

# ACCESSIBLE RAMBLES IN SUSSEX INTRODUCTION

last revised 21/05/2010



## Contents

WELCOME! .....	3
Scope of the guide.....	3
Copyright .....	4
Credits .....	4
Getting more copies of this guide. ....	4
Health Warning .....	4
Grading the rambles .....	5
GATES .....	6
Circles and Lines .....	6
Internet or No? .....	6
Getting to the Rambles .....	6
Trains.....	7
Buses.....	7
Car.....	8
Rights and Responsibilities in the Countryside .....	8
Maintaining rights of way .....	9
Reporting Problems.....	9
Maps and Grid References .....	10
Maps.....	10
Grid references.....	10
OTHER RESOURCES AND IDEAS .....	11
SUSSEX ROAMERS .....	11
Walks with wheelchairs/walks with buggies.....	11
SUSTRANS .....	11
BRIDLEWAYS AND BYWAYS .....	11
WOODLANDS AND OTHER SHORT ROUTES.....	12

# WELCOME!



Despite development, Sussex is still a beautiful county. Ashdown Forest, the Pevensey Levels, the Wealden woodlands, the downs and the seaside are great areas to explore. Being in the countryside can lift your spirits like few other experiences. Sussex has over 4,000 miles of footpaths and many areas of open access, but many of these have stiles, slippery ground or slopes which can cause problems for many people. We could not find a comprehensive guide to rambles that would avoid these hazards, so we set out to create one ourselves.

This is very much a work in progress. Have a look at the date on the front cover. If it has changed since you last looked then we have added new material.

The Sussex area of the Ramblers is publishing this guide to encourage you to get out and explore the countryside if you:

- Walk but are less agile or fit than you would like to be or,
- Use a wheelchair or buggy for mobility or;
- Want to explore the countryside with children in a pram or something similar.

Right now there are lots of examples of rambles where we are not sure of all the relevant information (where the information is missing or shown with a question mark). We have included these because you might like to explore these rather than wait until they can be served up on a plate for you. Obviously we welcome information about these or other rambles. Send your information to [chris.smith@hbhelp.co.uk](mailto:chris.smith@hbhelp.co.uk) or write to Chris Smith, PO box 2660, Lewes, BN7 2RW.

## Scope of the guide

Generally we have limited ourselves to country routes of at least 4km (2 km each way for linear routes)- that we think that are worth travelling to explore. But in the “other resources and ideas”



section we list some shorter and urban routes. This document is the introduction to the guide. Other documents list rambles in different parts of Sussex.

## Copyright

The copyright to most of this material is held by the Ramblers. You are welcome to reproduce it for the purpose of encouraging rambling provided that:

- no charge is made and
- the aim of reproduction is not to make a profit and,
- you provide a link to this guide or the web address.

The scanned images of 1940s Ordnance Survey maps used in this guide are licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-Non Commercial Licence 2.5. They are copyright 2005-2007 Richard Fairhurst, Mike Calder, Nick Burch and Andrew Rowbottom.

Open Street maps used in this guide are licensed under the Attribution-Share Alike 2.0 Generic licence.

Pictures are individually attributed.

## Credits

This guide has been written by Chris Smith. Chris would like to thank the following who have contributed comments, information or rambles- Malcolm McDonnell, Andrew le Gresley of East Sussex County Council rights of way, Lewes Footpath Group, John Harmer, Derek Knight, Dave Bangs, Linda Rivers, Mike Pope, Vicky Panell of East Sussex County Council, Jim Kent of Brighton and Hove Council, Andy Gattiker, South Downs Way National Trail Officer.

## Getting more copies of this guide.

You can download the guide from <http://www.sussex-ramblers.org.uk/> At the time of writing you can also get a copy by sending £1.50 in stamps and a large self addressed envelope to Chris Smith, Sussex Ramblers Association, PO Box 2660, Lewes BN7 2RW

## Health Warning

Inspired by the example of the Disabled Ramblers organization ([www.disabledramblers.co.uk/](http://www.disabledramblers.co.uk/)) we encourage you to be adventurous. Where possible we have tried to include contact details you can use for up to date information. Most rambles have a date when the information was last checked. If the date is old then you may want to be cautious.

