



Step Out



Staffordshire Area
www.staffordshireramblers.org
www.ramblers.org.uk

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STAFFORDSHIRE AREA RAMBLERS

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Issue 4 *Photo – Winter- you needn't go far for a wonderful walk Photo P. Matthews*

Editorial

Welcome to the Spring edition of Stepout. When going for a walk we often think of popular places like Dimmingsdale, Dovedale, Cannock Chase and so on. But wonderful places can be on your own doorstep. The photograph on the cover was taken about 300 yards from where I live. I don't live in the country but on a housing estate and yet one of Stoke on Trent's many green areas (an old railway line and colliery) provide the perfect opportunity to walk from home. I can probably walk an 8 mile route from my home and yet barley cross a main road. Parkhall and Berryhill are both accessible from home and all I have to do is cross two roads and a few hundred yards of walking through housing to link the two. If this is 'urban walking' then there is much to commend it. I realise I am probably very lucky but it does show that even in a City it is not too difficult to find good places to walk.

In my younger days I often walked the Dudley Borough Trail and you can't get much more urban than that. In our area, Sandwell is doing just that with their six towns challenge walk in August. Details at the end of Stepout. Come and try it, it may surprise you.

A Word from the Chairman

This issue of 'Step Out' gives me an opportunity to thank the Mid Staffs Group for organising the AGM and for arranging two very enjoyable walks. After a lively business session Guy Corbett-Marshall, Director of the Staffordshire Wildlife Trust spoke about the future of the Roaches under Trust management.

Graham Rothery stood down as Area Chairman. I think that we would all wish to thank him for his unstinting commitment to the work of the Ramblers Association in Staffordshire. He has given freely of his time and worked tirelessly to promote our aims and encourage discussion about our future.

SWT staged an information day at Rock Hall on the Roaches which was well attended by Area and Group representatives. It is pleasing to see a satisfactory resolution to the issue of the management of the Roaches. Unfortunately as one issue is resolved another appears to take its place! The proposed developments in the Churnet Valley may change the very nature of this beautiful area and adversely affect its

attractiveness for walkers and other outdoor groups. We need to keep a close watch and endeavour to make our views known.

I would urge all members to read the article '**Red tape threats**' in the Spring edition of '**Walk**'. The government's desire to reduce regulation could threaten hard won access rights. Certainly it highlights the need for a well-managed Ramblers Association to take a lead in informing the general public of what is at stake and in co-ordinating action to safeguard access and the footpath network.

Through the Area Council, Ramblers in Staffordshire continue to be represented on the bodies responsible for; *West Midlands Waterways, the National Forest, and Cannock Chase AONB* and be involved in the consultations regarding *HS2*.

The valuable work done by local groups to maintain access to footpaths is underpinned by the work of the Area Footpath Secretary. In 2011 105 footpath complaints were submitted to the County Council, 85 planning applications were investigated and 20 footpath diversions were discussed with the authorities.

The meeting of the General Council of the Ramblers Association in April will be attended by me and three other members. I hope to find that the new CEO is more in tune with the aims of the grassroots membership than his predecessor appeared to be!
George Greensides, Area Chairman.

Report from Area Footpath Secretary

I am satisfied that 2011 has been a successful year and that progress has been made in all aspects of my work for the Ramblers' Association Staffordshire Area. The most significant success of 2011 was the provision of a £25,000 bridge over the Church Eaton Brook on footpath 19 Bradley Parish Stafford Borough, after 17 years of campaigning.

Over the year I have submitted over a 100 footpath reports to Staffordshire County Council Rights of Way Office. All have been acknowledged and a significant number have been resolved. Unfortunately some problems are still taking over a year to resolve, but it is fair to say this number is reducing as the years go by. It has not been necessary to serve any notices on the County Council as requests to move work up the priority list have been agreed and the

work has been carried out. The following are a small sample of the footpaths opened this year, Alstonefield footpath 3, Blymhill bridleway 10, Brewood footpath 80, Bradley footpath 27, Grindon footpath 27 and Bradnop 40.

