



Newsletter

No 29

Spring 2024



A great walk at this time of year.
Along the River Teign between Steps Bridge
and Clifford Bridge.
Photo by Long John

www.tavistockramblers.org.uk

Message from the Chair

In November 2023 Ramblers Head Office published a 'Walks Guidance' consultation draft. A number of the Committee and some members of the group gave me comments and with these I was able to bring together a detailed written response.

We were concerned that the guidance was too long, too repetitive, at times poorly worded and seemed to be imposing restrictions that were a 'one size fits all' approach. Whilst much of the guidance was based on common sense and will already be put in place by experienced walks leaders, we thought that it could be off-putting to potential new leaders.

There were some specifics that we were very unhappy with, for instance there seemed to be an attempt to restrict the size of groups, which were described as being 'the norm'. However we felt this took no account of different terrain or weather conditions or how experienced the walk leader might be.

Having sent in comments, Ramblers HQ arranged some regional Zoom meetings to discuss the responses and the revisions that they are intending to make to develop the final version. Jan D and Helen F joined me for one of these meetings.

Ramblers HQ have advised that they have received around 900 comments on the guidance. It seems that many of the comments were about the same issues: guidance being too long, repetitive, and concerns about limits on walking group size.

We have been told that one of the main changes is that the guidance will be only 8 pages (instead of 36 pages) with 8 guiding principles. Hopefully the final version will make it clear that the 'size of group guidance' is only advisory and it will depend on the type of walk and leader's preferences. The final version is due to be published this spring.

Overall I think that the final version will be useful for new walk leaders and for training events. For existing leaders I hope it will be seen as just reinforcing existing good practice and that it will be welcomed because generic risk assessments will be expected rather than more walk specific ones.

On page 11 of the spring edition of 'Walk' magazine, you will have seen an item about the Ramblers new 10 year strategy. One of the outcomes is improved participation.

On this note I would encourage all our members to make the effort to welcome new or guest walkers. Whilst the group is welcoming, it is not just the responsibility of the walk leader to welcome new people, we all have a responsibility to do this. So I would encourage you to look out for new walkers and make them feel 'at home'.

On 24th February I attended the Devon Area AGM at Bovey Tracey. The Devon Area have agreed to set up a working party to see whether the Devon Area has a future, what purpose

does it serve, how can it be managed in the future? Volunteers for the working party are being sought.

The new Committee continue to work well together to see how we can develop the group and provide the best experience for both walks leaders and for our walkers.

We are very aware of some of the issues that have been of concern to walk leaders over the past year or so and we want to ensure that walking together is and remains an enjoyable, fun, healthy and safe activity for every member of the group. But if you do have any concerns please do get in touch.

Just a reminder please, if you contribute to the Tavistock Ramblers Facebook page, only use it to post reports about recent events or walks. It should not be used to post items such as upcoming events, cancellations of walks etc. as not everyone uses Facebook or will see a post at the right time.

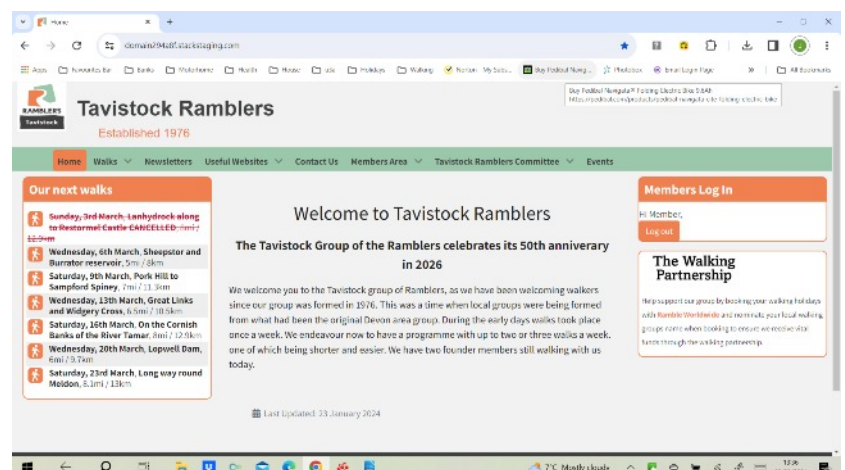
Paul Newdick



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Hopefully you have noticed that the website has moved. The driver for moving it was to bring it up to date whilst incorporating the changes that have happened over the publishing of walks on the Ramblers website.

