

## IVW Chairman's Report

Welcome to the 2018 Ivel Valley Walkers AGM. This is my second annual report as Chairman. With a diverse programme of walks and enthusiastic walkers willing to attend them, it has been a real pleasure representing you this year and have again put myself forward for re-election.

Our promotions to get people walking and interested in the Ramblers have been;

1. The walks programme in booklet form has been a real success. Well received by our members, it is a real showcase of our walk leaders efforts to attract new members
2. Our first week long contribution of walks for the Greensand Country Festival in May which coincided with the Ramblers Walkabout and should be on our calendar next year
3. Another very successful Bedfordshire Walking festival which saw increased attendance and more variation in the walks presented by our members on the programme
4. Promoting area walk programmes and events at this years' Bedford River Festival
5. Volunteers willing to distribution our programmes around Bedfordshire

As previous years, 2018 has been very busy for Ivel Valley. As is customary, we produced three walk programmes during the year and I would like very much to thank all those members who contributed to this undertaking; especially to the Programme Secretary, Andy Knight, who is retiring from the role next year but is remaining on the committee; to all the walk leaders coming forward with interesting walks; to the walk co-ordinators, to all of whom work tirelessly in the background to produce varied and interesting walks. The programmes continue to be comprehensive, ensuring that there is "something for every walker" by offering walks at different times of the day; days of the week; walking distance and walks of interest in various locations in Bedfordshire and beyond.

Our membership continues to grow and the walks programme is key to that growth.

Earlier in the year we had a weekend holiday to the Cotswolds based in Bourton-on-the-Water, organised by Andy & Myself. Despite the inclement weather at times, we visited Lower & Upper Slaughter, Stow and Winchcombe plus historic sites of Belas Knap and the Battle for Stow. My thanks to Andy for leading an enjoyable holiday in this beautiful part of the country.

In June, over 40 walkers made the long drive down to Tenby in Pembrokeshire for a week long holiday organised by Dave Broughton and Myself. The walks took in parts of the Pembrokeshire Coast Path; Stackpole Park (NT); Skomer and the city of St David's. It was quite a sight seeing a line of us snaking along the coast path. Some travelling was involved to get to walks but it was a wonderful holiday judging by the response and I must thank everyone present on the holiday for celebrating my 65<sup>th</sup>.

In October, Antony Copsey & Martin Whillis organised a long weekend to the South Lincolnshire Wolds in response to enthusiasm of a similar holiday they did in the area two years earlier. The walks were varied and in countryside that surprises many when they think of Lincolnshire. The Saturday walk had a talk about poet Alfred Lord Tennyson presented by a local historian and the Evening meal that night was just perfect. Our thanks to Antony & Martin for an enjoyable weekend.

We had two coach trips this year. First a coach trip to Lincoln in May organised and led by Tony Sheward, ably assisted by Pauline Seddon. This was a linear walk following part of the Viking Way that almost took us into Lincoln. The last bit was covered by coach which took us into the city centre for afternoon tea & cathedral before coming home. Second was a coach trip in October organised by Barry Ingram to Stratford-upon-Avon, ably assisted by Myself. It was another all-day linear walk starting from Wootton Wawen and followed part of the Monarch's Way into Stratford-upon-Avon. If Shakespeare had of been on our walk he might have said "it is the bright day that brings forth the adder, and that craves wary walking". Our thanks go to Tony and Barry for organising this year's coach trips.

We marked the Christmas season with a well attended Christmas walk led by Marcus Kilby from Old Warden Village Hall followed by an annual dinner at the White Horse in Southill organised by Mary & Bernard Morse. In June they also organised our first summer barbeque called "Yomp, Chomp and Roll-Up" at Langford Village Hall. It began with a morning walk led by Ian Jarry along the River Ivel and ended with a hog roast at the village hall and a taster session of crown green bowls on a nice, warm, sunny afternoon. Can I thank Mary and Bernard for organising both of these events and to walk leaders Marcus & Ian. We just about held the traditional Mulled Wine Ramble for Sunday walkers in December last year. A heavy fall of snow overnight almost prevented the walk leader and the mulled wine reaching Henlow village hall. Needless to say attendance was low but there was plenty to eat and drink. Thank you to Ian Jarry, Tina German and Dave Broughton for organising it. There are similar events this year with a Christmas dinner once again at the White Horse in Southill on Wednesday 12<sup>th</sup> December and the Mulled Wine Ramble on Sunday 16<sup>th</sup> December at Wootton Village Hall.

