

FROM THE CHAIRMAN

Welcome to the latest edition of our Group Newsletter!

In this issue we have details on how our walks programme is being enhanced, a very useful article on using the Ramblers mobile app, help for aspiring walk leaders and an article on our all important path maintenance activities. Plus the latest on our very popular series of walk booklets.

I am also pleased to say that our **Annual General Meeting** on 28th November was a great success. Not only do we have several new Committee members but we were also treated to a very informative and entertaining presentation on knee surgery from Chris Waller, fellow Ramblers member and orthopaedic surgeon (with pictures!).

Our **Group Committee** now comprises the following members:

Chairman	Phil Hutchins
Secretary	Jane Barnes
Treasurer	Carolyn Bouckley
Membership Secretary	Jennifer Day
Programme Planner (Weekday)	Alan Alper
Programme Planner (Sunday)	Liz Penn
Footpath Secretary	Charles Penn
Social Secretaries	Jane Owen and Jill Sutton
Area Representative	Charles Penn
Committee Member	Rob Perrin
Committee Member	Peter Westmacott

South Wilts Ramblers Group is now the largest group in Wiltshire. I have no doubt that this is largely due to so many of you contributing to our excellent walks programme and also for providing such welcoming company for new

members. I am keen that we continue our success into 2024 with a wide and varied programme of well run walks that all of our members can enjoy.

In the meantime, I wish you all a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.
Happy rambling!

Phil Hutchins

WHERE TO FIND OUR WALKS

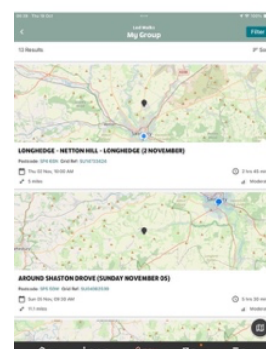
Back to basics. A summary especially for new and potential members.

Printed programmes are a thing of the past and now our walks can be accessed from 3 sources. Each one currently has a minor irritation highlighted in blue below.

1.

From the Ramblers app on your smartphone or tablet only.

Download the app and sign in. Your device should remember you next time.
Click: *Walking-Led Walks-My Group-list view icon* near bottom left corner on the map
Scroll down to find the date you're looking for. Your walk appears on the map above along with some details.
Click on the walk and a description with further details will appear.



The leader's name and contact details won't appear if they haven't given permission on the Assemble section of the Ramblers website. The walk leader will display to default - me! I'm *not* leading the walk on 4 Jan.

Currently only walks in the coming 4 weeks appear.

Cancelled walks don't always show as cancelled!

And currently the choice of photos may seem eccentric - my walk for 31 Dec shows the wiring inside my shower unit - and I can't delete it.

So the app is best avoided unless you're a walk leader using it to take a register.

2.

From the Ramblers National Website accessible on any device including your computer.

Go to www.ramblers.org.uk and click the 3 bars icon in the top right-hand corner. Sign in.

Save the email and password for a faster sign in next time. Click *My Account*.

Under *Manage your groups* click *My Groups* and then click *South Wiltshire Group*

Scroll down to *upcoming walks and events*.

This time scroll sideways to find the date you're looking for. Here you will find walks further ahead than on the previous programme. Click on a walk. Now further details appear including a map showing the starting point and the leader's contact details.

3.

From our group's own website

You can access this from Ramblers national website. Sign in as before.

Go to *My Groups* and click *South Wiltshire Group*. In the green panel click on the link to to our website.

Or you can go there directly. [The \(rather long\) web address](http://www.wiltsswindonramblers.org.uk) is at the end of this newsletter.