The introduction of Walks Manager for managing how our walks are publicised to Ramblers members led me to look at other local groups. A pattern emerged that they all have a similar layout. This led to Ramblers Webs that is run and maintained by another group of volunteers within the Ramblers. They provide assistance in the setting up and transferring of existing websites all for no cost.

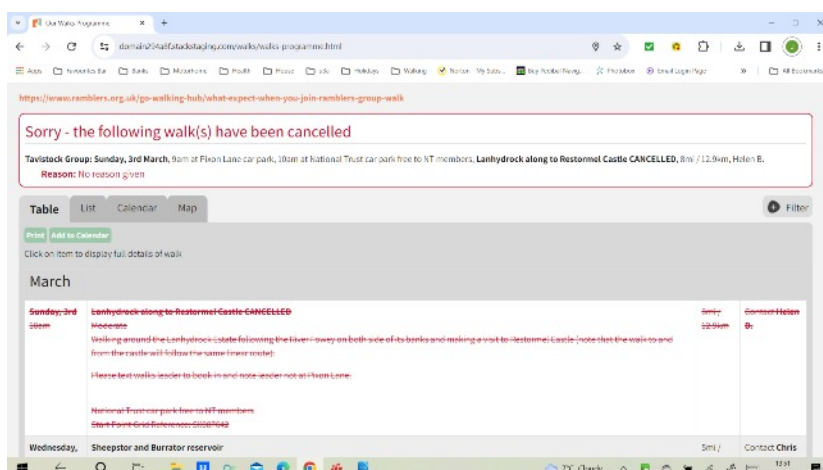


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Access to the members area is using the username and password of the old website for simplicity.

The listing of walks is covered for the group in a variety of ways. The box on the home page is a snapshot of upcoming walks. Each listing links to more detail. Under the walks header is the walks programme. This can be printed if you wish, filtering would allow Wednesday walkers for example to limit the printout to Wednesday if that is their wish. Each walk can be downloaded to your diary if you maintain an electronic one.

The only word of caution if you do print the programme is that being linked to Walks Manager means detail might change so before you book on a walk do one last check on the website or app to confirm the detail.



Cancelled walks are highlighted in red and very boldly on the walks programme, but subtle changes are not, although if you hover the mouse over a walk it will bring up a date if the walk has been changed after its first publication.

I will hasten to add that the website is a work in progress so I will always be open to comments and suggestions as to its development.

I leave you to explore the rest of the site at your leisure.

Jan Draper

Walks Team News

Walks frequency

We must thank our Walk Leaders for pulling together and offering to put on walks that have in the main provided all our members and visitors who wish to join us a walks programme that has kept us all moving despite the best efforts of the rain, the wind and vast quantities of mud. We are a resilient lot.

New Walk Leaders required

In order for us to return to three planned walks per week we need some new Leaders from our group to come forward. We are planning a Leader training/get together session for later this year and some of our experienced Leaders have offered to buddy up to provide help with planning, map reading, reviewing and Leading on the day for new Leaders. If any of you are thinking that you might like to try this then please just talk to one of the Committee on a walk or message us.

Dartmoor Way Project

Some of you will be aware that as part of this initiative the Tavistock Ramblers need to carry out signage checks twice yearly for the Lydford to Tavistock and Princetown to Tavistock stretches of the Dartmoor Way. The next check is planned for Spring 2024.

