

Minutes 4th Meeting

Southern Walking Forum

Secret Hills Discovery Centre, Craven Arms
10am-12noon, Thursday 23rd May 2013

Present:

Cheryl Johnson (CJ)	Rail Rambles
Chris Chillingworth (ChC)	P3 Ludlow
Gerry Richardson (GR)	WfH Church Stretton
Ian Pearmain (IP)	Walking Co-ordinator, Shropshire Council
Jim Stabler (JS)	Access Development Officer, Shropshire Council
Keith Pybus (KP): Chair	Shropshire Way Association
Les Lumsdon (LL)	Ludlow 21
Marion Law (ML)	Rail Rambles
Michael Holland (MH)	P3 Ludlow
Peter James (PJ)	P3 Clun & Ramblers Footpath Secretary
Simon Cooter (SC)	Natural England Stiperstones
Steven Levers (SL)	Clun Walking Group
Sue Jones (SJ)	Shropshire Area Ramblers
Val Simpson (VS)	WaW Cleobury Mortimer

Apologies:

Alan Garner	Secret Hills Walking
Colin Carson	Shrewsbury Hillwalking Club & HF Holidays
David Hardwick	Countryside Recreation Officer, Shropshire Council
Dick Bailey	WaW & WfH Much Wenlock
Dick Ward	P3 Church Stretton
Jodie Griffith	Shropshire Hills AONB
Joy Nisbet	South Shropshire Group of the Ramblers
Leanne Jones (LJ)	Shropshire Council
Mandy Smith	WfH Cleobury and Lacon Childes School
Merle Lippitt	WfH Apedale Amblers
Mike & Pam Beazley	WfH Ludlow
Phil Sams (PS)	Ludlow 21
Rick Summers (RS)	P3 Ludlow & Whitcliffe Common
Steph Hayes	Shropshire Hills AONB
Trish Howard (TH)	WfH Church Stretton

MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS**Leaflets / Literature Review** (Last Forum Topic):

- JS said that Shropshire Council will have to sell almost any leaflet / brochure that it produces in the future. Others pointed out that generally people don't mind buying a good leaflet and in fact they are more valued if they are bought.
- Leaflets like those from the Wye Valley AONB are excellent with their wealth of interpretation. These leaflets are made available free of charge, because lots of funding has been made available to produce them – they may struggle to be sustainable like this though since no money is coming in for reprinting.
- Currently, Shropshire Council is trying to establish a formal relationship with Ludlow Books.

Shropshire's Wainwright - a continued review of Ian Jones's titles

At the March meeting the following Pragmatic Recommendations were approved:

- Buy up the rights to Ian's publications;
- Local groups take on the responsibility for re-walking the routes and waymarking;
- Introduce interpretative element to the texts for the delight of all;
- Find a format which will preserve the charm of Ian's originals, but lets the text breathe more;
- Explore joint venture with a local publisher;
- Since the meeting we have received the sales figures via the South Shropshire Visitor Information Centres [Church Stretton, Ludlow, Much Wenlock] plus Shrewsbury VIC and the Discovery Centre –

551	Ludlow	82	Much Wenlock
286	Longmynd	81	Clun
210	Stiperstones	77	Wenlock Edge Ridge
177	Church Stretton Walks	70	Cardingmill Valley
159	Craven Arms	37	Wenlock Edge
103	Church Stretton Short Walks	20	Church Stretton Walkabout
95	Brown Clee	15	Shropshire Peaks
82	Bishop Castle		

In addition PJ, acting as an unofficial agent in the Clun area, has sold almost 10,000 titles in 15 years. The Clun title accounting for half of sales, Bishop's Castle for almost 1,400 and Ludlow for a mere 5. PJ also pointed out that although £4.95 is fine and good value for the Clun 33 walks book, there continue to be regular sales of the Ian Jones book for Clun – being only £1.50 it better suits the pocket of someone just wanting a single walk.