The number of planning applications which could affect footpaths has reduced by half this year, no doubt due to the current economic situation. A number of planning applications over the year would have directly affected public footpaths. One planning application in Abbots Bromley East Staffordshire if granted would have allowed a house to be built directly onto a footpath. David Hewett our District Footpath Secretary for East Staffordshire advised the planning authority that a footpath would have been built on and this application was turned down and is now subject to a public inquiry, but the footpath has now been protected. The quarry at Waterhouses Staffordshire Moorlands is to be extended, as are the smaller quarries in Horton and Kingsley Parishes, all these affect footpaths. Gas drilling will affect footpath 21 Horton Parish.

We received 20 diversion consultations from Staffordshire County Council and the District Councils; this is down on 2010, again most likely due to the current economic situation. Only one gave rise to an objection. Negotiations took place with a small number of diversion consultations resulting in our proposals being adopted. Staffordshire County Council proposed to divert a bridleway and a footpath at Coppenhall Parish Stafford Borough, but the diversions were unacceptable to the Ramblers' Association and Marjorie Cashmore our District Footpath Secretary for South Staffordshire objected at the informal consultation stage. However during negotiations she was able to secure better diversions and the creation of a new footpath.

The impact of the budget cuts at Staffordshire County Council have not had a significant effect on the workings of the Rights of Way department, however this year one Rights of Way Officer retired and his work on orders was transferred to another department. More worryingly a very experienced Rights of Way Officer resigned and left the County Council. At the time of writing, Staffordshire County Council have informed me that the Rights of Way Officer will be replaced.

Members are always welcome to contact me about any footpath problems they find while out walking, I can be contacted 01543 274805 or email harrywscott@

Harry W Scott

Access Report

With articles in the WALK magazine on the opening of the Welsh Coastal Footpath and the 'exclusive article' from the Minister for the Environment, there is little more I can say about the future of this governments attitude to the great outdoors. After Dorset, of the five further projects to be completed by 2015, it remains to see what type of access will be achieved.

At their request, I have presented to Head Office two sites that I feel strongly should have been included in the freedom to roam map. Namely, Hangingstone Rock near Gradbatch and Ossoms hill in the Manifold. If anyone has other ideas of added open access, please let me know ASAP on 01782 512851.

Eddie Dawson

Maintaining the Link.

In 2011, our Group Footpath Secretary, Bryan Phillips, took on the role of Area Representative with the Cannock Chase AONB. Since then both Bryan and myself have attended meetings of the Joint Committee of the AONB which is the coordination point for the various parish councils involved and also how the AONB team interface with the various bodies that utilise the facilities on the Chase including Ramblers.

The AONB team expressed a concern to us that they felt many of the visitors who came to the Chase only ever visited places they knew well and felt safe in and never ventured further afield, often assuming that the rest of the Chase was simply 'more of the same'.

We offered to help change this with the provision of walks on the Chase that would enable visitors to park at several of the car parks available and take circular walks of varying lengths around areas of the Chase they might not know and still be able to find their way back successfully to where they began.

Over the last few months we have mapped out walks based around a main circular walk around the entire Chase that we hope seasoned walkers will take on from time to time. For those not quite up to this the other walks we are developing will enable walkers to

effectively circumnavigate the Chase, but in bite-sized chunks of between 5 and 9 miles using our circular walks.

We've had to work within guidelines specified by the AOBN team but we recently gave them an update on our progress to date and they were happy for us to continue. The AONB team also have access to graphic design outlets that could be involved in printing our walk leaflets and we are also investigating how we can publicise the walks once they have been fully checked –out for the benefit of both the AONB and also Staffordshire Area of the Ramblers.

We're approaching a point where we'll need to call upon the volunteers from the Area Council who offered to help us out with walk testing /modifying and we'll naturally be in contact with everyone else in the Area too via Area Council to report on our progress.

Dick Turton/Bryan Phillips.

The Work of a Footpath Officer, South Staffs District

At the time of writing the Public Inquiry into the King's Street Wind Farm in Blymhill Parish is in its final stage. It has been held over two weeks. The application is for six turbines 423 feet high and overland pylons to carry electricity to Gnosall. The Ramblers' Association has objected to this right from the start two years ago. I have attended the inquiry on two days making objection statements. The Inspector's decision will be issued in about six weeks' time. If the wind farm goes ahead it will devastate the whole area, blighting people's lives, their livelihoods, their property and will destroy the outstanding outdoor amenities that are so highly valued, such as walking and cycling. The landowner will benefit to the tune of £240,000 per year and the amount of electricity produced will be a miserly 12kw per year if the wind blows.

