

tavistock ramblers



newsletter

26 summer 2023

Message from the Chair

Thank you to everyone who is contributing to our walks programme. The variety of walks on offer is testament to the efforts made by our walk leaders. It's wonderful to see so many walkers making the most of our programme, including several new members who are rapidly becoming familiar faces on our walks.

Our Committee extends particular thanks to Long John for the Coronation walks that took place on 7th May. 55 Ramblers from Tavistock and Plymouth groups attended the three walks. The highlight was all walkers coming together for a picnic lunch at King's Tor. The idea for the Coronation walks was Long John's and he did a brilliant job planning the day and making sure it went smoothly. Thanks also to Jan and Helen who led the short walk and to Tony Hoskin of Plymouth Ramblers who led the long walk.

The short holiday to St Ives at the end of April/start of May was most enjoyable, with three days of coastal walks in glorious sunshine plus some fun social activities in the evenings such as skittles, swimming and just the odd glass of wine. We're now looking at options for a week long holiday to the Lake District next year.

Our social programme is busy. Long John's treasure hunt will be on 15th June (the meal afterwards at Robertsons is now fully subscribed). Rosemary will be running a short walk on Saturday 15th July from Peter Tavy that will be



followed by lunch at the Peter Tavy Inn. We'll be sending out a separate communication about this shortly so that we can let the Peter Tavy Inn know how many of us will be turning up for lunch. We're also planning to hold a walk followed by lunch at the Mary Tavy Inn in September.

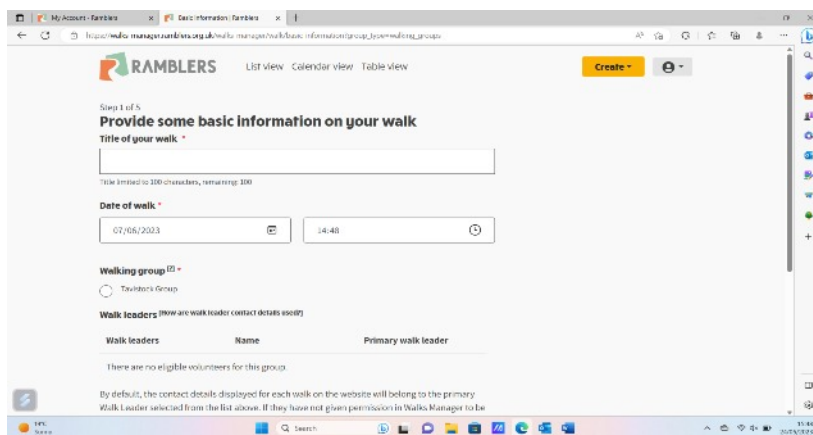
This newsletter gives important details of the new Ramblers Website and Walks Manager. Any changes can feel difficult but those of us that have seen the new website and walks manager genuinely do think it's going to make life easier for walk leaders and for walkers. Our aim is to make the move to the new platform as simple as possible.

The Committee met on 23rd May. We covered the new website and walks manager, walk leader training, social events and holiday planning and AGM planning. As a Committee we are trying hard to share the load to avoid over dependence on one person and this seems to be working really well. If anyone is able to help us, either by joining the Committee or by supporting us in other ways such as organising a social event or Group holiday, please do let one of us know.

Frances Teague

Coming Soon - New Ramblers Website and Walks Manager

Planned for the 31st May is the much-anticipated new Ramblers Website and Walks Manager. This has been more than 3 years in planning and development with the ultimate aim of attracting more walkers to the Ramblers. The Website will be much more User Friendly than the current one making it much easier to navigate to find the information you need. In particular, it will be much easier to access the huge potential of walks available from the Group – either through the Website or on the Ramblers App.



In the future, members looking for a walk will be able to use the new Walks Manager to filter walks to identify those appropriate for them – by location, length, whether dog-friendly, wheelchair accessible etc. The new Walks Manager also simplifies the entire process of Walks provision for the Group's many volunteers and provides a robust platform for future improvements.

Inevitably, the introduction of the new Walks Manager does involve some changes for how we make our Group Walks available. A more detailed explanation of what is involved for submitting walks will be circulated to Walk Leaders very shortly and it is our intention to hold some 1:1 sessions for those that need help using the new system. The monthly Ramblers Magazine will advertise the launch of the new Website and promote the benefits for all Group Members. We know that some of you will be concerned about the changes but our aim is to make the move to the new platform as simple as possible.

