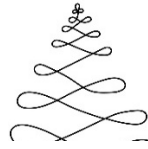


# FESTIVE FEET!

*Seasons Greetings from Loughborough and District Ramblers*



# SOAR FEET

## Newsletter of the Loughborough and District Ramblers

### Christmas 2025

#### *Editor's welcome*

Welcome to our 2025 end-of-year newsletter. I hope you will enjoy the reports of our walking activities and also find interest in our new "Soar Footnotes" section, where we exchange our experiences of the apps and maps that enhance our walks.

I am sure that like me you will also wonder at the images that our talented photographers have provided. In this era of concern about online security, we have had some requests to avoid using detailed images of individuals. It's an important consideration and we will revisit this; for now, we have erred on the side of caution. But just look at those landscapes!

This newsletter has been very generously supported by contributors across the group – and their information flowed in, which is an editor's dream! So many thanks to everyone who has so cheerfully provided content, and season's greetings to all!

#### *From the Chair: looking back on 2025*

We have had a good year! Thank you to everyone for your many and varied contributions. We finish this year strongly and look forward with enthusiasm to 2026!

At the heart of this has been our walks programme which has really thrived. We all say we "just want to walk!" - but of course "just walking" doesn't "just happen"! As a relatively small group we have sometimes found it challenging to sustain a substantial walk programme, so it is great that in 2025 we have increased the number of walk leaders within the group, with both longstanding and new members stepping up to complete the Ramblers' walk leader training and lead walks. This means we have been able to run a substantial programme of Wednesday walks throughout the year and also put on a varied range of Saturday walks, both locally and further afield.

The success of our walk programme is wholly dependent on members' contributions, and another highlight this year has been welcoming many new and

returning members to the group. Many now walk regularly with us, and several have quickly transitioned to walk leading, and/or made other contributions to the group's organisation and activities. Welcome to the class of 2025 - and thank you!



We also greatly value the continuing engagement of our wider community. Our total membership is much higher than the numbers who regularly join walks – currently, more than 150. A number joined us on our Cotswold day trip, and others have occasionally popped up on a weekly walk that has appealed. We really value this contact, hope you continue to keep in touch, and always welcome your communications and company!

With all the support we have from members we can now look forward with enthusiasm to building on this year's developments to further strengthen the group in 2026. There are one or two things we would particularly like to address. In terms of the walk programme, we do still rely on a small number of leaders to deliver a large part of our programme, so we hope that even more members will complete Walk Leader training and go on to lead walks. We would also especially like to build up our longer/Saturday walks programme. We have enjoyed some excellent longer walking in 2025: alongside our longer walks further afield, walks of 10-12 miles that are local to the Loughborough area are very popular and easy for people to access. We hope to increase these in 2025-26.

Overall then we have had a very positive year, improving our walk programme, increasing our membership... and even filling our previously vacant committee positions! We greatly appreciate the contributions of all our members, new and longstanding, who bring such vibrancy to the group. My own special thanks to our tireless committee, not just for their sterling work but for the positive, friendly spirit in which they do it.

*Tess Kay, Chair, December 2025*

## Committee matters

The following form our committee for 2025-26

| Loughborough and District Ramblers<br>Committee 2025-26 |                           |
|---------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Chair                                                   | Tess Kay                  |
| Treasurer                                               | Chris Rimbault            |
| Secretary                                               | Elizabeth Darcy           |
| Membership secretary                                    | Jackie Wales              |
| Walk Programme secretary                                | Sue Mears                 |
| Social secretary                                        | Sue Mears                 |
| Webmaster                                               | John Samson               |
| Area representative                                     | John Samson               |
| Footpaths officer                                       | Guy Jackson               |
| Newsletter editor                                       | Tess Kay with Mark Aylett |
| Committee member                                        | Liz Jones                 |

| Events and activities 2026                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <i>Confirmed dates and details will be notified on the Facebook page and via the WhatsApp groups</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| <b>Saturday 24 January 2025: Area AGM. Lutterworth Town Hall.</b> Doors open ~ 09.15 for meeting at 10.00. Followed by a local short walk afterwards, starting around 13.30; bring a packed lunch and walking gear if you want to join the walk. The committee will be up for election; in particular we are seeking a volunteer for the role of Membership Secretary. |
| <b>Spring coach trip, April tbc:</b> our annual day outing: enjoy Sue's Cotswold report of the 2025 trip on p4                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| <b>Summer evening walk and social, July tbc:</b> an evening walk followed by an optional pub meal                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| <b>AGM, October tbc:</b> our own annual meeting                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| <b>Area quiz, November:</b> the annual quiz contested by groups in the Area, hosted by us this year                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| <b>Christmas walk and lunch, December:</b> a festive walk followed by an optional pub meal                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |

## Rambling in an online world....a word about websites and WhatsApps

When we are not out roaming the countryside one of the challenges we have to navigate is how we communicate and operate in a world of screens! Our online presence is important to us, both within our membership and as a "window" for those outside it. Within the group itself, much communication now takes place via WhatsApp - including e.g. sharing of walk photos that might previously have been posted on Facebook.