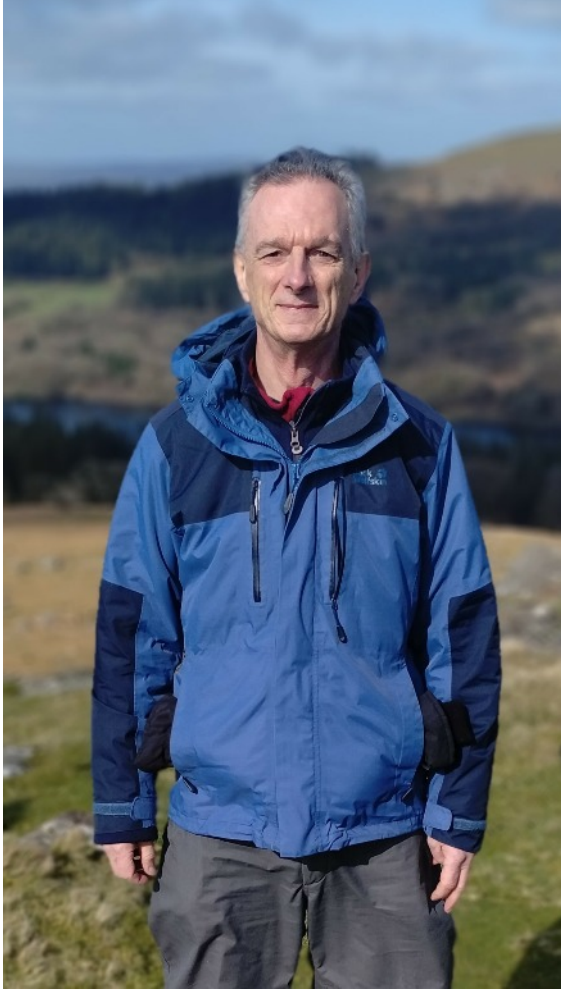
We need check the route signs, putting up more signs is restricted in that they can only be put in places that have existing signs or places that have other signs like footpath or bridleway signs. We have the signs, some of them are sticky and others have to be attached by nails hence the oversized hammer that's with the pack. If anyone wishes to help with this please do contact us.

We look forward to seeing you all on upcoming walks.

If any members have any queries for the walk team please contact us on tavywalkteam@gmail.com

Ramblers Chat

In conversation with Chris Bates, a new leader for Tavistock Group



When did you first hear about the Ramblers Association?

I was introduced to the Ramblers Association by my father in law who walked with Aylesbury group and led for Ramblers Holidays in the 90's. In 1998 I joined the RA when a group was formed in Thame where I lived at the time. I led a few walks but with a full time job and growing family, struggled with planning for the 6 monthly walks programme issued by Oxfordshire area.

It's been twenty years since your early days with the RA. Did you leave the RA?

No, but I did leave the country! My job took me to the Netherlands for 13 years although I did keep up my subscription and often went walking on trips when in the UK.

Why did you want to lead walks with Tavistock Ramblers?

I love the countryside around my adopted home of Tavistock and enjoy going out with my wife for a walk in the area. I did the walk leader training in 2022 but the process of publication reminded me why I only led a few walks in the past. When there was a new appeal for leaders last year I thought I must give it a go. I was pleased to see now the walks programme is online and in an App. Used properly it is so much better than the old days.

Oh, some leaders have struggled with the new method?

I understand there were some bugs when it was first introduced and it still requires a user to sign into the RA website twice. However now most bugs have been fixed it's easy to enter the information about a proposed walk on my PC. Once the Group's walk team publish the walk it is updated to the App overnight as are all changes made after publishing. If I need any help I can always contact one of the Walks Programme Team for help.

How did this work on your first walk?

On my first walk recce a stream was swollen so I decided to change the start and end points. With a walk published in a booklet I would probably have kept to the original route and we would all have got our feet very wet!

Did you learn anything else from first walk?

Yes, there a few fields in the online walks manager that do not get published, like the extra information and ascent / descent. These should be included in the description. I also like to remind people through the description to check the App just before the walk in case I make any changes!

