

Eleven Rivers Association

Newsletter: Issue 2 (winter 2023)

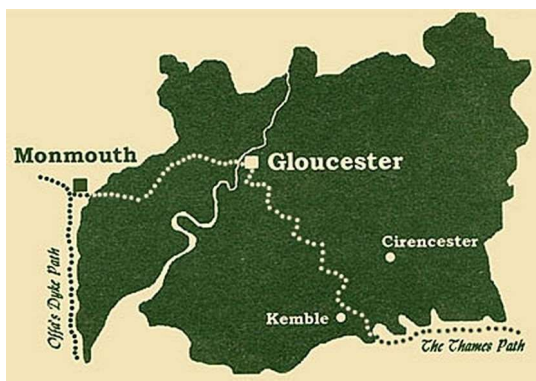
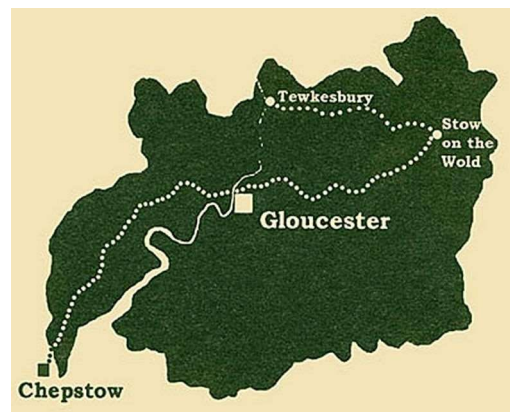


This is the second newsletter from the Eleven Rivers Association. Our mission is to sustain and develop the three long distance footpaths, devised by Gerry Stewart over 20 years ago: The Gloucestershire Way; The Wysis Way; and, The Three Choirs Way.

Together these routes provide over 250 miles of walking in Gloucestershire and its neighbouring counties of Monmouthshire, Worcestershire and Herefordshire.

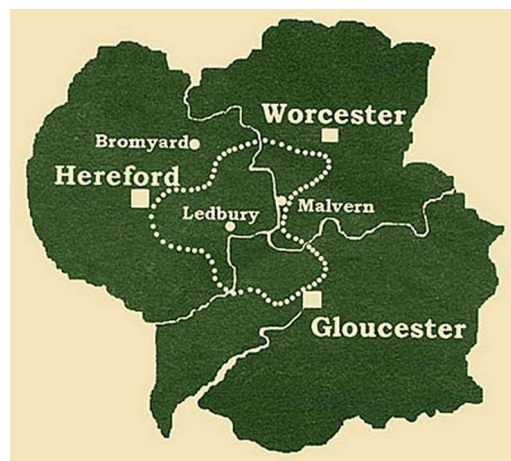
The three Ways meet briefly at Over Bridge – Telford’s iconic single span over the Severn just west of Gloucester. But each then pursues its individual purpose and route.

The Gloucestershire Way runs over 100 miles between Chepstow and Tewkesbury, with a very significant dog-leg into the Cotswolds as far as Stow. It showcases Gloucestershire’s varied landscapes – Forest and Vale and High Blue Hill.



The Wysis Way runs – as the name might suggest – from the Wye in Monmouth to the Isis (aka The Thames) at Kemble. As well as being a lovely route, it links the Offa’s Dyke and Thames National Trails, providing the walker (who has both stamina and time) the means to travel from the beaches of North Wales to the tidal reaches of the Thames, east of London.

The Three Choirs Way – another 100mile+ walk – links the three wonderful West Country cathedrals of Gloucester, Hereford and Worcester. It celebrates the peregrinating music festival, that has been running since 1715.



Aims of the Eleven Rivers Association.

To support on-going usage and enjoyment of the Long Distance routes: The Gloucestershire Way, The Wysis Way and The Three Choirs Way.

To work with statutory agencies and other voluntary groups to promote the upkeep of these Ways, both through co-ordinating volunteer efforts to maintain, clear and sign the routes, and through works commissioned by the statutory agencies.

To work with land owners to facilitate access to these paths whilst minimising both environmental impact and nuisance to land owners and their tenants.

To improve the accessibility of these routes to all parts of the population, including those with impaired mobility and those groups who historically have less often enjoyed the British countryside.

To support the provision of publicity, advice, guides and maps in various formats such that access and utilization of the routes is made easier.

A fit constitution!

At the public meeting held at Maisemore Village Hall on 2nd October 2023 a constitution for the Eleven Rivers Association was agreed by those present. The aims of the Association are those set out above. The document goes on to discuss how the Association should be run, how meetings are to be conducted and so on.

Daniel Hughes was agreed as chair and Richard Holmes as secretary. However, these posts and others will be up for election at the AGM which has been scheduled for 2.00pm Monday 15th January 2024 at Maisemore Village Hall.

The constitution also allows for anyone to be co-opted onto the committee - so if you have time and a readiness to help please let us know. We really do need active support.

The constitution is downloadable from our current website (see below for details).

An immediate benefit of becoming constituted is that we have been able to open a bank account. So we are now in a position to receive funding, grants, donations. If you know of any possible sources of income, please let us know.



May Hill

Times of the Signs

Gloucestershire County Council has now sourced a new batch of GW roundels and 200 have been passed on to the Cotswold Volunteer Wardens to install in the section running through the Cotswolds. It's hoped this task will be done by Easter.

