

DON'T GET EXCITED - THERE IS NO WALKS PROGRAMME!

Just a short newsletter to show everyone that we're still around, still walking but doing other things as well.

THE CHAIRMAN'S CHARITY WALK

Like most things these days it all started with a Zoom meeting. Our Church were discussing Christian Aid Week, a charity which we had always supported, but with the demise of door to door envelope collection we needed a new way of raising money. 'Richard could do a sponsored walk', my wife said. Being in control of the mouse a wise man might have accidentally left the meeting at this point but no, we stayed, and before I knew it I was up for 10 miles on the 14th May.

I planned my route carefully doing a circuit of the hills of Stroud mainly overlooking Rodborough. If you feel like a ten mile, hilly walk here is my route. From home I went down Kites Nest Lane to Lightpill, over the A46 and cycle track and up the hill to Selsley Common. Then up to the top to pick up the Cotswold Way through Penn Wood towards Middle Yard. I then followed the North Bound Cotswold Way through Ryeford, Far Westrip and into Randwick Woods, staying on until the path down the Throat. Down to Ruscombe, along to Whiteshill, down to Callowell and back through Tesco to Stroud. A long climb up Rodborough Hill brought me back to the Tab where my 10 miles were completed and Di picked up a grateful walker in her car.

Thanks to all those who have contributed to my efforts. *Richard*

<https://www.justgiving.com/team/Rodborough>.



THE FLAGS

It started when Richard decided, very early on, to self-isolate in order to maximise Di's chances of getting her hip operation done (fat lot of good it did, but that's another story). He sent pictures of himself walking locally, which I put on the website. Then lots of other people sent pictures of their "Isolation walks". Sometimes there were 4 or 5 lots a day. Several people started to use technology that they hadn't used before to send photos, learning new skills and filling time. They came in all shapes and sizes and formats so I also had to learn new skills. At the start of May it tailed off a bit, probably because people got fed up with taking pictures of the same old walks, but it was also a good way of recording changes. Different flowers out, the arrival of lambs and calves, blossom on the trees, where the horses and Alfie the donkey were, each repeated walk didn't necessarily look the same. And then the arrival of the cows. At the moment we're up to 83 walks on the website (you can find them at southcotswoldramblers.org.uk then select Photos). We've now got "Less isolated walks" now that people can join up with 1 other.

I consider myself very privileged that for my most frequent walk I can just walk 100 yards and I'm up on Minchinhampton or Rodborough Commons. Keith and I hike across to Minch with our rucksacks, where Minch Stores, Henry's and the butchers keep us supplied with food and drink. Lugging wine, fruit juice, cabbages, oranges and other heavy things back across the common is very good exercise, carrying a pack much heavier than my usual sandwich and a coke when we got out as a group.

But although I noticed the change in the wildflowers (and got quite excited when I found pink Early Purple orchids, and more excited when I found a solitary White one), the changes I noticed most were the flags.

There is a house just below Minch Common with a castellated roof and a flag pole. From the start of the lockdown they have flown 5 different flags. I have no idea whether they make them or buy them, but I look out for them as I pass. Sometime I have to stand for ages to take a photo as the wind 1) isn't blowing or 2) is blowing in the opposite direction so the letters are back to front 3) or is blowing so rapidly it won't stay still long enough, but usually I get something acceptable (to me, at least).

The first one was on the 26 March. I guess it had been up since 17th March as it said "Happy St. Patrick's Day".



Then at the start of April it was a Rainbow and a Unicorn.



On 20th April we walked past a "Keep Calm and Carry on" flag.



By the 8th May someone in the house must have been having a celebration as it was

“Happy Birthday” with a rainbow and champagne.



The fifth one on the 12th May doesn't seem to have a message. Judge for yourselves what you think it's about.

