SOAR FEET

Summer 2020: Lockdown Issue

We have all found recent months difficult for a whole range of reasons and will have all felt and managed the impacts and restrictions in different ways. I hope that you, and your loved ones, have all managed to keep well and safe throughout.

This issue of Soar Feet is the first that will not be posted out to members, unless they have requested that this should continue. However, it is more obviously characterised by a lack of content relating to our usual activities.

You will know that the Ramblers suspended all group activities from Wednesday 18 March until the end of June but have now said that small group walks in England can resume from 1st July for groups who want to do so. Having considered the restrictions associated with running such walks, and that they will benefit very few members (leader plus five walkers), the Committee have decided not to offer walks at the present time. This decision will be reviewed in line with changing government guidelines and Ramblers Association's requirements. Group members will be informed by email when walks are due to restart. The latest information from the Ramblers can be found on https://www.ramblers.org.uk/coronavirus.

For many of us, getting out for a walk has been one of the releases that has helped to maintain our sanity, particularly given the wonderful weather we had during the first couple of months. A number of the group have written descriptions of lockdown walks on their local patch (page 5-8) from the earlier stages of lockdown, before we were permitted to take unlimited exercise and could officially venture further afield. Dave Twigg, who manages the group webpages, has also started to collect and upload previous group walks. Our thanks go to Dave for providing what will be a very useful resource to allow us to find and modify routes for our own use, display them on OS maps and download the routes. Dave describes this resource and other changes to the website on page 2.

The social programme has also taken a hit. The skittles evening did take place at the end of February but the walking holiday in the Lake District had to be cancelled. This was a big disappointment to those of us anticipating some excellent hill walking but we express our gratitude to Sue Mears who, having put so much effort to organise the trip, then had to liaise with HF and the group to unravel the arrangements and book a trip for next May. There are still a few spare places; details are on page 3.

Footpath Closures

The Ramblers has received an increasing number of queries from people concerned about landowners closing paths close to where they live.

Under existing legislation, Local Authorities in **England** cannot close footpaths for public health reasons without the government passing emergency regulation, nor can landowners close footpaths which run across their land. Should walkers come across a public right of way that has been closed or blocked, it can be reported directly to the local highway authority (county councils or unitary authorities). Links are available on our website to report issues in the counties where we regularly walk or to email, Stuart, our footpath officer. {link}

Dates for the Calendar

Whitby Long Weekend Away:
7-10th May 2021 at HF Larpool Hall
Details on page 3

Your Soar Feet

I hope that you find something of interest in this newsletter. It would be great to receive suggestions of what you might like to see included, but also possible contributions; an interesting find or a quirky/amusing photo taken on a local walk?

Please send to ted.wells12@gmail.com.

Unattributed articles are by the editor

Website changes

Some lockdown time has been used in recent weeks to add the following new options to the website. The first three can be found under *Leader Resources* on the main menu and, as always, the best way to find out what the new options have to offer is to go on the website and start clicking! Help is available on the relevant pages.

Plots of previous walks

If you want ideas for independent walks or just want to look back on previous walks, then this mapping option uses gpx files of some of our previous walks to

- display a map of their locations
- list the routes in a table which can be filtered by leader, title, distance or ascent
- display each route with different map backgrounds, including OS
- display the route profile and elevations of points along the route
- save the route to a gpx file for use with your gps device/app
- print each route with a chosen map background

At present there are 62 walks in the database and hopefully more will be added in the near future.

Plot your own walk

If you want to create your own route or adapt an existing gpx file then this mapping option lets you

- upload and display an existing gpx file
- create a new route by clicking on screen
- edit the route
- reverse the direction of the route
- display the route profile and elevations of points along the route
- save the route as a gpx file for use with your gps device/app
- print your route with a chosen map background

Lockdown walks

This is similar to the *Plots of previous walks* option but was created to accompany the article in this edition of Soar Feet. At present, it contains 3 walks and more could be added in future.

