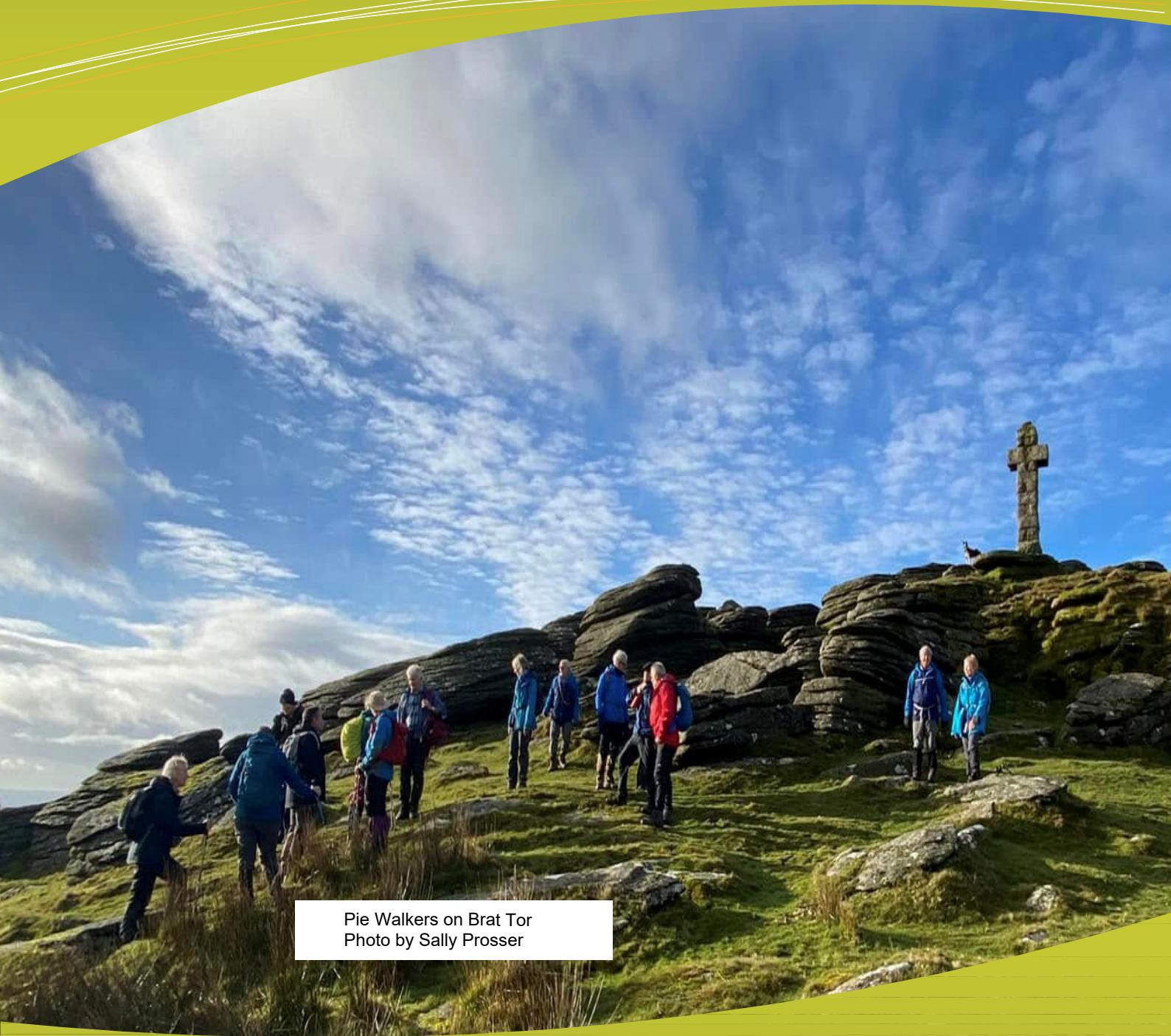




Newsletter

No 32

Winter 2024/2025



Pie Walkers on Brat Tor
Photo by Sally Prosser

www.tavistockramblers.org.uk

Ramblings from the Chair

It was great to see many of you at the AGM in November. The bright sunny day began with a lovely 5 mile walk from Whitchurch to Pew Tor led by David Simkins. After the walk we enjoyed a bring and share lunch together at the village hall in Whitchurch.

