



Newsletter

No 31

Autumn 2024



Late summer near Buckland Beacon
Photo by Long John

www.tavistockramblers.org.uk

Message from the Chair

Although overall it seems that summer never really arrived, the walks programme has continued throughout. It has been pleasing that we have been able to maintain a good programme of walks and our thanks are due to the leaders who volunteer to lead.

If you have not led a walk you may not realise just what is involved in bringing together the programme. Firstly, without the volunteer leaders walks would not happen. Walk leaders will have undertaken some training to ensure they have the necessary skills to lead. The leaders decide on what walks they would like to lead and then plan these. This will normally involve a 'recce' of the route a few days beforehand to make sure it will be safe and accessible on the day of the walk. Walks are then submitted to the Walks team who check the details before uploading it to the group's website, which is maintained by others on the Committee. These details also then feed through to the Ramblers app and Ramblers website.

We would encourage any member who has not led a walk to consider doing so. As mentioned above, training is available (it's not difficult) and we can always help you when planning your initial walks.

After a difficult few years, coping with lockdowns and new systems introduced nationally I am confident that the Tavistock group has now settled and we are certain we can move forward into the winter and into 2025 with a good programme of walks. We are also looking forward to 2026 when the group celebrates its 50th anniversary and the Committee is thinking about how we might mark this milestone.

We also look forward to seeing many of you at our Annual General Meeting on 2nd November at Whitchurch Community Hall.

Paul Newdick
Chair



Walks Team News

It's hard to believe that we are already planning autumn and winter walks. We recently sent out a message to walk leaders about putting on walks up to the end of the year and the programme to December is starting to build.

Training Day

You will have seen the recent email about the training day we are organising for potential new walk leaders. We haven't had a full programme of walks for some months now and we really need more walk leaders.

Please do think about undertaking the training with us. We're a supportive bunch of people and there are always people with experience, including other walk leaders, to help out if you need it. And you won't be alone as many walk leaders will be very happy to buddy up with you, especially while finding your feet.

What does the Walks Team do?

Tavistock Ramblers Walks Team is currently made up of Jan Draper, Jane Ingram and Helen Ford.

Overall we see our role as providing help and support to our walk leaders and fellow walkers. This includes advice to walk leaders about putting walks onto the website and app.

We share out some specific tasks. When walk leaders put a walk onto the Ramblers IT system (Walks Manager), it is Jane who checks them, and if necessary liaises with the walk leader, before they are published. Helen sends out reminders to walk leaders that we have gaps to be filled in the programme. As webmaster, Jan works on putting useful information and links on the website. Most recently Jan has been working on information that will assist all of us in planning routes for walks.

We are currently checking the part of the Dartmoor Way for which Tavistock Ramblers has responsibility. This involves checking that signs are still in place and in good condition.

And recently we've started planning the training content for the training day which will take place in November. If you want to get in touch with us, we have a dedicated email address

walksteam@tavistockramblers.org.uk

Pie Walks 2024

Paul and Judy have very kindly organised Pie Walks once again for a pre-Christmas get-together.

As in previous years, the walks will start from the Fox and Hounds and there will be a Wednesday walk and two walks on Saturday, one shorter and one longer.

Prices are unchanged at £13.95 per head (not including puds or drinks).

Details will be emailed nearer the time. Meanwhile put the dates in your diary:

Wednesday 11th and Saturday 14th December. We look forward to seeing you.

Tavistock Ramblers

Notice of AGM

To be held on Saturday 2nd November 2024 at 2.30pm

**At Whitchurch Community Hall, Church Hill, Whitchurch, Tavistock,
PL19 9ED**

You are invited to attend the Annual General Meeting of Tavistock Ramblers.

(NB: all Tavistock Ramblers are welcome to attend).

The meeting will consider the following matters:

- Minutes of the meeting held on 5th November 2023 and matters arising
- Presentation and Approval of Accounts
- Election of Honorary officers and Committee members

The current Honorary Officers and Committee members are willing to stand for re-election.

There is a vacancy for a vice-Chair. If anyone wishes to stand for election to this role, they can be nominated by a member and seconded by a second member at the meeting. If you are interested in this role and wish to discuss it please contact the Chair.

- Election of Independent Examiner
- Reports from members of the Committee.
- Questions to the committee or motions

If anyone wishes to ask a question or propose a motion to be discussed at the meeting please can you send these to the Membership Secretary by Friday 25th October.

There will be a walk in the morning before the meeting.

This will be a 4.5mile walk led by David Simkins. It will start at Whitchurch Village Hall at 10.30 am. It will go via Plaster Down to Sortridge and returning to Whitchurch. There are a number of stiles (may be difficult for large dogs).

Please bring your lunch to have before the meeting.