The countryside is always changing. Remember that:

- The person surveying the ramble may not have used the same equipment that you do. Surveyors use their best efforts to describe a route, but mistakes do occur.
- We have used the web site "Where's the path" <http://wtp2.appspot.com/wheresthepath.htm> to measure distance, height gain and gradient. This is an excellent site but does not give the extreme accuracy that expensive equipment can give. Treat all measurements as approximate.

- Bad weather can turn an easy path into a nightmare. Particularly in the weald, bad conditions can turn a path to a quagmire. The downs may be a better bet in winter.
- Paths can get illegally obstructed, some fool in a four wheel drive vehicle can carve up the route or the surface may not be properly maintained. Report any problems to the council responsible for highways. Later on we tell you how you can do this.

Please let us know about any problems you come across with these routes. Contact [chris.smith@hbhelp.co.uk](mailto:chris.smith@hbhelp.co.uk) or write to Chris Smith, PO box 2660, Lewes, BN7 2RW.

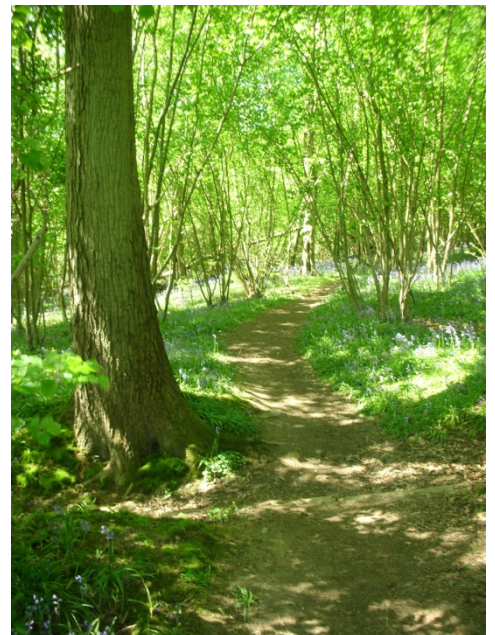
## Grading the rambles

We have graded the rambles into three grades. They are taken from the gradings used by the Disabled Ramblers organisation which in turn are related to categories used by Natural England (formerly the Countryside Agency). Broadly these categories map on to the Zone definitions described in the Countryside Agency publication: 'By All Reasonable Means'. Category 1 maps to Zone A, Category 2 maps to Zone B, Category 3 maps to Zone C.) These grades should be used as a rough guide to make it easier to find which rambles are suitable for you. Do read the details for each individual ramble.

**CATEGORY 1** implies generally high quality surfaces along the route. The surfaces will be for the most part, smooth and all weather. This means tarmac or good quality crushed stone will predominate. However, there may occasionally be short stretches of rougher path and some seasonal surfaces such as grass or compressed earth. The path will be adequately wide, with a normal standard of 1.5m, though 'pinch points' may occur, for example through gates. Cross slopes will be normally very small say up to 1 in 12. Occasionally cross slopes may be steeper, but there will usually be ways around such sections. There will be no steep hills greater than 1 in 12, except perhaps for very short stretches and the total height significant height climbed during the ramble will not exceed 30 metres. No stiles or similar obstructions.

**CATEGORY 2** expects generally good surfaces, but allows longer stretches of stony going (stones up to 40mm) beaten earth or grass track-way, The path will be adequately wide, generally of the order of 1.5m, though a number of narrow stretches down to 1.2m may be present as well as 'pinch points' through gates etc. Small steps not bigger than 40mm may be encountered. Cross slopes will generally be very small, but sections involving cambers, say up to 1 in 8 may occur for short stretches. Small stretches of soft going or involving ruts (up to 40mm) will occasionally be encountered, but usually these may be bypassed. Hills will generally be no more than 1 in 10, with occasional steeper stretches up to 1 in 8. Total significant height climbed may be up to 150 metres in a day. No stiles or similar obstructions.

**CATEGORY 3** means longer stretches of rough going with side slopes and some ruts (max depth 100mm). The paths may well be stony tracks with quite large stones (some stones max 100mm), or there may be very wet and soft sections. Occasional steps up to 100mm may be encountered). Cambers





may also be correspondingly steeper, sometimes in excess of 1 in 8. Hills may be long and steep, with some stretches even up to 1 in 5, or very occasionally 1 in 4. Total height climbed during a day may be up to 300 metres. No stiles or similar obstructions.