Can walkers that want to join a walk contact the leader through the App?

Unfortunately not. So we ask walkers to text the walk leader before the walk.

So, the App helps the leader and the walkers?

Definitely. With the weather in this part of England, flexibility over the walk makes for a better experience for all. I can confidently plan a walk weeks ahead knowing that I can adjust it closer to the time.

We all know the weather in Devon is very variable. When the weather is good it is so great to get out and enjoy it, but if it is bad then I think it is better to postpone a walk a few days until it changes back again! The RA App supports leaders in making this call right up to the day before.

Just make sure when you want to join a walk that you text the leader and keep an eye on the App.

Pudding and Bacon Butty Walks

The walks programme this year features a couple of new ideas designed to help fuel your walking enjoyment.

Firstly, the Pudding walk will be held on Saturday May 4th, starting from Lydford village car park and finishing at Lydford Nicholls Hall for.....puddings. We've done the Pie Walk at Christmastime but now go for your 7 miler, enjoy your coffee stop and lunch break of butties and crisps (or whatever takes your fancy) then arrive back around 2.30 to sit down in the Nicholls Hall for a selection of traditional puddings served with custard (or perhaps some cream). We are talking syrup sponge, jam roly-poly, bread and butter, apple crumble – none of your cheesecakes, meringues or trifles here. Your pudding and coffee or tea will cost you £5 paid direct to the Nicholls Hall on the day.

I will need names confirming along with your preferred pudding (just so we can get the numbers sorted) by April 20th please.

At the end of June, on Saturday 29th, We will meet at Lydford's Nicholls Hall again, 09 30 for a bacon butty and coffee starter to our walk out along the West Devon Way to Sourton and back along the edge of the Moor, to finish at Lydford car park. Two different walk lengths will be offered (approx. 6 and 10 miles). Again, you will need to book and payment will be direct to Nicholls Hall on the day.

Further details of this walk will be released next month.

Please book your places for either walk by contacting Paul Brookes, 07969 592779 paul@burleyview.co.uk

Another good walk is on the way!

This year Lydford PCC will again be holding the Lich Way walk on Sunday June 2nd, the closest weekend day to St. Petroc's Day. This linear walk has been held several times before and become a favourite with Tavistock Ramblers as it gives walkers the chance to follow the historic route from Bellever Forest to Lydford. It is usually well attended by the villagers of Lydford as well.

The Lich Way, sometimes called the Way of the Dead, was the track traversed by those bringing their dead to be buried at Lydford, their mother church, at the time, the largest parish in the country. The settling of the Ancient Tenements in Norman times increased the traffic along this route, and even when they were given special dispensation to bury their dead at Widecombe, they still had to pay tithes and attend the Forest courts at Lydford. When the farms in the central basin were established, their inhabitants also had to attend Lydford for religious and administrative purposes and this traffic would have remained until the building of the turnpike roads in the late eighteenth century.

The walk will begin at 9.30 a.m. from Bellever Forest car park and finish at approximately 3-4 p.m. at the Nicholls Hall, Lydford where refreshments will be available.

We leave Bellever Forest through the woodland, cross the main road and head across the Moor passing through Powder Mills. A brief drinks stop before we head up past Longaford Tor to then descend to our first river crossing using the weir below Beardown Tors. A steady climb takes us around Lydford Tor and then it's back down to Broad Hole where we cross Conies Down Water and probably take a well-earned coffee break. From here we are into real Dartmoor country traversing Conies Down, tackling another stream crossing and skirting Cocks Hill to arrive at White Barrow, where we fork right travelling steadily down hill to Baggator, and our lunch stop.

After lunch we continue downhill, and away from the moorland, passing Coffin Wood to the River Tavy crossing at Standon Steps Bridge before climbing out of the valley to Higher Willsworthy, and out on to the Willsworthy range area. A road crossing at Higher Beardon takes us down to the River Lyd valley, under the viaduct and back into the village via Silver Street.