Mass Trespass?

The mass trespass on Kinder Scout re-enacted? No. A far more peaceful group of ramblers met to mark the occasion of the coronation on King's Tor (where else?).

There wasn't much sunshine and just a smattering of red, white and blue but the sight of three groups of walkers from Tavistock and Plymouth Ramblers converging on King's Tor for the lunch stop made up for that. Three walks of differing lengths to cater for all had been devised so that they would all meet at the same time. Nearly 60 walkers were able to enjoy the splendid views across Dartmoor as far as the sea.



Two of the groups had brought "Celebrations" chocolates to share whilst the third group was treated to the fabled jelly babies, no less. As many Tavistock Ramblers will verify, they have to be earned indeed.

The only disappointment for some was there was not a single 365 to be bagged. Oh!, so close to several though. Those who went on the mid distance walk of 8.5 miles were able to say that they had visited Ten Tors, including Fur Tor, on the day.

Thanks to Jan and Helen and Long John for leading two of the walks and Tony H from Plymouth for the third.

Maybe we will do another combined walk one day?

Long John



Ramblers Chat

Chat with Membership Secretary - John Brewer



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

I joined Tavistock Ramblers about 10 years ago.

What made you join?

I have always enjoyed walking, but never seemed to find the time. By joining Ramblers, it gave me a commitment to walk most weekends, which I am still doing.

When did you become the membership secretary?

I took over the position in March 2019.

How many members does Tavistock Ramblers currently have?

The current membership is 186. It tends to fluctuate between 180 to 190. When I first became Membership Secretary the numbers stood at 172 so the membership has increased over the last 3 years. During that time, we have had a considerable influx of new members but sadly lost several of the members that were there when I first joined.

What is the highest number of members the group has reached?

That happened recently when we reached 191 members just after the last AGM.

What is the average age of a member do you think?

The majority of Ramblers nationwide seem to fall in the age band of between 55 to 75 and our group is similar. Ramblers are trying to bring this down but with limited success.

Is there a typical ramble?

That's a tough one. I would say probably not. If you look at the demographic of our group, we have people from most walks of life.

To be a Rambler the main requirement is to enjoy walking with other people and not mind getting wet and muddy from time to time.

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

To come along, join the walks and make new friends.

Do you lead walks?

I have led quite a few walks in the past which I have really enjoyed doing.

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

My Dartmoor favourite areas are around Manaton, Chagford and Lustleigh, I prefer the edge of Dartmoor with the small villages, but as a Cornishman my real love is the North Cornish coast.

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

There are a few. Falling into a leat on one of Paul's walks while helping a woman across and having to walk the remaining six miles soaking wet was one that is hard to forget.

I have fond memories of the Tavistock Ramblers holidays, four of which I helped to organise in conjunction with Rosemary, Paul and Long John which turned out to be a really fun thing to do.

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

A good pair of boots.

What do you consider an appropriate finish to a walk?

To unwind in a café or pub with a cup of Earl Grey and a slice of cake or a pint of Guinness with the rest of the group.

Stiles, Gates and other Barriers

Love them or hate them, stiles are a feature of a countryside walk that are seen the length and breadth of the UK and have been since records began. (The word stile actually derives from an Anglo Saxon word *stigel* meaning a set of steps for getting over a barrier) You could even say they are an icon of the countryside walk. Stiles come in all sorts of shapes and sizes there is no standard design. In fact, since lockdown a stile community has been formed on Twitter and even a Stile World Cup where photos were judged and the very best one was chosen.

Let's look first at the legalities of a stile. A stile is an obstruction therefore a nuisance and highways, which is what a footpath is, should not be obstructed. However, a stile is different because in the vast majority of paths the right of way would have been dedicated subject to the landowner being able to place stiles and gates across the path. A stile or gate or other barrier erected across a path that is not so dedicated is a nuisance and therefore an unlawful obstruction. If a landowner does not have the right to erect a stile or place a gate across footpath he/she can ask the Highway Authority for permission who will probably impose maintenance conditions. The Highways Act of 1980 requires landowners to keep stiles in good and safe condition. If the landowner fails to keep a stile in good repair the highway authority can step in and do the work and recoup the cost from him/her.