**CATEGORY 4** Refers to routes that are not wheelchair or pram accessible but are useful for ramblers with limited agility or strength. There are no stiles and height gain is generally less than 150 metres in total. Normally no ascents steeper than 1 in 15. Normally there will be no rough or unstable surfaces (but remember that fields may be ploughed after our survey and that prolonged heavy rain can affect routes). There may be exceptions to these limits. These will be set out in the details. If rambles in this category are suitable for you then category one rambles will also be suitable, as will most category 2 rambles, but read the descriptions.

The height assessment used as a basis of route classification is based upon clearly identifiable hills along the route. Normal small ups and downs encountered on any ramble are discounted.

## GATES

On most of these rambles you will need to go through gates. A typical gate is about 1.3 metres high and roughly the same width. It is likely to be secured with a bolt or latch about two thirds of the way up, or higher. In a number of cases there may be a lever on the bolt which extends over the top of the gate. This is to make the gate easier for horse riders to open. The lever can make the gate easier for you to open if you can reach it, but otherwise adds weight to the bolt.

Where gates differ substantially from this description this is mentioned in the text. But bear in mind that gates can be changed or renewed at any time.

## Circles and Lines

A very large number of accessible rambles are linear. It is quite difficult to find circular accessible rambles. However the problems of coming back the same way can be overrated. On a linear ramble you can go as far as you like and then turn back. You also get different views on the way back. Even better, you know how far you have to go and have no navigation problems.

However there are often possibilities to come back by public transport. Wherever possible we describe these.

## Internet or No?

More and more information is only available on the internet. Where internet information is available we provide a link to it. Where possible we also provide an address or a phone number. If we do not do this then the information is only available on line as far as we know.

## Getting to the Rambles

We encourage you to use public transport wherever possible. In theory bus and train companies have put a lot of effort into accessible public transport in recent years. The reality can sometimes be a bit different. But the more transport companies are challenged to provide proper access the more they will do it.

## Trains

The majority of trains in Sussex are run by Southern Railways. The majority of their stations are, in theory, wheelchair accessible. See <http://www.southernrailway.com/your-journey/network-map/?access=on>. The key problem can often be getting on to an off of the trains, although ramps are available. It is a good idea to contact the train company to make sure they can meet your needs. Where stations are not accessible the railway company should organize a taxi from the nearest accessible station to a point outside the station. The maximum size of a wheelchair or scooter on Southern services (and most other Train operators) is 700mm wide by 1200mm long and the combined weight of the passenger and conveyance must not be more than 300kg as this is the safe working load of the ramp. The conveyance must be able to fit in the accessible area provided and cannot safely be stored in the vestibule area near the doors.

Many of the stations you may want to use are unstaffed, but trains carry ramps.

South Eastern Trains run services from Tunbridge Wells to Hastings. First Capital Connect run services on the same route as Southern from Brighton to London.

## Buses

Generally speaking buses will take wheelchairs and wheelchair sized powered chairs. They will not take buggies or scooters. Buses will take pushchairs.

The main bus company in the Brighton area is Brighton and Hove buses. They also run to Tunbridge Wells, Eastbourne and Steyning. They have bus services that run up to sites like Devils Dyke, Ditchling Beacon and Stanmer Park. They publish a timetable "Bus times" twice a year which has comprehensive information about accessibility as well as timetables. This can be obtained by ringing 01273 886200 Their web site is at <http://www.buses.co.uk/>

Outside the Brighton area the largest operator is Stagecoach, a national company. It has two operations in Sussex, Stagecoach South runs buses along the West Sussex coastal area and as far north as Midhurst. Stagecoach East Sussex runs buses in the Eastbourne and Hastings area. Stagecoach has a web site at [www.stagecoachbus.com/](http://www.stagecoachbus.com/) Contact them on 0871 200 22 33

Cuckmere Community Transport runs the Saturday 25 service from Lewes to Alfriston and the Saturday 26 service from Seaford to Eastbourne via Alfriston, local services in the Cuckmere Valley and Rambler buses in the Cuckmere Valley. On services 25 and 26 there is low floor access, but a weight limit of 300 kilos. The Cuckmere Ramblerbus is not wheelchair accessible. Book wheelchair access on 01323 870920



*The operator of the bus in this picture was being paid by the council to provide wheelchair access, but the bus has steps*

For details of other buses in West Sussex see <http://www.westsussex.gov.uk/ccm/content/roads-and-transport/public-transport/buses-and-coaches/bus-timetables.en;jsessionid=a7TclurtEaza>



For details of other buses in East Sussex see

<http://www.eastsussex.gov.uk/roadsandtransport/public/buses/downloadmaps.htm>

Last time I looked only the East Sussex buses web site had details of accessibility of bus routes.