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| The group's <b>website</b> tells people who we are, provides access to walk details and other information, is where members can find resources and where potential new walkers are likely to find out about us. Our webmaster John Samson keeps the content updated with news and events. <a href="http://www.loughboroughramblers.org.uk">http://www.loughboroughramblers.org.uk</a>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| John also manages the group's <b>Facebook page</b> . It is used largely to advertise walks and other group events and to share photos of group walks. It reaches a wide community and has three times as many members as our group. <a href="#">Loughborough Ramblers   Facebook</a>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| <p>We increasingly use <b>WhatsApp</b> for practical and social communication within the group:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Our <b>Lboro Ramblers Walks</b> group is where we organise our walk programme. We use WhatsApp polls as an efficient method for signing up to walks. Anyone who walks regularly with us is welcome to join this chat – it is not just for group members. (You can also still join walks in the usual way, by contacting the walk leader through the details given on the walk programme). Photos taken on walks are also posted here. We occasionally establish an additional group for a specific activity – e.g. the spring coach day trip.</li> <li>• Now that most of our walk organisation is taking place on WhatsApp, we have made sure there are still places for more social chat. Our <b>Lboro Ramblers Chat-about-walks</b> (and longer-established <b>Ramblings</b>) group allows more general chat about enjoying the countryside without cluttering up the walk arrangements information! People also share photos from walking in areas they would like to recommend and just enjoy their conversations. It is also a really useful group for the newsletter editor to post pleas for content! Belonging to the groups does not have to be intrusive – you can set WhatsApp to mute the chat, so you do not get notifications, and to not download photos.</li> </ul> <p>The WhatsApp groups provide very immediate and enjoyable communication – please do join both. People do sometimes worry that they might have posted to the "wrong" group - but there is no such thing as WhatsApp crime! We try to keep the Walks group for walk organisation but would much rather people talk somewhere than not! We follow the usual online community rules of being courteous and respectful in our conversations. To join the groups, or to raise any requests or concerns, do please contact one of the committee members.</p> |

## Loughborough and District Ramblers Coach trip to the Cotswolds, April 2025

*Sue Mears*



Walking through the Cotswolds on a lovely sunny April day - another great day out for the Loughborough Ramblers and their friends! This was the fourth coach trip that we have put on to kick start our summer season of walks. We do seem to have found a winning formula for a successful day out! This year a record number of 40 hit the Cotswolds!

The route that was followed was varied and picturesque, the company was as mixed and fun, we chatted our way through the beautiful Cotswold scenery.



We offered two walks of varying lengths to accommodate all our walkers. The longer walk of ten miles started in Broadway and went via Chipping Campden to Moreton in Marsh. The shorter route of seven miles started in Chipping Campden and finished in Moreton in Marsh where we enjoyed refreshments in the local cafes or pubs.

The journey to the Cotswolds was trouble free and just the right length, Tesco's in Loughborough is a great pick-up point.

We returned, having had a great walking experience, we had met up with old and new acquaintances and a grand day out was hopefully had by all!

Sue M



## INFORMATION FROM THE RAMBLERS:

### WALK LEADING TRAINING to be completed by JANUARY 2026

- The training needed in order to lead walk needs to be completed **this year**. If you are able to, the group would be really grateful if you could undertake the training.
- The training can be done by completing the online modules or being able to indicate that you have led 12 walks in the past 3 years and recording this information on your membership profile.
- To access the training, new walkers that are not leaders at present can let our Walk Programme Secretary Sue Mears know so that she can submit your name to The Ramblers. You will then be contacted directly with details of how to undertake the online modules. A number of our members have recently done this.
- In January 2026, Ramblers national office will be working with Groups to support any final walk leaders who still need to update their training record.
- Some of the Group's most experienced walkers and walk leaders have now completed the training (thank you!) and it is encouraging that they speak positively of its value:

*It's worth spending an evening doing the training, although much is passive clicking. There are perspectives from experienced leaders on how they do their walks and some incidents that have arisen, and several scenarios when you have to think through the courses of action and their consequences when an incident arises (injury, bad weather, etc). Some of this is best considered in advance than when it happens on a walk. John Samson*