Walks programme

A new option has been added to the *Walks* menu that combines all the previous display formats (drop-down details, table, list or map of locations) on a single screen for you to select the one you prefer, and also contains a filter module to allow you to select which walks you want to display (by dates, day, distance or grade). The printing and *Calendar download* options are both still available. When we start walking again and there are walks to display I will get some feedback as to which of the display formats you prefer.

Dave Twigg

Charnwood Forest Development Park

The Charnwood Forest Development Park is a partnership of local authorities, agencies, user groups and land management organisations working together to manage and promote the unique cultural and heritage features of the area. The Partnership has recently developed a bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund and has been awarded around £3 million for projects over a 2-year period.

Some projects are designed to celebrate the internationally important volcanic legacy and that means making the heritage more resilient to growing pressures by dispersing people to explore the rich landscape and diverse heritage of the whole Park area and not just the honey pots that are currently overrun at times. Visitors will be encouraged to spread out by the installation of facilities which in turn contribute to the local economy.

There is to be a deeper engagement with residents and visitors to encourage a greater sense of local pride.

From our rambling point of view there are to be projects made to increase and ease access and to find ways to link up footpaths to reduce the use of cars. We have contributed our suggestions in this respect when the Plan was being compiled. The Ramblers Association Leicestershire and Rutland Area Committee continues to have representation on the partnership.

Their motto is “Made by volcanoes, shaped by people”. Let’s hope the current people shape it to suit our interests.

Sue Bicknell

Social News Summer 2020

Sue Mears, Social Secretary

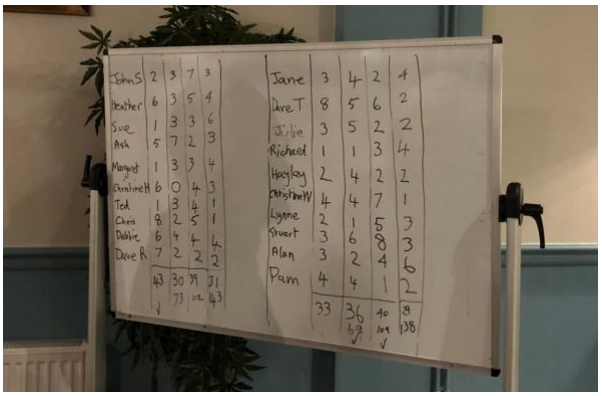
Skittles Evening

This was our first social event of the year. It was held on Friday 31st January, at the Soar Bridge Inn in Barrow upon Soar.



Twenty of us gathered together for an exciting evening of intense competition! It followed the usual pattern of two teams taking turns to get the highest score over four rounds. John Samson, to his amazement, headed the winning team. His team were rewarded with numerous chocolates which were then distributed to the losing team in order to keep their morale up!!

After a delicious supper, the action continued with a knockout game which was eventually won by Christine, a great individual effort from her and she was well rewarded for her efforts with more chocolates!



As you can see, members tempted to attend future events shouldn't be put off by the level of competition and the high-scoring games! -Ed

The evening was a great success in that it brought together our friendly group of walkers for an evening out. A big thank you to all those who helped make the evening successful by putting up the knocked-down skittles and monitoring the scoreboard!

Derwent Bank April 2020

This year our holiday was going to be in the Lake District at the HF house of Derwent Bank. We had planned to have a long weekend from the 24th to the 27th April.

However, unfortunately the holiday did not go ahead due to the Coronavirus lockdown. It was a real disappointment for the group not to be walking over the hills and around the lovely lakes, the weather would have been glorious!

We will hopefully book a holiday again to the Lake District in the near future.

Next year we are off to Whitby, let's hope that we can enjoy the delights of a walking holiday together again. If you are interested in joining this group trip, then please get in touch.

Details of Whitby Holiday 2021

Weekend of 7th May to 10th May 2021.

Accommodation at HF Holiday's Larpool Hall.

There will be a choice of long or short walks on the Saturday and Sunday.

Short walks on Friday afternoon and Monday morning.

The cost will be £285, this covers all meals and also picnic lunches on Saturday and Sunday.