However almost all Brighton and Hove buses are wheelchair accessible.

There can be problems using wheelchair ramps if there is no kerb. Where we recommend rambles using buses we say whether or not a kerb is available at the bus stop.

## Car

Cars can be ideal if you need to transport equipment for your ramble. Wherever possible we say whether or not car parking is likely to be suitable for a trailer towing a tramper or similar equipment.

Cars do present problems with linear rambles because you have to have to come back to the place that you started.

## Rights and Responsibilities in the Countryside

Keeping footpaths and other rights of way open is the responsibility of the highway authority. In Sussex that means the counties of East Sussex and West Sussex and the unitary authority of Brighton and Hove. But councils can delegate responsibilities to other bodies. Currently both East and West Sussex delegate their powers in the South Downs to the South Downs Area of National Beauty board. East Sussex delegates powers in Hastings and Eastbourne to the councils for those towns.

There are three main types of right of way other than roads. These are:

**Footpaths:** You have the right to travel along these on foot, with a pram, with a wheelchair, including motorized chairs or similar if you need them. Footpaths are shown as short red dashes on landranger ordnance survey maps and as short green dashes on ordnance survey explorer maps.

**Bridleways:** You have the right to travel along these on a horse or bicycle on foot, with a pram, with a wheelchair, including motorized chairs or similar if you need them. Bridleways are shown as long red dashes on landranger maps and as long green dashes on explorer maps. Cyclists are supposed to give way to other traffic and there is no obligation to make routes suitable for them.

**Byways:** You have the right to travel along these on a horse, horse and cart or bicycle on foot, with a pram, with a wheelchair, including motorized chairs or similar if you need them. There may also be rights for motor vehicles to use some byways although many motoring rights have been abolished. There is more information about byways at

[http://www.ramblers.org.uk/rights\\_of\\_way/knowledge\\_portal/advice\\_notes/byways\\_restricted\\_byways\\_and\\_tracks.htm](http://www.ramblers.org.uk/rights_of_way/knowledge_portal/advice_notes/byways_restricted_byways_and_tracks.htm)

Owners of land can give additional rights to whoever they want and there may be some private rights. For example owners of a house may have a right to use a way to get to their home.



On some types of downland there is a right to roam where you want. These places are shown in brown and yellow on the latest landranger maps. Landowners may allow people to go where they want on some land. In this case there will usually be signposts on the land. But otherwise there is no right to go where you want on private land.

### **Maintaining rights of way**

Generally speaking it is the responsibility of the highway authority to maintain the surface of the right of way, including most bridges. The landowner must maintain stiles, gates and any bridges over ditches they have constructed themselves. The landowner must not obstruct the way. The highway authority has a duty to make sure that the landowner carries out their duties. You can find more information at

[http://www.ramblers.org.uk/rights\\_of\\_way/knowledge\\_portal/advice\\_notes/](http://www.ramblers.org.uk/rights_of_way/knowledge_portal/advice_notes/)

The highway authority must make sure that the right of way is in good enough condition to be used by the usual traffic that it gets. So, unfortunately, there is no obligation to maintain a way so that it is fit for prams or wheelchairs, unless you can show that a reasonable number of people use the route using prams or wheelchairs, or the route is advertised as being suitable for people with these. On footpaths, ramblers are expected to put up with mud or ruts unless these last all year or make the path positively dangerous.