There is no statutory design that stile and gates must adhere to but there is a British Standard BS5709 2006, updated but only in respect of new stiles and gates, in 2018 which should be adhered to. Stiles are not now flavour of the month and you will find that in very many instances stiles have been replaced by shiny new galvanised gates some of which have offset hinges that make them self closing.

From the 2018 update can be drawn 10 rules about stiles and other barriers. I am not going to list them all here.

There isn't space to do them justice but I will just throw in a few;

The selection of a gap, gate or stile, which permits people to use a path crossing a boundary such as a hedge fence or stone wall, shall meet the needs of the land manager and shall cause as little restriction as possible for all lawful users. Mmmm. Yes, well go and have a look at the stile behind Mary Tavy church and see if you agree it doesn't quite adhere to this rule.



The manoeuvring space, ie the space needed to be kept clear so as to allow users to get into position to open, pass through, and close a gate or to negotiate a fixed structure. Go through the kissing gate at the Middlemoor end of the tarmac path. It's a bit tight isn't it, but as it is not a new installation there is not a lot that can be done about it, which also applies to the next rule.

The path within two metres of the structure and the ground through the structure as well as any part of the manoeuvring space beyond that has to be free of surface water and provide a firm surface. Except immediately after rain. I am sure you can give me a long list of wet muddy paths on either side of very many stiles or gates.

Barbed wire, which I am continually seeing wrapped around a gate post. No barbed wire, electric fence etc within one metre of the structure or within the manoeuvring space. No injurious plants within 500mm of the structure.

Taking a walk in the countryside should be an enjoyable and safe experience so if you come across a defective stile a gate or barrier on top of a stone wall that is not safe then let me know and I will take it up with DCC.

David Simkins

Footpath Officer

The Life Cycle of a Tick



Now is the time of year, with the bracken starting to grow, that ramblers are more aware of ticks. Pesky creatures they may be, but like most living species, ticks go through a number of very distinct stages throughout their life cycle. While aspects such as their appearance may differ at each stage, their primary goal remains the same: find a host to feed on.

Depending on the species, ticks can live for up to three years, during which they go through four distinct life stages: egg, larva, nymph and adult. Once the egg hatches, a tick needs a blood meal at each stage in order to survive and continue to grow. For females in particular, feeding is essential for reproducing and laying eggs. Each phase of a tick's life cycle is different and at certain stages these pests can pose serious problems for humans.

Egg

After feeding on a host, adult female ticks typically lay their eggs in the springtime, capable of producing thousands of offspring. Outdoors, ticks are known to lay their eggs in areas where sheep, deer or other animals usually roam in order to provide their offspring with access to potential hosts. Eggs can appear translucent and are usually red and brown in colour.

Larva

In the summer, tick eggs will hatch into larvae, hungry and ready for their first blood meal. Ticks do not hatch with any diseases or infections, however the smaller animals that they typically feed on at this stage of their life can carry disease-causing pathogens. If a larva feeds on an infected animal, the pathogen can be transmitted to the tick and they become a carrier. Once larvae have finished feeding on a host, they will detach and continue to develop throughout the autumn and winter, sheltering beneath leaf litter or nesting on a host for warmth.

Nymph

Come spring, larvae have transitioned into nymphs and will be looking for their next blood meal. At this stage, ticks may seek out larger hosts such as deer, and, yes, humans.

While the warmer months of May, June and July are great opportunities to get outside and enjoy the weather, it's especially important to take proper tick precautions during this time because the ticks are still tiny and may be infected. Ticks will crawl up greenery and wait with their front legs extended outwards for a passing by host that they can latch onto, a practice known as "questing."

Nymphs that became infected with disease-causing bacteria during their larva stage can transmit these pathogens to hosts such as humans or pets at this point in their life cycle, leading to serious conditions such as Lyme disease. Furthermore, uninfected nymphs can pick up dangerous bacteria from infected hosts such as deer, which can then be transmitted during their adult stage.

Adult

After feeding, nymphs will transition into adults by autumn or winter. During this final stage of their life, they will again seek out a blood meal as females in particular prepare to reproduce. Hungry adult ticks that became infected with disease-causing bacteria during their larva or nymph stage can still transmit these pathogens to hosts at this phase as well, making tick prevention important even during the winter months if temperatures are mild enough for tick activity. After feeding, adult ticks will mate, with males typically dying after mating with one or two females. Adult females who have mated will then lay thousands of eggs during the spring before dying soon after, as a new generation of ticks begin their life cycle.