The walk covers twelve miles, most of it over open, undulating moorland, so is not to be undertaken lightly, but anybody who is reasonably fit should be capable of completing it. The ground conditions are normally quite wet, especially around the river crossings! As before, there will be the opportunity to finish after 8 miles at the lunch stop on Bagga Tor or to join us there and walk the last 4 miles or so if you do not feel up to the full monty! You must ensure you have organised your transport to get to and from both the start and finish points. We will also be investigating the provision of a bus at Lydford, leaving at 08 30, to take walkers to the start at Bellever with a small charge being made for this but the numbers will be restricted.

It goes without saying that suitable clothing and footwear are essential, and an adequate supply of food and drink must be carried.

Please book your place by contacting Paul Brookes, 07969 592779 paul@burleyview.co.uk

The Milford Track

On my recent trip to New Zealand, I managed to slip in a few walks (or should I say tramps?) including the Milford Track which is a 33½ mile, four day walk in Fjordland on the south west coast of South Island.

The start of this iconic walk can only be reached by ferry across Lake Te Anau which immediately gives it a certain 'extra special' feel. The trip across the lake passes a tiny island of rocks and stones which marks the drowning spot of Quintin McKinnon in 1892. He was an explorer, originally from Scotland, the first European to traverse the area. He is credited with discovering the Milford track – along with a few others. On arrival at the starting point, the reality of the need to pack insect repellent became apparent – sandflies! We then walked a mile to Glade House for our first night where we met our fellow walkers and guides. Reception for mobile phones ceased and from hereon access was by helicopter only – bliss!

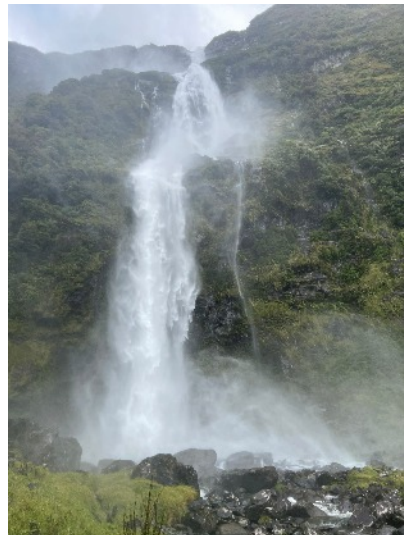
One of the features of the Milford Track is that all walkers follow the same direction. Also, the National Park has strict rules with only 90 walkers per day to commence the walk – so there can be times when you don't see a soul for long periods. The Department of Conservation (DOC) releases 40 passes for 'freedom' walkers carrying their food and equipment whilst the group I booked through, have separate accommodation (for up to 50), with showers and food at the end of each day, so we only carried our personal belongings – some would say this is not proper tramping – I'll let you decide!

The next day, which is the first day of proper walking, involved a 10 mile hike following the crystal clear Clinton river. I have to say at first I felt slightly underwhelmed as I imagined I could be walking through woodland, by the side of a fast flowing river, on a sunny day in Devon, but, these thoughts were soon dashed. The landscape changed as we followed a boarded walkway to wetlands with abundant mosses and lichens and continued through thick rainforest, buzzing with cicadas, towards the temperate beech forests. As the walk unfolded so the mountains and lakes began to emerge and the sheer contrast of the terrain became apparent. Within our group, we had four guides who encouraged us to walk at our own pace, so I lingered and savoured the experience, why rush?

With heavy overnight rain, we left Pampolona Lodge early ready for the 9 miler up and over the pass - within minutes we crossed a stream which reached halfway up our shins! Although the rain subsided at times, it left the paths running with water and the mountains cascading with waterfalls – what a sight! Within a short time, the group had spread out as we started the steady ascent passing through the tree line to a barren, mountainous landscape. There were eleven zigzags as we made our way towards the top, passing the McKinnon memorial cairn and so through the MacKinnon pass which at the highest point is 1154m.



