

Eleven Rivers Group
or
Gloucestershire Way, Wysis Way, Three Choirs Way
or
Gerry's Legacy

Newsletter: Issue 1 (summer 2023)^{ed2}



This is the first newsletter from the group of us that is working to sustain, enhance and promote the three long distance paths that were developed by Gerry Stewart over 20 years ago. I have taken the liberty of presuming that anyone who has shown even a modicum of interest in this project might want to read this news letter. If I've got that wrong, and you don't want any further emails, please drop me a line at dan@cheltenhamoutlier.uk and let me know.

WHAT'S THIS ALL ABOUT?

The best place to find out more is to go to our [current web-location](https://cheltenhamoutlier.uk/gloucestershire-promoted-trails/) which is at <https://cheltenhamoutlier.uk/gloucestershire-promoted-trails/> . Or you can drop me a line at dan@cheltenhamoutlier.uk .

In summary, a few local walkers, active in the Ramblers and the Cotswold Voluntary Wardens, identified that there were a number of splendid local long-distance paths. However, we also supposed that these were somewhat under-advertised and that some of the signs and way-marks, installed decades ago, were showing the signs of wear-and-tear (and mechanised hedge-cutters!).

So, we figured, why not band together, engage with the various powers-that-be, and see if we can give these great routes a new lease of life, and hopefully encourage a new generation of walkers to enjoy the adventure of long-distance walking.

The three walks we've chosen to promote are:

- >> The Gloucestershire Way, which runs over 100 miles, from Chepstow to Tewkesbury
- >> The Wysis Way, which runs over 50 miles, connecting Offa's Dyke at Monmouth to the Thames Path near Kemble
- >> The Three Choirs Way, which links the Cathedrals at Gloucester, Hereford and Worcester.

The great twisted Ash Tree between Salperton and Notgrove (SP 09691 19520).

Gnarled, hollowed, ancient but still standing.

(Just like some of us.)



MEETINGS AND MINUTES

We have now held two Stakeholder Meetings where we have asked individuals and corporations with an interest in this initiative whether they are supportive and enthusiastic. It seems they are! Thanks to all those who have troubled to attend. The minutes of these meetings are on the website.

The next will be at Maisemore Village Hall, GL2 8JE on Monday 2 October 2023 at 2pm. You'd be more-than-welcome to come along, but if you are planning to do so, could you drop us a line - dan@cheltenhamoutlier.uk - so we can plan.

NEWS AND UPDATES

Cicerone. We have recently received further contact from Cicerone to say that they are interested in starting formal discussions about taking over the guide-books. The belief is that with a well-known big publisher involved, the routes will gain significant additional publicity and notoriety.

Severnside near Gloucester. This is the section of the Gloucestershire Way that follows the River Severn around Gloucester from SO 82448 19046 (end of foot bridge crossing Severn into Gloucester) to SO 82866 20875 (the point where the path emerges onto Sandhurst Lane – just past the former pub building). For years this section of the Gloucestershire Way has been heavily overgrown and difficult to negotiate. So much so that a deviation has been devised and recommended (through the very urban retail park nearby). Now Gloucestershire CC has agreed with the National Probation Service that Community Payback – Unpaid Work teams can start clearing the route. We are expecting a start on site later this year, and we hope that on-going clearance of the route may be agreed¹.

Signage: Roundels and Finger-posts. At the last Stakeholder meeting that last stock of 30 Gloucestershire Way roundels were passed to the Cotswold Voluntary Wardens for installation. GCC Public Rights of Way has indicated they are ready to purchase 500 more, which will certainly go a long way to covering the route. We already have a good stock of Wysis Way roundels. What we continue to lack is Three Choirs Way roundels. As this route is almost entirely without roadside finger posts, the roundels are critical. Colleagues in Worcestershire and Herefordshire report back that even those in place are showing significant signs of aging. We are hopeful that one of the three PROW authorities will be willing to pre-fund and purchase the roundels and then recharge as necessary. Watch this space.



Cotswold National Landscape Voluntary Wardens step up. Having run off with the last of the roundels, the CNL CVWs have agreed to take on the task of checking and reinstating the yellow roundel waymarks on the sections of the Gloucestershire Way and Wysis Way that lie in the CNL. It so happens that Dan has walked and written up guidance for this section of the route also, which is temporarily available on the website (<https://cheltenhamoutlier.uk/gloucestershire-way/>). So feedback on that would be welcome also.

