

Walk

**BEDFORDSHIRE
AND BEYOND**



WINTER INTO SPRING 2026 WALKING PROGRAMME



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 **RAMBLERS**
IVEL VALLEY WALKERS



Bob's Corner

by Bob Wallace, Chair of IVW Ramblers Group

As we enter a New Year, a short resume of our 2025 activities -

- Over 250 walks, 1,650+ miles. Members explored local Bedfordshire landscapes, London parks, and beyond.
- Dedicated walk leaders. Their planning, guidance, and friendliness ensure every walk is safe, enjoyable, and accessible.
- Wide promotion. Walks are advertised in the printed programme, Roy's fortnightly bulletins, on our website (www.ivelvalleywalkers.org.uk), the Ramblers website (www.ramblers.org.uk), and on Facebook, making it easy for new and existing members to find walks.
- Special interest walks & holidays. Highlights included Dawn Chorus, Equinox, Bus and London walks, plus holidays to Bayeux, Anglesey, and Canterbury.
- Community spirit. 2025 has been a year of laughter, exploration, and shared experiences, strengthening the bonds that make the Ivel Valley Group such a welcoming club.

Looking ahead to 2026 we anticipate even more miles, walks, and memorable experiences. We welcome everyone to be part of this continuing journey.

HAPPY NEW YEAR - Bob

IVEL VALLEY PROUDLY PRESENTS

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Friday 23rd January – 7.30pm
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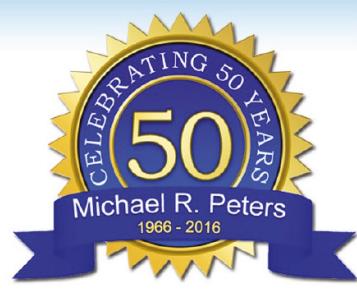
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IVEL VALLEY HOLIDAYS 2026

DURHAM CITY

Thursday 14th May to Monday 18th May



The magnificent cathedral and castle are probably best viewed from the mainline rail station,

well worth a short hike uphill unless you plan to come by train anyway. Walks will include a tour of this small, beautiful city and then the surrounding countryside to give you a real flavour of the northeast, it's landscapes and it's history.

SOLD OUT

(Ed: a language and translation guide may follow in the next issue of the Walk magazine!)

BUXTON, DERBYSHIRE

Sunday 28th June to Friday 3rd July

Buxton is a picturesque town known for



its stunning natural scenery, historic architecture and cultural attractions.

In the heart of the

Peak District National Park it's famous for its thermal springs, first discovered by the Romans, later becoming a fashionable spa destination complete with it's Georgian and Victorian architecture.

The town has plenty to offer visitors including the opera house, the Pavilion Gardens, a 23-acre public park and the spa sites. Then there's the stunning surrounding countryside where Sandra, Roy C and perhaps other leaders will offer fascinating short and long walks.

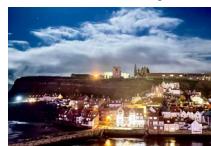
There's masses to discover. Maybe even The Cat & Fiddle pub, the second highest in England. We don't plan to limit the numbers.

Admin fee is £20 per person.

Reference code: Buxton

WHITBY, NORTH YORKSHIRE

20th to 25th September



Tom C, Tony S and Roy D are looking forward to leading an Ivel Valley walking holiday

based in the historic port town.

From the famous whalebone arch to the ruined Benedictine abbey and it's iconic 199 steps. From the explorer Captain Cook to Bram Stoker and Dracula, we'll explore Whitby and beyond with coastal walks and probably the pretty villages of Staithes and Robin Hood's Bay, the end of Alfred Wainwright's famous coast to coast walk.

The heather should be looking lovely in its early autumn colours where some might enjoy a climb up to Roseberry Topping, Yorkshire's little Matterhorn and also visit the Captain Cook monument.

We must visit the North Yorkshire steam railway and visit Grosmont and Goathland stations, famous as locations for the Heartbeat and the Harry Potter film The Philosopher's Stone.

So an action - packed week with long and short walks on offer, we'll recce in April with more details to follow.

Please see back cover for full booking details, just include the reference as appropriate.

STEP ABOARD... AND INTO BOOTS

Cruising in a different way

By Sandra Axtell



In February I was chasing the Northern Lights, wrapped in thermals, standing under freezing skies and hoping for that magical shimmer of the Aurora Borealis. Fast forward to summer, and it

was a very different mission: two friends, one cruise ship, and a hunt for the sun. We sailed aboard Ambience, Ambassador Cruise Line's flagship and I'll say it now, it was flawless. Elegant lounges, friendly staff, and the sort of themed lifts that make you pause and stare. But while many on board were content with poolside cocktails and leisurely mornings, Ivel Valley instincts kicked in; my boots were with me and at every port they were put to good use.

WALK 1: HAUGESUND

Our first port is steeped in Viking history and coastal charm. My friend and I explored the harbour together, the shops, the sculptures and enjoyed the crisp scent of sea air but then we parted ways for the afternoon. She returned to the ship whilst I struck out solo. My route hugged the coastline, weaving between rocky paths and open sea views with a few curious goats and gulls overhead for company. The highlight came at the end, a haunting installation of life-sized horse statues

rising from the sea. Stark, surreal, and oddly moving, they seemed to watch over the waves like Norse guardians.

Miles walked: 10

Terrain: Paved town paths, rugged coastal tracks

Highlight: The striking horse statues standing proud in the surf.

"Most people packed heels... I packed hiking socks."

WALK 2: ULVIK

A smaller, quieter and possibly my favourite stop. Tucked beside a mirror-still fjord, the village is surrounded by green hills and orchards heavy with apples. My friend chose a café and a good book, I followed Ulvik's Fruit Trail which wound through farmland and past weathered wooden churches. The views down to the fjord were glorious although I spent much of the walk waving away fruit flies determined to make me their next meal. Still, it was peaceful and reflective — the kind of walk where you let your mind roam as much as your feet.