The AGM considered the various reports from the Committee and the election of Officers for the next year.

As most of the Committee were willing to stand again for election there was only one change following Janet Harvey's need to stand down from the Walks Programme Team. Jenny Haig was elected to replace Janet on the team

The current Committee is as follows:

- Chair – Paul Newdick
- Treasurer – Chris Bates
- Footpath Officer – David Simkins
- Membership Secretary – Helen Bone
- Minutes Secretary – Jeanette Doherty
- Web Manager – Jan Draper
- Social, Training and Newsletter – Jane Brookes
- Walks Programme Team – Jane Ingram, Helen Ford, Jan Draper, Jenny Haig



Peter Wright was appointed as the Independent Examiner for the accounts.

After the AGM business we had an interesting illustrated talk from Ian Gasper about his trip to Japan which was enjoyed by all.

Now very much part of the Tavistock Ramblers calendar, 55 people enjoyed the 'Christmas Pie walks', that were held on a Wednesday and a Saturday just before Christmas, after a choice of short or long walks a Christmas meal was enjoyed at the Fox and Hounds at Lydford. Our thanks are due to Paul and Judy Brookes assisted by Jane Ingram in organising these events for us.

A training day was organised in November, this was run jointly with Plymouth Ramblers at Clearbrook Village Hall. It was good to share with the Plymouth group in making the day a success. As most of you will know our Walk Leaders are required to have training before leading a walk. It is not onerous and we would encourage anyone who is interested in becoming a leader to get in touch with us. We hope to run a similar event in the future.

The success of the group does not depend on the Committee but primarily on the walk leaders.

However, as I said at the AGM, between January 2023 and October 2024 we put on 95 walks, but of these 44 were led by the same 4 leaders. So if the group is going to continue to be able to put on a regular programme of walks, we would love to see some more people leading, it does not need to be weekly or monthly, even an occasional walk would be a welcome addition to our programme.

Please give it some serious thought!

Paul Newdick

Chair



Walks Team News

Training Day for New Walk Leaders

This took place at Clearbrook Village Hall in November and was run jointly with Plymouth Ramblers. Twenty people did the training, including eight from Tavistock. It was our first go at this and we'd like to thank participants for being positive and engaged as it really helped.

Doing the day jointly with Plymouth worked well and enabled us to share costs as well as experience. It was interesting that some of their experienced walk leaders of many years chose to do the training too. We plan to run another training day later this year, so keep an eye out for that.

We'll now get together with Tavistock participants to help with next steps. Not everyone will feel able to launch themselves into leading straight away, but there are already a couple of people from the training day who have put on walks in the next month or so. Please do give them your support.

We intend to run a navigation and walk planning day quite soon.

In Case of Emergency

A topic that features in the Ramblers training is walk leaders inviting any walkers with health conditions to speak to the leader separately if they feel it appropriate. Interestingly on the training day, a couple of people with medical backgrounds mentioned health conditions that it might be useful for a walk leader to know about. Things like diabetes or bee sting allergy and where to find the walker's epi-pen for instance. Don't be surprised if some leaders now mention this at the start of a walk.

If there is an emergency, ICE cards are the easiest way for a walk leader to find out about any health issues and who to contact. We have some new ICE cards and we'll try to make sure that all walk leaders have some to hand out to new walkers. If you don't have one, either ask the walk leader on your next walk or get in touch with the Walks Team.

There's a useful Ramblers leaflet called Information for Walkers. We'd encourage everyone, but especially new members, to read it as it contains information about what to consider before coming on a walk. It can be found on our website which is www.tavistockramblers.org.uk If the link doesn't work, go to our Home page and you will find the leaflet above the list of walks on the left.

Car sharing - Pixon Lane

The Information for Walkers document refers to letting the walk leader know if you can offer or need a lift to a walk. Longstanding members will recall that pre-pandemic we had an informal but well-used system of people meeting at Pixon Lane in Tavistock to car share, especially at weekends. This still happens sometimes but is less common than it used to be.