The 154 site in Bilbrook Parish has acquired a new developer. Range Rover is to build a new engine factory on the land. There has been for many years a permissive path from Pendeford across the site to Bridleway No. 8, The Monarch's Way, at Coven. South Staffs Council has made an official Diversion Order and provided an alternative path which it was not obliged to do as the path was not a Definitive route. I'm sure local residents are grateful for this.

The long standing problem on Footpath No. 6 in Pattingham Parish, which goes from Great Moor to Nurton, has now been resolved. A new stile is now in place. The delay was caused by a change in the

tenant landowner. Penkrige Parish now has a new volunteer footpath secretary. Mrs Adrienne Gent who is on the Mid Staffs Group committee has taken over. I hope she enjoys walking the paths. John Gilmer from Stourbridge Group informs me that he and his team of volunteers are starting to survey all the paths to assess what work needs to be done and then restarting footpath work for the County Council.

Things are a little quiet on the planning scene — only 20 applications in the last six months and no major diversions. Now spring is here I am sure there will be plenty of ploughed and cropped paths to report.

There are still vacancies for Parish Footpath Secretaries in Cheslyn Hay, Great Wyrley, Essington and Featherstone. Please give Harry Scott or myself a ring if you can fill one of these.

Marjorie Cahmore, South Staffs District Footpath Secretary

The Average Walk

For the last few years I have written about the average walk. It fascinates me and it must do others because no one has complained!! So here we go again. Of the nine groups that have provided me with their programmes they have from 1st January to the end of June provided 292 (167) walks varying in length (last years figures in brackets) from 3 to 15 miles, the average being 7.6 miles and a total of 2208 miles (1259). However the most popular distance is 9 miles with a total of 38 walks. The next popular is 8 miles with 26 walks and 10 miles with 25 walks. Walks of less than 7 miles (23 walks) are not nearly so popular with only 4 miles and 5.5 miles having more than 20 walks. Even 10 mile walk are more popular than this. Some 115 walks are less than 7 miles leaving 160 walks over 7.5 miles.

In fact this is not too dissimilar than last year where again 9 miles was the most popular distance. The areas chosen for walking remain much the same with Cannock Chase, Dimmingsdale and the Roaches being popular areas for walking.

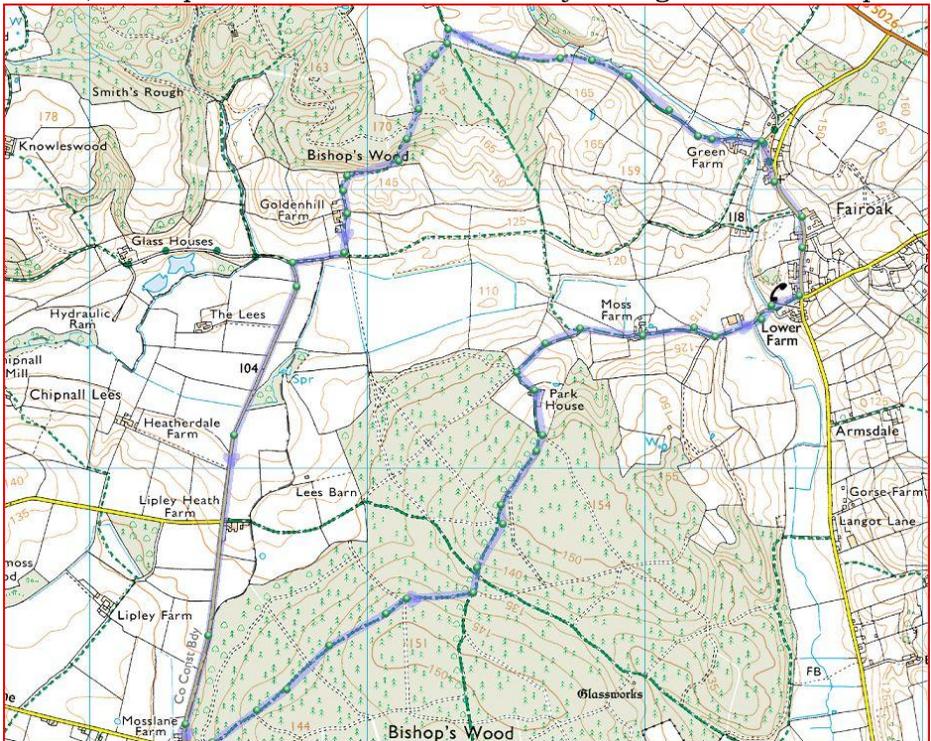


A walk through Bishops Wood.