Help is needed in the sections from Tewkesbury - Oxenton and the much longer section from Badgeworth all the way to Chepstow. Can you assist? Even to take on just one Civic Parish would be a real help!



Supporters of Eleven Rivers who are also Ramblers are looking to access funds to purchase signs for the Three Choirs Way. We have also made grant-applications to various funding bodies for these. These attractive and distinctive signs are showing the signs of wear, many having been installed nearly 20 years ago. A walker following the TCW is particularly reliant on these, as this route has never benefitted from roadside finger-posts. We are hoping to purchase one-thousand, and once we have them, again we'll be calling out for help in installation.

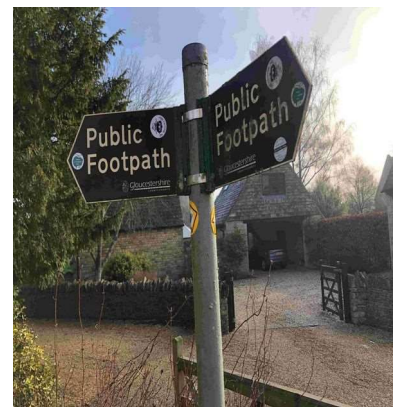
...But let's not overdo it!...

If you are helping with putting up signs, we are keen that we do so responsibly.

Please don't 'over-sign', that is, if the route is clear and straight-on, consider not putting a sign.

Don't deface or overlay existing signs.

Really the land-owner's permission is needed, but generally, if there is already an arrow there - then an additional sign is OK.



Creating a continuous trail

How do we help the trail walker on the metalled sections that link the off-road public rights of way? The National Trails use the acorn symbol affixed to street-furniture and signs. Should we do similarly? We're looking at possible solutions, but ideas welcome.

Cirencester Ramblers work on the Wysis Way

On St George's Day, 2016, Cirencester Ramblers started working on clearing and improving the Wysis Way. They started at Kemble, and whilst finding that the way was always passible, much brush clearance was needed. Furthermore, in places the path was unsigned and occasionally had deviated from the official route.



Some stretches, for example the canal side near Sapperton, required several visits for the work to be completed, due to the extent of overgrowth. Elsewhere, signage needed to be installed for the first time, such as around Robinswood Hill.

Up to five working parties have been held each year since 2016 with increasing distances traveled, particularly once the Forest of Dean had been reached. Liaison was undertaken with local Rambler's volunteers, land owners, GCC PROW Team, Forestry England and Monmouthshire County Council.

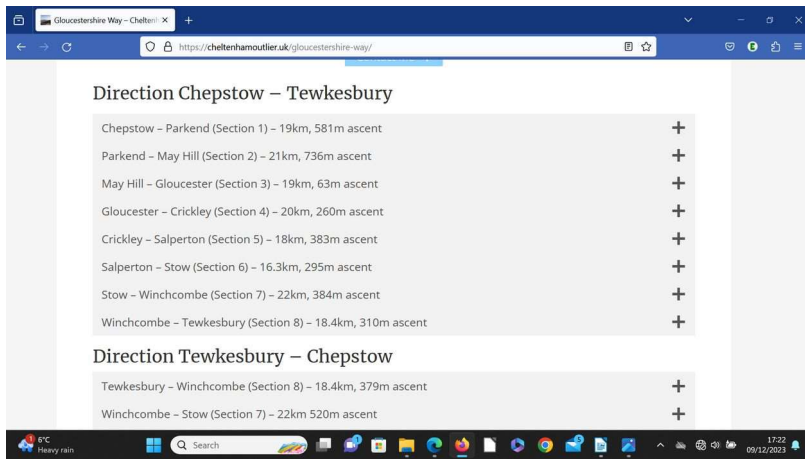
The workers finally arrived in Monmouth in February 2023 having walked the full length of the Gerry Stewart's route and celebrated with cake and fizz. But – rather like the Forth Bridge – the group has finished just in time to restart!



Annual General Meeting

The Annual General Meeting of the Three Rivers Association will take place on Monday 15th January 2024 at 2pm in Maisemore Village Hall, GL2 8JW. All are welcome, but if you plan to attend, can you let the secretary, Richard Holmes, know in advance (horbox@hotmail.com). Please consider taking on a portfolio, see the Help Needed section below.

Gloucestershire Way route guide on-line



Dan has now completed his first draft of the updated guide. It is available on-line along with GPX downloads. This is not intended to replace Gerry's existing route guide, which is still available from www.countryside-matters.co.uk.

The on-line guide lacks the colour and points of interest of the book. But it does provide an update on the route directions.

Dan has acknowledged that his guide is somewhat more verbose than Gerry's original. But trying out different styles fits with the mission of looking to engage with a wide and varied audience of possible walkers. If you are planning to walk any part of the route, feedback on text (and gpx) would be very much appreciated. <https://cheltenhamoutlier.uk/gloucestershire-way/>

We still await confirmation from Cicerone publishing whether they will take over publication of the guide. If this is forthcoming we'll review the on-line offer. In the meantime, do try it out!

Help needed!

Membership secretary. Publicity. Liaison officers with PROW authorities. Footpath walkers. Sign fixers. Lobbyists for better road crossings. Civic Parish point of contact. Website design. Photography. Fund applications. Path clearance. Information board designers. Treasurer. Accommodation listings. Public transport links. Minutes secretary.....

Contact details

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