As the afternoon progressed so the rain eased, the temperature warmed and the views became spectacular. Then we were by the banks of Arthur river, enjoying an extra stroll to see the highest waterfall in New Zealand – the Sutherland Falls - where we got wet through yet again, this time from the spray of the 580m waterfall.



On the final walking day, we woke to snow covered peaks surrounding Quintin Lodge which even the guides were snapping. We had to make an early start for the 13½ mile walk in order to catch the last ferry – nobody would want to be left at Sandfly Point – you would be eaten alive! The sun slowly rose above the mountains as we followed the river for miles through the Arthur Valley with its uneven and rocky pathway.

The landscape changed yet again with thick forest, hanging climbers and huge tree ferns forming a lush almost 'jungle like' pathway as we made our way over swing bridges passing Mackay Falls, Giants Gate and Bell Rock. I became almost blasé about yet another mountain or yet another waterfall – how could that happen?

As we neared the ending, the boatshed shelter came into view with a solitary sign marking the finish – there was a feeling of elation tinged with sadness. The short ferry trip across the spectacular Milford Sound made an apt ending to a fantastic walk.

Helen Bone



Lunch in the hut near the top was a welcome stop, our bodies steamed in the cold air and most changed sodden socks and numerous other garments. The clouds were swirling and parting giving us glimpses of the glacial valleys and surrounding mountains.

The downhill tramp was hard going in places, with rocky parts which were steep with uneven steps.

Not Travelling to Strasburg

Looking back at a previous contributor's article on the sort of things they would take on a walking holiday: the usual, water-proofs, food, drinks, warm clothing etc. and when walking in some parts of the world anti-bear spray – (not much need for on Dartmoor). One item that was missing, when travelling in non-English speaking parts of the world, was a phrase book of the local language. That this item had been omitted from the list is the reason for this article; their experience I would guess being similar perhaps to mine.

I went to work in Germany many years ago and, not having done any German at school, someone thoughtfully gave me a German phrase book. The format had specific headings: travelling by bus/train, at the airport, hotels, shopping, restaurants and so on. I needed to do a train journey and searched in this slim volume for a phrase that would enable me to buy a return ticket, surely a most basic and useful phrase. Nah! nothing resembling it. At the ticket office I stated where I wanted to go to and waved my arms to indicate there and back; it was understood and I got my ticket. Sitting now in the carriage and looking through this slim volume in more detail and, had I been an indecisive traveller many decades previously, I might, just might, have found the following phrase useful *"Soll ich meine Hutschachtel auf das Gestell oder unter den Sitz stellen?"* *- *"Shall I put my hat box up on the rack or under the seat?"* I wasn't wearing a hat! *"Wann kommt der Zug in Stasbourg an?"* - *"At what time does the train arrive at Strasbourg?"* I wasn't going to Strasbourg. It was followed by a selection of possible answers. (I amused myself thinking of possible answers to the question regarding the hat box). Having nothing else to do I sat in the carriage and thumbed further through this slim volume that I was fast becoming dis-encharmed with. At the Hotel: *"I want a room with a view of the mountains"* - hard luck if you were planning staying in Berlin. *"I don't like this room, the drains smell"* On to Shopping: *"I want a pair of button boots size 6"* - hard luck again if you wanted a pair of sandals size 8. - Needing something to eat. - In the Restaurant: *"These prawns are off, bring something else."*

