

Eleven Rivers Association

Newsletter: Issue 3 (summer 2024)

Gerry Stewart

It is with considerable sadness that I have to report that Gerry Stewart died on 1 July 2024, aged 90. Gerry was the creator and driving force behind the three long-distance walks that the Eleven Rivers Association wishes to promote. He not only developed the walks, but he played an active role in installing the original signage, most of which stands to this day. He also wrote the original guide books, which are still available for purchase.

Despite his reducing mobility, Gerry remained passionate about protecting and enhancing access to the countryside. Woe betide anyone who suggested the installation of a stile (eg this author) when a kissing gate was an option. Until very recently he was continuing to monitor the access to the various paths he had developed, and he was an unrelenting lobbyist for walkers and their rights. I was happy to be able to report to him earlier this year that I had been able to walk unimpeded through the Access Land by Carrington Road bridge, an issue he had been in sustained correspondence with Worcestershire County Council for many months!

Gerry's wit, knowledge, wisdom and energy will be much missed.

On the OS 1:25000 maps there are lines of green diamonds running over 250 miles – reflecting the three long distance walks he devised that endure to this day. What a great legacy and memorial!

Daniel Hughes



The view across Access Land from Carrington Road bridge. A fence previously ran in front of the oak, but that has now been removed. Gerry Stewart kept up a correspondence with Worcestershire CC for nearly two years to get this section of the Three Choirs Way restored!

Aims of the Eleven Rivers Association.

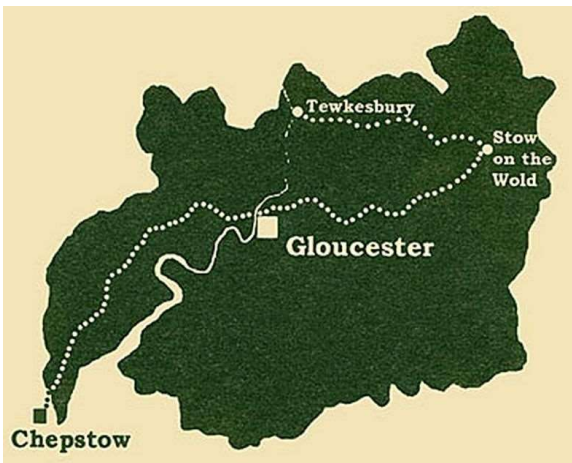
To support on-going usage and enjoyment of the Long Distance routes: The Gloucestershire Way, The Wysis Way and The Three Choirs Way.

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.

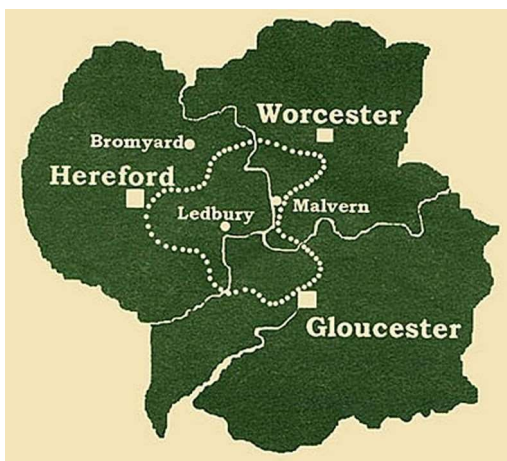
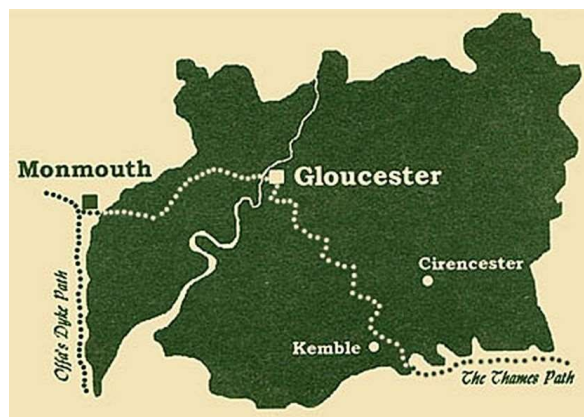
To improve the accessibility of these routes to all parts of the population, including those with impaired mobility and those groups who historically have less often enjoyed the British countryside.