Whilst there has not really been much in the way of feedback about including a walk in Stepout I have heard nothing negative, so to continue the pattern here is a lovely 5 mile walk just south of Loggerheads, a beautiful part of Staffordshire though seldom walked in.

This is a splendid walk, just on the edge of Staffordshire and feeling very remote in some stunning countryside. Although slightly hilly this is an easy route. On the map follow route anti route clockwise . Parking is verge side about 3 miles south of Loggerheads. Difficult to find. GR SJ 743 309

From the car, walk towards the T junction on the left. Virtually opposite is a broad, forestry track leading into the wood. Take this and after a few yards, where the main track starts to bear right, keep ahead along a well used but unsurfaced path. Follow this for nearly a mile, climbing to the top of the hill. In places the path is muddy but a second, drier path follows much of it on your right. When the path



emerges onto a forestry road, by footpath sign, turn left, not on the excellent track ahead. After about 50 yards, continue ahead at the fourway bridleway sign. After about a quarter of a mile, the path starts to bend right and a field can be seen ahead and a path which descends down to a gate with a house below. Take this path, through the gate to descend a sunken path, pass the house and more gates to join track. This soon bears right and follow this for about a third of a mile to reach a quiet road. Here turn left (Fair Oaks. There is alternative parking here).

Continue along the road, passing a white house on the right and then a stables. Immediately after these, look for an unmade lane on the left. Take this to soon come to a small green and access sign. Follow the lane to the junction and turn left along the bridleway, passing Green farm. Follow the clear track to reach a long field. Keep to the left side of this field and at the far end join the track once more. Where the track bends sharp left, look for a metal gate ahead (or on your right as you start round the corner). Go through the gate to emerge on a clear track which follows the hollow between two humps and a wood on the left. Enter another field and keep to the track until the end of the field where it bears right to a farm. Here turn left to enter the wood. After a few yards, fork right at the junction, following the clear track on the right side of the wood until you reach a large circular area. The forest road continues ahead and then starts to bear right. At this point, look for a path which descends into the trees before swinging right, in effect below the forestry track. Follow this to a gate. Through gate and then left, following the right side of the field then at the end, left, still following the edge of the field to reach a 'gate' in the field corner by a farm. Through and pass the farm. Down the farm track and at the track junction, turn right to soon reach a metalled road. Turn left and follow this for nearly a mile, passing a road junction on the right, to reach the start.

The Importance of Walking

The following was emailed to me but I have lost the covering details as to who sent it to me so my apologies to them for not crediting them for these appropriate sayings.

I've just received this from a very old friend who apparently has recently discovered the benefits of walking. She passed this on to me in the hope that I too will benefit from some of these pearls of wisdom.

I'm going out for a long walk tomorrow, and if you don't hear from me for a while, don't worry, I still have a while to go before I'm 97 – Walking can add minutes to your life. This enables you at 85 years old to spend an additional 5 months in a nursing home at \$7000 per month.

My grandpa started walking five miles a day when he was 60. Now he's 97 years old and we don't know where he is.

I like long walks, especially when they are taken by people who annoy me.

The only reason I would take up walking is so that I could hear heavy breathing again.

I have to walk early in the morning, before my brain figures out what I'm doing..

I joined a health club last year, spent about 400 bucks. I Haven't lost a pound. Apparently you have to go there.

Every time I hear the dirty word 'exercise', I wash my mouth out with chocolate.

The advantage of exercising every day is so when you die, they'll say, 'Well, she looks good doesn't she.'

If you are going to try cross-country skiing, start with a small country.

I know I got a lot of exercise the last few years,..... just getting over the hill.

We all get heavier as we get older, because there's a lot more information in our heads.

That's my story and I'm sticking to it.

AND

Every time I start thinking too much about how I look, I just find a Happy Hour and by the time I leave, I look just fine.