Several of our walk leaders don't live in Tavistock but that shouldn't stop others meeting there. Maybe this is something we should be encouraging more often, especially for walks that are further away?

Any thoughts welcome.

Walks Team

We have been lucky to welcome Jenny Haig to the Walks Team. Jenny has been doing a sterling job of putting walks onto the programme in recent months and many of you will have met her. So the Walks Team now consists of Jan Draper, Helen Ford, Jenny Haig and Jane Ingram. Feedback, queries or requests for help are welcome and you can get in touch with us at

walksteam@tavistockramblers.org

Did You Know?

You may not realise that if you go on a Ramble Worldwide (previously known as Ramblers Worldwide Holidays) holiday our group will be allocated a small sum of money because you are a member. To make this happen, you tick the walking partnerships box when booking or ring up Ramble Worldwide to let them know you are a member of Tavistock Ramblers. This can be put towards things like social activities or training.



A little bit of snow makes all the difference.

No prizes for guessing where John Noblet took this photo a couple of weeks ago

Is that a bull on the other side of the field?

This is exactly the situation we found ourselves when walking around Brentor last December. We tried to find an alternative route to the road but to no avail. It was up to me to go and speak nicely to the bull and ask him to move away from the field exit gate. He objected at first but then relented and walked away.

Was this a wise thing to do? Well probably not, but there wasn't really an alternative. Fortunately, being brought up in the country I am not bad at recognising cattle breeds which, when walking through cattle infested fields, is an advantage.

What's that got to do with chatting up a bull? Well it's an offence for the owner of a field crossed by a right of way to allow a bull to be at large in the field except when it's a non dairy breed. Now I was pretty sure, viewed from about 200m away, that this was a Charolais or possibly a Simmental, both of which are non dairy breeds.

However, the farmer was still committing an offence because although it was a non dairy breed it was not at large with cows or heifers. He was all by himself. For a bull to be in a field crossed by a public right of way then he must be accompanied by cows or heifers. Bulls do tend to be a bit hen pecked and will follow their hareem rather than stand and watch them walk away and then come after you. The only exception to this rule is that if it is a dairy breed the bull must be less than 10 months old. One must assume the farmer is aware of the animal's age for I have no idea what to look for.

The rules regarding bulls can be found in the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 S 59, but also the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974. Now I reported the presence of the bull to the DCC local footpath warden but I could have gone to the police or even the local Health and Safety Executive office. The HSE recommend that notices are prominently displayed advising walkers of the presence of a bull in the field they are about to cross. They also recommend

that these notices are removed when the bull has been taken away but that doesn't happen very often. I have come across plenty of ancient "Beware of the Bull" signs but even these are not recommended for to say "Beware" indicates a danger and it is an offence to allow dangerous animals in fields where this is public access.

David Simkins
Footpath Officer



A Belted Galloway. Non dairy breed standing on the West Devon Way

Christmas Pie Walks

Our Christmas Pie Walks were held on Wednesday December 11th and Saturday December 14th welcoming a total of 55 walkers. 24 met up outside the Fox and Hounds near Lydford on the Wednesday when Paul and Judy took the gang for a spirited walk up and around Arms Tor, across to Brat Tor and back down to cross the river by the bridge, the river being a bit too feisty for wading at the ford. Several left after the walk, so 16 sat down to enjoy their pies at the Fox.

On the Saturday, 31 met up in the car park and the group split almost 50/50 with Paul taking the long walk straight up Brat Tor then across to Great Links where we enjoyed good weather and a coffee stop. It was then down towards Arms Tor before crossing at the ford then back to the Fox and Hounds. The short walk was led by Jane for a walk along the old peat track to Great Nodden then down across Southerly Down to come back via the Granite Way. A few left and a few joined for lunch with 28 pies being devoured with favourable comments made for the both the food and service.



For those who like their facts, the turkey and cranberry pies were the most popular with 16, then steak pie at 14, fish pie at 8 and hominy pie at 6. Chips were by far the most dominant accompaniment.