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



The Gloucestershire Way, which runs from Chepstow to Tewkesbury, via Stow-on-the-Wold. About 100miles

The Wysis Way, running from Monmouth to Kemble, linking Offa's Dyke National Trail with The Thames Path. About 50miles



The Three Choirs Way. Named for the long-established music festival. The Way visits each of the three west-country cathedrals, Gloucester, Hereford and Worcester. About 100 miles.

Eleven Rivers – On line

The Eleven Rivers Association aspires to be as transparent as possible in its operation. All of the agenda, minutes and financial reports are available on-line at: <https://cheltenhamoutlier.uk/gloucestershire-promoted-trails/> . On the same page can be found the constitution of the Association and previous editions of this news-letter.

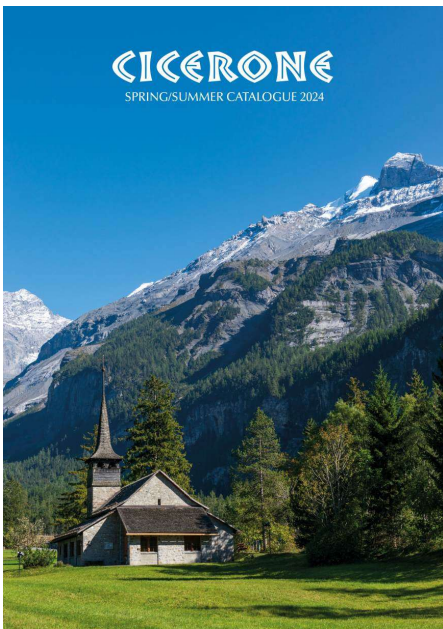
Each of the Ways has its own dedicated page – there are links from the web-site above. In due course we would like to improve our on-line offering, so that each walk has its own site that can be easily found by a search-engine (eg Google, Duck-Duck-Go, Bing, etc).



Other long-distance trails have shown how it can be done, including:

- The Cambrian Way <https://www.cambrianway.org.uk/>
- The Wye Valley Way <https://www.wyvalleywalk.org/>
- The Two Moors Way <https://twomoorsway.org/>

Could **YOU** help us develop our web-based offering? Please get in touch if you have the skills and time.



Cicerone

Most walkers will be familiar with the Cicerone publishing house, which for over 50 years has been producing guides for the outdoors. They now list over **400 books**, ranging from short day walks in England, to proper adventures in the Himalaya and Andes. Despite its success, Cicerone remains a family business and is true to its roots as an advocate for enjoyment by all of the outdoors.

Early on in the genesis of Eleven Rivers, we decided to approach Cicerone with a view to them taking on publication of the guides. The reason for this was that we felt we were likely to reach a bigger audience with a big publishing house, which would also bring design and marketing expertise. Furthermore, with Gerry Stewart wanting to reduce his involvement, we thought that this was a time to end the self-publishing approach that relied on Gerry's energy and know-how.

Cicerone has been consistently encouraging, but before now, the time wasn't quite right for them. However, recently they have indicated that they are ready-to-go, and we're hopeful that Eleven Rivers (actually, Daniel Hughes) will be able to enter into an agreement with them in the coming weeks.

This will require an extensive rewrite and reformatting of the existing guides to fit the Cicerone house style. However, we will look to retain much of the additional comment and anecdote that have made Gerry's books so entertaining and popular over many years.

Forest and Vale and High Blue Hill ... Can You Help?



Our intention is that the first of the guides to be published by Cicerone will be that of *The Gloucestershire Way*.

This walk showcases the breadth of beauty within the county, as celebrated in FW Harvey's poem, *A Song of Gloucestershire*, which prefaces the existing guide.