Sally



Lockdown in Cheltenham

Over the last few weeks we have complied with government guidelines and have been walking from home. The Town Centre and Lansdown area are easily accessible. ‘Out and Returns’ included Pittville Pump Rooms via the Honeybourne Cycle Track and Pittville Park and Charlton Kings Church (an oasis for bored youths) via the parks of Montpelier, Imperial, Sandford, Cox’s Meadow and Hatherley. Wildlife included seeing a duck with 11 ducklings crossing the A40, walking the length of St Stephen’s road on their way to Hatherley Park. Where had they been? A neighbour who also saw them asked how many ducklings she started with and where the father was. We soon discovered the quickest way to gain access to countryside was by walking out via Shurdington, Leckhampton and Daisybank to Leckhampton Hill then on to Hartley Hill and Crickley Hill. We discovered the amount of pavement walking at the beginning and end of these walks took a toll on knee and hip joints but worth it to get into green space and see lambs, calves, bluebells, wild garlic, cowslips and even the odd orchid.

These walks have provided time to reflect on urban walking. We’ve lived in Cheltenham for 20 years and walk in and out of town to shops, libraries, museums, galleries, music venues, restaurants, theatres and medical facilities. We’ve been rather smug about having these on our doorstep, so the last few weeks, when these amenities have been closed, has been interesting. To begin with, when the guidelines on exercise were to stay close to home, the town felt crowded and claustrophobic. Everywhere one walked was busy with others, walking, cycling, jogging or skateboarding. Gradually we began to explore the footpaths instead of the pavements and discovered an intricate network of paths connecting Cheltenham to

the surrounding countryside. As we explored these paths we realised they pre-dated the spa town of the eighteenth century and linked the medieval market town of Cheltenham (charter granted 1226) to the countryside. There were other industrial roots in some of the paths too. The ill-fated lime industry of Leckhampton, the malting, tanning and tobacco growing activity of the 15th, 16th and 17th centuries all left a robust network of paths in and out of the town.

It’s been an interesting few weeks. We’ve discovered a lot about the town we live in. We’ve realised how much we’ve taken for granted driving out to take a walk. We’ve realised how much we miss walking with friends and the camaraderie of a walking group. We’ve discovered at least 8 other walking acquaintances who live in Cheltenham and like us were pounding the pavements to reach green space. The photographs on the South Cotswold website of ‘real’ countryside have been a lifeline. The ability to drive out to walk, signalled a few weeks ago was a joy; Painswick and Cleve became regular haunts again. The directive issued a few days ago allowing unlimited travel and some contact with others outside the household seems like giddy freedom compared to the last few weeks.

Jill



LOCK-DOWN UP-SIDE

Much has been achieved during lock-down. Home-working has expanded, virtual conferencing taken off, bicycle sales increased and global warming slowed. How many cupboards have been cleaned, books read, shrubs replanted, telephone calls made or tasks completed which would have been left undone in normal times? Our allotments are immaculate and tenants have removed scrub and cleared walls of ivy which has grown over decades. The width of an allotment is a good "safe distance" and chats with neighbouring tenants now last longer.

A perverse feature of human nature is that we do not value our life-style and possessions for what they are but rather what they seem relative to those of others. He likes his 9-5 job because his neighbour works shifts; she loves her squat because her friend sleeps in doorways. I have felt a bit like this about lock-down. I love my house, garden and allotment because I have space and interest denied many city dwellers. Even losing social events which normally provided the backbone to life is not all bad. I miss my walks with Ramblers but I don't have to get up early to get my paper, cut my sandwich or pack my haversack

before I go. I miss visiting my family abroad but it is a joy not to have to worry about dry weather to cut the lawn before I go. I don't have to pack, fiddle with the PC for tickets or endure the hassle of the airport. But my main advantage, when I think about those poor youngsters whose life is socialising from crowded flats, is being geriatric. A few years ago, my impatience and twitchiness would have been exaggerated by the Corona virus but age has provided a new attitude of calmness. I can accept taking longer to do things. I can read, stare into the middle distance or have a nap. If the garage door needs painting or a flower-bed weeding, there is always tomorrow. An empty diary gives freedom. I am beginning to understand that why, despite infirmities and the approach of the grim reaper, the happiest age group is the over seventies.

One other thing: I have developed arthritis in my hands and I increasingly find it painful to receive a firm hand-shake. Now, hand-shakes don't happen. Covid 19 is not all bad - the glass is half full.

Brian

HOLIDAY NEWS

I'm sure the last thing on everyone's minds at the moment is going away on holiday although it would be nice to have a change of scenery.