Miles walked: 8

Terrain: Gentle inclines, orchard tracks,

Highlight: The fjord views from the hilltop trail

"You can take the walker on a cruise — but we'll still find a footpath."

WALK 3: FLÅM

While most passengers took the famous Flåm Railway, I headed in the opposite direction. My destination, the Flåm Valley and its hidden waterfall, Rjoandefossen.

The path followed the river through forest and farmland to Flåm Church, a simple wooden structure nestled in wild grasses. From there the walk began to climb steeply and it didn't let up through switchbacks and shaded woods. Just when my legs were beginning to protest, I rounded a bend and there it was, the waterfall, tumbling down the cliff face, framed by pine forest and catching the sun in its spray. One of the most rewarding views of the whole trip. By the time I returned to the ship, I'd walked 12 miles and felt more refreshed than I had been since boarding.

Miles walked: 12

Terrain: Forest paths, riverside trails, steep climbs **Highlight:** Reaching the roaring waterfall after a challenging ascent

“While they sipped cocktails, I chased waterfalls.”

WALK 4: BERGEN

Our final stop was Bergen, Norway's second city and a visual feast. My friend and I rode the Fløibanen funicular to the top of Mount Fløyen. There, the forest trails were cool and quiet, shaded by pine and dotted with the occasional wooden troll sculpture. While she relaxed at the viewpoint café, I explored deeper into the woodland, where goats grazed in the clearings and still lakes reflected the sky. Our descent offered sweeping views of the city below, but I wasn't quite ready to stop — so I explored Bergen and wandered through the old wharf, Bryggen, with its brightly painted wooden houses and narrow, cobbled streets.

Miles walked: 12 (6 trail, 6 city)

Terrain: Forest tracks, mountain paths, historic town streets **Highlight:** The contrast between wild nature and Bergen's colourful charm

“Who needs a gym when there's a fjord to walk around?”



The weather throughout was astonishing with warm sunshine, clear skies, and the kind of golden evenings you don't forget. At every port, I laced up my boots and walked alone — not because I had to, but because I couldn't imagine a better way to experience Norway's beauty. There's a unique rhythm to solo walking. You notice more. Think more. Breathe differently. The world expands and quiets, all at once.

“Docked 4 times and walked just over 40 miles— just your average relaxing holiday.”

I felt like I'd done more than just travel, I'd properly explored. Through fjords and forests, coastal paths and colourful towns, every mile brought something new. My friend had a wonderful cruise too — the spa, the books, the deckchairs. But for me, the best memories came from the trail: the moments when the noise dropped away and the landscape opened up.

“You can try to take the walk out of the Ivel Valley walker... but I'll just lace up anyway.”

Cruise life doesn't have to mean just sun loungers and organised sightseeing. With a little research and a bit of planning before the ship docks, it can be the start of some truly spectacular walking adventures. Whether you're into mountains, meadows, or cobbled lanes, the trails are out there, just waiting.

Canterbury Tales 1 The Lady's tale

By Trish Brickell

*Hengist and Horsa landed in Kent
Oh what a terrible morning they spent
Pooling the pillage of township and village
And each on outwitting the other was bent.*

The above verse of a poem and a vague memory of a visit to a carnival in Margate, aged 8, are my only links with Kent. I was therefore delighted to learn that there was to be an Ivel Valley holiday centred in Canterbury last autumn and led by experienced leaders Roger, Tom and Tony.



Our tour started in Canterbury with its famous cathedral, one of the most important places for Christian pilgrims who visit the site of the brutal murder of the then Archbishop of Canterbury, Thomas Becket. There's controversy among scholars as to who sanctioned the murder in 1170 - was it on the orders of Henry II or was it a terrible mistake?

The afternoon walk was a lovely one along the Stour Valley Way via St Martins church, the oldest church building in Britain still used for religious meetings. Then onto Fordwich, the smallest town in the UK boasting lots of timber framed buildings. We were invited into one and regaled with tales of court proceedings from times past.

Day 2 started from the Turner Contemporary Gallery in Margate. The town was one of the

earliest to offer bathing facilities and, with its proximity to London, was a perfect resort for the middle classes to enjoy the horse drawn 'machine' which offered privacy while bathing.

With views of the sea we walked in sunshine to the seaside town of Broadstairs where Charles Dickens wrote David Copperfield and Turner painted various scenes.

Back in the countryside on **day 3** with a walk in the Elham Valley. This is a picturesque chalk valley carved by the River Nailbourne. Lovely cottages, one aptly named Heart's Delight.

After the gentle walk in the Elham Valley, **day 4** and the landscape of Dungeness came as a stark contrast. Both natural and engineered landscapes are equally bleak then negotiating the pebble beach was a challenge which seemed to last forever. The attempt by the late Derek Jarman to make a garden at his home Prospect Cottage was a gargantuan task.

Day 5 and stunning scenery on our arrival at the Dover White Cliffs Visitors Centre. It was strange having a bird's eye view of the ferries coming in and out of the harbour with the cliffs sparkling in the bright sunlight

A lovely walk on the cliff top path around the South Forland Lighthouse to St Margaret's Bay. After a perfect walking day it was lovely to meet up in our best attire to enjoy our group meal at the Granville.

Our last walk was a circular one around Chilham, a beautiful little village with numerous Tudor and Jacobean houses and well preserved properties. A wonderful holiday thank you to the leaders Roger, Tom and Tony, a great job by all.



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Canterbury Tales 2 The Drummer's tale

By Tom Collier (our very own percussion artist)

Roger M, having been brought up in Kent, suggested an Ivel holiday there, centred on Canterbury. Roger, Tony S (King of Maps) and me, Tom C, would lead the various walks so off we went in late September.

Our first walk was around the city centre and although the cathedral was undergoing restoration it stood magnificent and glorious with the sun shining on the refurbished stonework.