KP had identified a suitable font to retain the charm of Ian's work, *FF Erikriorthand Regular*, which would free any 'new editions' from the restriction of calligraphy and allow seamless incorporation of additional interpretative text. He had concluded that £1.50 retail was an unachievable price for any commercial undertaking. If a gross margin of 33% to 40% were to be allowed for – a price point of up to £4.95 would be indicated. LL was concerned that this might have serious implications for distribution. The more

casual outlets like Newsagents were prepared to handle the £1.50 impulse purchase but might bridle at £4.95 which is a more considered purchase and therefore more a bookshop product. He advised picking one title only as a test market. Walks publishing he counselled is not a licence to 'print money', but a *labour of love*.

KP had up-dated editions of the top few selling titles in mind, but avoiding needless competition – in Ludlow for example the set of 9 Ludlow Country Walks leaflets has recently be published. LL advised a Kittiwake book is to be expected. An alternative would be to re-invigorate some of the lesser selling titles. In updating the booklets a level of interpretation should be included, but not as extensive as the Wye Valley leaflets. GR agreed interpretative text which preceded the walk route was essential. .

A test market is desirable. There was universal agreement that the market is competitive even fragmented. Walkers who might have purchased a walks book or booklet on arrival now may come armed with something they have downloaded. If the Ian Jones' titles are to continue they have to appeal as a unique local product of great charm. KP was concerned that the missing interpretative element is crucial in the appeal to the visitor and to make for a rounded 'souvenir' of the Shropshire Hills. A walk has to appeal before it is chosen when the browser skim-reads or the purchaser reads in the armchair. This decision rests on answering the question "what will I see?" not merely on "where does the route go?"

Next steps:

- reach an agreement with Ian Jones
- Discuss who is prepared to publish and distribute
- Identify Titles to trial [VS pleaded for the inclusion of Brown Cleef]
- Consider a test market
- Re-walk, waymark, etc.

MEMBERS UPDATES

Footpath Addition Clun local enquiry 15th May 2013

Following the enquiry PJ and KP reported on the lessons of general application. The case in favour had been gravely, if not fatally, undermined by the years taken from the initial attempt to get the Waterloo-The Hurst footpath recognised. Those in support had died, moved, withdrawn or were on holiday. When evidence of past usage is crucial, the witnesses are likely to be, say, 65+, you cannot afford to take more than a decade to process these matters.

The validity of the evidence had been attacked because the handwriting was the same on several statements. Local supporters should beware helping others too much with their submissions.

The Inspector's findings are expected within three months.

Elsewhere there has been more positive news: with various reservations as to the roughness of the calculations, the Definitive Map and Enforcement Support Officer estimated "that over the past 5 years the Council has recorded approximately 18 km of public routes as a result of Definitive Map Modification Orders under the Wildlife and Countryside Act. Many of these routes were being used as public routes for many years and we have then gone through the legal process to record them on the Definitive Map. In addition, the net gain through Highways Act diversion orders over the past 5 years is

(very) approximately 1km. We have also created some routes through agreement with landowners which amount to approximately 2km. This gives a grand estimated total of 21km of public rights of way recorded in the past 5 years. We have also deleted a few routes which amount to approximately 1.5 km during this period.”

Rail Rambles

The Rail Rambles programme of walks was established in 1989 by Alan Howard. It encouraged walkers and rambles to use public transport to access remote areas of Wales, the borders, the Welsh coast and Shropshire.

From one walk a fortnight, the programme has expanded to two walks every Saturday throughout the year. A long walk of 10 – 15 miles, usually at a fairly brisk pace, and a shorter walk of less than 10 miles for those who are less energetic. There are sometimes 50 or more on the two walks any Saturday. Last year this generated about £10,000 in fares for Arriva Trains Wales.

Shrewsbury is regarded as The Base. All walks take place from railway stations with train connections to Shrewsbury. We have also expanded into walks using buses.

The programme is published twice a year, in January and July. It is organised by Cheryl Johnston who establishes the walks from a database of about 200 different walks, Marion Law who types the programme and gets it printed and distributed, and Chris Jenkins who checks the train times and provides the leaders with maps of their routes. And we all work together to ensure that all the information is as accurate as possible. It is the responsibility of walkers to check train and bus times as the programme is produced six months in advance, and also to check whether engineering work or other disruptions will affect the timetable.

