



Newsletter

No 33

Spring 2025



Pudding Walkers at High Down
Photo by Sally Prosser on Facebook

www.tavistockramblers.org.uk

Ramblings from the Chair

It has been a dreary winter, so it's good to see the spring flowers and some brighter days and it is a great time to get out and walk. If you have not been out with Tavistock Ramblers for a while then do consider coming on a walk this spring. There is a great selection of walks over the next few months; weekend walks tend to be a bit longer than the Wednesday walks. So whatever your fitness level you are sure to find something to suit you. So if you have not looked at the programme for a while, hop over to our website: <https://www.tavistockramblers.org.uk/> and search out the walks programme.

You may have noticed over the past year some mention of the fact that in 2026, Tavistock Ramblers celebrates its 50th Anniversary. This is quite an achievement for a group that is entirely run by volunteers. It is also notable that two of the founder members are still walking with us today. The Committee are currently thinking about how we might mark the anniversary.

For example, we may try to recreate the first walk from 50 years ago. We are thinking about a walk followed by a big picnic. How about a walk and a lunch somewhere? We know that we do have a number of members who have been with us for many years, but who no longer actively walk, but it would be great to see them at one or more of the events. So do keep an eye out early next year for the events that we hope to put on.

We also hope to be able to share some memories and photographs from down the years.

With this in mind we are looking to see if we can set up a small group of volunteers who would like to be an 'organising committee' for the Anniversary Events programme. If you are interested in being part of such a group do let me know via the Contacts form (Membership Secretary) on the website. You will see a separate article written by Sally regarding our Facebook Group and this could be a good way of sharing ideas about the 50th Anniversary Celebrations.

Paul Newdick
Chair



A New Walk Leader

We are very fortunate to have such enthusiastic and welcoming walk leaders in the Tavistock group. Speaking as a relative newcomer I have always been made to feel welcome and encouraged to keep coming! When the call went out for people to train as walk leaders it got me thinking that I would like to help – as scary as that might feel.

The walks team have nudged and supported those of us who feel ready to take that step, and I have now completed the walk leader and navigation training days. Both were delivered in a group setting with lots of laughs, tea and cake! It has been great to see several other Tavistock group members also taking that next step.

The walk leader training day was based around the Ramblers eight guiding principles to help us lead safer, enjoyable and welcoming walks. As a group we completed the walk leader modules designed to build confidence and share insights into planning and preparing for a walk. Members from Tavistock and Plymouth groups shared experiences and tips which made the delivery by group session particularly helpful. These modules are available on the Ramblers website.

The navigation training day took place at Sourton Community Hall and was attended by members of Tavistock, Plymouth and Totnes groups. Together we learnt about reading an OS map, using grid references and planning a route. After lunch we were treated to a lovely exercise navigating ourselves in small groups to preset checkpoints on the moor. The day was finished off with tea and home-made cakes back in the hall.

So, when you see a new name on the walks list it may well be one of us fledglings taking the leap and leading a walk. All walk leaders need our support, but us newbies will be particularly appreciative of it.



Huge thanks to the members of Tavistock Ramblers who put so much work into delivering these training days. There will be more walk leader training days later in the year – if you're thinking about it then I encourage you to follow us and take that leap!

Cath Ford

Ramblers Chat

In conversation with new Committee member - Jenny Haig



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

Three years

What made you join?

I love the great outdoors, walking in the countryside, moorlands and coastal paths and I wanted to make new friendships and make a positive difference.

When did you become a member of the Tavistock Ramblers Committee and why?

Autumn last year 2024. I wanted to lead walks, find new and interesting paths and tracks and share these wonderful findings with my group.

What is your advice to the newer members in the group?

Get to know the Ramblers website and app, the Tavistock Ramblers website and the Walks Leaders Guidance. So much useful information.

Do you lead walks?

Yes, for about one year.

Do you have any tips for people using and adding information to the Walk App?

Take your time, plan and recce your walk. The more you use the app to add walks and navigate how it works, the easier it gets.

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

I love both Dartmoor and Bodmin Moor but I lead walks on coastal paths too. I like to keep walks varied and add interesting and sometimes historical and beautiful features, with good views and lovely spots for coffee and lunch breaks.

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

All my walks have been memorable, I love to see walkers enjoying themselves, chatting and making friends and getting the most out of walking in our beautiful outdoors.

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

A good pair of sturdy, waterproof, comfortable walking boots. Secondly a waterproof, preferably breathable jacket with hood.

Navigation and Walk Planning Training Day

This took place on 1st March at Sourton Village Hall and was again organised jointly with Plymouth Ramblers. A couple of days beforehand we laid a trail on the moor for people to follow.

There were 21 participants. Quite a few were people who had participated in the walk leader training day that we ran in November last year. The morning session focussed on map reading, planning a walk and navigation. After lunch, we sent people out to have a go at putting into practice what they'd learned. You'll hear the perspective of someone who took part in the day elsewhere in this newsletter.