That afternoon walk we headed to Sturry along the Stour valley way and spent time at St Martin's church, the oldest in Britain dating back to 597 AD. From woodlands we soon came out into bright sunlight and could see our next stop by the river, Fordwich, population 372 making it the smallest town in the UK. This was also a river port the Normans used to import Caen stone in the 12th and 13th centuries to build or rebuild the cathedrals of Canterbury,

St Albans, Durham and lots else. The town hall is a beautiful Tudor building where we found Caroline, one of the trustees, who welcomed us with open arms. Passionate about the building and history she waived the £2 entrance fee and was more interested in telling the history of the place. So up the rickety steep stairs to the chamber complete with the jury bench and jail. As I walked over to a little wooden stool I was asked not to sit on it as it was for punishing unruly women and weak from much usage (!!). So I stood up, leaning on a horizontal structure called a Bar. Here, barristers would plead on behalf of the prisoner, hence being 'called to the Bar'

Monday saw us going "Dahn ta Margate" then heading to Ramsgate and a bit beyond. Start point was the Turner gallery overlooking the slipway where a nude Gormley figure stood. Just before lunch we stopped at Bleak House in Broadstairs where Dickens wrote David Copperfield. The short walk finished here whilst the the long walk continued to Ramsgate, along some stunning beaches, although the incoming tide did mean a swift ascent to safety. Onward to the harbour and the

end of the walk where we waited all of 5 minutes for the bus back.

Tuesday's escapade was in the Elham Valley where we enjoyed fabulous countryside following the Six Churches trail. The start was from Kingston and the short walk of 4.5 miles left us at Bishopsbourne. The longer walk continued on towards Bridge. On our recce we'd missed our way but now we found the hidden way marker.

Wednesday...Dungeness Britain's only desert , mainly "pebbles and cobbles a live a live O". The short walk of 4.5 miles wandered around the local RSPB reserve where you can see a variety of rare birds such as hobbies and marsh harriers and also grass snakes. The long walk started at the black lighthouse beside the nuclear reactor. We climbed onto the breakwater to view the reactors being dismantled although some are still in use. Waves lapped upon the shingle as we worked our way through the RSPB area then onto the never ending cobbles and pebbles to lunchtime by the sea, a very welcome break, and as we sat there we heard the whistle of the miniature steam train from Hythe to Dungeness. It was very tempting to get a lift.....not that we were out of puff! So off we went back to Dungeness

and toward Derek Jarman's Prospect Cottage showing the resilience of the plants that live there. The artist and film director former owner has left it in trust for all to appreciate.



Thursday...The White cliffs...Dover and group meal at the "GGGrannville", open all hours. Starting at the visitor centre we followed the challenging coastal path and the views were amazing. That evening was "Handbags and Glad rags"with fabulous food and drinks.

Friday...Chilham...The only Tudor Square ever! A walk up from the car park into instant history. The walk along the Stour Valley Way to Bobbin Lodge farm and return looked fine but less so in the rain on a path not recced. We got there though, some enjoyed a beer, we said our goodbyes and headed home.

Thanks to Roger for sharing his childhood memories and to Tony for adding his special touch to the short walks.

I WILL WALK (not 500) those 50 miles

By Sue Barlow



Roy's 100 mile challenge with the LDWA (the Long Distance Walking Association) started me thinking!

I'd completed a few 27 mile challenges and the Essex and Herts

Group of the LDWA were organising a 50-mile challenge to mark their 50th Anniversary on 26 July 2025. A cleverly designed route of two loops, 31 and 19 miles, with 25 miles in each county and starting from Manuden near Bishop's Stortford. It sounded appealing since I could retire after the first loop if it came to it, there were no hills and it wasn't too far from where I live. Let's give it a go.

There hadn't been many opportunities to train but the day arrived and the weather was favourable so off we set with printed route descriptions including many abbreviations. e.g. RHFE (right hand field edge), EBW (enclosed bridleway). Checkpoints point 1, 2 and 3 came and went so far so good! It was a bit breezy and in trying to keep my hair off my face, adjust clothing etc. over I went. "Oh no! ...Oh, not to worry it's only a grazed knee".

On reaching the next checkpoint, Much Hadham Village Hall, some familiar, friendly faces greeted us. "She fell over" Roy told them. I wish he hadn't!! After bathing the knee a lovely marshal gave me a dressing and off we went again. The snacks on offer at various checkpoints were delicious, especially the protein balls and homemade flapjacks.

We completed the first loop and offloaded some clothing into the boot of the car, a bonus. It was early evening now and we've got a few hours of daylight left. Roy was ahead of me most of the time but as long as I kept him in sight

I knew I'd be okay with the pace. Darkness fell and on with the head torches! I hadn't done much night walking before and the bright light attracted moths whilst I kept seeing black beetle creatures underfoot (no, I wasn't hallucinating!). Apart from the occasional head torch of another walker, there was an eerie quietness.

The route description told me that the track becomes a very narrow path with a sharp drop to a deep ditch running alongside on the left! I was tired now, I'd done over 36 miles so I'd better be careful. We arrived in the early hours at the next checkpoint. It was so quiet and a marshal was sitting in a corner next to a toaster, in case anyone wanted crumpets! Apart from one or two people tending to sore feet, only one other person arrived. Off again, it's the last leg!

The route description now told me to beware of enclosed track with uneven surface, many dips and potential trip hazards! They were right. As I stepped over fallen branches, the trip hazards, over I went again, landing on the same grazed knee! "Still okay, no damage done" I told Roy. Got to keep going now, I'd done just over 40 miles.

We reached the finish after just over 18 hours, (the cut off being 22 hours) and everyone who came through the door received a round of applause from the marshals. Otherwise it was quite subdued as we were tired and it had been a long day for the marshals too. No sooner had we collapsed on a chair, our certificates were printed and handed to us. How efficient is that! A cup of tea and beans on toast at 3.30 am and I couldn't believe I'd done it! It's the furthest I've ever walked. Will I do another 50? I probably will. Will I attempt a 100? I very much doubt it.