There are currently about 40 people who lead, all members of the Ramblers, some of them lead three, four or five walks per programme, some only one, but all are valued and without them there would be no led walks.

Arriva Trains Wales support the programme by providing free train passes for the leaders to use to recce and lead the walks.

The walks are published on the website www.railrambles.com, which is updated by Mike Downward.

The walks are open to anyone with a reasonable level of fitness. Walkers do not have to be members of any formal group (eg Ramblers Association). The Ramblers provide a small grant to cover out-of-pocket expenses, especially for the printed programmes, but we are increasingly reliant on use of the internet.

Offa Hoppa: As part of the Walking with Offa project, LL and Alison Caffyn have developed a free booklet of 6 Offa Hoppa Bus Walks around Knighton and Kington.

New ***Castle Connect*** bus service between Ludlow and Bishop’s Castle is now running, as well as the 2 other Shuttle Bus services – Long Mynd & Stiperstones Shuttle and Wenlock Wanderer. LL added that the Castle Connect is a bigger bus (33 seater) so well suited to

walking groups and it is also possible to phone in advance and a larger bus can be put on.

Ludlow 21 and IP have produced the 1st of a number of leaflets for walks accessible using public transport – [Bromfield to Leintwardine](#) – available on Shropshire Walking website.

There was some discussion of the great story begun by the Rail Rambles initiative leading into more and improved sustainable walking access. This would make a good story for a newsletter, which could be sent to West Midlands walking groups and other people / organisations to encourage walkers and walking in the Shropshire Hills.

From **Shropshire Hills AONB** (Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty):

- Shropshire Way bus walks have been updated and are downloadable from www.shropshirewalking.co.uk/shropshire-way/linear-walks.htm
- 6 new pub walks in the Walking with Offa series- from The Bog Centre, The Bridges, The Bottle and Glass, Picklescott, The Plough Wall under Heyward, The Royal Oak, Cardington and The Horseshoes, Pontesbury. Leaflets will be available in the next month.
- Walking with Offa guided walks programme is available - <http://www.shropshirehillsaonb.co.uk/things-to-do/walking-with-offa/#guided-walks>.
- Shropshire Hills Walkers Are Welcome group now being chaired by Val Simpson.
- Walking with Offa cooperation project is on-going.

Ramblers

There was discussion of the falling national membership of the association – probably down to a variety of reasons, but particularly competition. Due to the wealth of free or cheap information, it came from increased numbers of walking groups plus more people walking independently.

It was pointed out that the work of the Ramblers is much more than organising and leading walks. For example, they took a major role in establishing the definitive map of Rights of Way (RoW).

MH felt that the Ramblers should take a greater role in working with local P3 (Parish Path Partnership) groups who volunteer their time to maintain the RoW network. ML pointed out that in many parts of the county the Ramblers are actually the driving force behind the local P3 and she would encourage Ludlow-based members of the Ramblers to contact MH.

Holiday Property Bond

This is an up-market holiday set up with 91 bed spaces at Upper Norton near Craven Arms. JS is working with the manager to produce a pack of walking leaflets.

FORUM TOPIC: WORLD WAR 1

Guest Speaker: Margaret Hay-Campbell, Chapel Lawn

Margaret showed examples of the booklets she was compiling on the men of the four original parishes in her Benefice (Bucknell, Stowe, Chapel Lawn and Llanfair Waterdine) and on three now added (Bedstone, Hopton Castle and Clungunford) who fought and lost their lives in the World Wars. The booklets focus not just on who the people were pre-war (research from the census and talking to descendants), but also stories about how many of

them died or the actual engagements they were in at the time of their deaths (with the aid of the regimental war diaries).

She recounted many of the stories she had uncovered and mentioned many of the potential landmarks around her parishes that could be used to create walking routes.

JS said that he would like to see a pack of 20 walking leaflets designed around the commemoration of the First World War. Heritage Lottery Fund would be approached for a grant.

The Forum agreed this was a project it could focus on. It would be the main topic for the next meeting in September.

Date of Next Meeting

10am – 12noon, Friday 6th September 2013

Secret Hills Discovery Centre, Craven Arms

TOPIC: World War 1 Centenary – War Walks on the Home Front