The meeting will also include a talk from one of our Members, Ian Gaspar, about his trip to Japan.

Ramblers Chat

In conversation with David Simkins, Footpath Officer



How long have you been a member of the Tavistock Ramblers?

Since I retired in 2016

What made you join?

My wife joined me when I retired.

When did you become part of the committee and what is your role?

I joined the committee when I volunteered to take over the role of footpath officer that suddenly became vacant half way through the year. I think that was about 2019.

What is your ambition to achieve for Tavistock Ramblers as a committee member?

That's quite a difficult question to answer as I have never considered I should have an ambition as a committee member. Being on the committee is helping to keep the group running smoothly.

I would, however, like to encourage the membership to be far more proactive in keeping our footpaths open. Despite all the walks we organise I very rarely get notified of any problems. No one came forward to volunteer to help in a working party and only one person came forward to help in doing an annual condition survey. Only three people came forward to help with the Don't Lose Your Way project which I have now put on the back burner.

So yes, perhaps my ambition for the Tavistock Ramblers is to encourage members to be more interested in the paths and less in just wanting to go for a walk and have a walking holiday organised for them.

Is there a typical rambler do you think?

Anyone with a pair of boots and wanting to explore our countryside.

What is your advice to newer members in the group?

Get to know your area. When you have been on a walk come back and plot it on a map then go and walk it again.

Do you lead walks and how did you start leading?

I have been leading walks for quite some time. Can't remember how I started. I think someone asked me to do one.

Do you have a favourite part of the Moor to which you like to take members on walks?

Again another difficult question. I spend more time in rural parts of our patch and don't do a lot of walking into the moors. When I do, I like to visit archaeological sites, stone rows and circles and settlements of hut circles.

What is your most memorable moment so far of being a rambler and why?

Not long after I started walking with Ramblers we were walking through a wood of magnificent tall trees. We stopped for a coffee break soon after and I mentioned the huge trees we had passed. "What trees?" was the reply. Far too much yapping and not looking where you are going!!

In your opinion what is the most important piece of walking kit to have?

This really depends on the type of walking you want to do. Tramping across the moor, a compass would be essential. If you want to walk every day then a raincoat. But I suppose its really got to be boots. Don't be economical. Pay a bit more and you will find they will last longer.

(See also David's plea for volunteers on the last page of this Newsletter)

What's our Footpath Officer been up to?

I have been involved with a problem footpath in Bere Ferrers now for about a year. A footpath that had been used for well over 20 years was suddenly blocked up by a new owner who spotted on the definitive map that the path was shown as going a different way. To alleviate the problem and allow people to still walk the route a permissive path was created by the land owner on the other side of the fence. In July the landowner agreed to a definitive map modification order (DMMO) to permanently re-route the path along the route of the permissive path. I visited the land owner, walked the route and then wrote in support of the new route on behalf of the Ramblers. Just as an aside, the neighbour who blocked up the original route has objected which means the application will now have to go up the line to the Planning Inspectorate which also means it will probably take years for a decision to be made.

Also in Bere Ferrers for several years now a path has been blocked by crops, specifically maize, making it impossible to walk through. This was reported to DCC last year and again this year. I walked it again last week and, lo and behold, it's not a footpath any more it's a motorway through the maize. Thank you farm owner, you are a star.



A land owner at Middlemoor wants to have a footpath rerouted and I was contacted by DNP for my views. This is the footpath that goes through Holwell on the way to Caseytown. It's actually quite a

nice path that I, and I expect many of you, have walked on many occasions. I met with the land owner and we walked the proposed new route which makes use of the old farm track through the woods. A DMMO will be made, I expect some time in the next 6 months.



Last week I had a meeting for over an hour at my local café with the DCC footpath warden who has responsibility for the Tavistock area (she also bought the coffee). I had 10 items on my list to discuss including two fairly important problems; a footpath at Lewtrenchard that just stops and a DIY non standard kissing gate at Coryton. Other issues including possibly extending the boardwalk at Liphill quay, the lack of way markers on a footpath at Brentor, a very poor field hedge crossing at Lamerton as well as advice on some other general footpath issues. I have known Ros for many years and have always found her very helpful.

I have as usual been out walking our paths and have found some which were very overgrown. It's quite evident they are not being used. Please, instead of walking the open moor choose a West Devon parish and walk the footpaths and report any problems to me. I was out walking a path in Mary Tavy this morning before the rain set in and found a broken stile.

David Simkins

Tavistock Ramblers Exmoor Holiday

Tavistock Ramblers will be running a 3 night walking holiday in the Exmoor National Park from the 24th October 2025 at a discounted cost of £305 per person on a full board basis. We have reserved a number of double rooms which can be either doubles or twins and single rooms. There is no single room supplement for the single rooms. All rooms are en suite.

