



Newsletter

No 28

Winter 2023



Autumn colours on Dartmoor. But where?
Photo by Long John

www.tavistockramblers.org.uk

Message from the Chair

It gives me great pleasure to contribute to this latest newsletter, my first as the new Chairman of the Tavistock Ramblers. I have been with the Ramblers for around eight years; initially after I retired I was with the East Surrey group and since moving to Devon four years ago, with the Tavistock Group.

I know a good number of the group; however as someone who mainly walks on a Wednesday I may not have 'crossed paths' with some of you.

At the AGM on 5th November a new Committee was elected, with a good number of new faces joining. However we must thank those Committee members who have stood down or retired from the Committee, some of whom have faithfully served for a number of years. We thank them for keeping the group running through some difficult times, including through the challenges of Covid and dealing with some recent changes to the walks planning arrangements.

The new Committee comprises:

- Chair - Paul Newdick
- Vice Chair – vacant
- Treasurer – Chris Bates
- Footpath officer – David Simkins
- Membership secretary – Helen Bone
- Minutes secretary – Jeanette Doherty
- Walks Programme Team – Janet Harvey, Jane Ingram, Helen Ford, Jan Draper
- Web Manager – Jan Draper
- Social, Training and Newsletter – Jane Brookes

As you will know the Committee are all volunteers and give their time and effort freely to make sure the group functions well. We appreciate that sometimes things are not quite as some members of the group would like and sometimes the Committee has to wrestle with systems or requirements introduced by Ramblers nationally. So please be patient with the Committee members who will do their best to make things work as well as possible.

As a Committee we are excited about some of the new projects, such as the proposed new Tavistock Ramblers website, which you can read about in the Walks Team news elsewhere in this newsletter. This will give some added functionality which we hope members will find helpful, for example being able to filter and search for walks.

Again, you can read about this in the Walks Team news, but we have already introduced a new one-page Risk Assessment form (agreed by Ramblers nationally) which we hope will be less daunting for Walks Leaders to use.

Going forward the Committee wants to ensure that we communicate with all the group members as effectively and as timely as possible, the new website will be an important feature of this.

Emails sent out via 'Mailchimp' will be the other main means of contact. Facebook will generally be used for reports of walks and events.

The new Committee also wants to build on the work of the previous Committee by 'bedding in' the Walks Manager system and they are willing to come alongside leaders to implement the system. The Committee is also very keen to ensure that we have a manageable and predictable programme of walks, even if we are unable, for the time being, to put on as many walks as previously.

Paul Newdick



New website of local walks

Over the past four years I have been putting onto the Tavistock Ramblers website a number of self guided walks for you all to use. Some I have taken off and replaced with new ones but now you can see them all on a new website that I have created called www.walkingwestdevon.co.uk. You will find about 40 walks on this site varying from 3 to 10 miles and covering an area from Plymstock to Okehampton and from Milton Abbot to Princetown.

If you haven't used the self guided walks before you need to know that these are Rambler walks. There are no maps to follow just photographs many with superimposed yellow arrows and a route description. This is because when you go out walking with the Ramblers you don't normally take a map to use; you rely on the leader to lead you around. You have to pretend your phone is the walk leader. Download the walk which is in pdf format to a folder on your phone and open it up when you get to the starting point. Then follow the instructions and the photographs. Nearly all walks are circular but there are a couple of linear walks using the bus which you will find on the page called BuStop Walks.

The website will be regularly updated with new walks especially in the Broadwoodwidge, Hatherleigh, Holsworthy triangle as there are none there at the moment. I shall also be putting on some very short walks ie less than 3 miles suitable for children (and grandparents) as well as routes suitable for wheelchair users.

Hope you like the site and you are welcome to leave comments on the blog page.

David Simkins
Footpath officer

Don't Lose Your Way

As a member of the Ramblers, and if you have been keeping up to date on the Ramblers website, you must have noticed the publicity surrounding the task to uncover thousands of miles of footpaths not currently identified as a right of way that kicked off about three years ago. The project was, and still is, called Don't Lose Your Way.