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Walk leaders

Ramblers UK and most local groups including Ivey Valley, are very keen to encourage new walk leaders since, without such people there'd be no walks. He or she plans the walks, checks (recce's) the routes, arranges the starting point, rest stops, perhaps lunch stops, points out things along the way and keeps the group safe. It's not particularly onerous, it just needs doing. The Ramblers UK website has an excellent section on what's involved and how to progress your interest. ramblers.org.uk

For now though let's take an offbeat look at walk leaders and leading over this and the next few pages:-

Was this the last of the Summer Wine?



In September Tom, Tony and Roger led a 6-day walking holiday based in and around Canterbury, as you can read elsewhere in this magazine. We three leaders have a collective age of 240 years, yes, you've got it, almost a quarter of a Millennium between us.

The walks around Canterbury frequently took us past vineyards that produced wines of such high quality that they often win prestigious international awards. When passing these vineyards, I got to thinking that maybe us three veteran leaders represented the last of the summer wine.

I leave it to you, dear reader, as to which of us should be associated with the character of Compo, Cleg or Foggy. Musing on the fact that if we three were in fact the embodiment of the last of the Summer Wine, how would our vintage be judged? Earthy, Silky, Spicy?

I think we would be happy to settle for, uncomplicated, full bodied, well rounded, that leaves a long lingering, pleasing flavour, on the palate.

A new walk leader

Walk magazine's R.Mc chats to that popular Ivel Valley Leader, Jack R.



Firstly Jack we must thank you for taking time out your busy schedule to give this interview.

Not at all, it is I that should thank you for the opportunity to let your readers know a little of my life and times. Because of my lack of stature in a physical way, everybody looks down on me, but they should really know that my pedigree is impeccable. I am canine Royalty, frankly. I would go so far as to say if it wasn't for the camaraderie of rambling, there are a number of members that I would never dream of associating with.

Jack, can you tell me something of your back story?

I was proudly born and bred in Yorkshire, one of septuplets, happily spending my early days with loving parents and brothers and sisters.

What were the circumstances that brought you to Bedfordshire?

I came to Flitwick to take up an appointment to look after David and Margaret, a delightful couple. My first hurdle was to get used to the peculiar way that you speak down here "hello" instead of "ay up", "tea" not "brew", "it'll be ok" not "be reyt".

How was it, Jack, that you became an Ivel Valley Leader?

Once settled and on top of my duties, I began looking for something to do that would benefit the community. I thought walk leading should be my forte as I have extensive experience in both. I enlisted the help of my faithful retainer, David, who, at the mention of the word, "walkies" never fails to put his towing line onto my harness, ready to be led by me on some new adventure.

When receiving a walk, it amuses me to see my two legged friends examining a piece of paper with squiggles on it or looking at some contraption in the palm of their hand. And they frequently stumble on uneven ground. I, on the other hand, have a far simpler and safer method when receiving; all I need to do is cock my leg at important junctions, allowing me on the day of the walk to speedily sniff my way round the route so why they bother with all that



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JACK – Continued

paraphernalia is a mystery to me. Mind you, some of the walkers do frequently wee, but not at important junctions. Amateurs!

Have you noticed many differences between you and those you are leading?

Yes, I am often surprised by human followers when they encounter stiles.



They are all poles and creaking joints as they ascend the steps, whilst I simply pass

beneath, unhindered. Similarly on steep and slippery hills, they insist on using only two of their limbs, so slither and slide all over the place. I, in 4 paw mode, am able to scamper up any gradient at speed.

If I have any fault at all, it would be that of over enthusiasm, so from time to time I ask David to pull on his tow rope to remind me not to get too far ahead of the group.

From your unique vantage point, Jack, can you tell us of any observations?

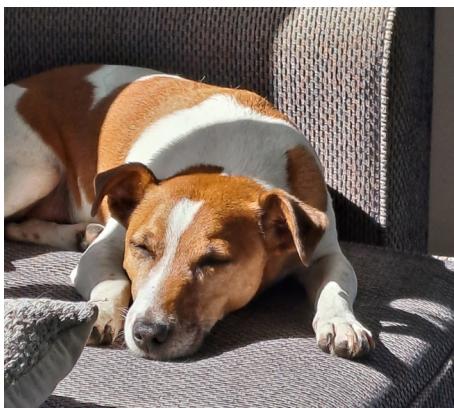
Well yes, there is one of your walkers, I think his name is Roger, who standing with his feet together is so bow legged,

that I swear, one of these days I will jump through them without touching the sides and he would never notice.

I should also mention that time of year when the temperature rises and shorts appear and I'm surrounded by a forest of some hairy legs, lily white at first, gradually turning browner as the year progresses, for me like seasons of the year.

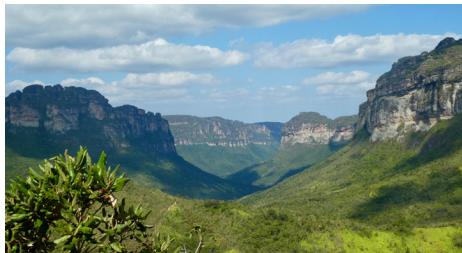
If I were to sum up, leading for the Ivel Valley is very worthwhile and pleasing for me, although when I give them a coffee or lunch break, they could be a lot more generous to me by sharing their food. They don't realise how much effort is required - begging, cocking ones head from side to side and looking cute is very tiring.

I hope to see you out on one of my walks soon. Now I think a nap is in order.



Follow your leader

Last September Carolyn and Mark journeyed many miles from the often familiar Bedfordshire footpaths to... the Chapada Diamantina.



WHERE?

We're in Brazil, a 7 hour bus journey west from Salvador, Brazil's first capital, and in the midst of the Chapada Diamantina region. Chapadas are spectacular table mountains with flatish tops and almost vertical sides. Think monument valley in Arizona and those old cowboy films but on a seriously grand scale. Here, between the equator and the Tropic of Capricorn, they're cloaked in a vast variety of vegetation. Oh and they're several billion years old. All this means steep climbs, long walks, beautiful rivers, caves and spectacular waterfalls.