Kinder Scout Trespass 80th Anniversary: How you can help the Ramblers celebrate the 80th anniversary of the Kinder Scout Trespass.

(I came across this on the Ramblers website and since Kinder is an area not only physically close to us but close to our hearts I have included it in Stepout though it may just be a little late to take part).

You may know that it is the 80th anniversary of the Kinder Scout Trespass this year, an iconic event that helped lead to the creation of the Ramblers a few years later. Groups in Sheffield and Manchester Areas have been working hard to plan a whole calendar of events in the week of the anniversary (21st – 30th April) and a flagship event on the date of the anniversary (Tuesday 24th April) . A full programme of events for the anniversary celebrations can be found on <http://kindertrespass.com/documents/Kinder80-TrespassToTreasure.pdf>

There are two things that you can do to help us celebrate the anniversary:

1. Get yourself to Kinder on the 24th April for the anniversary of the Trespass.
2. When you are next out walking, send us a photo of you next to a place that you can't access. It would be great if you could include a sign that says "Kinder 80" and e mail it to walking.environment@Ramblers.org.uk

For The Bookshelf

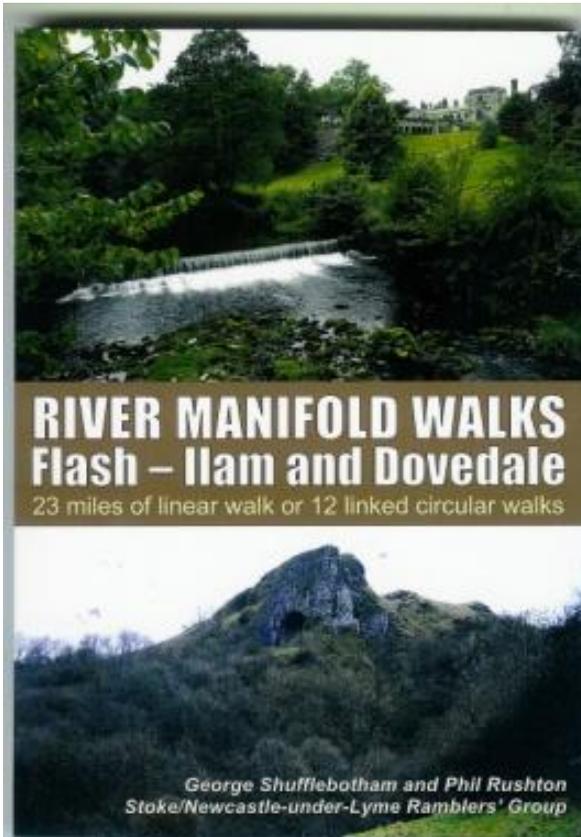
LIKE FATHER, LOVE SON by Alan Nolan ISBN No. 978184876

If you enjoyed ANCIENT FEET (reviewed in Step Out last year) then you will enjoy this latest book by the Staffordshire author. It is a tale of adventure, autobiography, family history and tough walking, all related in a very humorous way.

Alan and his son have been apart for 20 years and hope to renew their relationship by undertaking the challenging trek around The Tour of Mont Blanc, a two weeks walk of 105 miles and 33,000 feet of ascent though three countries. There is a laugh every step of the way and he highlights the funny side of every situation. This is a thoroughly enjoyable read.

Marjorie Cashmore

The Stoke/Newcastle Ramblers' Group



We are pleased to announce that “The River Manifold Walks” published by Sigma Press on behalf of Stoke/Newcastle Ramblers Group is now available from most local bookshops, Tesco and via the internet from Amazon and Ebay. (ISBN number 978-1-85058-912-9). It is reasonably priced at around £8.99. All royalties from sales of the book go to the Stoke/Newcastle Ramblers charity for the benefit of walkers.

The guide is designed to appeal to both experienced walkers and individuals or families wanting a pleasant and interesting stroll. All the walks are described in considerable detail to assist those who may not

be confident in map reading, but who may wish to explore and enjoy the lesser walked areas of the beautiful Staffordshire Moorlands. For the energetic there is a 23 miles linear walk from the high and remote moorlands of Flash to the popular and picturesque location of Ilam and Dovedale. Devotees of circular walks will find 12 carefully described routes, all accompanied by maps, photographs and interesting facts. One circular walk commences from the moors at Flash, 3 start from the ancient village of Longnor, 2 from Hulme End on the Hartington road, 2 from the Manifold Valley and 4 from the magnificent National Trust estate at Ilam and Dovedale.