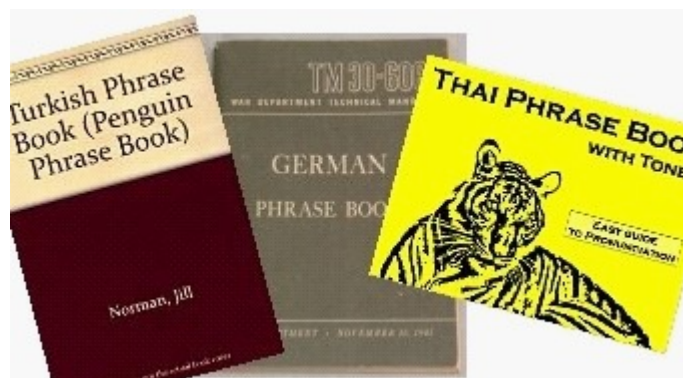
And so it went on; little of any use: I wasn't going to Strasbourg with a hat box, nor had need of button boots, nor did I stay in a hotel with smelly drains, or with off prawns. I nearly consigned this font of useless phrases out of the carriage window.

Useless phrases were not confined to the German Language. Travelling to Turkey some time later, someone again, well-intended, gave me a Turkish phase book. The only bit from it that I remember was a declamation: *"Ho kayıkçı beni padişahın sarayına kürek çekiyor"* - *"Ho! boatman row me to the Sultan's Palace"* I think Sultans had disappeared many years previous, and would he have wanted to see me anyway: a twenty something year old, bearded, and in the travel-stained clothes that was the costume of those who had travelled overland? This further useless tome was nearly consigned to the Bosphorus.

Not only were a majority of phrases not much use, some of them were decidedly funny and even bizarre: I am moving on east now and in comparatively recent times. Thailand. Not only the "Land of Smiles," as they market themselves, great food in a great climate, temples and Buddhas and so on, but also for ripe pickings from a phrase book that I picked up, as much out of curiosity as anything else.

This "Thai Phrase Book with tones Easy guide to pronunciation" (I still have it and has been useful for this article if nothing else) was in a class of its own.

It contained an outline of Thai grammar, the writing system with its pronunciations, then followed phrases under the usual headings plus a few more. The Thai language does not translate word for



word as European languages nearly do. After each phrase a literal translation of the Thai is given.

Here are a few random examples both of the bizarreness of the choice of phrase in the first place and of the idiomaticness of the literal translation. (I am not going to include the pronunciation – it'll drive my spell check mad):

Greetings: "Hello Mr John, nice to meet you" - สวัสดีคุณจอห์น ยินดีที่ได้รู้จัก Literal: *"Hear good that get acquainted you."*
An innocent and useful enough phrase, - if you had got it right, - if not you might get the following response.
"I am not Mr John I am Miss Bird" สวัสดีคุณจอห์น ยินดีที่ได้รู้จัก Lit. *"Request punishment name of me not yes Mr John. I am Miss Bird."*

(You couldn't make it up! Though there is at times a certain ambiguity of gender with some individuals. Perhaps that exchange caters for it). The book continues under much the usual headings: Numbers, Colours, Time and Date, Shopping, all of which have peculiarities in choice of phrase and literal translation, till the last section of the book:

Romance: The full ripening of this article; again a random selection:

Ques. *"Would you like a mistress?"* - *"คุณต้องการที่จะมีนายหญิง?"* Lit. *"you would like mistress no?"* -

A selection of possible answers given thus:

- Ans 1. *"I don't want a woman because I have a puppy already"* or
Ans 2. *"I would not like a mistress because I have two already"* or
Ans 3. *"I would like a wife that doesn't have bad breath"* - Lit. *"I would not want a wife with mouth stink"* or
Ans 4. *"Damn! Bring me that puppy"* Lit. *"take that child-dog unit that come"* or
Ans 5. *"You would not like her she's fatter than an elephant"*

Although Thailand is a place where almost anything goes and where I have spent some time through family connections, I would like to assure the reader that I have not had recourse to need any of the phases in this last section.

Thinking back, what would be the difference in cost between an aerosol of anti-bear spray and a woman with mouth-stink?

* As an after-thought the non-English bits were obtained from Babel fish. I could not guarantee their accuracy if you wanted to travel to Stasbourg to buy button boots to send to your mistress in Thailand using a boatman to cross the Bosphorus.