We met our second leader, Leon, on day 2 and within 20 minutes were parked up at the start of the day's

hike. His co-leader, Tai, driver and lots more (always good to have backup) carried the picnic lunch. The route was described, water supplies were checked because temperatures would be in the 30s with not much cover. We could however pick up more water from the rivers along the way. Off we go.

Point 1. Follow your leader. Leon skipped away, he knew the route well, crucially knowing which pathways not to follow, which were the right ones and where the hazards were.

Point 2. Although the leader sets the pace, he or she should always walk at the pace of the slowest, we don't want to leave anyone behind. Leon not only checked on us, he regularly stopped to point out special plants, leaves and flowers, even making special bouquets and imaginative gifts for Carolyn. We learned masses including which berries were safe and good to eat and which shrubs to avoid because of their thorns.

Advisory point to all. By all means use sticks or walking poles but please don't swing them up to point out the route or something you've seen. "Look over there...." Up comes the pole, out goes someone's eye. Leon simply used his arm

to point things out, raised a finger to stop us if he'd seen something interesting or shushed us to listen to a bird. Top marks.

Point 3. The leader should be visible. Leon used a bright yellow hat, the yellow of Brazil's football team, a perfect beacon for us as we wandered through dense shrubs, long grasses and exotic everything.

Point 4. Offer help where needed and check on the group. We'd crossed a river complete with inviting rock pools (we'd return there later) and now needed to climb the steep far bank. Leon was up in a flash then turned to offer a welcome helping hand to Carolyn.

Point 5. Choose and arrange suitable rest and lunch stops. Today's lunch was just perfect. A mountain river flowing gently across ancient rocks offering sink holes and gorgeous swimming, bathing or paddling pools. Even small waterfalls to add more atmosphere and colour to the scene. Leon's backup, Tai, laid out a picnic on the rocks - bread, cheese, tomato concasse, salami, hard boiled eggs with sweet jelly bars and fig curls for dessert. Leon had worked hard so only fair that he took me up river to a lovely pool where he could jump in and onto a sandy base rather than a bruising rocky one. Safety first.

Point 6. Keep to time. We were in a watery paradise but it was a long walk back so time to go said Leon otherwise we'd be getting back in twilight. Away from the river, round the mountain, down into another valley and time for another swim in those pools we passed earlier. Now, even the best leader needs help sometimes, Leon can't yet swim, happy to doggie paddle, so Tai and I made sure one of us was on hand by his side.

The sun was going down now bathing the chapadas in a lovely late afternoon light. We'd covered almost 18kms and Leon was getting tired. He'd covered the entire day in flip flops (or bare feet), so time to hitch a ride on the shoulders of Tai, his dad. After all, Leon is only six.





The Fran Interview

By Fran Stedman



Roy Carter

I've always been sporty from an early age. A school friend and I joined the YHA and hitch-hiked to the Lake District in the summer of '69'

and walked all over the place. So many things occurred and it remains vivid in memory. Like helping a vicar push his Morris Traveller out of Lancaster in heavy rain in order get us a lift to Kendal. Like walking Striding Edge down into Patterdale to sleep under a duvet - a duvet being totally new to both the YHA and us. It was exciting and I became hooked on walking as being the conduit for excitement. The next year we both hitch-hiked to France & Spain using the YHA and a backup tent to focus on the Pyrenees.

The story continues.....

At work we formed a walking group which kept the excitement going. Almost every year the group members in different guises have had an annual walk beginning in the 70s into the 80s to Malham; to Snowdon in the 90s and this century to the Lake District. Indeed four of us from the first original walk are still walking with the group today. My wife and children also attended some of the annual walks along with other members' families too.

'Youth is a gift of nature, but age is a work of art!'

Joining the Ramblers wasn't my intention, "it's for old fogeys", is what I said to Barry Ingram when he led the Greensand Challenge on the Beds Walking Festival in 2009. However, the walk was very enjoyable, informative, and in an area that I'd never walked before – Bedfordshire. Yes, I'd lived here for 35 years and walked elsewhere except on home turf. So, I joined Ivel Valley Walkers that autumn and embraced becoming an old fogey!

A leader is one who knows the way, goes the way and shows the way.

From then on, I began leading Sunday walks and organised my first IVW holiday to Corfe in 2014. I've organised a holiday or coach trip each year ever since. Some memorable moments. Wells was all rain when storm Alex got everyone soaked for days; Melrose was enjoyable with a variety of walks in good weather using three walk leaders; Swanage saw a complex set of walks in different directions. All simple for me because the analysis, preparation and leading of walks is in symmetry to my career as a support engineer to the oil exploration industry, where we would analyse seismic data, determine processes and apply them, then present the results to oil companies.

Role play. Discuss.

Becoming Chair of IVW wasn't my intention, "I'm not a manager", is what I said to Andy Nunn who was stepping down. I've kept away from management, preferring to maintain a technical role. However, I got a lot of support from members and the committee who saw me through a 5-Year tenure, with the difficulties of managing GDPR & COVID on the way. In the end I liked being Chair and now I enjoy my role as Membership Secretary and volunteering on the weekly RIPPLES, which help to restore and improve our county rights of way.

Hello, hello, hello! You and the Boys in Blue!!

My career took me to unusual and awkward places where oil exploration in those countries was at an early stage. I was arrested several times in Greece whilst reading a gravity meter and under interrogation, they laughed and pointed to a petrol station down the road – I needed a translator.

JUST DO IT ✓ should be your motto!

Thank you, Roy!

The Plough

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SUNDAY

OPEN: 12.30PM TO 4.00PM KITCHEN: 12.30PM TO 2.00PM

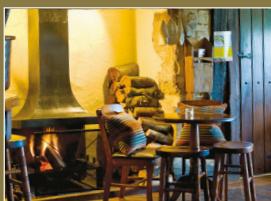
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Ivel Valley Walks Programme

Winter / Spring 2026

Top Tip: check IV website, also Roy's bulletin for possible programme changes.