Most of this day was planned and led by Peter Wright and we'd like to thank him for his help (and patience with his fellow trainers!)

We're taking a break from training now. We want to go out walking! But we plan to offer more training next autumn or winter.



This image is from the excellent navigation training pages of the Ramblers website www.ramblers.org.uk

Public Rights of Way

I have in previous newsletters commented on dogs on footpaths, bulls in fields, the role of the footpath officer, definitive maps and more but I think the time has come to get back to basics especially for the newer members and say something about what actually is a public right of way (PROW)

This could be a full page article or even an hour's lecture so I will just pick out the salient facts.

A **pro** is a highway and a highway is a public right of way; but what is a highway? You may even have heard of the phrase "Once a highway always a highway" but that is another subject altogether.

In common law highways fall into 3 categories:

A **carriageway**..... over which there is a right to pass and repass **by foot by horse or by vehicle**.

A **bridleway**over which there is a right to pass and repass but **only on foot or on horse back** (later legislation widened users to include persons on a pedal cycle).

A **footpath**over which there is a right to pass and repass **only on foot**.

As a result of legislation, ie the enactment of a law by Parliament, additional **pro**'s have been created

A **BOAT** A byway open to **all** traffic. These are primarily unsurfaced tracks sometimes linking farmsteads or other rural properties

A **motorway** being a highway restricting access to only some specified types of vehicle making it illegal to use on foot or by horse.

There are **cycle tracks** like for instance Route 27 that goes for miles across Devon. There are **streets with pavements** otherwise known as **footways**. There were also **Restricted byways** sometimes known as RUPP's or roads used as a public

path but I think we will just stick to footpaths and bridleways for the moment as these fell by the wayside in 2006.

But I hear you say what about the **green lanes**. Well, this is a term that in fact has no legal standing whatsoever it is simply a descriptive word for an unsurfaced track and may also be a footpath or bridleway or just some ancient track used since time began that has never been formalised into a bridle way or footpath.

If you take out your trusty OS map you will find footpaths and also bridleways shown as green dashes and other routes that allow public access, eg green lanes as green dots. A public right of way as specified above is a way over which the public have the right of passage without hindrance by landowners over which the way passes. However, some landowners, for instance the National Trust, allow the public to use paths on their land by consent and these are known as permissive paths and which can be bridleways or footpaths and are shown as red dashes.

National Trails or recreational routes have will have been created on existing highways but sometimes by agreement with a landowner and these are shown as green diamonds. Where the route is not a **pro** and crosses, for instance, a field this is probably, but not necessarily, a permissive path.

So, when you are next wanting to go out for a walk pick up your trusty OS map and plot a route along green dots dashes and diamonds happy with the knowledge that you have the full force of the law both common and legislative behind you to walk that "way".

David Simkins

Footpath Officer

-----	Footpath
-----	Bridleway
+ + + + +	Byway open to all traffic
+ + + + +	Restricted byway (not for use by mechanically propelled vehicles)

Joining Our Walks

Last minute changes

Even routes familiar to walk leaders might change.

Most of you will know that walk leaders recce their route in advance, usually quite close to the day of the walk. Any changes can be updated on the walk information that you see on the website or app and you'll see updates more often these days.

We recommend that you check for any last minute changes the day before the walk.

Booking by text

When a walk leader asks you to book by text, can we ask that you don't use email instead? This is because your email probably won't go to the walk leader.

Although Ramblers IT systems always provide a link for both mobile number and email on the app and website, if the walk leader hasn't given permission for their personal email address to be used (and most of ours haven't) then the email will be sent elsewhere. It won't go to the walk leader.

Of course if someone specifies that you can email, that's fine.

As ever, you can get in touch with the Walks Team by emailing

walksteam@tavistockramblers.org.uk



What is a Facebook Group ?

and how can it work for Tavistock Ramblers?

Even if you don't use Facebook all that much, being part of our Tavistock Facebook group can be really good for bringing our community together, and it's easier than you think.

First off, a Facebook group is like a digital campfire where we can all hang out, share ideas, and plan our next adventure.

It doesn't replace other methods that we have to draw on. There's the national Ramblers website, the Ramblers app and the Tavistock website packed with updates and useful information. There are emails from Ramblers UK plus local emails that include the regular Tavistock newsletter, updates and events, plus those specifically aimed at walk leaders. But please remember the website always has the most up to date information on the walks programme.

Our Facebook group is somewhere else to find some of this key information but we can all give feedback, ask questions and share ideas. Imagine this: all the rambling and walk updates, photos, and chat in one place, and you don't have to scroll through a lot of random posts elsewhere. It's all about the walks and the community.

Who can join? Facebook groups are closed so people have to apply before they are part of it. There are questions to answer: Are you a member of Tavistock Ramblers? If not why do you want to be part of the group? Do you agree to abide by the rules of the group? The admins decide whether to approve or deny their request.



