

Rambling: Not Taking Footpaths for Granted

Tom discusses Kinder Scout with John, Margaret and Florence, and hears about the origins of Sudbury Ramblers from Keith.

John, Margaret and Frances discuss Kinder Scout

John: But it's a good institution. I think it is, it gets you out and it gets you walking and I don't think there's any way of enjoying something other than the walking in it, it is so immersive isn't walking?

Tom Crowley: I love walking.

Tom Crowley: Is the Ramblers I guess like at heart also a social thing?

Margaret: Yeah, to an extent it is, yeah.

John: You get to know people and talk to people with different points of view. It's just nice to mingle with other people. And the walk is the focal point.

Tom Crowley: Do you know what the origin of rambling organisations are?

Margaret: Do you know that? John, when did they organise Ramblers and get started? This group's been going over 50 years. Because last year, they had the Christmas lunch. And that was planned to coincide with 50 years. Is that right?

John: It's 50 years old, the Sudbury group.

Margaret: Well, it wasn't actually last year. It was the year before I think but COVID held everything.

John: The Ramblers itself I don't know when it started, but I'd imagine it was when they started to walk over the moors in the North where it was all banned, wasn't it and they revolted against it.

Margaret: I think there was quite a lot of politics, they could see that there was going to be nowhere for people to walk at all. Because the farmers had got all the land tied up and the landowners and what have you. And they began to look, I would imagine at ancient walkways, you know, tracks and what have you. And they were they could see they were disappearing. And then they of course, opposed it and there was, yeah. Quite a lot of opposition. And that's how it started. I guess. I'm only guessing.

Frances: It was Kinder Scout, wasn't it that was the first.

Margaret: Absolutely. Kinder Scout.

John: I think that's probably where it started, don't you?

Margaret: Yeah, I think that's the Peak District or somewhere. Yeah. And then it grew from there.

Tom Crowley: When was Kinder Scout roughly?

Margaret: Was it the 30s or the 20s? You could find out quite easily, I guess.

Frances: But it was yes. It was the first mass trespass. Because the landowners wanted to stop the workers from walking outside the town.

Margaret: That's right. You're right. And it grew from there.

Tom Crowley: I had no idea that was the origin. So the people from the towns wanted to have access to recreation basically.

Margaret: I guess so. Yeah.

Frances: They wanted to enjoy the countryside. Yeah. Not sure whether that was the beginning of the Ramblers, but it was the first organised...

Margaret: One of the landmark points. Yeah absolutely... There's a van coming.

[Pause]

Keith talks about the origins of Sudbury Ramblers

Keith: Sudbury Ramblers came to be... a group of people really were interested in trying to re-establish the footpaths around this part of Suffolk, around Sudbury area. Because way back in the sort of late 60s, early 70s, the state of the footpaths was quite parlous around here. Landowners didn't want you on. More than one occasion, people in those days had been met by the landowner carrying shotguns and things so they weren't very welcoming. And also the paths were very badly maintained, of course. So it started with a group of people really trying to improve the footpaths going out, walking the paths, clearing them as much as they can, and waymarking as much as they could, establishing. And then they got together and said, "Well, there really is a need for a Ramblers group to be in this area". And so they got together with the Council and there was a meeting and they established the Sudbury Ramblers group at that meeting. And it was the first Ramblers group that was formulated in the whole of Suffolk in 1970.