Thu 01 Jan	10:00	Silsoe - The Sherry Amble	5 miles
		Park Avenue, near Church. Bring Festive food left from Xmas Day & enjoy a Sherry under cover of Crawley Barn. MK45 4EH (TL 082 356). Roy C 07784 28997	
Sun 04 Jan	10:00	Shefford	12 miles
		Town CP, Old Bridge way. SG17 5EF (TL 142 391). Roy D 07713 464510	
Wed 07 Jan	10:00	Woburn	7 miles
		CP opposite the church. MK17 9PG (SP 951 331). Dave B 07796 178659	
Thu 08 Jan	10:00	Northill	4.5 miles
		Meet at the Church. Park considerately in the village. SG18 9AA (TL 149 465). Jan W 07895 045410 on the day only	
Sun 11 Jan	10:00	Ridgmont	7 miles
		Railway Station. MK43 0XP (SP 965 374). Sandra A 07789 777060	
Sun 11 Jan	13:30	Ridgmont	5 miles
		Railway Station. MK43 0XP (SP 965 374). Sandra A 07789 777060	
Tue 13 Jan	10:00	Amphill	12 miles
		Amphill Park West CP. MK45 2HX (TL 023 382). Bob & Celia W 07474 303545	
Wed 14 Jan	10:00	Deepdale	7.5 miles
		Parking near Sandy Heath transmitter. SG19 2NH (TL 206 495). Steve A 07802 279486	
Sun 18 Jan	10:00	Cosgrove	12 miles
		Cosgrove Marina, Lock Lane. (When driving through entrance gates, drive to the right). MK19 7JR (SP 793 423). Tom C 07743 128645	
Wed 21 Jan	10:00	Flitwick	7 miles
		The Rufus Centre, Steppingley Road, Flitwick. MK45 1AH (TL 033 387). Mel S 07966 210950	
Thu 22 Jan	10:00	Woburn	5 miles
		CP opposite the church. MK17 9PG (SP 951 331). Jan W 07895 045410 on the day only	

Sun 25 Jan	10:00	St Neots	7 miles
		Riverside CP free Sunday parking. PE19 7SD (TL 179 600). Roy C 07784 208997 on the day only	
Sun 25 Jan	13:30	St Neots	5 miles
		Riverside CP free Sunday parking. PE19 7SD (TL 179 600). Roy C 07784 208997 on the day only	
Tue 27 Jan	10:00	Milton Keynes	12 miles
		Bradwell Abbey. Park in long stay section of CP or on Alston Drive. MK13 9AP (SP 826 394). Tony & Karen A 07875 210926	
Wed 28 Jan	10:00	Fenlake Meadows	7 miles
		Cardington Road CP opposite The Anchor PH. MK42 0DG (TL 068 486). Colin B 07787 413957	
Sun 01 Feb	10:00	Pegsdon Hills	12 miles
		Layby near gates to Hexton Manor. SG5 3JS (TL 118 302). Tom C 07743 128645	
Wed 04 Feb	10:00	Elsworth	8 miles
		Near Poacher PH, Brockley Rd, Elsworth, Cambridge. CB23 4JS (TL 314 636). Brian S 07955 700259	
Thu 05 Feb	10:00	Silsoe	5 miles
		St James Church, High St. MK45 4DR (TL 082 356). Nick M 07803 125876	
Sun 08 Feb	10:00	Olney	7 miles
		Olney Market Square. Free parking in High St. MK46 4AJ (SP 889 513). Roy C 07784 208997 on the day only	
Sun 08 Feb	13:30	Olney	5 miles
		Olney Market Square. Free parking in High St. MK46 4AJ (SP 889 513). Roy C 07784 208997 on the day only	
Tue 10 Feb	10:00	Ickleford	12 miles
		Sports & Recreation Centre CP, Chambers Lane. SG5 3YA (TL 180 318). John N 07950 708087	
Wed 11 Feb	10:00	Royston	7 miles
		Therfield Heath Sports Centre CP, Baldock Road, Royston. SG8 5BJ (TL 348 405). Derek T 07410 973338	
Sun 15 Feb	10:00	Barton	12 miles
		Old Road, near Recreation Ground. MK45 4LD (TL 083 304). Tom C 07743 128645	
Wed 18 Feb	10:00	Wilden	7 miles
		Near Victoria Arms PH. Please Park considerately in the village. MK44 2PB (TL 095 552). Bridget C 07807 931274	
Thu 19 Feb	10:00	Pirton	5 miles
		Great Green, please spread cars out around the village and park clear of the narrow corners on the bus route. SG5 3QD (TL 145 316). Derek T 07410 973338	

Sun 22 Feb 10:00	Tring Meet in Dolphine Square. Park in Church Yard Long Stay CP behind Black Horse PH. MK45 4SH (TL 063 305). Sandra A 07789 777060	7 miles
Sun 22 Feb 13:30	Tring Meet in Dolphine Square. Park in Church Yard long Stay CP behind Black Horse PH. MK45 4SH (TL 063 305). Sandra A 07789 777060	5 miles
Tue 24 Feb 10:00	Shefford Town CP, Old Station Way. SG17 5EF (TL 142 391). Roy D 07713 464510	12 miles
Wed 25 Feb 10:00	Woburn Sands Russell Street CP Woburn Sands. MK17 8NU (SP 930 358). Colin B 07787 413957	7 miles
Sun 01 Mar 10:00	Radwell Meadows CP off Nortonbury Lane, near Letchworth. SG6 1AN (TL 233 349). John N 07950 708087	12 miles
Wed 04 Mar 10:00	Henlow CP at end of Gardeners Lane. SG16 7DJ (TL 178 388). John N 07950 708087	7 miles
Thu 05 Mar 10:00	Gt Denham Parking at Archers Restaurant CP. MK40 4SQ (TL 021 482). Liz W 07762 430385	4.5 miles
Sun 08 Mar 10:00	Barton Old Road, near Recreation Ground. MK45 4LD (TL 083 304). Tom C 07743 128645	7 miles
Sun 08 Mar 13:30	Barton Old Road, near Recreation Ground. MK45 4LD (TL 083 304). Tom C 07743 128645	5 miles
Tue 10 Mar 10:00	Amphill Amphill Park, West CP. MK45 2HX (TL 023 382). Tony & Karen A 07875 210926	12 miles
Wed 11 Mar 10:00	Aspley Guise Recreation ground CP (through gateway Aspley Guise GC, bear right immediately, then turn left into the CP by the sports field). MK17 8DX (SP 236 358). Bob & Celia W 07474 303545	7 miles
Sun 15 Mar 10:00	Milton Keynes Caldecotte Lake North CP, off Bletcham Way Eastbound. MK7 8HP (SP 887 355). Bob & Celia W 07474 303545	12 miles
Wed 18 Mar 10:00	Hitchin South End of Kingswood Ave. SG4 0NT (TL 207 295). Dave B 07796 178659	7 miles