Whitby, without the anticipated blue skies.

There are a few places available. If you are interested in going, then please get in touch with Sue Mears, Social Secretary.

susanmears16@gmail.com

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Meet the Member: Chris Rimbault

Chris joined the Ramblers in August 2018. He walks regularly with the Loughborough group and now leads walks for us.

I was born in Cardiff, but as a child, we moved around a lot with my father's job. I lived in Towyn, Merionethshire, Cardiff, Newcastle-Upon-Tyne and at the age of eight, moved to Middlesex. After finishing my A levels, I went to Portsmouth College of Technology to do an external University of London degree in Physics. After graduation, I joined Olivetti and subsequently spent 50 years in IT. During this time, I worked for Nixdorf twice, (during the second period, it was taken over by Siemens), Target Furniture in Northampton and two periods of self-employment.

When I was working in Cardiff in 1975, I met my future wife who was working as a senior sister in the University Hospital of Wales. After we were married, we moved to Windsor where our son, Andrew, was born. In 1980 we moved to Chesham, located in the beautiful Chiltern Hills, and subsequently on to Wokingham. It was there that Andrew was diagnosed as autistic.

In 2001 my wife was diagnosed with oesophageal cancer. After surgery, five days in intensive care and a period of recuperation she had nine good months before the cancer returned; she died in April 2003.

Andrew and I moved to Mountsorrel in 2007. I have since managed to organise Andrew to live in his own house.

I retired in 2013 but continued to some work at Target furniture and did so until the lockdown. By the time I retired, my mother was unable to look after herself properly and she moved to a care home in Rothley where I could ensure that she was well looked after

After my mother passed away, I joined the U3A and started walking with them. I had always enjoyed walking but had not been on any organised walks. I subsequently joined the Zimmy walks (monthly group walks in Derbyshire from April to October) and the Ramblers. I thought the Zimmy walks were challenging until some of the Ramblers' longer weekend walks.

I have now been on three group walking holidays. The first to the Julian Alps in Slovenia. The week was split between Kronjska Gora and Lake Bohinj with a day at Lake Bled. The walks were among pine forests around areas popular for skiing in the winter. The next was to La Palma in the Canaries which is very green in the north with many volcanic craters in the south. We spent a week going up and down volcanoes, culminating in 1000 metres climb to the top of the island at 2426 metres, the site of an astronomical observatory.



Walking in La Palma

My most recent trip was to La Gomera where the walks are mainly on very steep rocky paths.

In 2016 I finally purchase my French house which had been a dream for years. I bought in Languedoc because of the fine weather and much lower prices than the Cote d'Azur. My house is in Argeliers, near Narbonne and Beziers and about 40 minutes from the Mediterranean It's only an hour from Carcassonne which has flights from East Midlands during the summer. It is on the Canal du Midi, completed in the late 17th century and linking the Atlantic and Mediterranean.

It is available for rent; more details can found by entering "La vieille boulangerie Argeliers" into a search engine.



La Vieille Boulangerie.

During lockdown I have concentrated on exercising and trying to improve my French. It will be interesting to see whether my French will be better when I use it in France. As soon as possible, I want to drive down to my French house and sample the local produce again.



Members' Lockdown walks

Routes for these three walks can be viewed on Loughborough Ramblers website. Click here to display and select from either the list or the map tab. *See Dave's explanation on page 2*

Cossington Meadows Nature Reserve:
Ted and Christine

We have always felt fortunate to have Cossington Meadows on our doorstep, but this was particularly the case during the first, more restrictive phase of lockdown. The circuit described here is about three miles and can easily be accessed on foot from Rothley, Mountsorrel, Sileby and Cossington. Also, the wide paths and meadows readily lend themselves to social distancing. The reserve is managed by Leicestershire and Rutland Wildlife Trust but, as it is criss-crossed by rights of way, access to it is not restricted to permit-holders (unlike some of the reserves). We had always said that we should find time to walk it more regularly to observe it changing with the seasons; early during lockdown, we were walking there several times a week – be careful what you wish for!