No stiles or similar obstructions that would stop access by horses are allowed on bridleways or byways. But there is nothing to make a landowner take stiles down on footpaths, although highway authorities and the Ramblers do encourage landowners to remove unnecessary stiles. A stile must be maintained in a reasonable and safe condition. However a new stile or similar is another matter. If a landowner erects a stile or similar where there has not been one before, then this is an obstruction. You should report it to the highway authority saying why this is a problem for you. More about stiles at:

[http://www.ramblers.org.uk/rights\\_of\\_way/knowledge\\_portal/advice\\_notes/stiles\\_gaps\\_gates.htm](http://www.ramblers.org.uk/rights_of_way/knowledge_portal/advice_notes/stiles_gaps_gates.htm)

Crops grown across rights of way can be a particular problem. Landowners are allowed to plough up paths in order to grow crops, but are supposed to reinstate the path shortly afterwards. The path may be much rougher after re-instatement. If you are in a group and come across a route that is obstructed by crops and feel that you can travel though the crop the usual advice is to travel in single file so that the route is clearly marked out for future travellers. You can find more information about ploughing at:

[http://www.ramblers.org.uk/rights\\_of\\_way/knowledge\\_portal/advice\\_notes/ploughing\\_and\\_croppin\\_g.htm](http://www.ramblers.org.uk/rights_of_way/knowledge_portal/advice_notes/ploughing_and_croppin_g.htm)

### **Reporting Problems**

Footpath problems can be reported to West Sussex County Council at

<https://secure.westsussex.gov.uk/formbuilder/showForm.do?title=Public%20Rights%20of%20Way%20Feedback%20Form> or write to the Rights of Way team, West Sussex County Council, County Hall, West St. Chichester, West Sussex PO19 1RQ

and to East Sussex County Council at

<https://www.eastsussex.gov.uk/contactus/emailus/email.aspx?n=Rights+of+Way&e=rightsofway&d=eastsussex.gov.uk> or write to the Rights of Way team, East Sussex County Council, County Hall, Lewes, BN7 1UE

If you know that the problem is inside the South Downs area of outstanding national beauty(AONB) it may be quicker to report the problem to the South Downs Joint Committee [www.southdownsonline.org/protecting/row](http://www.southdownsonline.org/protecting/row) or write to South Downs Joint Committee, Victorian Barn, Victorian Business Centre, Ford Lane, Ford, Nr Arundel, West Sussex BN18 0EF  
The committee will also deal with problems over problems with access areas on the downs. In 2011 the National Park will take over from the AONB and these details will change.

It may be good idea to spell out why a particular issue may be a particular problem to the less able.

## Maps and Grid References

### Maps

A map is essential to help you ramble. We recommend the maps published by the Ordnance Survey, which are available from libraries and many book shops. There are two main series:

Explorer maps: These are 1/25,000 scale and are probably the best for route finding. But you will need quite a few to cover Sussex.

Landranger maps: These are 1/50,000 scale and have less detail. But they cover a greater area.

In this guide we sometimes use some very old maps from the seventh series of Ordnance Survey maps. These are over 30 years old and show the country as it was some time ago. We do this because copyright rules mean that we cannot use newer maps without paying Ordnance Survey a large sum of money. These maps will show you where the walk is, but we recommend that you get hold of more recent maps.

### Grid references

Maps are divided into grid squares which allow you to pinpoint any location.

Every reference starts with two letters which tells you which 100 kilometre square in the country the place is in. For most of Sussex the letters are TQ, although in West Sussex west of Littlehampton the letters are SU.

Then you take the left edge of the square in which the location you want to describe sits. Read the large figures at the top or bottom of the line, in the margin of the map. This will give you two figures (say 56). Then estimate how far your point is across the square in 10ths. For example if you think that the point is half way across the square it would be 5/10ths. This gives you the third figure- in this case 5. In my example the figure so far might be 565.

Finally take the bottom edge of the square in which the location you want to describe sits. Read the large figures at the side of the line, in the margin. This will give you the fourth and fifth figures (say 12). Then estimate how far your point is up the square in 10ths. This will give you the final figure (say 2)

So your total reference might be TQ566122.



We use grid references to describe the start and finish of walks and also some points in between.

In many on-line mapping sites you can type in the grid references and the map will take you to the point pinpointed by the reference.- although sometimes they are not entirely accurate.

## OTHER RESOURCES AND IDEAS

There are a number of other places you might go for ideas:

### SUSSEX ROAMERS

A rambling and social club for ramblers using trampers and similar motorized buggies. Contact Bob Mathews, 7 Fitzgerald Park, Seaford, BN25 1AX, phone 01323 892647, email [sussexroamers99@aol.com](mailto:sussexroamers99@aol.com).