Thu 19 Mar	10:00	Riseley Park carefully near to Fox and Hounds PH. MK44 1DT (TL 040 627). Sue T 07849 827049	5 miles
Sun 22 Mar	10:00	Sandy Sandy Town centre CP. SG19 1AG (TL 174 492). Roy C 07784 208997 on the day only	7 miles
Sun 22 Mar	13:30	Sandy Sandy Town centre CP. SG19 1AG (TL 174 492). Roy C 07784 208997 on the day only	5 miles
Tue 24 Mar	10:00	Pirton Great Green, near Motte and Bailey PH. SG5 3QD (TL 146 316). Graham B 07399 881460	12 miles
Wed 25 Mar	10:00	Flitwick Flitwick Village Hall, Dunstable Road, Flitwick. MK45 1HP (TL 033 348). Mel S 07966 210950	7 miles
Fri 27 Mar	09:45	Turvey Historic Churches Bus Walk Meet at All Saints, Turvey and walk to St. Mary's Clifton Reynes. Bus back from Olney. MK43 8EP (SP 940 525). Roy C 07784 208997 on the day only	7 miles
Sun 29 Mar	10:00	Yardley Hastings Rose & Crown PH. NN7 1EX (SP 864 568). Roger M 07989 307046	12 miles
Wed 01 Apr	10:00	Tempsford Meet and park on the old A1 outside St Peter's Church in Tempsford. SG19 2AN (TL 162 531). Chris E 07747 007368	7 miles
Thu 02 Apr	10:00	Stewartby Village hall, park considerably nearby. MK43 9LU (TL 019 424). Jan W 07895 045410 on the day only	4.5 miles
Sun 05 Apr	10:00	Aspley Guise Meet in the recreation ground CP (enter through the gateway for the Aspley Guise golf club but bear right immediately, then turn left into the CP by the sports field). MK17 8DX (SP 936 358). Sandra A 07789 777060	7 miles
Sun 05 Apr	13:30	Aspley Guise Please see morning instructions above. Sandra A 07789 777060	5 miles
Tue 07 Apr	10:00	Breachwood Green Near the Red Lion PH. SG4 8NU (TL 150 220). Roy D 07713 464510	12 miles
Wed 08 Apr	10:00	Steeple Morden Recreation ground CP, beyond village hall. SG8 0PD (TL 285 427). Antony C 07857 890829 on the day only	7 miles

Fri 10 Apr	09:15 Riseley Historic Churches Bus Walk	6 miles
Meet in Riseley to catch No.28 Bus at 09:25 to St Nicholas, Swineshead and walk to St Andrew, Kimbolton. Bus back from Kimbolton. MK44 1DR (TL 047 634). Roy C 07784 208997 on the day only		
Sun 12 Apr	10:00 Wimpole	12 miles
Wimpole Hall CP. Follow brown NT signs as some Sat Navs go to an unused gate. No charge for parking. SG8 0BW (TL 338 509). Mark & Carolyn L 07740 684923		
Wed 15 Apr	10:00 Broom (Memorial Walk)	7 miles
Broom High Street or Green near the Cock PH. SG18 9NA (TL 172 430). Tony S 07745 655938		
Thu 16 Apr	10:00 Harrold	5 miles
Harrold and Odell Country Park CP. MK43 7DS (SP 956 566). Sue T 07849 827049		
Sun 19 Apr	10:00 Ashwell	6 miles
Near Church. SG7 5LY (TL 267 398). Roger M 07989 307046		
Sun 19 Apr	13:30 Ashwell	6 miles
Near Church. SG7 5LY (TL 267 398). Roger M 07989 307046		
Tue 21 Apr	10:00 Sundon Hills	12 miles
Country Park CP Harlington Rd, between Harlington and Upper Sundon. LU3 3PQ (TL 047 286). Tom C 07743 128645		
Wed 22 Apr	10:00 Ardeley	7.5 miles
Ardeley Church Farm (opposite the Jolly Wagoners). Free parking if you spend £5 in the cafe or farm shop. SG2 7AH (TL 309 270). Ian J 07866 389443		
Fri 24 Apr	10:00 Felmersham Historic Churches Bus Walk	8 miles
Meet at St Mary's Felmersham and walk to St Michael's Farndish. Bus back from Irchester. MK19 7JR (SP 793 423). Roy C 07784 208997 on the day only		
Sun 26 Apr	10:00 Woburn Sands	12 miles
Russell Street CP, Woburn Sands. MK17 8NU (SP 930 358). Linda M 07885 181422		
Wed 29 Apr	10:00 Swineshead	7 miles
St Nicholas Church. Please Park considerately in High Street. MK44 2AA (TL 057 658). Steve A 07802 279486		
Thu 30 Apr	10:00 Radwell Meadow Country Park	5 miles
CP off Nortonbury Lane, near Letchworth. SG6 1AN (TL 233 349). Antony C 07857 890829 on the day only		

What a SWELL egant, elegant party at sea



Chris Dorow is Rights of Way Officer at Central Bedfordshire Council and we at Ivel Valley work with him to help clear and maintain public footpaths, bridleways, kissing gates, stiles and more around the county. In November Chris changed his work attire and donned a suit to marry his long-standing partner of 23 years. Chris said that his newly wedded wife Jacqui had recently overcome breast cancer and, having just had his 60th birthday, the time just seemed right to pop the question. But they wanted to do something a little different and, as they were thinking of taking a cruise somewhere, they decided to combine the two and get married on board.