The debate continues about what is a true pie of course; top, bottom and sides covered in pastry rather than just a lid on the top? The latter prevails at the Fox but bear in mind that with this version, you get more filling than pastry!! Some great walks, great food and great company especially to wish everyone festive cheer at the time.

I am pleased to announce that a Pudding Walk has been arranged for Saturday March 8th and a Bacon Butty walk for Saturday April 26th. These have proved to be very popular. Further details will be sent out nearer the time.

Paul Brookes

Beating the Bounds

The village of Horrabridge became a parish in its own right in 1950. The name Horrabridge is supposedly derived from an ancient word meaning boundary bridge. It is at the bridge that the parishes of Sampford Spinney, Whitchurch and Buckland Monachorum came together; the river Walkham being part of the boundaries. Walkhampton parish almost touched this point but a short distance up stream.



The boundaries of parishes were and still are defined by rivers, streams, field hedges and often by rocks with the initials of the respective parishes chiselled on to the relevant side.

Examples of this can easily be seen in and around the Pew Tor area with the letters 'W' for Whitchurch and 'SS' for Sampford Spinney. The OS maps show the parish boundaries by a series of dotted lines interspaced with 'BS'.

Beating of these bounds or perambulating them is an ancient custom still carried out in many parts of the country today, including here.

Traditionally it took place on a Rogation day, the Sunday which is the fifth after Easter. The word rogation derives from the Latin verb *rogare* – to ask. It is where God's blessing is sought for good tidings and crops for the relevant parish also it is to ascertain that no encroachment had taken place by an adjacent parish. Matters such as liability to contribute to church repairs and the right to be buried in the churchyard might also be ascertained.

The actual beating bit, often initiated with prayers with a priest, usually takes place by a group of parishioners perambulating the boundary. With maps in former times being scarce, the limits of each parish needed be handed on in practical terms, usually to young boys who would bear witness to them the longest. They were often whipped or bumped on a boundary stone so that the memory would be firmly and lastingly impressed on them. The other and more later practice was to beat the boundary stones themselves with birch or willow twigs, the object of this today is to

avoid child abuse claims, formerly though it was to drive evil spirits out and away from of the parish. Anecdotally, friction occurred, even violence, if two adjacent parishes arrived at the same boundary marker at the same time, each attempting to drive these evil spirits into each other's parish.

Modern mapping systems and surveying such as the Ordnance Survey, have made the ceremony largely obsolete for practical purposes; it continues having a social and ceremonial function, and where bumping and whipping does take place it does so symbolically, with proper supervision.

On a personal level, parish boundaries frequently run over private land, land where one would not necessarily have any right of way. Land owners, though not obliged to, do not always object to such a group crossing their land for this purpose only. It is then a good chance to go to places one would not normally have access to.

The other reason, of course is that there is often some convivial celebration afterwards.

So it was that a large group of wellington-booted parishioners set off from the centre of the village in 1950 to beat the newly established bounds, preceded by the obligatory and ceremonial bumping of a local boy (he had been born in the village and is still around) by members of the newly formed parish council including Mr Patrick Coleman, headmaster of the village school and the Rev. John Davis. The other two were local builders.

I am in that group but obscured behind one of the bumpers. It was considered, at nine miles, to be too far for a six year old.

The bounds were again beaten infrequently, the most recent one, I was this time permitted, as a seventy one year old. I have taken part in a number of beating of the bounds of adjacent parishes subsequently. It makes an interesting day out, gives you chance to go to places otherwise denied and there are usually refreshments afterwards.

Graham Clarke

Did you hear?

Thousands of miles of footpaths that faced being lost forever could now be saved after the government committed on Boxing Day to lift a deadline for all rights of ways in England to be mapped.

People had been given until 2031 to have all historic but unrecorded public paths and bridleways added to the nation's official "definitive map".

The government said scrapping the cut-off date would give councils time to assess whether paths met the requirements. Ramblers has welcomed the announcement.

Legislation requiring local authorities to create a "definitive map" showing public rights of way in their area was passed in 1949. There are estimated to be more than 40,000 miles of rights of way in England which are not officially recorded.