Here's what we can do in the group:

1. Easy planning: Want to share one of the next walk details or ask who's up for it? Just pop it in the group, and everyone can see it right away (plus a link to it on the websites and the walk leader so you can message them if you're joining in).

2. Photos and memories: After a ramble, post your photos from the day. It's a fun way to relive the hike, and everyone can enjoy

each other's pictures. There's a wealth of old photos too as it's almost 50 years since the first hike.

3. Ask questions and share tips: Have a great hiking tip or need advice on boots? Pop it in the group, and you've got a whole bunch of people ready to help.



4. Stay connected: Even if you miss walks, you'll always know what's happening with the group. You won't feel left out of the loop. There's so much going on behind the scenes which you might find interesting or even want to get involved with.

It's simple to join and use, and we can all help each other get the hang of it. Plus, you don't have to use Facebook for anything else if you don't want to—just the group.

Let's get on board and make it easier to enjoy our next adventures together.

Here's the link

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/tavistockramblers>

So why don't you share what you think about this article or any of the others in this newsletter today? Your feedback is vital to get the best out of our Tavistock Ramblers group now and in the future.

See you there and happy rambling.

Sally Prosser



Names You May Not Know

As we saw with the story of Thomas Tyrwhitt in the Autumn 2024 newsletter, very few people have made their fortune from anything to do with Dartmoor.

William Crossing is no exception, despite being considered one of the leading authorities on Dartmoor during his lifetime. He was a pioneer, discovering stone crosses long forgotten and a chronicler of Dartmoor folklore and customs. He was a prolific author on all things Dartmoor. His *"Guide to Dartmoor"* was published in 1909 and for most of the 20th century was considered to be THE Bible on Dartmoor. (I am fortunate enough to have a first edition).

He was born in Plymouth on 14th November 1847 and spent most of his boyhood in that town. As a child he was encouraged by his mother to interest himself in the antiquities and traditions of the countryside and since the family spent holidays in a cottage on Roborough Down, he was introduced to Dartmoor at an early age.

When he left school he was apprenticed to a sail cloth manufacturer but disliking the trade he ran away to sea and sailed to Canada. That didn't work out and by the time he was twenty he had returned to Plymouth and was working for his father. In his spare time, he wrote poetry and plays, but took every opportunity to visit the moor, which remained his chief interest.

His father, no doubt thinking that some discipline was required, made him the manager of the family flax mill in South Brent. Probably because he was spending more time on the moor than he was in the mill the business failed (although the growth of steam power for ships must have had something to do with a decline in trade).

He had married Emma, the daughter of a draper in Ivybridge, in 1872 and at about the time that William had started keeping detailed notes of his moorland excursions. Now without an income, he decided to earn a living by writing. He wrote articles about Dartmoor, not just about the landscape but its antiquities and the people who lived there. It is because he wrote in detail about the people who lived on the moor that we know so much about the customs, practices and folklore of the day. Most of his work was published in various newspapers and periodicals, many in the Western Morning News. At some point he was introduced to Philip Stevens who worked at Dartmoor prison, had an interest in the moor and who was something of an artist. He became the illustrator of William's articles and it is sometimes suggested that the format of pen and ink sketches inspired Alfred Wainwright many years later.

Crossing wrote 17 books about Dartmoor during his career as an author, of which his authoritative and comprehensive *"Guide to Dartmoor"* compiled from his series of articles for the Western Morning News is perhaps the best known. Although his writings brought an income he was only scratching a living.

The frequent soakings that Crossing had endured in his lengthy moorland rambles began to take their toll and by his early fifties he was stricken with chronic rheumatism. (No Gore Tex in those days, of course). He found it increasingly difficult to walk, eventually becoming more or less house-bound. Meanwhile the couple were now so poor that they were barely able to make ends meet. His fortunes changed when he met William Collins and became the tutor of Mr Collins' children.



The last portrait taken of William Crossing in the late 1920s.

Courtesy John Collins

Photo from an article by South Brent Old School Community Centre

Emma died in 1921 after having been ill for some time. William survived Emma by just a few years, and after a spell in the workhouse in July 1925, was given a place in a gentleman's home, paid for by his patron, William Collins. The last straw in the unhappy ending to the story of this intrepid explorer who mapped Dartmoor's landscape like no one before or since, had been to lose the manuscript to his final book, a history of Dartmoor, when his housekeeper at the Mary Tavy house burnt it, thinking it ruined as the mice had got to it.

William Crossing, a gentleman's son, who had inherited a mill, and once had the funds to keep servants, died in a Plymouth nursing home, alone, ill and in poverty, his keep paid for by the ever loyal Collins.

The house in which he lived is called Crossings to this day and we all pass it on a regular basis on the A386. There is a small plaque on the wall recording the fact that he had once lived in the house.

He and Emma are both buried in Mary Tavy churchyard, alongside the public footpath that leads to the big stone stile in the corner. Most of us will have walked past many a time.

John Noblet