It's impossible to know at the moment whether we will be able to go to Polperro in September. We do not have to pay the balance for the holiday until the second week of July so hopefully may know a bit more by then. I will contact everyone who has booked to go towards the end of June to discuss what our options are.

I do look forward to seeing everyone out on walks again when Boris lets us out and hope that the good weather persists when you think of all the mud and water we slogged through in the winter. One good thing to come of this is that I have found quite a lot of walks that I can put on the next programme whenever that is.

Ann

RETURN TO NORMAL – WHAT WILL NORMAL BE?

We are at last able to extend our walking activities to go slightly further afield but this now raises the question as to when we will be able to start Group walks again. And the simple answer is we don't know. Obviously we will be waiting for Ramblers to give us the all clear to get going again but there is every likelihood that these walks initially will not be quite what we are used to.

Certainly nothing will be decided until the virus starts to subside. We could then be faced with a further period of isolation where we can do Group walks providing the 2 metre isolation is observed. Thoughts on this possibility have already been considered and there would probably have to be a restriction on numbers to make it effective, possibly with a booking system being put in place.

Initially we might also have to give careful consideration to the walk itself. Planning to avoid stiles or gates wherever possible or even footpaths which are narrow or might be crowded. I even heard the possibility raised of sanitising stiles before you go over and when the group has passed. This would involve having a leader and back marker plus a front sanitiser and a back sanitiser. I am not sure if this was made totally seriously.

Richard

Isolation Walk to Piccadilly Wood May 7th 2020

Some ten or fifteen years ago, the Parish Footpath Group from Upton St. Leonards, improved and refurbished a little used public footpath to Piccadilly Wood. This lies on the Cotswold edge to the east of the lane from Sneedham's Green to Brookthorpe. Details of the walk were published at that time in the Upton St. Leonards Parish magazine and Patrick and Angela duly explored the route.

During the lock-down, they decided to revisit this walk, knowing that they were unlikely to meet any other walkers on this somewhat hidden way. Taking the footpath out of the village, under the M5 Painswick Road motorway bridge they walked through fields to Snow Capel Farm, passing an ancient moat on the way. The M5 was then crossed at the Upton to Brookthorpe lane bridge and a footpath towards the rifle range was taken. From here, the route traversed a series of medieval strips uphill to Range Farm where inquisitive horses peeped through stable doors as they passed by. The sloping field behind the farm was criss-crossed with a barrier of electric fences, with no dedicated route for ramblers. They managed to squeeze past a support post at the top of the electric wire.



The following section of the route was difficult to find, but some posts painted with faint yellow arrows were eventually spotted. Once into the woods the direction was even less clear, but fortunately the the GPS gave a clue to the correct direction. The pathway was overgrown and confused by multiple cattle tracks.

At last, they found themselves above the woods in a grassy meadow, but it was unclear where the downward route would be found. After trying tracks which turned out to have been made only by cattle, a stile was spotted to the left. It appeared that the original route had been changed in favour of a nearby permissive path. From here on, things improved, although the going was treacherous due to the surface that had been deeply pitted by cattle during the wet winter.

On reaching the lane near Grange farm, they crossed into beautiful buttercup meadows which led to a path around the perimeter of the Gloucester motorway services area. The lorry park was in use, but only one or two cars were in evidence. Onward through more meadows adjacent to the motorway they then fought their way up an overgrown slope to rejoin



the lane and cross the motorway before returning to the village by the same route.



The walk was six miles in length from the house, but progress had been slow due to the heat and problems with finding the way. Once out of the village they met no one at all but it would indeed be good if more walkers were encouraged to try the route once things return to normal!

Angela

BOTANISTS?



A young Rodborough resident (?future Rambler) examines the local flora (milkwort and buttercups)



An old Rodborough resident (current Rambler) photographs the local flora (pink Early Purple orchids)

Unexpected Treat: 'The Eagle has (not) Landed'

Although this period of 'lock down' has meant rearranging our lives and maybe feeling 'shut in' and out of sorts there have been some unexpected treats. One has been the heightened awareness of birdsong due to the decrease in traffic noise as well as bird sightings. As we have been out for our daily release, not only have we been overwhelmed by the sound of blackbirds, robins, and a variety of tits but also heard the drumming of the woodpecker in the wood we walk through followed by the harsh call of the pheasants. Yellowhammers have been aplenty as have the whole range of tits and finches.