### Walks with wheelchairs/walks with buggies

These linked web sites have a number of short rambles in Sussex.

<http://www.walkswithbuggies.com/>

<http://www.walkswithwheelchairs.com/>

### SUSTRANS

Sustrans is an organisation dedicated to promoting cycle routes. As many as possible of these are traffic free so they can be a good resource for other ramblers with wheels. But bear in mind that cyclists may be happier to go up hills than you are and may be happier on busy roads than you.

They have maps which show off and on road cycle routes throughout the country. Here is a link to their on-line map <http://www.sustrans.org.uk/map>

### BRIDLEWAYS AND BYWAYS

It is illegal to put a stile across a bridleway or byway so you should not meet any of these obstructions on these routes.

However horses use these routes and horses can churn up a lot of mud in bad weather. Gates can sometimes be in poor condition and hard to open.

But bridleways and byways are particularly worth exploring on the South Downs. This is because:

- There are a large number of bridleways on the Downs;
- The Downs are made of chalk which tends to drain well;
- Routes on the Downs are maintained by the South Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Board, which has a policy of maintaining gates even though it has no legal duty to do so.



- There are a number of places where you can get a bus to the top of the Downs (Devils Dyke and Ditchling Beacon) and a number of car parks also on the ridge of the Downs, so you can start your ramble without going up steep hills.

## WOODLANDS AND OTHER SHORT ROUTES

A number of woodlands and wildlife sites have short paved trails. In East Sussex see

<http://www.eastsussex.gov.uk/leisureandtourism/countryside/disabledaccess/woodlands/default.htm>  
and

<http://www.eastsussex.gov.uk/leisureandtourism/countryside/disabledaccess/other/default.htm>

At Beachy Head there is a short peace path with fine cliff top views. Details at <http://www.visitsouthdowns.com/files/1053/Beachy%20Head.pdf> or phone 01323 737273

Brighton Council have created easy access trails at Hollingbury Woods [www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/downloads/bhcc/countryside/C.S\\_Hollingbury\\_2007\(lowres\).pdf](http://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/downloads/bhcc/countryside/C.S_Hollingbury_2007(lowres).pdf) Details from Brighton Council 01273 290000

Other short accessible routes can be found at <http://www.visitsouthdowns.com/rte.asp?id=89>

A number of people have recommended Lynchmere Common near Liphook. <http://www.visitsouthdowns.com/files/1061/Lynchmere%20Common.pdf>

Stedham Nature reserve west of Midhurst has an extensive trail system.

<http://www.sussexwt.org.uk/reserves/page00018.htm>

Other Sussex Wildlife Trust sites have accessible trails. <http://www.sussexwt.org.uk/index.htm>

Buchan Park near Crawley also has short accessible routes.

[http://www.westsussex.gov.uk/leisureandtourism/prow/pdfs/Buchan\\_CP\\_Trail\\_Guide.pdf](http://www.westsussex.gov.uk/leisureandtourism/prow/pdfs/Buchan_CP_Trail_Guide.pdf)

Near Selsey, the Sidlesham Ferry Nature Trail is a short accessible route

[http://www2.westsussex.gov.uk/leisureandtourism/prow/pdfs/Sidlesham\\_Ferry\\_Nat\\_Trail.pdf](http://www2.westsussex.gov.uk/leisureandtourism/prow/pdfs/Sidlesham_Ferry_Nat_Trail.pdf)

Aside from the longer Salterns Way, Chichester Harbour Conservancy also has some shorter routes. Find these at [http://www.conservancy.co.uk/assets/assets/walks\\_short\\_strolls.pdf](http://www.conservancy.co.uk/assets/assets/walks_short_strolls.pdf)

*Published by the Sussex Area of the Ramblers*

*Ramblers - at the heart of walking*

*The Ramblers' Association is a registered charity (England & Wales no 1093577, Scotland no SC039799) and a company limited by guarantee, registered in England & Wales (no 4458492). Registered office.: 2nd floor, Camelford House, 87-90 Albert Embankment, London SE1 7TW*

Visit our websites at [www.sussex-ramblers.org.uk](http://www.sussex-ramblers.org.uk) and [www.ramblers.org.uk](http://www.ramblers.org.uk)



Find your local Ramblers group at <http://www.ramblers.co.uk/groups/groupInfo.php?group=SX>