The NHS website offers the following advice:

- keep to footpaths and avoid long grass when out walking
- wear appropriate clothing (a long-sleeved shirt and trousers tucked into your socks)
- wear light-coloured fabrics that may help you spot a tick on your clothes
- use insect repellent on exposed skin
- check your skin for ticks
- make sure ticks are not brought home on your clothes
- check that pets do not bring ticks into your home in their fur

How much of that is practical you may judge for yourselves but "Be Aware".

Long John

St Ives

It was with rucksacks packed with the usual walking gear, changes of clothes walking poles and well waxed boots, that twelve of us arrived at our accommodation, Chy Morvah. Situated in an elevated position overlooking St Ives, the hotel's name means House by the Sea and is one of the houses of the Holiday Fellowship organisation whose aims are to provide walking holidays from their houses around Britain. That's what we came for – three day's worth of coastal path walking in that area on a full board basis.

Day One – Sunday: Fuelled up with a good breakfast and with packed lunches we set off to walk across country to Zennor, returning to base using the coast path. To go into more detail: once we left the built up outskirts of the town then what started to materialise? Stiles: We had been advised that there were about twenty six stiles on the six mile stretch to Zennor. Looking at the map you will see the patchwork of small fields that the footpath crossed. I lost count after the twelfth, or was it the thirteenth? By the time we got to Zennor someone, who had been more diligent in their counting, estimated that we had been over fifty. The stiles themselves were an interesting mix, mostly up and over granite slabs laid horizontally, also similar posts laid simply across the path; the forerunner of the cattle grid; they effectively served that purpose. The footpath itself undulated across fields; cows momentarily paused from their grazing to stare dismissively at us before returning unconcerned to what they had been doing. We passed through farms and small hamlets, some in various stages of dereliction, many of whose names began with 'Tre'. This prefix simply means homestead: Trevalgan, Treveagh. Treveassa, Trendrine, Tremedda, Tregetheren. It was in this last place that D H Lawrence lived with his German-born wife, for a short period during WWI. Given the period and his wife's origins a whole raft of exaggerated insinuations became associated with him at that time.

We passed a habitation named Wicca. I was intrigued by the name but could not and have not been able to establish any connection of that place with the occultist, earth-centred religion.

The tower of Zennor church gradually arose into our view and a gentle descent through a wild-flower-bedecked grid stile led us down to the church.

Zennor – alphabetically the last parish in Britain, whose name derives from a local saint St Senara whose actual identity and even gender is not generally agreed upon. Such legend as is attached to him or her bears a striking similarity to ones of Greek and Cornish mythology plus a local additive process during long winter evenings: arriving by sea, having travelled floating on a leaf . . .

Inside the church one of the bench ends portrays the Mermaid of Zennor depicted as admiring herself in a mirror. Known as the 'Mermaids Chair' it is believed to date from 15th c. Legend again relates that her voice was deemed to be so sweet, singing in the choir that she enticed one, Mathey Trewella, to come away with her – neither of them were ever seen again.



Again we have an ambiguity: did the chair inspire the legend, or did the fabled mermaid inspire the carving of the chair? - tales by the fire-side?

Once outside the church, myths and legends evaporated, the real world kicked in; lunch. We headed roughly north now to pick up the coast path and on Zennor Head, a granite promontory facing the Atlantic ocean identifiable by the perched rock, we had lunch.

I described the first part of the walk in somewhat bucolic terms: gentle, undulating, cows in field, quaint homesteads with literary associations etc.

If there was ever a walk of two halves this was it, and it started right after the lunch stop. With panoramic views from 275 million years of weathering of the granite, Gurnard's Head in the west we set off eastwards towards St Ives. Steep ascents and descents over a rough and uneven path necessitated a careful approach. In places the route involved nothing less than rock scrambling. The route followed the ins and outs of headlands and inlets and despite the cautious, and in my case rather slow approach, we were well rewarded with large drifts of bluebells near the path to stunning panoramic views up and down the coast, we spotted seals on the rocky islets just off shore and all of this in the context of a blue sky meeting a sparkling blue sea as a backdrop. Regular stops were needed not only to draw breath but to 'Wow' the views.