1. This paragraph was amended to reflect revised timescale for start on site.

Shout out to Stow-on-the-Wold Civic Society.

Supporters from the Stow Civic Society recently undertook a detailed and thorough survey of the route around the town. They also provided extremely helpful feedback on the written guidance on the website. In general, comments on the text were favourable, although on-the-ground signage could be improved. There is a proliferation of long-distance paths around Stow, and it was suggested that some co-ordination between them might be helpful.



Support from District and Town Councils. As Dan has walked the Gloucestershire Way route he has approached the various District and Town Councils covering the areas in question. Notwithstanding the straitened times in which we live, responses have been wholly positive and interested. One notion suggested is to develop A1 sized information boards that could deploy, possibly with a bit of tweaking to reflect local circumstances. This would be a step-up from the modest, if distinctive and much loved, information signs that were installed along the route at its inception.

Civil Parishes. We have created lists Civil Parishes for each of the three routes, and these are available on the respective pages on the website. Comment on these would be welcome. We hope to engage with Parishes as the project develops.

Carrington Road Bridge. This is where the Three Choirs Way recrosses the Severn on the leg between Worcester and Gloucester. Changes to the line of the route at Carrington Road have been noted and advertised on the website (<https://cheltenhamoutlier.uk/three-choirs-way/>). These have also been passed on and noted by the Long Distance Walkers Association. Hopefully access to the Access Land on the western side of the bridge has now been improved as promised. (There is an anomalous legal situation that whilst a walker can proceed unimpeded within Access Land, there is no legal obligation to provide a means of getting there.)



Bannersbrook Farm. It has now been reported to us that the “difficulties” about progress around Bannersbrook have been resolved.

HELP!

The more folk that get involved with this initiative the better. Gerry Stewart was and remains passionate about opening up the countryside for all, and devising routes that provide challenge and interest. This is a real opportunity to participate in the rejuvenation of these great walks.

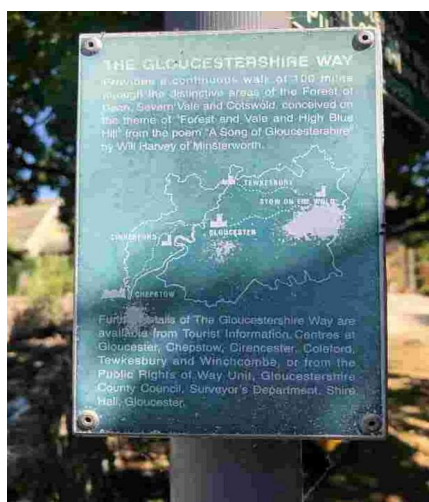
Route checking. GPX files for all three routes are available on the website. Walking the routes and reporting back helps ensure that the advertised lines of the routes are accurate. Furthermore other problems, obstacles and impediments to progress can be reported either to us, or to the local PROW authority. Take along either Gerry's guidebooks or Dan's recent write up of the Gloucestershire Way, and report back on errors or suggested improvements.

Clear and (re-)sign the routes. Ideally as part of a group, take on a section of the route, and ensure that it is clear of vegetation or other obstruction. Check and install signs according to best practice. Report to PROW authorities any issues of impediments to progress. Lobby Highway authorities about pedestrian safety on the stretches where the ways go along roads. Please let us know what you are planning, and what you do.

Photography. If you are a competent photographer with decent kit, would you like get involved in producing high-quality images for the website or publications? Let us know.

Website development. If you look at <https://cheltenhamoutlier.uk> you'll see this is an amateur effort. Do you have the skills to produce a more polished offer? Get in touch.

Publicity and design. Could you design an A1 information board for the routes? Drop us a line.



Old A5 sign and an example of new-style information signs.



Armchair help. Would you be interested in researching around transport, accommodation, retail options for a walker undertaking the routes? Express your interest.

Happy Walking!

E: dan@cheltenhamoutlier.uk

W: <https://cheltenhamoutlier.uk/gloucestershire-promoted-trails/>