The reserve has been shaped by restorative landscaping, following gravel extraction from the Soar flood plain, leaving a series of deep pools. The habitat has been improved by the formation of scrapes which are filled by the winter floods and slowly dry out through the summer.

We access the route from Rothley. The towpath west of the Soar provides an option to vary the walk, linking into our route after crossing the river at Sileby Mill. We cross the river, past Osier Villa, located on the island between the feeds from the lock and the weir and enter the reserve down a few steps on the left. Heron and little egret can often be seen fishing in the shallows below the bridge. We head along the river, past the old boat house, which has been turned into private moorings. There are shallow scrapes on the right. These come into their own in winter with an influx or ducks and waders. Today, there were a few teal and lapwings with chicks. About half a mile into the walk, the path loops around an Island which has old boats tied at a landing stage and shows occasional signs of habitation. It is difficult to uncover any information about this online. Ahead is a reed bed which takes up a much of of Moor Pool. In some previous winters, this has been a substantial starling roost giving rise to impressive murmurations; unfortunately,

not over the last few years. At this point we turn right around the reeds. We started adopting this figure of eight route back in May to increase the chance of hearing the lone nightingale singing (very rare in Leicestershire) in the trees ahead, just off the main path. We heard it, but didn't see it, on several occasions.



Reserve map (taken from information board)



View over Upper Marsh.

This spring, the reedbeds, hedgerows and trees of the reserve have been alive with birdsong courtesy of a wide variety of migrant and resident songbirds. Backtracking slightly, we turn right and head north between the reed beds along the edge of Tern Pool, and views of two more lakes between the trees to the right. A few common terns have now arrived and can be seen acrobatically fishing on these pools; no kingfishers at all this year. Going through the gate ahead we enter Barber's Rough, a large pasture outside the reserve that appears to be sympathetically farmed in line with the surrounding area. We take the path toward the pipe bridge. Ahead is Sileby Mill and Marina and access to Mountsorrel and Sileby. However, we cut back and follow the river back into the reserve and, after passing the other side of Tern Pool, turn left, thus completing the top of the figure of eight. In the area around Moor Pool and Tern Pool you will frequently encounter the cattle that graze the reserve as part of its management. This role used to be fulfilled by hardy Exmoor ponies which seem to have been retired. Perhaps the cattle come with a financial benefit?



Cattle Grazing by Tern Pool

On reaching the main track, we turn right toward the main entrance. The track is now lined with well-established trees and hedgerows. During some winters, it has been an excellent place to see short-eared owls hunting over the surrounding pastures during late afternoon. Their success is dependent on vole numbers and probably influenced by the extent of winter flooding. A recent surprise sighting was a grass snake on the main path, almost trodden on by Christine as it disappeared into the undergrowth.

There is extensive parking on a large layby outside the main entrance (now that you can drive to take your unrestricted exercise), but we go through the gate behind the metal shed and

cross the meadows a short distance back to where we entered the reserve.

Old Dalby Park and the Vale. ***John Harper***

During lockdown, with no ceremonial duties to perform, 250 horses from the Household Cavalry have swapped London stables for Leicestershire countryside in some fields around Old Dalby. You too can enjoy these surroundings and see the horses on this lockdown walk.



Heading in a clockwise direction the walks starts with an unassuming public footpath from the Green down to the Crown public house where after your walk (depending on your timing) you might be able to call in for some welcome refreshment or food. This path formed part of a minor route during the Roman occupation of England linking the Fosse and Salt ways. The route soon turns left up Debdale Hill, on a steep gated road, before reaching the site of the long-demolished village windmill from where much of the village can be viewed. Crossing Longcliff Hill and following the Midshires Way, fine views open to reveal much of the Vale of Belvoir and its Castle. Turning right and leaving this national pathway, the way leads alongside hay fields and past some of those grazing horses before passing through a tunnel. Overhead is the once busy Nottingham / London rail line which, since 1970, has been used as a test track for various developments, including more recently London Underground and Cross Rail trains which you may well see running.