As mentioned in previous newsletters, Daniel Hughes has already undertaken a

preliminary walk-through of the route, and has created a first draft for the new guide. However, does he know his left from his right? Are stiles still there? Or have kissing gates been installed? We need **VOLUNTEERS** ready to walk sections of the route, Dan's guide in hand, and provide feedback and criticism. You could do this alone or as a group. You can take on a whole section (about 13 miles) or a smaller part section. The task is to simply walk the route, using Dan's guide, and check it for accuracy and usefulness. You might also comment on the presence, absence and necessity of signage.

The guide has already been written, and is available at:
<https://cheltenhamoutlier.uk/gloucestershire-way/>



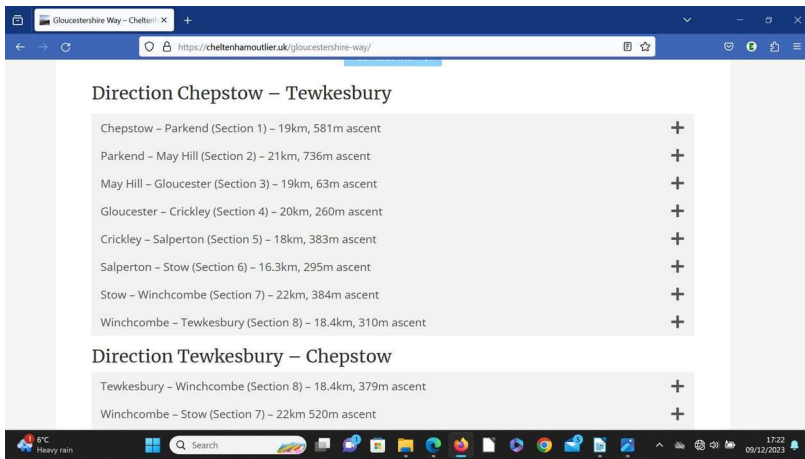
You could do this as a one-off – which itself would be particularly helpful. A group of walkers from Stow-on-the-Wold undertook this task on the paths around the town, and provided really useful feedback.



However, you might want to consider “adopting” a small section of the path, that you would continue to walk and monitor as years go by.

As we have reported previously, Gloucestershire County Council now has a good supply of yellow roundels. So if you were up for it, you could install these as required along your section of the route. Alternatively, simply report issues to the Eleven Rivers secretary, and we'll arrange for

installations to be made by a working party. Any offers of help, will be very welcome, although we particularly need folk ready to walk the sections to the west of the Severn.



The draft text, along with downloadable GPX files are available at:
<https://cheltenhamoutlier.uk/gloucestershire-way/>

(Although on line Dan has created both South-North and North-South guides, it is the former we are particularly interested in being critiqued and checked at this time.)

As discussed in the last newsletter, the on-line guides are deliberately restricted to just the route, and lack the colour and interest of Gerry's publications.

Signs

In a characteristic act of generosity, Gerry Stewart made a significant donation to the *Three Rivers Association* earlier this year. This followed gratefully received donations respectively from Herefordshire, Worcestershire and Gloucestershire Ramblers. Together these enabled us to authorise the purchase of signs for the *Three Choirs Way*.

This followed an earlier purchase by Gloucestershire County Council of Gloucestershire Way signs.

As we already had a significant stock of Wysis Way signage, this now means we have a good supply of roundels for all three routes. If you would like a few to install on a section near you, please get in touch.



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. Ecclesiastical boffin. Minutes secretary.....

Next Meeting of the Eleven Rivers Association

We'll next be meeting on Monday 16 September 2024 at 2pm at Maisemore Village Hall, GL2 8EY.

All are welcome, but if you are planning to come could you inform secretary Richard Holmes (horbox@hotmail.com).

There is no charge to attend, but we will be asking folk to consider making a voluntary £1 contribution towards the fee for the hall.

Contact details

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

Email: dan@cheltenhamoutlier.uk

Secretary email: horbox@hotmail.com

Don't want to receive this newsletter? Send an email to dan@cheltenhamoutlier.uk with the word UNSUBSCRIBE in the subject line.