Three years ago the whole of England and Wales 96,000 miles of mapped land was examined in detail, primarily using the first OS maps, for possible rights of way not included on today's definitive map. They were called the lost paths. Amazingly, this research was completed in just six weeks with the help of over 3,000 members of the public, many of whom were members of the Ramblers.

Then, in the second phase of the project, with the paths having been identified another team of local Rambler members (3 of us) set about checking the results and prioritizing the lost paths which had been identified in our local area. We ended up with about 50 paths that we felt should be reopened with 15 being high priority. Three years ago we knew that to be in accordance with Countryside Act we had just five years to bring them back into use.

But then the Government threw us a lifeline and said they were considering abolishing this timescale. We waited and waited for

the announcement but when it came it was to announce that the date had been put back to 2031 and was not to be abolished.

Up at Walking HQ there is now a dedicated team of mostly volunteers who are poring over old maps, dog eared and yellowing documents, inland revenue tax maps, railway plans and parish records to make a case for each and every lost path and bring them back onto the definitive map.

This is going to take a very long time and quite likely will not be completed before 2031. But it may well be possible to save a great many of them if there was a bit more help. I have in my possession a book called Right of Way Restoring the Record by Sarah Bucks and Phil Wadey that is an incredibly detailed book and leads the volunteer through every step of rededicating a path.

It can be yours to borrow if you would like to have a go at researching just one of the 15 high priority paths in the Tavistock area.

You can sign up by contacting the Chairman of Tavistock Ramblers today.

David Simkins
Footpath officer

Walks Team News

We are delighted to give everyone an update on initial plans.

Walks frequency – we are all aware that we do not have enough Leaders at the moment so we think the best thing to aim for currently is a weekly walk schedule of a Wednesday and a weekend walk. Two walks per week. The Wednesday walk circa three hours and longer at the weekend as has been the general pattern of walk lengths in recent times.

Of course, ad hoc walks can always be added but as a general guide at the moment we are hoping to be able to offer two walks a week. Please keep an eye on the Ramblers web site or using the App on your mobile phone so that you can keep track of planned walks and book onto them.

New Tavistock Ramblers Web Site – Jan D has taken on this challenge and is currently dedicated to the development of this new web site, which will give all of us in the Tavistock group a much easier way to find out which walks are planned. The other huge benefit from this new site is that if you wish, you will be able to **print off** planned walks. We will of course keep you all updated!

Dartmoor Way Project - some of you will be aware that as part of this initiative Tavistock Ramblers need to carry out signage checks twice yearly for the Lydford to Tavistock and Princetown to Tavistock stretches. The next check is planned for Spring 2024 so if any one wishes to help with this please do contact us.

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 two Leader training/refresher sessions each year and some of our wonderful 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.

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

From the new walks team:

Janet Harvey, Jane Ingram and Helen Ford. The team will be assisted by **Jan Draper.**

Ramblers Chat

Chat with Membership Secretary - Helen Bone



Do you lead walks?

Yes – I did the training a few years ago and lead walks with Robert and now Pam joins us as well. We have just as much fun on the recces as the actual walks – planning the routes, distances and watering holes.

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

So far we have led coastal and inland walks but, after the training with Emma from Dartmoor Daughters, I feel more confident with my compass reading and may venture on to Dartmoor – watch this space! I love the walks leading out from the Whiteworks near Princetown into the remote valleys where you are a long way from civilisation and also the contrasting area on the other side of the moor around Manaton.

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

I have too many to pinpoint one – I often arrive home with memories of fantastic views, interesting conversations, fascinating geographical or historical features or even funny moments which make me laugh out loud.

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

A decent pair of walking shoes or boots is a must.

How long have you been a member of the Tavistock Ramblers?
About five years – although it seems longer.

What made you join?

A number of things really – retirement (early!), personal circumstances and a wish to spend more time walking and exploring the local area and Dartmoor.

When did you become the membership secretary?

I have literally just taken on the position at the recent AGM – so am a newbie! John Brewer has been very patient and thorough in his training – I didn't quite realise how much it involved!

How many members does Tavistock Ramblers currently have?