- Our secretary Elizabeth Darcy was the first in our group to complete the online training to qualify as a leader – congratulations and thank you! - and has provided the tips below about how to access the training online.

| <b>ACCESSING AND COMPLETING THE ONLINE TRAINING</b>                                                 |                                                                                                                                                                     |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b><i>Make sure you have your membership login details (email address and password) to hand</i></b> |                                                                                                                                                                     |
| Access your member account                                                                          | You need to go into your Ramblers account and tick all the relevant boxes to give permission.                                                                       |
| Access the training modules. These are in the "volunteering" section                                | There are 3 modules that you complete.:<br>1. Walk Leadership Foundation.<br>2. The Walk Leader Handbook.<br>3. Preventing and Managing Incidents.                  |
| Update your profile to show you have completed the training                                         | Update your profile to show that you have completed the training. You need to have done this so that you can access Walk Manager once you are ready to lead a walk. |

### **Walk Leader Training Deadline!**

**If a walk leader has not completed the training or logged their experience or qualification by the end of January 2026, they will no longer be able to lead Ramblers group walks or access Walks Manager.**

So please do get in touch with our Walk Programme Secretary Sue Mears if you are able to complete the training and/or would like help to do so. She will be happy to support you and will email your credentials to our Area representative to start the process for you.

***Thank you!***

# FIRST AID TRAINING

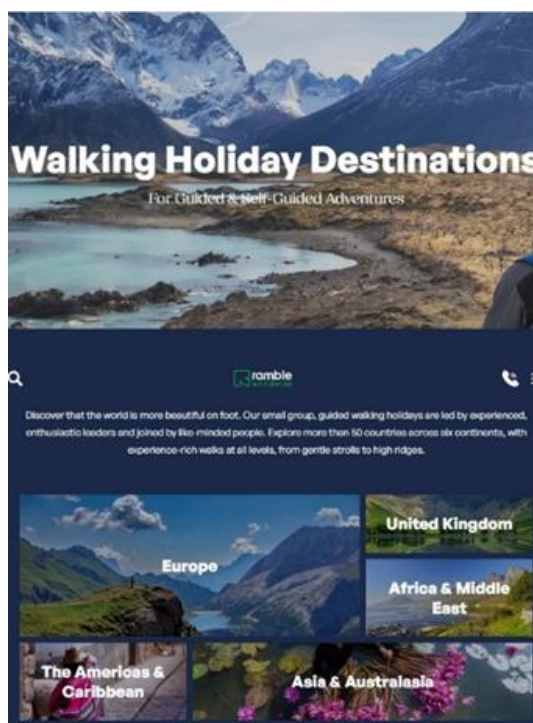
Earlier this year, eight group members completed a one-day First Aid training course. Thank you to Chris Rimbault for arranging for us to have access to the course, and to Isobel, Betty, Paddy, Jan, Jane, Margaret, John and Sue for getting trained up – it is a great contribution to our capacity to deliver safe and secure walking!

*Hi everyone. We went on the first aid course yesterday that Chris had organised. It was excellent with lots of topics covered and plenty of interaction. We certainly learnt new ways of dealing with things and had our memories refreshed from when we attended previous courses when at work. We recommend this course. Thanks Chris for arranging for us to go.*



*The first aid course was excellent. Sue and I did it in February at Botcheston. There was a lot to absorb - a good mixture of practical stuff and information and quite a fast pace to the day but really interesting and helpful! I enjoyed it and I think Sue did too.*

*Agree that it was excellent - and brought so many memories back from my working days x Highly recommended 🙌 A Brilliant course and Teacher.*

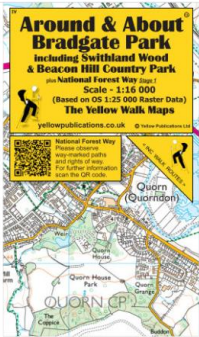
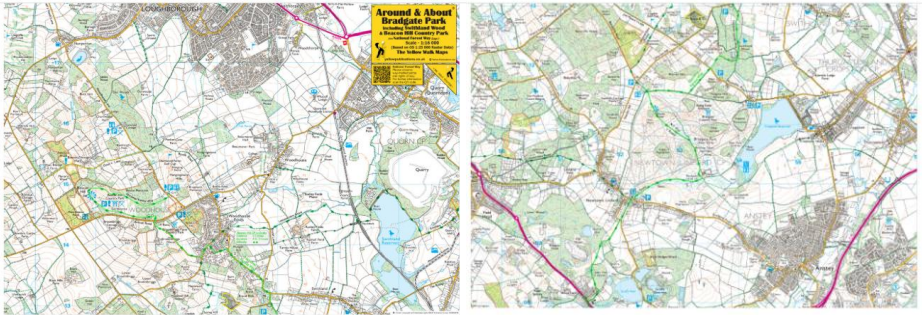
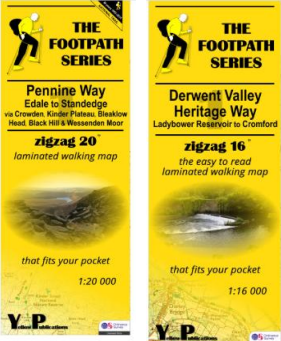