The ship left Southampton on 19th November and steamed to Spain for a visit to Porto de Coruna. Then on to the Canary Islands with stop offs at Lanzarote, Gran Canaria and Tenerife. A final stop at Madeira before a return to Southampton.

The wedding was held in international waters on 28th November 2025. The couple had to choose a ship which was registered in a country where the UK had reciprocal marriage agreements in place to ensure it would be recognised in the UK. In this case the ship was registered in Bermuda. Chris said, "It was a great day and P & O went the extra mile to ensure that everything was exactly as we wanted." The day was finished off with a special evening meal and a champagne breakfast in the cabin the next day. A tiring couple of weeks but something they both said they would never forget.



The day after arriving back in the UK Chris was back working with volunteers clearing footpaths in Sandy, Bedfordshire. Chris said this was the first step to working off the 4 lbs he managed to put on during the cruise.

We promise to make you work even harder Chris!

Obituary Robin Setchell



It was with great sadness that the Ivel Valley Group learnt of the death of Robin Setchell on 3 August 2025 after a long battle against prostate cancer

at the age of 78. He was the founder of the Group and a former chairman.

There is some dispute over the exact date when the Group was formed. What is known is that Robin Setchell wanted to replicate the walking that he had enjoyed with the Huntingdon Group before moving to Biggleswade and, to that end, a programme of walks was put together in the autumn of 1984, starting with one at Sutton in November. Robin led all the walks up to February 1985, by which time it was possible to form a Committee, with him as chairman, and have a proper programme of walks. Membership of the Ramblers came a bit later.

Robin served for two periods as chairman: 1984-1991 and 1992-96. During his tenure, many of the features of the current day Group were developed:-

- Sunday walks alternating with a full day and two half days
- spring and autumn coach trips
- weekends away
- social events such as barn dances
- Christmas sherry rambles

Robin stayed on the Committee after stepping down as chairman and did a spell as Publicity Secretary 1998-2003, before leaving the Committee. He was presented with a copy of the Group's book of Favourite

Walks in and around Bedfordshire at the 25th anniversary celebrations



An interesting man with a variety of interests. He was knowledgeable about the countryside both in Bedfordshire and further afield. He

also was keen to protect rights of way and gained the reputation for tackling ploughed crossfield paths in the middle of winter! He also led a protest walk when there was a Highways scheme to upgrade the A1 through the fields to the west of Biggleswade.

Well - read, often seen in Biggleswade library on a Saturday, he had two special interests, railways and the period of the two Jacobite rebellions in the first half of the eighteenth century. A lover of real ale he often chose a pub for our Ramblers Sunday lunchtime stop accordingly and was very good company, forthright in his views and not afraid to express them.



The Committee send their condolences to his wife Ann, his children Becky and Lawrence, and two grandchildren.

By Tony Sheward

Interested and new to Ramblers?

Well, how about some Q & A's?

Q Okay, I'm interested. What next?

A Have a look at the programme, choose a day, a walk, a distance to suit. Note the starting point/meeting place which will always be clear and easy to find and then just turn up. For most walks you don't need to book, just turn up. However, some leaders do ask you to book by phone or email.

Q What do I wear and what to bring?

A From the bottom upwards we'd suggest walking boots /shoes or other strong footwear since most of the time will be in countryside of various types. Then it's dress for the weather be it hot, cool, wet or windy including hats where appropriate, suncream, waterproofs etc as per the weather forecast. Shorter walks will stop for a coffee break and longer walks will stop for lunch, often a picnic somewhere or perhaps at a pub/cafe, and also coffee breaks. So bring a flask, water and whatever you fancy to eat.

Q Start time?

A The programme specifies the start time plus other important details. We leave promptly so arrive in good time and we're ready to hit the road!

Q What about the weather? Do you walk if it's raining?

A Hey, this is the UK! We might cancel in extreme conditions but otherwise we go come rain, hail or shine. There's no bad weather, just the wrong clothes.

Q To get started then, all I need do is turn up and follow the leader?

A You've got it!

Q Any paperwork, forms etc to bring or fill in?

A No. We're not great fans of this.

Q How much?

A The walks are free, but if you walk regularly with us and like what you find we'd like you to join the Ramblers Association. Ramblers membership is the best way to support the work done for walkers across Britain.

Please visit www.ramblers.org.uk or telephone: 020 3961 3300 and nominate Ivel Valley Walkers as your local group

Q How much to join?

A The good news is that we don't want your money. Not yet anyway. We suggest you try before you buy. Have a look at the programme in this brochure, find something that suits you, turn up on the day and walk with us for a few times. You'll be made very welcome, there's no charge, no commitment, not even any paperwork. If you like what you find, join us. We want Rambling to be available as widely as possible. It's only £45 for one adult for one year and an unbelievable £61 for two adults.

WE WALK ON:

Sundays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays and occasional Saturdays and Summer evenings. We're also offering some Friday bus walks in this programme, a happy return for them.

New walkers are always made welcome

HOW TO BOOK IVW TRIPS...

To book and make payments to Ivel Valley please email the organiser and wait for confirmation before paying.

This avoids overbooking trips or events when we have limited numbers availability.

TO PAY

Bank:	Unity Trust Bank
Account Payee:	Ivel Valley Social Account
Sort code:	60-83-01
Account No:	20201274
Reference:	Please give the name of the individual activity you are booking/paying for.



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