We will be staying at Holnicote House, a country house run by HF Holidays, which is set in the heart of the Exmoor National Park.

Our holiday will offer guided walking with a choice of distances and locations. But, if you want to go it alone then there are many self guided walks available at the accommodation or you can just use the opportunity to explore Exmoor.

This holiday will be available to members of Plymouth Ramblers so if you know of someone who would like to go feel free to let them know.

Places are limited and will be accepted on a first come first served basis. To express your interest, please email Jane Brookes at brookesjane22@gmail.com.

There is a non-refundable deposit of £75 per person. This needs to be paid by 7th October 2024 to secure your booking. On receiving your expression of interest, Jane will email you with details of the bank account. The balance will be due by 31st July 2025.

As all HF Holidays benefit from ATOL or ABTOT bonding, your payment is fully protected. **We strongly recommend that you take out adequate travel insurance when booking your place on the holiday.**



Photo © HF Holidays

Helping Us to Help You to Help Us

The Mountain Rescue Team at Edale in the Peak District have been having some issues with What3Words and recently published this advice. It is reproduced here almost word for word as the situations found in the Peak District are very similar to Dartmoor and therefore relevant to us. Thanks to **Paul Brookes** who spotted the post on Facebook.

In the olden days a member of a walking group would have to run downhill to the nearest farm or phone box in an emergency and use a landline to call 999. The advent of mobile phones changed all that.

For a mobile phone to work, firstly it needs power – a spare battery pack and cable is a very good idea, as is setting out with a fully charged phone and not draining the battery by using mapping and photo / video apps constantly along the walk. Your phone also needs a signal and to do this it tries to 'handshake' with multiple masts all the time – it does this to provide call and data services as well as to provide geo-location for apps that use your position. So, let's imagine you are driving to the start of your walk and in a deadspot your phone loses signal a mile from the car park. You set off on your moorland walk and shortly afterwards you trip over and hurt your ankle and can't walk. You realise you need Mountain Rescue and to do this you use your phone to dial 999 and ask for POLICE – MOUNTAIN RESCUE.

When you dial 999 the limitations on coverage are removed and your phone will (almost certainly) be able to dial 999 even if there is no coverage by your service provider. Some new phones offer an emergency SMS capability via satellite. During your phone call to the emergency services it is going to be really beneficial if you can accurately confirm your location. The more accurate the better. But this is where some mistakes are occurring.

The two most common ones with What3Words are either that the phone still thinks it's somewhere else (remember when we said your phone had lost signal a mile from the car park ? ... well your phone still thinks it's in that previous location), or in transmitting the 3 words over the phone they are either spoken or heard incorrectly somewhere along the process.

Most navigation apps (eg Ordnance Survey OS Locate, What3Words etc) work by translating the geo-location data of your phone in to another 'language'. For What3Words it is translated in to 3 words (eg ///watching.safest.nudge) and for OS Locate it is translated in to two letters followed by either 6 or 8 numbers (eg SK 125 974). The What3Words language relates to a 3m square 'box' on the surface of the earth. The OS Locate language relates to your location according to the National Grid, 8 numbers is more accurate than 6 and you can change this in 'settings' on the OS Locate app.

You can do a few things to increase the accuracy of all navigation apps:

- *Let your phone settle when you open the app BEFORE you read out the location (give it at least 30 seconds for your phone to establish the most accurate location it can)*
- *Zoom out on the What3Words app map – this increases the accuracy but also helps you realise if the app has you in the wrong place (ie does it show you next to a big lake when there clearly isn't one)*
- *Read out the words clearly (and numbers if used), spell them out and repeat them.*



(In the example photo if the word 'safest' is misread as 'safe' the location changes from Mam Tor to Alaska !!)

- *Know how to send your location (eg to Mountain Rescue) as an SMS from within the app – this removes any issues with mispronunciation etc*

You may also be sent a text message by Mountain Rescue and asked to open it. This is so that we can use a system called SAR LOC to also determine your location.

If none of the above works you may also be asked to describe your location over the phone to us and maybe even send a photo of what you can see. We're quite good at 'guess the location' quizzes.

What3Words and OS Locate are both free and both available on IOS and Android

As Mountain Rescuers we are more interested in an accurate location than how you sourced it – but we would prefer an accurate 6 or 8 figure grid reference (and the 2 letter prefix) coupled with an accurate description of where you are eg I am at SK 123 456 and I am sat against the corner of the wall wearing a yellow pom pom hat.

Other free apps that will give you a grid reference for your location include 'Grid Ref Free' and 'Grid Point GB'

On What3Words you can also send someone your location as a grid reference – to do this go to 'Settings' then 'Share Settings' then scroll down to 'British National Grid' then '8 Digit Grid Reference'.