# SOAR FOOTNOTES

## Apps, maps and maps-on-apps to enhance your wanderings!

Welcome to our first “Soar Footnotes” information section. Here we share some of the group’s knowledge of resources that can add to our enjoyment when we are out in our wonderful countryside. And - it’s good to talk: if you have comments, questions or extra information, please join the discussion on the Chat-about-walks WhatsApp group!

## Footnote #1: (More) manageable maps from Yellow Publications

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | <h3>Large-scale, small area maps using OS data</h3> <p><i>contributed by Tess Kay</i></p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| <p>A number of us have recently discovered “Yellow Publications” – a range of resources that use OS mapping data to produce very manageable, clear physical maps that cover a relatively small area at a large scale. The maps are great for planning routes and navigating. They fold up to about the size of an iPhone and slip in the pocket easily so the days of battling large sheets in the wind may be behind you!</p> <p>There are several collections within the overall range, to suit different types of outdoor exploring. Below I have selected two examples that seem of most obvious relevance for our walking - the “Around and About” series, which now includes several in our local area, and the Zigzag series, for long distance footpaths; there is also a collection for cyclists, which may appeal to those of you who also like to whiz around on wheels!</p> |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| <p><b>“Around &amp; About” map series</b></p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | <p>A series of walking maps based on Ordnance Survey’s 1:25 000 data, enlarged to 1:16 000 for easy reading. Each map is laminated, two-sided, folds up small to fit in a pocket and comes with a concise Legend card in a plastic sleeve. Each map covers approximately 6.5 x 3.4 miles.</p>                                                                                                                            |
| <p><b>“Zigzag” map series</b></p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | <p>The Zigzag map series follows long distance footpaths using Ordnance Survey’s 1:25 000 data at scales of 1:16, 1:20 and 1:25 000, depending on the path.</p> <p>It is a concertina map that when folded is 99 mm across but extends to over a metre unfolded. It is laminated, will fit in a pocket, has a concise legend on the back cover and comes with a scale ruler in a plastic sleeve.</p> <p>Depending on the path and scale, the map can cover anything from 20 to 30 miles of the footpath.</p> |
| <p><b>More information</b></p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | <p><a href="http://www.yellowmaps.co.uk">Yellow Maps</a></p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |

## Footnote #2: Identify birds with Merlin

|                                                                                   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|  | <b>Merlin Bird ID</b> <i>contributed by Richard Jack</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| What it does                                                                      | It identifies birds!                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| How it works                                                                      | It either identifies birds from their song or a photograph. When you open the app you can choose either recording the song or taking a picture. Usually you can hear rather than see the bird, so I've only used it to identify birds from recordings. I assume that the photo recognition is similar to Google Lens.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| User-friendly?                                                                    | It is very easy to use. Open the app and let it record any sounds. A list of any birds identified comes up very quickly - usually less than half a minute. You can save a recording to view later.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| Constraints/limitations                                                           | Identifying birds from their song is easier in the quiet of the countryside. Lots of eg traffic noise in the town makes it difficult to hear the birds over the traffic. Usually you can't see the birds so you have to take the app on trust - however I've always been confident in the results, but I've never used it in exotic situations where very rare birds are likely to be found. There are other features - for example it offers a list of birds, with pictures, in the vicinity; there is a list of 121 likely to be found near Quorn. For each bird it gives a picture and description, examples of their song and calls, whether they are resident or migratory etc. |
| Getting the app                                                                   | This is a free app created by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and is available for Apple and Android phones, and Macintosh and PC computers                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| Any other info                                                                    | The app is designed for all levels of bird watchers and offers features like building a digital scrapbook of birding memories. Merlin is powered by eBird, which is the world's largest database of bird sighting, sounds and photos.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |

## Footnote #3: Identify animal, plant or mushroom with ObsIdentify

|                                                                                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
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|  | <b>ObsIdentify</b> <i>contributed by Lynne Atkinson</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| What it does                                                                        | It "recognises nature in one" – it identifies wild animals, plants and mushrooms                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| How it works                                                                        | The app is based on photo-recognition. You can take or upload a photo of a wild species and the app will use image recognition to identify it.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| User-friendly?                                                                      | "The few times I've used it I have found it easy to use and it is very accurate".                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| Constraints/limitations                                                             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The App identifies species in Europe and the Dutch Caribbean</li> <li>ObsIdentify is trained to recognize wild species of flora and fauna. It will not work on pets nor most houseplants and garden plants. The website also advises that "Using the app for cars, each other, etc. will give funny results which are not useful..."</li> </ul> |
| Getting the app                                                                     | This is a free app, available to download free of charge for both iOS and Android                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| Any other info                                                                      | Please don't use it for selfies!:                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| Other information                                                                   | The ObsIdentify app is a venture from the Dutch foundation, Observation International. It is less widely used in Britain but very popular in European countries. More info at <a href="#">ObsIdentify app for iOS and Android - BirdGuides</a>                                                                                                                                         |

## Footnote #4: Identify plants with PlantNet

|                                                                                   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
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|  | <b>PlantNet</b> (also written as Pl@ntNet) <i>contributed by Christine Wells</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| What it does                                                                      | App used to identify plants.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| How it works                                                                      | You can use flowers, leaves, fruit, bark or habitat to identify the plant or maybe use more than one, to help confirm identification.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| User-friendly?                                                                    | <p>It's fairly straightforward to use. You either use it directly by uploading a photo taken 'in the field' on to the site for identification there and then, or you can use a photo you've taken earlier and use that image from your stored photos to identify it later in comfort at home!</p> <p>When you've uploaded an image it will make suggestions of what it's likely to be with a percentage probability for a particular (or sometimes several) species. It will show several images of the species they are suggesting. If you think one of them is correct, you can hit the confirm button thereby adding information to the database. It also gives you further information about the plants they are suggesting which will vary depending on how much information has been uploaded by others.</p> |
| Constraints/limitations                                                           | In principle it can be used on any plants but tends to be more reliable on Northern European species (I think it was developed in France.)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| Getting the app                                                                   | It's free. Available for Apple and Android phones.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| Any other info                                                                    | It's based on a citizen science project so the data is accumulated by users' contributions to the database. So as well as the identification facility there's also the opportunity to join the 'Groups' or read the 'Feed'. You can just use it as an Identification tool though which is all I use it for.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |

## Footnote #5: identify plants with Picture This - Plant identifier

|                                                                                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|  | <b>Picture This - Plant identifier</b> <i>contributed by Guy Jackson</i>                                                                                                                                                      |
| What it does                                                                        | App used to identify wild & garden plants. In the latter case it diagnoses the plants' condition and gives care tips.                                                                                                         |
| How it works                                                                        | Just open the App.....take a pic of the plant.. and it tells you what it is.. and all about it.                                                                                                                               |
| User-friendly?                                                                      | Very. Easy to use, and then provides very good information. Especially useful because you can use one app for your own garden or in the wild.                                                                                 |
| Constraints/limitations                                                             | Not really found any to be honest!                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| Getting the app                                                                     | It's free. Available for Apple and Android phones.                                                                                                                                                                            |
| Any other info                                                                      | <p>It stores your pics - if you want to go back to re-identify etc.</p> <p>If you need tips on caring for particular plants, it provides relevant information - and you can keep going back to any plant you've pictured.</p> |