At the moment we have 184, three more joined over the past fortnight which is very heartening.

What is your view on the best way to recruit new members?

Word of mouth, maybe representatives from the group taking part in local events and possibly putting flyers in local shops or the library to invite people to join us for a couple of taster walks.

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

Take the plunge! Join a walk that you would look forward to and make contact with the leader if you are unsure about anything. It is often the small things that seem daunting like being in the right car park or that you will know someone. I actually missed the first walk I was booked in for as I went to the Long Stay car park in Pixon Lane. When I rang to ask where everyone was, they had already left! Fortunately, I plucked up courage and went on another walk a few weeks later from the right car park and never looked back.

Message from the Treasurer

Following a request at the AGM, the committee confirms that payments to the Tavistock Ramblers for social events and holidays should preferably be made by bank transfer to the Groups account. Instructions on references to use are provided on each event by the organiser. Where a member cannot use online banking then cash can be sent to the treasurer who will hold the cash and make a transfer on behalf of the member.

Clearly this is not ideal as the member must remain responsible until receiving an acknowledgement from the treasurer, so as the treasurer I will consider other processes in the future once I have explored the functionality of the groups bank account.

Chris Bates
Treasurer

A few months ago the names of the National Parks in Wales were changed in a fanfare of publicity. Now it is the turn of the English Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Henceforth they will be National Landscapes. So next time you are walking in the Tamar Valley, see if you can spot the difference!

Names You May Not Know

We have sometimes parked, but more often driven past, the small car park below Little Staple Tor, usually referred to as the Rees Jefferys car park. It has not yet been blocked off by the Dartmoor National Park and nor is there a parking meter. There is, however, a small memorial to William Rees Jefferys.



But who was he?

William Rees Jefferys, who died in 1954 at the age of 82, was a British cyclist and early campaigner for road improvements. He became a key figure in the early 20th-century development of the UK highway system. As honorary secretary and later chairman of the Roads Improvement Association and the first secretary of the Road Board (which in 1919 became part of the Ministry of Transport), he was an early advocate of a ring road around London, and helped instigate the British road numbering system. Another idea of his was "special roads restricted to motor traffic alone with no stopping permitted and no pipes or cables laid beneath them". (We call them motorways today).

In 1937 Jefferys was described by former UK Prime Minister David Lloyd George as "the greatest authority on roads in the United Kingdom and one of the greatest in the whole world."

When Chancellor of the Exchequer Winston Churchill told Parliament that English roads were the best in the world Jefferys said Churchill was spouting "political dope": English roads were narrow, ill-designed and abounding with hidden corners and blind turns and were the most congested and overcrowded in the world. He said £100 million should be immediately spent on building new roads.

In 1929 a total of 6,016 people were killed on UK roads. It is a testament to his influence and foresight that despite the massive

increase in vehicular traffic since then, the number killed in 2022 was 1,695. Jefferys and the RIA continued to campaign for "new roads, safe roads, beautiful roads", inspiring the 1928 establishment of the Roads Beautifying Association (RBA), a group of horticultural experts who would provide free advice to councils on the planting alongside trunk roads, by-passes and road-widening schemes.

In 1923, the first year miles driven was estimated and exactly 100 years ago, the motor-vehicle death rate was 18.65 deaths for every 100 million miles driven. Since 1923, the mileage death rate has decreased 92% and now stands at 1.50 deaths per 100 million miles driven.

A charity that he founded in 1950, the **Rees Jefferys Road Fund**, continues to support UK transport-related projects.

Bringing the story up to date, the Rees Jefferys Road Fund recently launched a £150,000 'future roads' competition to mark the anniversary of Jefferys's birth. Trustees asked entrants to consider their vision of how roads (motorways, highways, streets and footways) could best work for everybody for the next 50 years. Two winners of the competition were announced; the Eloy connected vehicle platform and Reed Mobility's automated vehicle system each won £75,000 to support delivery of their ideas.

Question:

(a very small prize for the answer!).

Where else, less than 10 miles from Tavistock town centre, will you find another Rees Jefferys memorial?

Long John

More Autumn Colours



Photo by Long John