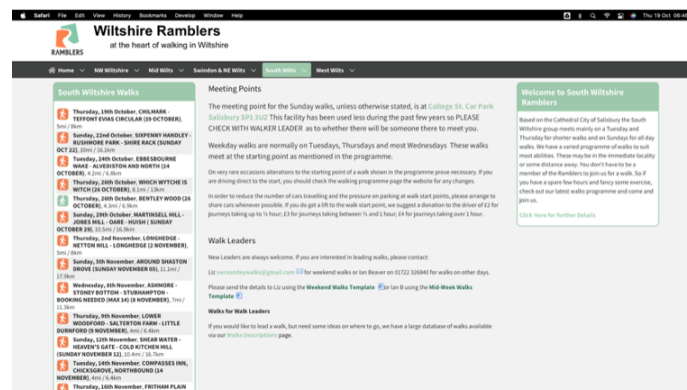
It's www.wiltsswindonramblers.org.uk.

Bookmark it!

Here you can find all our walks listed just as they were in the days of the printed programme! **But not past ones.**

Click on a walk for more details.

It's probably the best of the 3 options.



Alan A

OUR WALKS PROGRAMME

We offer as great a range of walks in our weekly programme as any other group in the country. In order to continue to do so we're in constant need of new walk leaders to replace the ones who retire from active service.

We're aiming to make it as easy and enjoyable as possible for you to lead our walks.

Jane Owen has previously offered to advise new leaders on their first walk. She has kindly offered to do so again.

Please contact her if you'd like to give it a try. janeelizabethowen@gmail.com

It's England so the worst that can happen if you get lost is being late for the pub.



However, somewhat irritatingly, when you go back to the walks, you have to start scrolling again from the beginning.

Gobi Desert. Getting lost here would seriously spoil your day.



SIGNING UP TO LEAD WALKS

There is now a spreadsheet for you to see and hopefully fill in vacant slots in our monthly programme. All your walk details can be added there too. It will be checked before uploading to the online programme. You can copy and paste it into your browser from the Word version of this newsletter and it will shortly appear on our website:

<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/185YnZXGknoVb2FnZcMbswKJqk6xe5BGXd2NpYLqP9uI/edit?usp=sharing>

The spreadsheet updates automatically every time it's used – so no need to save or send anything. Plus of course you can instantly see which days remain to be covered.

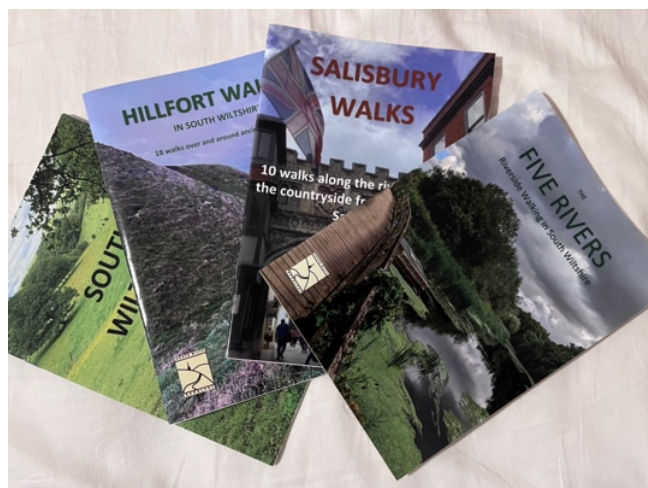
However, regular walk leaders are welcome to use or continue using the tried and tested templates. A single revised and user friendly version for both Sunday and weekday walks will shortly be available to download from our local website. In the meantime just complete any of the templates and send it to Liz (for Sunday walks) or Alan (midweek) and we'll let you know if your date is OK and fill in your name on the spreadsheet for you so others can see that slot is filled. If you're unhappy with online forms you can also simply email us your proposed walk details.

Grant W has further enhanced the process by suggesting the addition of a gpx file option. With a single click in the cell on the Google spreadsheet everyone can now view a route on OS maps both before and after the walk. If a link appears in the walks programme you can paste it into your browser and again see the route.