Please Note - this article doesn't cover all of the other aspects of dealing with an emergency out on the moors. Please read up on that subject, gain experience or maybe attend a course.

Please practise with using the location part of navigation apps BEFORE you need them in an emergency.

For any of this to work you need a powered mobile phone. Lastly, everyone in Mountain Rescue is firmly of the opinion that a paper map and compass (and the knowledge and experience to use them) are excellent navigation tools however we are realists and our experience shows that the vast majority of walkers no longer carry them, hence this article. We hope you found it useful.

Take care.

Post edited and photo by Long John

Names You May Not Know

Had Thomas Sir Tyrwhitt (pronounced *tirrit*) not been born, or if his circumstances had been different, Princetown would in all probability not exist. So who was Thomas Tyrwhitt?

His life was a paradox in many ways. He was born in 1762 and came from a privileged background. His father was an Essex vicar and his family were for generations landowners in Lincolnshire and high ranking ecclesiastics. He was educated at Eton and Oxford, where he gained an MA, yet he spent much of his life, and most of his fortune, in a remote location far from the fashionable world in which from which he came.

Whilst at Oxford he met a fellow student, the Prince of Wales who was to become George IV. A lifelong friendship ensued and there is no doubt that this was a factor in a succession of influential appointments. It certainly helps to have friends in high places!

As heir to the throne, the Prince of Wales was also Duke of Cornwall who then, as now, owned large parts of Dartmoor. In 1785 plain Mr Tyrwhitt, as he was then, was appointed Lord Warden of the Stannaries and leased over 2000 acres of moorland from the Duchy. He set himself the challenge of changing the very face of the moor. This eventually drained both his energy and wealth as with so many others. His father had left him a large legacy and so did his mother and he had a generous bequest from an uncle who died in 1786. Almost all of his money was used to finance the ventures he undertook around Princetown.



Photo © DNP

Initially he enclosed large tracts of the moorland and attempted to grow cereals and flax at the farm we now know as Tor Royal. He named the settlement that started to develop as Prince's Town in honour of his friend. There were, he thought, ready markets in the growing town of Plymouth and the naval dockyard in neighbouring Devonport, then two very distinct places. It wasn't long before the inhospitable climate and acid soil proved the winner.

From being Private Secretary to the Prince he became MP for Okehampton in 1796 and in 1806 MP for Plymouth. This was, of

course, the time of the Napoleonic Wars and there were thousands of French prisoners of war held in insanitary and overcrowded conditions on hulks in the River Tamar. In 1805, the year of the Battle of Trafalgar, Tyrwhitt put forward a proposal to construct a prisoner of war "depot" at Prince's Town and the Duchy granted a 99 year lease on the site chosen. Thomas Tyrwhitt laid the foundation stone in March 1806. The building materials, naturally, came from granite quarries that he owned. In May 1809 2500 French prisoners were marched up from Plymouth, later to be joined by several thousand more. War broke out with America in 1812 and prisoners of war from this "forgotten war" swelled numbers to over 7000. (Not, incidentally, from the American War of Independence which is sometimes stated to be the case. That had ended more than 30 years earlier).

Both the wars with France and America ended in 1815 and over a period of time all the prisoners were repatriated. The brief era of prosperity for what was now Princetown came to an end and the prison remained empty for many years. But that is another story.

However, Sir Thomas had another idea. The plan was for a railway from Plymouth to bring up lime and sea sand for the improvement of the land, timber for building and other domestic necessities. In return, the railway could transport the exportable goods from Dartmoor, granite in particular, peat and produce from his farming ventures. And so it was that the Plymouth and Dartmoor Railway came into being, opening in 1823.

This was never a paying proposition any more than his attempts to farm the land and he died in 1833 without truly realising his dreams. He never married.

His legacy, however, remains to this day.

Long John

Volunteers Needed

As well as needing volunteers to inspect our local footpath network, Tavistock Ramblers are also keen to set up a working party who would be willing to undertake practical tasks.

For instance where stiles need replacing or kissing gates installed it would be good to have a team of practically skilled volunteers who would be willing to undertake such projects. We would need a team leader who could coordinate projects and some people to help with the work.

If this is something you feel you may be able to help with let our Footpath Officer, David Simkins know. He can be contacted at: firtrees20@gmail.com

Grumpy or what?

As was discussed on a recent walk, it is a well established fact that some of our Tavistock Ramblers members are well qualified in the noble art of curmudgeonliness. (Yes, there is such a word).

But surely Alfred Wainwright was known to be a true master of the art and he amply demonstrated this when he appeared on Desert Island Discs.

Find it on BBC Sounds. I can recommend it.

Long John