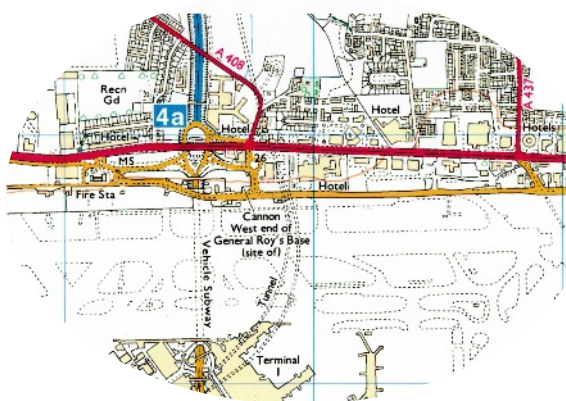


The ceremonial bumping of a local boy at the start of bounds beating.

Names You May Not Know

Most Tavistock Ramblers have probably flown from Heathrow airport at some time. Many will possibly have stayed in one of the hotels on the A4 Bath Road and used the Hoppa to get to the terminal. Others may have used one of the car parks on the Northern Perimeter Road and used the shuttle bus.

But how many have noticed a small plot of land sandwiched between these two busy roads almost directly behind the Three Magpies? There is an upturned cannon and a small memorial plaque and marked on OS maps as "West end of General Roy's base". I would hazard a guess that the answer is "very few" despite the fact that it must be no exaggeration to say that millions pass this spot every year. You can even see it when taking off or landing on the northern runway.



So who was General Roy and why does he deserve a mention on current OS maps?

Put simply, he is considered to be "the father of Ordnance Survey" and it is no surprise that he was a military man.

The origins of today's Ordnance Survey can be traced to the Jacobite Rebellion of 1745. This uprising highlighted the fact that movement of government troops in Scotland north of Edinburgh was hampered by lack of roads and of accurate maps. To remedy this, the building of a network of military roads was commenced by General Wade, as anybody who has walked the West Highland Way will know. But this was, of course, also hindered by the lack of maps.

To address the problem, King George II commissioned a military survey of the Highlands and this fell to a Scotsman, Lt Col David Watson. He knew of William Roy who, having been born in Lanarkshire in 1726, was training as a surveyor in Edinburgh and already had a reputation for his cartographic skills. Watson engaged him as his "assistant" (although at that time Roy was a civilian). It is a very long and convoluted story, although worth a read if you are interested, but what is now known as "Roy's Map of Scotland" (not Watson's) was completed in 1750.

Another military scuffle, this time with the French, interrupted proceedings but fast forward a few years and Roy, by which time had been commissioned into the army, was appointed to carry out a 'geodetic survey' on behalf of King George III and The Royal Society, and under the authority of the Master General of the Board of Ordnance.

His task was to connect the Royal Observatories of Greenwich and Paris, to solve a dispute over their relative positions. To do this he needed a more sophisticated theodolite (a precision instrument for

measuring angles horizontally and vertically) than had previously existed and a baseline from which to start.

During the summer of 1784, Roy established his baseline on the flattest suitable ground near to London. This was Hounslow Heath (the heath from which Heathrow gets its name). He measured the baseline between Hampton Poor House and King's Arbour, at a distance of just over 5 miles.



It was a laborious task. The first measurement was reached using wooden rods, each 20 ft in length. However, measurements could differ depending on whether the rods were wet or dry. The rods were replaced by one-inch-thick glass tubes of the same length. They were supported on trestles, then the ends were aligned to an accuracy of a thousandth part of an inch. The first rod was then carried to the end of the third, an operation which had to be repeated more than 1,000 times. Perhaps taking lessons from this, after 1791 baselines were measured instead with steel chains, each 100 ft long.

By 1789 Roy had completed all the triangulation work between the base and the Kentish coast, making use of a theodolite specially crafted by the instrument maker Jesse Ramsden.

The first public survey of Britain was set up by the Board of Ordnance in 1791, the year after Roy's death. Using Roy's fieldwork in southern England as its foundation, the Board produced its first map – of Kent – in 1801.



The Ordnance Survey, or OS for short, continues to flourish to this day in the digital age.

John Noblet