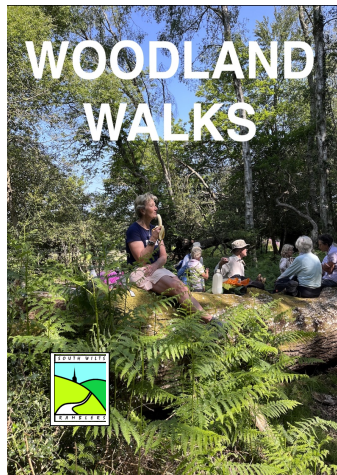
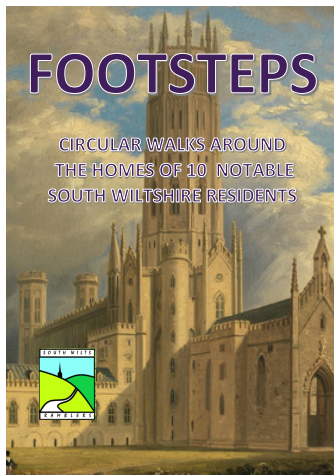
Finally Chris Riches has produced an alternative, much simplified risk assessment. It will shortly be available to view or download from our website.

Liz & Alan (walks coordinators)

OUR BOOKLETS



Our group has produced 4 walks booklets and there's one we'll publish early next year "Footsteps". A final booklet will appear in 2025 "Woodland Walks".



They're self-financing and actually boost our funds a little. Currently they're sold mainly in the Salisbury Tourist Information Centre, Museum and Library. I supply these Salisbury outlets.

However, I look with envy at the success of the Tisbury Walking Group in selling their 2 booklets by means of one person distributing them to village shops and other outlets in their area which cheekily includes Salisbury.

Could I appeal for 3 people to do the same with our booklets?

to the north - based on Amesbury and Devizes

to the east - New Forest villages

to the south - based on Downton

to the west - based on Dinton and Tisbury

Jane Owen is taking this one on.

All you'd need to do is show our booklets in places they might be sold and if they agree to take some, give them my contact details. I'll then get them to you or deliver them myself. Postage wipes out our profit. Our treasurer (Carolyn) will then bill them. Please let me know if you can help.

Alan alperalan8@gmail.com

FOOTPATH MAINTENANCE AND IMPROVEMENT

Each year we report to Ramblers on our work done by the Path Clearance Team, and by Heavy Gang. We are also asked to report on 'paths surveyed', but we don't formally do this as a discrete activity. We do however recce all of our walks at least once, and this comes to well over 1000Km of paths 'surveyed' in the year. These recces, as well as all our group and other walks, provide an excellent opportunity to identify areas where some clearance, maintenance or improvement is needed. For the Path Clearance Team in particular we rely on such feedback to guide us on where to go and when to best effect. The same principle applies to the Heavy Gang although there is a longer lead time from report to improvement as more planning is involved and equipment to procure.

For Path Clearance we would like to know about:

- Stretches with overgrown vegetation that severely impedes progress
- Stiles and gates obstructed by hedges, brambles, ivy etc.

Heavy Gang tasks typically involve replacing stiles with gates, boardwalks and footbridges, and substantial ground improvement or repair. As Footpath Secretary I am our Group's point of contact for all footpath problems.

Please send relevant information to me at swrfootpaths@gmail.com, which should include details of location, the problem that needs fixing, photograph(s), and if arising from a walk recce when the walk itself will happen.

We can't fix everything, as we are constrained by time, access and other resources, but it really helps to know where fellow Ramblers want to see improvements!

Please also see my article on how to report footpath problems to Wiltshire Council and to local parishes in the Spring 2023 Newsletter. Please do also report everything to Wiltshire Council.

Charles

SHORT SUNDAY WALKS

We're thinking of offering short Sunday morning walks next year. Everyone will be welcome but they'll be particularly suitable for dogs and accompanied children. Watch out for them in the walks programme.

Non-members can join up to 3 walks, so if you see one that appeals, come along with friends, family or neighbours. That way we can help introduce the next generation to country walking and possibly recruit some new members for our group.

