



Newsletter

No 27

Autumn 2023



Tavistock Ramblers on top of the world.
Or, to be more precise, on top of Sheeps
Tor back in August.

www.tavistockramblers.org.uk

News from the Committee

Our Committee met on 22nd August and the highlight of the meeting was congratulating our Footpaths Officer David Simkins on his success with the Tavistock Canal footpath improvements. David's persistence, along with his strong reputation within Ramblers and at Devon County Council, helped to achieve the upgrade of the towpath making it safer for wheelchairs. David also received a round of applause for his paper to the Committee which showed he's chomping at the bit to achieve further improvements elsewhere. Listening to David always brings home that being a member of Ramblers isn't just about group walks, social activities and holidays, it's also about really important work that goes on to support us all with our walking.

Jane has been looking at various options for walk leader training and has come up with an exciting plan that involves an external training provider. Ramblers have an ongoing project for Managing Walk Safety which will be rolled out over the next few months. This project takes on board member feedback about risk assessments and is also developing a 90 minute online induction webinar to support new walk leaders. More information is on the Ramblers website. We'll still run local training courses for our walk leaders which will be informative and engaging.

Christine and Janet reported on the roll out of the new Ramblers website/App and Walks Manager. None of us are impressed with the way that Ramblers rolled these out while the systems contained a number of glitches and omissions. However, Ramblers have quickly taken on board feedback from members and the systems are now working well. Many of our members, including walk leaders, are commenting that they prefer the new systems which allow more flexibility, are easy to use and are enabling our members to walk with other groups more easily.

If anyone needs any help with setting up a walk or finding a walk using the new website/App, please do let us know. We're always happy to help. If you're a confident user, please pass on your "tips and tricks" to anyone you come across who is struggling. And if you notice any further improvements that can be made, please feed these back to Ramblers directly.

Our social events programme has been busy. Long John's treasure hunt followed by the meal at Robertsons and the Peter Tavy Inn walk and lunch were both a success. We're considering options for other social events in the autumn so watch this space...

Bookings for our Lake District holiday in April 24 now stand at 19 which is fantastic. The Lake District holiday offers three walks each day from easier to harder, will be located on the bank of Lake Derwent Water and is within easy walking distance of Keswick. It has something for everyone. If anyone would like to organise a social event or holiday, please let anyone on the Committee know.

Our AGM will be held on Sunday 5th November at Whitchurch Community Hall. We'll be having a short walk beforehand, a bring and share lunch and guest speaker Paul Hudson who is lead Search Manager for Dartmoor Search and Rescue.

As normal, all Committee posts will be subject to re-election at the AGM. Walks Programme Co-ordinator and Membership Secretary do not wish to stand for re-election and we have members who have put themselves forward for these roles.

For the group to continue after the AGM, the post of Chair needs to be filled and so far, nobody has expressed an intention to stand as Chair. If you're interested in supporting our group by standing as Chair or in another capacity on our Committee, please let one of the committee know, we will be delighted to hear from you.

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The new Ramblers Website

On 31st May Ramblers launched its much-anticipated new website and Walks Manager.

The aim of this significant initiative has been to attract more walkers to the Ramblers by making it much easier to access the huge potential of walks available from the groups – either through the Ramblers website (www.ramblers.org.uk) or on the Ramblers App on a smart phone. It has also sought to simplify the entire process of walks provision for the group's many volunteers and to build a robust platform for future improvements.

Members can now look for a walk anywhere in the country by filtering to identify those appropriate for them – by location, length, whether dog-friendly etc.

There is now also a link on Tavistock Ramblers' website which will take you straight to our Walks Page on the Ramblers Website. This has the added advantage of showing you walks put on by other Ramblers groups. Great when you are going on holiday to an area that you don't know!

Ramblers Chat

Chat with Minutes Secretary - Jeanette Doherty



Is there a typical Rambler do you think?

I think each Rambler is unique with lots of common interests with other members.

What is your advice to newer members in the group?