However, Monday 4th May brought a special treat as we sat in our back garden in The Maples sipping a coffee whilst taking a 'gardening' break. A very large bird of prey soared into view above us, circling round, it was clearly 'on the hunt' and all local birdlife set up alarm calls and moved away fast. Was it a buzzard? No - as there was none of the tell-tale 'mewing' call and they mostly hunt in pairs. It did not have the distinctive forked tail and colouring of a kite – of which there have been several circling around recently. We were puzzled until we read in the paper the following morning that 6 young sea eagles had been released last year on the Isle of Wight; some are now confident enough to travel and had been spotted in the area wheeling and turning on the wind currents. One had even reached the Peak District (they are ringed). From the photograph that is what it was! It was certainly a sight to see has it moved around above us for about 15 minutes but interestingly it was a crow who finally saw it off. I hope he does not try that when that sea eagle becomes an adult!
Ros



Ros has been sewing scrubs, VERY LARGE SCRUBS. Sally asked her whether she had muddled up the metric and imperial measurements but Ros insisted that they had arrived already cut for her to sew. Both agreed that whichever medical professional, nurse or doctor, was going to be wearing them, no-one would be arguing with them!

MUSIC PERFORMANCE AND LOCKDOWN

Many Group members have supported Stroud Symphony Orchestra concerts over the years (27 in my case) and it is always good to see so many familiar faces in the audience. We as players were much taken aback when we were told to send our music back within three weeks of our planned concert in March. The concert was cancelled, and thus began the Covid-19 lockdown. We were all nearly ready with the Brahms 2nd Symphony and therefore as amateurs were much disappointed. But I do worry about the plight of professional players.

I have been watching some live streaming recitals from players' homes, which is to be encouraged, but is nothing like professional performances and the atmosphere which we are missing terribly. And of course the players' livelihoods are halted in their tracks. We have CDs, Radio 3 and even You Tube performances. The Berlin Philharmoniker website broadcasts concerts live – when they happen - and their vast library of historic recordings are available at all times. I signed up for a 7 day free trial, and they are excellent, but it's not like being there in person at a concert. <https://tinyurl.com/BerlinPhilDetails>
Links you might enjoy:

Cardiff Street Orchestra on Twitter – have done several performances (they are neighbouring families who play in the BBC National Orchestra of Wales <https://twitter.com/i/web/status/1255964728876204049> More performances at @robertplane

Nevis Living Room Ensemble | 500 Miles Online Orchestra
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ujjyYdfNBXM>

And of course the amazing Kanneh-Mason family on Facebook, Twitter and YouTube, seven siblings all playing amazingly well! Highly recommended.

You might like to see the semi-finals of BBC Young Musician 2020, available on BBC iPlayer.

Incidentally one of the judges on the Piano semi-final was Katya Apekisheva, the London based pianist (and music professor) who has played with The Stroud Symphony Orchestra 3 times. *Mike*

ACYROLOGIA (Ass-zero-lodge-ear)

An incorrect use of words – particulately replacing one word with another word what sounds similar but has a diffident meaning – possibly fuelled by a deep-seeded desire to sound more educated, witch results in an attempt to passe off an incorrect word in place of an correct one. In macademia, such flaunting of common social morays are seen as almost a syn and mite result in the offender becoming a piranha, in the monday world, after all is set and done, such a miner era will often leave normal people unphased. This is just as well sense people of that elk are unlikely to tow the line irregardless of any attempt to better educate them. A small percentage however, suffer from acute acyrologiaphobia, and it is there upmost desire to sea English used property. Exposure may cause them symptoms that may resemble post-dramatic stress disorder and, eventually, descend in to whole-scale outrage as they go star-craving mad. Eventually, they will succumb to the stings and arrows of such a barrage and suffer a complete metal breakdown, leaving them curled up in the feeble position.

John L

No Social Distancing on those halcyon days of early 2020 when all we had to worry about was mud and flooded paths



But it doesn't affect the cows