## Footnote #6: identify anything! – with Google Lens

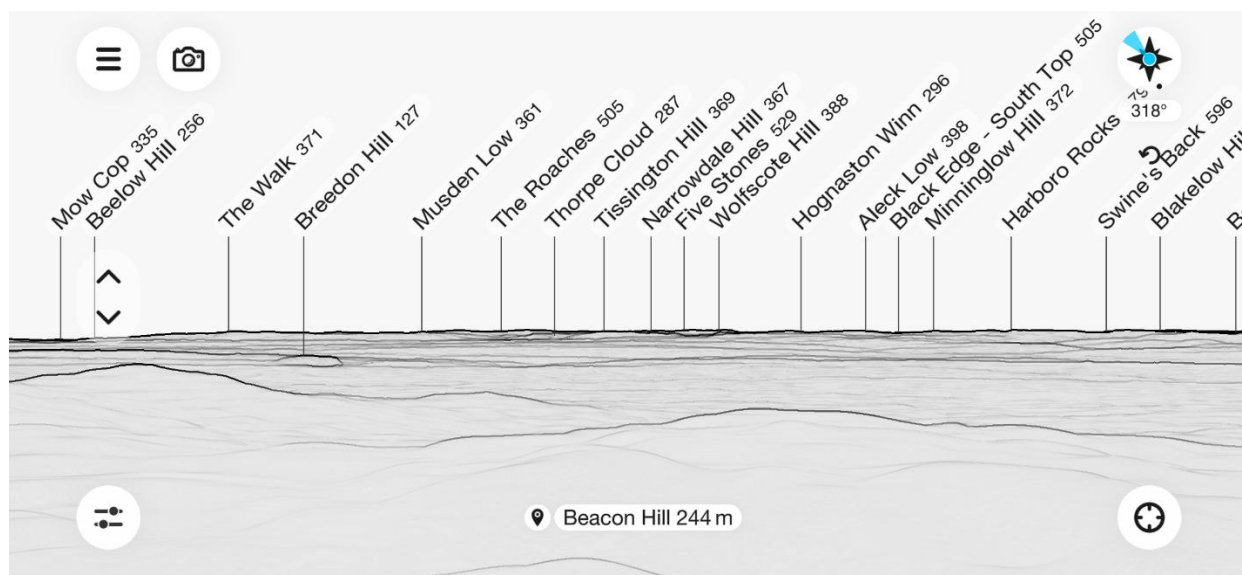
|                                                                                   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|  | <b>Google Lens</b> <i>contributed by Elizabeth Darcy</i>                                                                                                                                                                   |
| What it does                                                                      | It identifies <i>anything</i> ! When out walking, it's particularly good at identifying trees if the whole shape is shown. For plants, it is good with leaves/flowers.                                                     |
| How it works                                                                      | Select the camera icon in the app, then just take a picture with the camera in the app                                                                                                                                     |
| User-friendly?                                                                    | Very fast. Not always accurate                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| Constraints/limitations                                                           | Too much information sometimes! "I took a photo of a leaf on the ground next to my foot and it told me where to buy my boots..." Other users report it providing information on other items in shot, e.g. a passing dog... |
| Getting the app                                                                   | Totally free, and Google is very widely available. Google Lens can be used either in an app, or through your browser                                                                                                       |
|                                                                                   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |

## Footnote #7: Identify the peaks you can see with PeakFinder

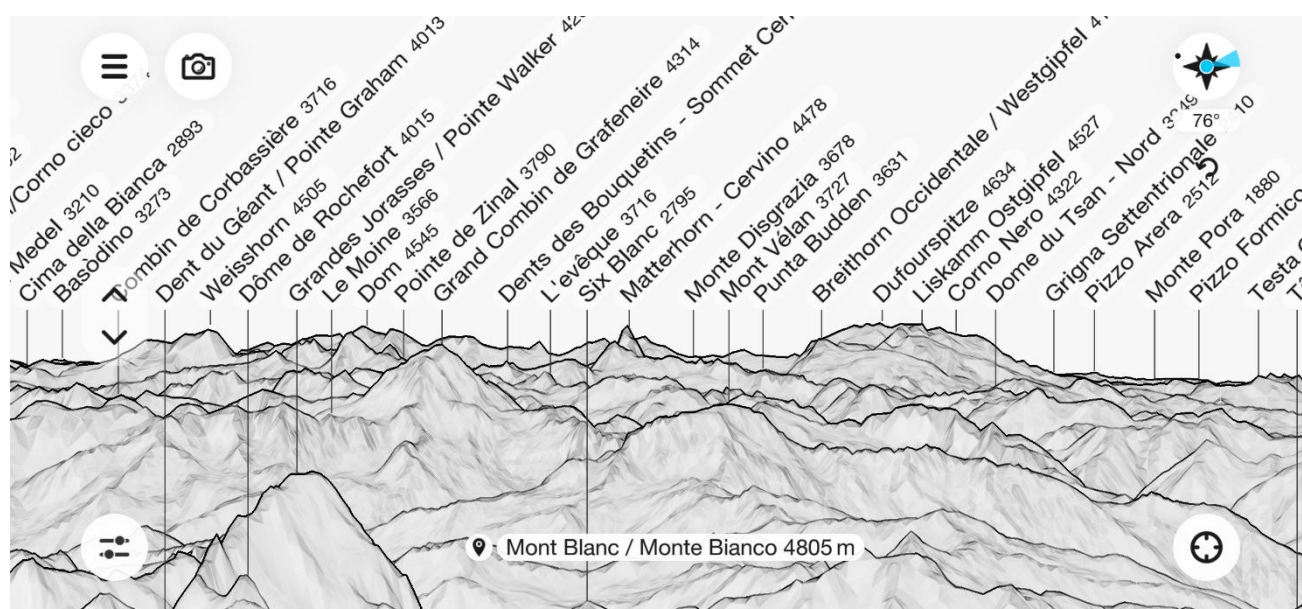
|                                                                                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|  | <b>PeakFinder</b> <i>contributed by John Samson</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| What it does                                                                        | It captures the view at any point on Earth, and labels the visible peaks                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| How it works                                                                        | The user downloads free geographical data from the regions of interest; about 17 squares are needed to cover the UK (tap on the map squares) but the whole world is available. The data remain on the device, so you only need to do it once for each region (make sure you're on WiFi!). In use no signal other than GPS is needed: it uses the current position. You can also find the view from elsewhere by searching by peak name (to see if it's worth the climb) or entering the coordinates or (if you have a signal) an online map. You can see the view, overlapped in augmented reality with the view from the camera if you wish, or see a list of visible peaks. It will also automatically annotate photos taken within the app with mountain names. |
| User-friendly?                                                                      | Easy to use, fast                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |

|                             |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Constraints/<br>limitations | <p>Works everywhere; some regions may have fewer recorded geographical names. It searches for peaks no more than 312 km away, which is rarely a limitation unless you are in an aeroplane.</p> <p>“The most distant ground-to-ground view I’ve seen is 306 km in California <a href="https://www.viewfinderpanoramas.org/panoramas.html#longlines">https://www.viewfinderpanoramas.org/panoramas.html#longlines</a> but I have seen Mont Blanc from Belgian airspace at 538 km - and on other occasions Alpine peaks have been recognisable from the air over 400 km away”.</p> |
| Getting the app             | <p>Apple (£4.99), Android (£3.99). One-off payment, data download free (use WiFi!). Web site <a href="https://www.peakfinder.com/">https://www.peakfinder.com/</a> has similar functionality</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |

121 named peaks from the Beacon



5454 named peaks from Mont Blanc



# Maps-on-apps

*Reviewed by Mark Aylett*

There seems to be a myriad of Apps related to walking and outdoor exploration generally, but I thought I'd take a look at what Apps best relate to us as ramblers and what other Apps may be of interest. Initially I asked Google to summarise the top 5 Apps for planning and recording routes, and this is what it came up with.

| App        | Free Version        | Premium Cost | Key Features                                                                                       |
|------------|---------------------|--------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| AllTrails  | Yes                 | £35.99/year  | 100s of routes worldwide, record your own routes, offline maps, detailed elevation & distance info |
| Walkmeter  | Yes                 | £7.90/year   | GPS tracking, maps, graphs, training plans, live tracking, social posting                          |
| Strava     | Yes                 | £9.50/month  | Track 30+ sports, Beacon live tracking, detailed metrics, community challenges                     |
| MapMyWalk  | Yes                 | £4.70/month  | Route mapping, audio coaching, nutrition tracking, integration with wearables                      |
| Fitbit App | Free with FB device | £7.90/month  | Step tracking, heart rate monitoring, guided programs, motivation tools                            |

It seems many of the more popular Apps are more related to fitness, energy, step counts etc. Personally, I'm not too concerned to learn how much my fingernails have grown during an exercise, and like most ramblers, I'm more concerned with routes and tracking. What follows reflects this

## ***The OS app***

Interestingly, the OS App doesn't appear in the Google list, despite being so popular amongst our numbers. The OS and Strava Apps share many features including the ability to record activities, and import and export GPX files. If you're not familiar with the GPX\* format, it's a file format that's common to many Apps, allowing sharing of mapped routes between favourite Apps. There is a footnote – a real one! - at the end of this review about this.

I use the OS App, like many of us and commonly use it for recording activities. I've found that this function of the App has a high battery drain on phones, so on longer routes, I've found it useful to carry a battery bank to keep the phone charged up. It was interesting to discover recently that I'm not the only one who's had this issue! If you go rambling in small numbers or alone and rely on your phone for navigation, a battery bank should be an essential piece of kit, and suitable banks are available from £20.