Progressing, the sight of the Godrevy island and lighthouse indicating that we were nearing St Ives became a welcoming sight; exhilaration giving away now to weariness but with a sense of achievement.

The anticipation of a beer and dinner provided the last motivation to the ascent to Chy Morvah. We were not disappointed and afterwards I felt quite good about myself having done what turned out to be thirteen miles, strenuous with a capital S.

St Ives *Continued*

Day Two: - Monday: Setting off steadily upwards through lanes and footpaths, the 50 foot pointed, granite Knill's Monument was gained. It was the work of John Wood the Younger who designed the Royal Crescent in Bath, and served as a mausoleum to John Knill, a former mayor of St Ives.

Further footpaths and minor lanes, with plentiful evidence of Cornwall's mining past, brought the group to Trencom Hill. At 175m the prominent hill fort afforded far reaching views across the Hayle estuary and to the south St Michael's Mount could be glimpsed. As with so many places in Cornwall, the legend associated with this place is that the giant Trencom was supposed to have hurled a hammer, from here to St. Michael's Mount to kill the wife of Cormoran who was believed to have created the island.



Continuing, more footpaths and minor roads brought the group to the head of the Hayle estuary where South West coastal path was met and which took the group eventually to St Levan's church. The church dates from the medieval period, restored in the 19th C. Its 6th C patron saint, like so many in Cornwall, is subject to legends.



Of more recent note, the church was featured in an early episode of BBC's Dr Who.

Picking up the footpath, which runs alongside the branch line to St Ives, took everyone, via of course, the obligatory tea shop, back to Chy Morvah.

Day Three – Tuesday: Fuelled up again with the most important meal of the day, we set off home. Well not accessing the A30 right away and driving eastwards but via the Lizard where another eleven mile circuit around the southern-most promontory of mainland Britain had been proposed.

Heading away now from the village we came upon the church of St. Winwaloe. He fled to Brittany to escape the plague and is regarded as one of the phallic saints, an object of reproductive fruitfulness and revered by barren women.



The church itself is constructed of alternating blocks of serpentine and granite giving it a chequer board and unique appearance. Heading north now on an undulating footpath, a section of which ran on top of a hedge, we arrived at St Ruan's holy well:

A diminutive, 15th C structure made from local serpentine and granite blocks, and containing a random selection of votive offerings. Healing powers are believed in its waters. Legend, again, has it that Ruan was accused by his wife of being a werewolf; killing their daughter and ravaging local sheep. The King's hunting dogs in not reacting to him as such proved his innocence.

On to Ruan Minor, a village whose pillar box was well kitted (knitted) out for the coronation.

St Ives *Continued*



Then to Poltesco, formerly a centre for working serpentine in the 19th C, though the now silent, empty and the semi-ruinous building are all that remain.

The coastal path nearby took us on to Cadgwith, an archetypical fishing village: thatched cottages, hauled-out boats with their associated hotchpotch of fishing tackle.

A steep ascent out of the village led us on to the Devil's Frying Pan. A big hole with an arched entrance formed when the roof of a cave collapsed. (doesn't explain the origin of the name).

We were accompanied along the coastal path on each side by an almost continuous profusion of wild flowers: Italian garlic, bluebells and pink champions; the countryside at its best and under a cloudless blue sky; what more could you want? Past the lifeboat station, Bass Point lookout and on to Housel Bay where the white, prominent four-square



castellated building of the Lloyds Signal Station could be seen. Set at 200ft above sea level, it was built in 1872 to communicate with passing vessels using flag semaphore. Such information was then passed on to London via telegraph. Coming into view now was the Lizard Lighthouse complex. The present structure dates from 1751 with various additions and improvements including a now decommissioned fog-horn (the horn bits are still visible). The rotating arc continues in use. Then the tea shops at Lizard Point . . .!

A wonderful three days out walking in perfect weather, wonderful coastal scenery and in May, the best time of the year. A mercifully uneventful drive home took a sun-tanned, exhilarated group home. What more is needed? [

Graham Clarke

From (and
to) the
Archives



The Tavistock Ramblers group on the 2023 St Ives holiday, and those who went in 2010