This years' social events started in March with the rescheduled trip to the Palace of Westminster organised by Barry Ingram. We travelled by train into London and walked the route of the Boat Race from Mortlake to Putney Bridge before getting the underground to Westminster. We didn't meet the newly elected MP for Bedford but the visit inside Parliament was awesome. Also in March, Andy Knight organised a skid pan experience to Essex which attracted a lot of members. Everyone learnt new skills in car control so we should see increased numbers at this years Mulled Wine Ramble if it decides to snow again. In August, Roger McLeod organised a kayak/canoe trip down the River Ouse from Bedford to Great Barford followed by tea and cakes on the lawn beside the bridge. Both the paddlers and those walking in tandem along the riverbank had an enjoyable afternoon. I'd like to thank Barry, Andy, Roger & Mandy for these events.

In addition to IVW events, we continue to support Bedfordshire Area initiatives in Training and Path Restoration (RIPPLE). Nick Markham organised two courses during the year; a Walk Leader Day for new and experienced leaders to refresh their skills and; a Map Reading course to improve walkers' navigation skills. Both were well attended and successful. At the beginning of the year the RIPPLE initiative looked unsupportive and in chaos because of organisational changes to ROW officer responsibilities in both Central & Bedford Councils. Evidence of this was seen later in the loss of some equipment that went missing. However by June, Barry Ingram having walked the 'corridors of power' had managed to get the RIPPLE activities back together. Now we have a programme of tasks planned to the end of the year and beyond. Some of these without the ROW officers present and arranged within the RIPPLE team itself. My thanks to Barry for getting the productive RIPPLE initiative moving once again and to Nick for his support in training our members.

Our Footpath Officer, Derek Turner has continued to monitor diversions and temporary closures of paths as building work progresses at many locations. The process of compiling Local Plans affecting housing and other development up to 2030 is continuing and should be finalised early next year. There's been nothing new about either upgrading the remainder of the A1 to motorway or about closing level crossings on the East Coast mainline but plans to alter things on the Bedford-Bletchley line as part of Phase 2 of the East West Rail Link continue moving forward. One contention is former footpath 5 at Stewartby which used to cross the line in the early days of the brickworks. Derek was keen to see this crossing remain open for when the path across the old clay pit is re-instated and the brickworks site then redeveloped, which is likely in the next few years. Recently, he had a call to ask if he would withdraw his objection if they abandoned their plans to close the crossing, which he indicated he would. We await further communications about this.

Have you heard of Defra Conservation Walks & Natural England? These are permissive paths or access land that farmers and landowners have provided for walkers, and sometimes horse riders too, in return for an annual payment. The agreements last for 10 years at a time and some have been renewed twice and been available for nearly 30 years. Many of these paths have never been publicised. Payments for them are being phased out as existing arrangements expire and no new ones will be taken on. In many cases this is not much of a loss for us, as we were never consulted about their creation anyway. Also, some are just unproductive field headlands in places where they contribute little to the path network and unsurprisingly, receive little use. However most remaining schemes in the villages of Thurleigh, Sundon, Streatley, Wootton, Haynes, Clifton, Clophill and Heath & Reach will expire between July and December 2019. Another in Pertenhall lasts until Oct 2020. Whilst it's possible that some of these paths and areas will remain open after payments cease, we should make the most of the useful ones while we can.

This year saw the introduction of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) which came into force at the end of May. The chairman sent out forms to members to gain consent, or not for using their home address, their email and their appearance on media publicity documents. This was not a success, nor a convenient method to interface with

our members and has caused confusion, indicated by the number of replies received, which only totalled 30% of the existing membership. One thing that wasn't realised at the time and became apparent, was that members needed to login to the main Ramblers Website and register their details with them before GDPR preferences began. Therefore the process at the moment remains 'in progress' and we need to inform the members precisely what is needed to move forward.

The committee have agreed holiday plans for 2019 which include a week long holiday to Alfriston in the South Downs National Park at the end of April organised by Bob & Celia. A three day City Break to Liverpool in June organised by Barry Ingram. And a long weekend to Great Malvern at the beginning of October organised by Roy Carter and another. We have a proposal for a coach trip to Virginia Water & Windsor in May next year organised by Roy Carter and Andy Knight. Please look out for these and their booking forms in the Spring walks programme.

On the social calendar we have an imminent event in late November for an historic evening pub walk in London organised by Roger McCleod and a visit to see the London lights in December organised by Marcus Kilby. Neither of these social events appear in the current programme, so please contact the organisers, that's Roger & Marcus for details and restrictions.

Lastly, I would like to express thanks to the Committee and backroom staff (walk coordinators, technicians and auditor), all of whom have worked very hard over the past year on your behalf. I thank them for their continued commitment to Ivel Valley Walkers and to volunteering to be on the committee during the year. However, next year we will need some new members to replace those who have worked 5 years as a volunteer on the committee. I would like to take the opportunity here to thank the Webmaster, Ian Jarry and the General Secretary, Sue Tate for their invaluable contribution to the Committee and club over the last 5 years. We have a vibrant committee with plenty of good ideas and know that we have members who have or who can step forward to fill vacant positions.

Please join me in giving all of the Committee members, a round of applause. Thank you.

Roy Carter  
Chairman, Ivel Valley Walkers