Beyond the tunnel the path splits. The left fork head towards Upper Broughton and can be taken for a longer walk but our route turns right back towards Old Dalby and the road from Queensway. After half a mile, a quick right and left leads to Paradise Lane and the entrance to the 'Park' just prior to the church. Here doubling back on the left is a privately-owned footpath marked for anglers use only but which has been well worn by locals over many years. Take this path past the picturesque fishpond used by monks and manor servants in days gone by, into an area of mature beech and oak trees, before linking once again with the public footpath which descends from Grimston and Dalby Woods. The route now leads across open rolling parkland back towards the village. Between the thirteenth and sixteenth century this was the site of a preceptor (monastery) of the Knights Hospitaller and the main centre of the village. Finally the route leads past the Derbyshire stone faced village church, built in 1835 to replace an earlier medieval version destroyed by fire. The clock is one of only two in Leicestershire which has a face on all four sides of the tower. It does not belong to the church but was purchased by the Parish using money which was given by the Lord of the Manor in compensation for the closure of a footpath. One hundred yards up Church Lane the walk ends back at the village green, unless of course the Crown beckons.

Lockdown discovery walk: ***Sue Bicknell***

A short distance from home there is a golf course which was closed around 5 years ago due to financial problems. I had not been near it as I understood it was to be used for housing. However, on a recent wander around, looking for new places and interesting features, I came to the perimeter. There were gates and paths running around and people walking. So, I set off to have a look and three miles later returned to my start point. On the way, I discovered that the area has been managed as a country park and has lovely variable scenery. I even spotted a manna ash tree in full flower and smelling so



Manna Ash in full bloom

sweet. It must have been imported and planted by the former clubhouse. Along one edge there has been industrial development (close by the

M1 junction 21a) and between these buildings and the golf course is a new reserve, complete with mown paths and a natural pond; another surprise. I will try and create a walk and show the area to you all in due course.

Meanwhile, while out walking in another area I had the first-time experience of having to cross a field occupied by llama. They were huge with very thick, long necks; much taller than me. I would not fancy being confronted by one. I'm pleased to report they didn't bother to stir themselves, but they did watch me all the time.

Loughborough University Campus Walk:

DaveTwigg

When lockdown started and some outdoor local spaces such as the Outwoods were closed to the public, an obvious place to go for my daily walk was the nearby Loughborough University campus. Apart from its academic buildings and student accommodation the extensive campus has plenty of open spaces, mainly due to the many and varied sporting facilities, formal and informal gardens, wildlife areas and ancient woodlands. This made it ideal for different walks each day and so I would just walk to the campus and then wander wherever my fancy took me, occasionally bumping into friends for a socially distanced chat. Eventually I developed a preferred longer route which took in many of the different aspects of the campus.

The route can be seen in this link and starts just off campus, outside Bom Bom Cafe on Derwent Drive, well worth a visit when it eventually reopens. The walk passes through, or close to all the following locations: Burleigh Court Conference Centre, Holywell sports pitches and University stadium, the domed observatory, the lake and fountains of Holywell Park Conference centre, the WEDC collection of hand pumps from around the world, the Pilkington Library, the athletics stadium, the James Watt beam engine outside the Students' Union, the Rutland and Hazlerigg buildings and fountain of the original campus, the Walled Garden and Garden of Remembrance, the communal garden project managed by the Students' Union Landscape and Gardening Society, and the Paddock pitch which apparently passes through the remains of an Iron Age hill fort. Along the way the walk passed between drifts of daffodils, camassia, crocuses and fritillaries, depending on timing, and detours can also be made to Burleigh and Holywell woods with their impressive displays of bluebells.

I have very recently discovered six walking routes around different parts of the campus that were created as part of the University centenary celebrations in 2009 and a further route of the Olympic Torch Walk that was added in 2012. The route maps and detailed information about the campus can be found in leaflets at this link.

Finally, although the University encourages community use of its facilities and amenities, please remember that the campus is private property with limited rights of way and that walking or exercising dogs is prohibited.