In order to record activities, you will need the premium version, but at £35/year, I think is good value. As mentioned, it has the ability to import and export GPX files, so this function works well e.g. if you use it in conjunction with AllTrails, saving the need to have multiple apps running. The 3d Flythrough\* function is good way to share your walking experience and as they can be viewed in the desktop version, can be screen recorded and provide an entertaining record of your walks! Distance measuring accuracy is probably around 10%, and comparing activity tracking with other walkers, total distance measuring will vary by around this amount. It's likely due to the way we carry our phones and the way we walk.

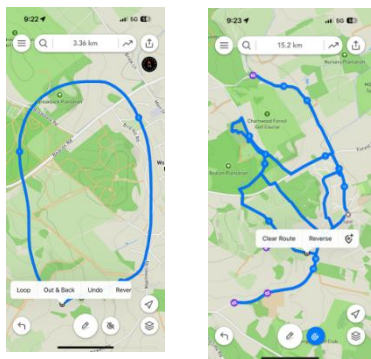
## ***AllTrails***

Personally, I have found the AllTrails app a great source for finding new routes. If you like to throw yourself into the unknown, the AllTrails App is great for finding local routes and learning from with reviews and comments from other walkers.

## ***'Footpath' App.***

Another of my favourite Apps is the 'Footpath' App. It's a simple App with a very uncluttered display clearly showing all footpaths and a great App to clearly show footpaths around you. It also has a feature to circle an area to create

circular or linear route nearby. This can be useful if you are in an unfamiliar area and want to explore local footpaths and routes.



The Footpath app is available on Apple and Android and like most Apps, there's a free version and a premium (elite) version. The basic version has easy, intuitive route creation with the tap of the map, Measure route distance, See your elevation changes, Save up to 5 routes to use later, Sync routes across devices and Share routes with friends or on social. \$24 a year buys All the features of Footpath Basic PLUS: Unlimited saved routes, Route lists: Create lists and organise your routes, Cue sheets so you know where to turn, Turn-by-turn voice navigation on the go, In-depth elevation and slope analysis for your routes, Premium topographic maps and Route export.

### **Apple maps**

I recently discovered a new function in the Apple Maps App. While trying to navigate my way round a city, I found Apple Maps app will now produce an AI 'framework' of surrounding buildings. Aligning your phone so the view fits the framework will then guide you in exactly the right path – maybe not so useful exploring the countryside, but watch this space!

### **Associated apps for walkers**

I also wanted to look at 'associated' Apps that we use, several of which feature in the Footnotes section above. Probably the most common are new AI Apps that can identify fauna and flora. There are now numerous Apps to identify plant life. I have used 'Plant Snap' for some time, and recently took advantage of a Black Friday offer to upgrade to the premium version for less than £10 a year for 3 years. The best rated apps for accuracy are LeafSnap (iPhone only) and PlantNet (Footnote #4) and are available free. iNaturalist is another app that identifies birds by expanding on bird song and can help to identify many varieties of wildlife.

All that said, AI is developing at great speed, and simple 'image searching' is quickly making all other related Apps redundant. New technology including 'circle to search' and 'google lens' (Footnote #6) can help to identify not just fauna and flora, but pretty much anything we may find along our way, although there is still a place for specialist identifier apps. On a recent walk, we strolled into a field containing a sturdy work horse – on attempting to identify it with Google lens, it simply said "It's a horse"! A quick search revealed many more focused apps, including ones specific to dogs and bugs, so there's something for everyone!

While AI seems relatively new, music recognition Apps have been around for over 20 years, with Shazam! launching in 2002, albeit a dialup service predating smart phones! I look forward to the day when your phone will project the avatar of a walk leader for you to follow – just make sure your keep that battery bank handy!

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### **Editor's notes for those keen to learn!**

- **GPX files** use a universal format containing coordinates for waypoints, routes, or recorded tracks, allowing you to import them into apps like OS Maps, Komoot, or Garmin for GPS guidance, even offline. They offer precision, safety, and convenience, letting you to follow exact, pre-planned paths with elevation details, or record your own adventures, making them great for outdoor enthusiasts to share journeys. They contain **Waypoints** (points of interest such as campsites, peaks), **Routes** (planned paths from start to finish) and **Tracks** (a detailed "breadcrumb trail" of where someone actually went, recorded at intervals, great for following specific paths).
- A **fly-through** on an app is an animated visualization that simulates the experience of flying over or moving through a three-dimensional environment. It provides a continuous, cinematic view of a space or route. Fly-throughs are used in various mapping and navigation apps - e.g.both Google Earth and OS Maps use fly-throughs to provide an immersive preview of a planned route (cycling, walking, or driving), allowing users to understand the terrain, elevation changes, and surroundings before starting their journey.

## Loughborough Ramblers in 2025: walking in an all-year wonderland