The first walk will be on New Year's Eve in the Cathedral Close. There'll be an I-spy type quiz.



FUTURE NEWSLETTERS

This issue is about practical matters but it would be nice to have material of more general interest when space permits. Your photos would be especially welcome:

- snaps of your walking holidays?
- something that piqued your interest on a walk. A butterfly perhaps?
- an encounter with a bull?

No guarantee that they'll appear in the next newsletter but they'll certainly be held in reserve for future publication.

Other suggestions for the newsletter:

We all miss Richard Manchee's coffee break quizzes on his walks.

Could they be revived here?

You may also recall Richard's witty and sometimes provocative articles in the Salisbury Journal. Could they too be revived? His articles publicised our Group's walks and contributions to path maintenance. They raised awareness of the health benefits of walking, rights of way issues and many other walking-related topical matters.

So send in your copy for publication here first. If suitable for a wider readership and with your consent it can then be forwarded to The Journal and the free Salisbury & Avon Gazette.

Could we have your reviews and recommendations of

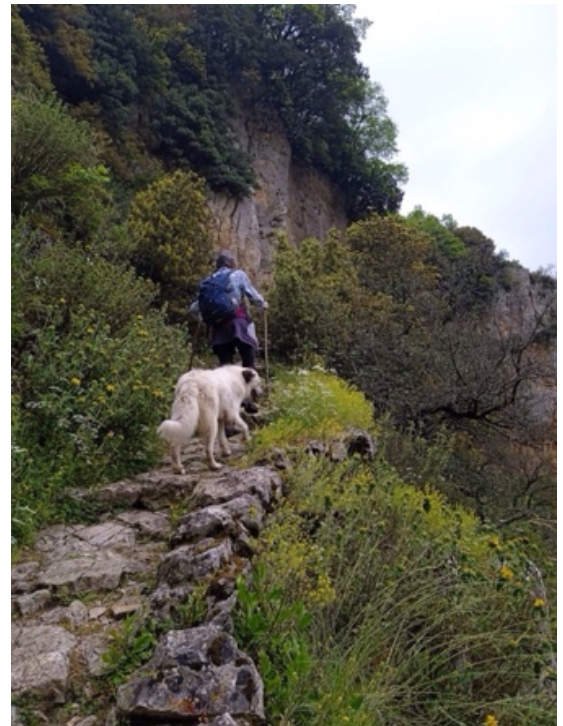
-walking gear?

-hikes and hiking holidays?

-holiday companies and regions you've visited?

Here's an example:

Vikos Gorge. N Greece.
An unspoilt and uncrowded walking region.



Nicky followed by a faithful friend (for the day) earlier this year.

By the way, although many people are rather antipathetic to social media, our Facebook page - see end of newsletter - does often have photos of our walks, (depending on whether a photographer has gone along). They make interesting browsing and you can see what you missed! The page is ably managed by

*Suzanne R -
suzannepalmerriches@gmail.com
and
Jane O - janeelizabethowen@gmail.com*

who will be happy to post your photos there.

FREE, FOR SALE OR WANTED

Our own eBay section!

Advertise here items such as walking poles, binoculars, rucksacks etc.

Please submit for next month's newsletter.

COMMENTS, QUERIES & SUGGESTIONS

Please submit for next month's newsletter.

EMAIL CORRESPONDENCE

Jennifer (membership secretary) would remind you to please get in touch with her at jennifer@farmadmin.co.uk if you think you are not receiving her emails. Under ramblers data protection arrangements, all communications from group or area to members, are sent from her.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Ramblers Lunch
White Hart
12.15 Friday 12 Jan

FINALLY

If you know of any Group members who don't go on-line, perhaps you could print out a copy of this newsletter for them?

The Spring Newsletter will go out in the second week of March. Please send your contributions in good time to Alan (alperalan8@gmail.com)

www.ramblers.org.uk/south-wiltshire

www.wiltsswindonramblers.org.uk

www.facebook.com/southwiltshireramblers