Graham Clarke

Names You May Not Know

Many of you will know the clapper bridge over the River Teign at Teignhead Farm. Indeed, Tavistock Ramblers have picnicked beside this bridge on various occasions over the years. However, have you ever noticed that there is another, smaller, clapper bridge about 100 m further downstream? Beside this bridge is a small memorial to F H (Harry) Starkey.



Who was he?

Originally Starkey, who was born in 1912, hailed from London, but moved to Yorkshire and then to Lincolnshire in his early life. In later years, he joined the Metropolitan Police Force where he reached the rank of chief superintendent. After 31 years' service, he retired to Devon.

As he says in his introduction to his book "Exploring Dartmoor" he first discovered Dartmoor in 1952 when he and his wife came to Devon for a seaside holiday. He had gone to Teignmouth but said that, pleasant though it was, it was very little different from the seaside resorts that he had previously visited such as Clacton, Hunstanton and Skegness.

They had no car in those days and looking to expand his horizons he took a number of coach trips around the area. One of these was across Dartmoor to Postbridge and onto Princetown. He was familiar with the works of Eden Phillpotts, and had, therefore, read various accounts of Dartmoor people and places. He took early retirement and decided to come and live in Devon and a settled at Haytor Vale. From then, on, he continued his exploration of Dartmoor, and was encouraged to commit to writing much of what he had learned in his explorations.

If you have seen any of his books, you will know that they are illustrated with very fine pen and ink drawings. If they seem familiar it is because his collaborator was in fact John Haywood. Now where have you heard that name before?

He said that he did not claim to be an expert about anything and certainly not about Dartmoor, but he loved the moor and had an intense interest in its history and folklore. He said he could also

claim to know a little about paths and tracks, tors and hills and mires and bogs.

He urges you to don your boots, bring your maps and sandwiches and come with him to explore a little of the wild and wondrous region called Dartmoor.

Good advice indeed because not only was he a prolific writer, he was also a member of the Ramblers Association (as it was called in those days).

The books for which he is probably best known are "Exploring Dartmoor" and "Exploring Dartmoor Again". There were other books and various articles for Dartmoor Magazine.

He died in 1989. The small clapper bridge that he discovered in a dilapidated state was restored in his honour and the memorial stone erected close by.



Words and photos by **Long John**

Keep to the Footpath!



When walking on Dartmoor, unless on open access land, you should always keep to the footpath!

Day Trip to Lundy Island

Saturday 8th June 2024

Departing Bideford Quay 08.00

Returning to Bideford for 19.00

There are still a few spaces left for this Tavistock Ramblers trip.

If you haven't already booked or if you want further details, contact Rosemary asap. Email her at:

rosemary.clarke@anderton39.co.uk



From the Archives

The photo above is of a Tavistock Ramblers group at the old lighthouse on Lundy.

And if you are planning on going on one of the Area Members Day walks to Dunkery Beacon in April to commemorate Exmoor National Park's 70th birthday, you won't be the first Tavistock Ramblers to reach Somerset's highest point.

We went there back in 2012. Let's hope the weather will be just as kind in 2024.



And finally

No one claimed the prize on offer in the last newsletter so the Newsletter Editor had to drink it himself!

Devon Area Member's Day

As you will already know, it is planned to hold a Devon Area Members Day on Saturday 13th April 2024.

The theme for the day is to celebrate the beauty of our two local national parks, Dartmoor and Exmoor. The reason for the celebration is that 2024 will mark the 75th anniversary of the passing of the 1949 legislation, which created national parks. Exmoor National Park was created 70 years ago so it is a significant occasion.

The outline plan is to meet at the Rest and Be Thankful pub at Wheddon Cross. Tea and coffee will be available from 10.00 am before the walks start.

There will be three walks on offer

Walk 1: about 5½ miles

Walk 2: about 7½ miles

Walk 3: about 10 miles and will visit Dunkery Beacon.

More details of the day and of the walks are on the Devon Area website.

Let the walks team know if you are interested in joining any of the walks.