Get out there walking when and while you can. Enjoy the Southwest's beautiful and outstanding landscapes. When visiting different parts of the UK why not go for a Rambler's walk with a nearby group or follow one of their routes? The new website and app are now easy to use and you can identify what you are looking for. Please, if you can, help your committee out. It doesn't matter how little, many hands make light work.

Do you have a favourite part of the Moor and why?

I haven't seen enough of Dartmoor, Exmoor or Bodmin Moor to have a favourite. I enjoy the experience of each one whether I been there before or not, each visit is different, and you never know what to expect but to accept the unexpected. I do love the coastal walks, north and south but the north is more dramatic and reminds me of the Northern Irish coastline.

I know on occasions you look after your daughter's dog. When you do does this alter what walks you do and why?

Yes, it does. I need to confirm with the walk leader if it is acceptable and suitable to bring a dog on the walk, as there could be areas where dogs are not allowed or there are many difficult stiles to climb over and can you easily lift your dog over them? You also need to consider if the long walk will be too much for the dog on a very hot day and is there enough shade on the walk? Plus, a walk leader may need to cut the walk short due to a dog having a slight injury or not wanting to complete the 12 miles route (e.g., Helen's and Robert's walk last year from St. Cleer, cut the walk short at Siblyback reservoir).

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

The great time we all had on the Tavistock Ramblers mini break around Eype, Dorset in mid-October 2021 organised by Rosemary Clarke and John Noblet. Fantastic routes and weather!

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

It must be a good pair of comfortable walking boots with wide toe area and good supporting insoles.

How long have you been a member of Tavistock Ramblers?

I have been a member since June 2021, so just over 2 years.

My first walk with the Ramblers was with Paul and Judy Brookes, on a Thursday evening from Four Winds car park. It was a foggy and atmospheric experience near Foggintor and Swelltor quarries, it didn't put me off.

What made you join?

I joined for several of reasons, I love walking and exploring new areas, my beloved dog Barney of 14 years had passed away in November 2020 and I wanted to explore more of the Southwest area but not on my own due to safety reasons. I had moved to Devon in September 2017, I had previously lived in the northwest of Northern Ireland for just over 17 years. I also wanted to make new friends, get fit and healthier.

When did you become the Minutes Secretary for Tavistock Ramblers?

I officially became Minutes Secretary for Tavistock Ramblers in November 2022.

What is your ambition in your role of Minutes Secretary for Tavistock Ramblers?

Writing up the minutes of the committee's meetings and to inform committee members of any relevant non-Tavistock Ramblers events in the future or just past.

Taking Your Dog on a Walk?

Using a public right of way you may pass and repass and take with you usual accompaniments". What is a usual accompaniment?

Well, a court case back in the middle of the 19th century decided that a perambulator was one but a bicycle wasn't. A path is for pedestrians and therefore the bicycle owner could be sued for trespass as could a man waving a flag as he walks backwards and forwards on a path adjacent to a pheasant shoot. Therefore, you can be sued for trespass if you are not just walking along minding your own business. As dogs have been walking with their owners for hundreds of years, it is extremely unlikely that a court would say that they are not a "usual accompaniment" so no fears on that score.

Should your dog always be on a lead? No, it can sometimes run next to you, but if it causes a nuisance to others you could be in trouble.

However, look out for a notice pinned up on the PROW telling you to keep the dog on a lead for the Highway Authority, under S27 of the RTA 1988, can make an order requiring all dogs to be kept on a lead. Also, the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 requires all dogs entering Access land, eg Dartmoor, to be restrained on a short lead between the 1st March and 31st July and thereafter if there is stock in the vicinity.



Also, again under the Dogs (Protection of Livestock) Act 1953 it is an offence to allow a dog to run freely in a field of sheep, ie not under close control. The Act does not define a field but it is generally regarded as an enclosed area and not open moorland.

What about the land owner's dog, police dogs, packs of hounds, working gun dogs and trained sheepdogs I hear you ask. They are all excluded. And, of course, you all

know that if your dog worries livestock, particularly sheep, it can be shot with no repercussion on the farmer.

