acts etc may all refer to nearby paths which all helps build up a case that the path did exist. Old Tithe maps are another valuable source of information.

The working group intend to approach other organisations working on the same issues to ensure we coordinate our research and do not duplicate our efforts. This will include the history societies, heritage groups and the Open Spaces Society etc.

We have the full support of the County Councils as they have a legal obligation to research these and just do not have the manpower or financial resources to do the work themselves.

This can be fascinating research. Regardless of what we are actually looking for, digging into these old records can turn up some real surprises and snippets of important history. It may not be for you but why not come and see what is involved and give it a try. You can decide not to get involved but everybody I know who has started prying into our past has become hooked on it.

Roy Denney