Both of these long distance walks have now been included on the White Peak OL 24 Map.

Quite an achievement!

I have done some of these walks and they are excellent and easy to follow. Well done. Ed



*The beauty of Staffordshire. Near Kingstone Wood, close to Uttoxeter.
Photo Peter Matthews*

SANDWELL SIX TOWNS CHALLENGE WALK/RUN

Sunday 26 August 2012 – 26, 18 or 14 miles routes

In conjunction with Sandwell MBC, Sandwell Ramblers are staging the third Six Towns Challenge event on Bank Holiday Sunday 26 August 2012, starting and finishing at the Sandwell Show in Sandwell Valley.

The routes include country parks and open spaces with minimal road walking and make extensive use of the canal system which was the lifeblood of the Black Country during its heyday. The 26 mile route visits each of Sandwell's Six Towns and includes the 1.75 miles of the

famous Netherton Tunnel (torch essential), recently renovated by British Waterways at a cost of £230,000.

Refreshments and snacks will be provided at checkpoints and the finish.

Start will be at 8am for 26 miles, 9am for 18 miles and 9.30am for 14 miles, both runners and walkers.

All to finish by 8pm. Certificates for all finishers.

Entrants under 18 to be accompanied by an adult.

The inaugural event in 2010 attracted entrants from far and wide including London, Lancashire, South Wales, Oxford, Cheltenham and most pleasingly, a good number from Staffordshire.

For details, see the Notice Board on www.sandwellramblers.org.uk £5 entrance for both routes which includes free parking for pre entries.

Entries on the day £6.

Applications for entry forms to Tony Potter, Events Manager, Environment House, Lombard Street, West Bromwich, B70 8RU. Daytime phone 0121 569 4703. Email tony_potter@sandwell.gov.uk



The Work of Groups.

Whilst it is intended that the mid year edition of Stepout reflects the work of the Area and Groups over the year rather than walk and social activities, this report from Leek Group reveals several other ways in which the Groups achieve the aims of the RA as a whole.

Although a relatively small group, (membership is around 120), we have a large percentage of active members participating in our walks programme resulting in a good turnout for all walks throughout the Winter months. Also, encouragingly, a number of new walk leaders have come forward adding some fresh blood to our regular core of leaders. Walks are regularly reported to the local press and featured together with photographs providing good publicity for the Group. Recently the Group produced its own publicity leaflet taking advantage of the Ramblers offer of producing 5000 free leaflets promoting the objectives of the organisation as well as details of our own Group. It's too early to ascertain whether this has led to new members but it helps raise the profile of the Ramblers generally.

The Group's AGM in October was well supported and included a demonstration of a mapping application for planning walks presented by Geoff Preston as well as an entertaining slide show showing photos from all our walks in 2011, put together by Alan Gibson.

Our Christmas lunch was well attended and much enjoyed as was the day trip to Holmfirth. Thanks go to Lynn and John Wakefield for organising both these events. Thanks also in advance to Diane and Kevin Andrew for once again arranging a weekend away – this year to Llandudno.

A number of members have volunteered to assist the District Council this Spring in checking their self guided walks. There are 12 of these which can be downloaded from the Council's website and are shown on the O.S map. Members also attended the Staffordshire Wildlife event at Rockhall on the Roachesheld to publicise their recent acquisition and we look forward to working with them in the future.

Angie Guest

Area Walks Programme

Why not find out more about the walks organised by other groups and walk with them for a change? The information you require can be found on the Area Walks' Programme and a copy can be yours by sending a stamped addressed envelope to Peter Matthews (address on rear of Stepout). When you send your envelope please make sure that it is large enough to accommodate from between two and six sheets of A4. The minimum size should really be C5.

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Next Issue

Will be published mid October. Contributions please by 15th September.

STOP PRESS

Minutes before going to press we received the following information from Cotswold Camping at Bridgemere; Cotswold Outdoor have increased the discount we offer the Ramblers from 10% to 15% off everything in store (terms and conditions apply, cannot be used in conjunction with any other offers).