So where does this leave us? If your dog stands barring the way baring its teeth and snarling in a threatening manner this would constitute a public nuisance. It would also be regarded as an obstruction to the right of way which is also a public nuisance. If it is a sweet little cocker spaniel on a short lead trotting next to you well enjoy the walk.

Generally, always keep your dog on a lead when walking farmland. Perhaps the only exception to this is when you meet cattle with calves. Cows will feel threatened by the dog, not you, so unless you know the dog will behave aggressively towards the cows and calves let it off the lead and they are more likely to follow the dog than you giving you time to move to safety.

Now what is the situation where you have your old 5 stone black lab out on a walk and you come across a stile with no dog flap and no means of getting him through without lifting him over.

Well, I have to say the only thing you can do is turn around and find another stile free route for paths are for people not dogs. And lastly, don't forget under the Control of Dogs Order 1992 your dog must have an identification collar on whenever it is in a public place.

David Simkins

Footpath Officer

VOLUNTEER SUCCESSES



WHEELY GOOD IMPROVEMENT

Ramblers with wheelchairs, mobility scooters and prams can now enjoy the Tavistock Canal footpath, thanks to Tavistock Ramblers. The group worked with Devon County Council and South West Water to remove gates, cover tree roots and build a new ramp. Pictured are the local Wheeled Access Group, trying it out.

You may have missed the article in the Tavistock Times, but hopefully you have all seen this piece in Walk magazine. Well done, David!

Be Prepared!

Be Prepared is, famously, the motto of the Scout movement (and using the initials of its founder, Baden Powell). It could, however, equally apply to Ramblers setting out on the recently launched Tamara Way.

Cheekily called "Coast to Coast" it is waymarked here and there (usually on street furniture) and just for fun at the southern end it is sometimes the Tamara Way and sometimes the Tamar Valley Discovery Trail, both with the same logo. Beware though, some of the signage is definitely questionable. You would be advised to have a map with you.

I know that some Tavistock Ramblers have completed the whole route but if you haven't yet embarked on the challenge

of walking from Cremyll to the Bristol Channel then: Be Prepared! Here are a few photos of what you might expect.

No, you don't need a compass and maybe a chainsaw is over the top, but a machete would not go amiss. And don't forget the hi viz. There is a lot of road walking. Remember also to check train times and tide times for river crossings before you set out.

Not selling it? Well, make up your own mind, but I don't think it will rival Wainwright's walk or even that other local walk that has borrowed the "Coast to Coast" title, the Two Moors Way.

Long John



Island Hopping in the Azores

- A Ramblers Holiday

The Azores are a volcanic archipelago of islands in the Atlantic Ocean 930 miles from Lisbon and 2,400 miles from the east coast of North America. They consist primarily of nine islands spread over approximately 360 miles in a north-west – south-east direction. It was my good fortune to visit four of them, São Miguel, São Jorge, Pico and Faial.

The climate was sub-tropical with verdant lush vegetation so, yes, that meant plenty of rain, although only one day was so misty the view was obscured. Mostly we had warm humid days with varying amounts of cloud, good walking weather.

The walks themselves were varied from coastal footpaths, volcanic ridges, vast lakes, and steep sided valleys. We got to see them all.

The national flower of the Azores is the Hydrangea, imported originally as an ornamental shrub and now found as hedges. Whilst we were there they were in full bloom making a delightful picture of blue.

The volcanic nature of the islands was in evidence everywhere. Lakes had formed in calderas, people lived on fajãs (areas of flat land from lava flow), volcano cones, lava tubes, bubbling mud/water with the accompanying aroma of sulfur and black sand beaches.

The last eruption was in 1958 and lasted for 13 months after which 30% of the population emigrated to the USA and Canada. The eruption is still evident on Faial with new land having been formed.

Walking in the Azores is well advertised with the trails being published on the V website, the route marking in the universal red/white or red/yellow.

Finally, a free day allowed for a spot of whale watching, the Azores being visited by 20 different species. Our trip was successful with sightings of Sperm Whales, Bottlenose Dolphins and the delightful playful Spotted Dolphins the highlight of my day.

Jan Draper

