



Newsletter Summer 2025



Spring has been wall to wall blue sky and what a display of hawthorn blossom.

Ramblings from the Chair

Paul Newdick



Long range weather forecast for June and July gives a high of 26° and just 5 days of rain.

Can they reliably predict that far ahead? Well lets hope so.

I hope that many of you have been able to get out recently and enjoy walking in the beautiful spring weather. It certainly has been glorious, but spare a thought for the farmers who are desperate for some rain.

Ramblers is an organisation that is run by volunteers, whilst there is a paid staff at Head Office providing some key services, the work at local level is entirely led by volunteers who give their time and effort freely to make sure the group functions well.

You may wonder what the Tavistock Ramblers Committee does (or perhaps you don't!) There are certain 'legal' matters we have to carry out, such as organising the AGM and ensuring the finances are in order. We also consider reports from the Footpath Officer and support him in the representations he makes, for example when commenting on proposed footpath diversions.

The Committee also looks at what social events we could organise or how we can support others who plan these. Training walk leaders is vitally important and the Committee are keen to ensure that this is accessible to those wishing to lead. So organising training events, sometimes with other local groups is an important part of our work.

Within the Committee we have a walks team who work to ensure there is a full programme of walks and that these are available on the web site. Currently we are working on a programme that normally has one Wednesday walk and one weekend walk. At our recent committee meeting we discussed whether we could manage two walks at the weekend, but the reality is, without more walk leaders this is difficult.

However the key to the success of our walks programme are the walk leaders, without them we could not operate. Leading a walk includes planning and carrying out a recce to make sure it is walkable and safe. So leaders do not just turn up on the day and strike out, it is all planned beforehand.

It has been good to see some new walk leaders getting involved and putting on walks. Also it has been great to see some of our experienced leaders leading again. So from the Committee and the Members we thank all our leaders for being willing to lead.

As I chat to other walkers, there does seem to be a little confusion about our policy regarding dogs on our walks. We do have guidance on this and I have included this information in another article in this newsletter.

The Committee are continuing to think about how we might celebrate our 50th anniversary, in 2026.

Up the Plym from Sea to Source. David Simkins Footpath Officer

A couple of months ago we were asked along with other regions to suggest possible rivers where new access could be created along its banks. Well we already have a walkable river, the Plym, which has within 500m along all of the whole 16 mile length, footpaths, trails, minor roads and open moorland to traverse from sea to source.

Here is how you do it. If you want to leave cars at either end of a section there is parking at Laira Bridge, Marsh Mills, Plymbridge, Bickleigh Bridge, Shaugh Bridge, Cadover Bridge, and with a bit more of a walk at the Scout Hut near Ditworthy Warren farm house. Right off we go.....



1. Starting at Laira bridge walk up the West Devon Way which is a wide footpath all the way to the National Trust Saltram Estate which you don't share with bikes as they have their own track. When you reach the NT estate use the path that is closest to the river. 2. You will eventually go under the Marsh Mills Flyover. Here follow the signs to the City Centre by keeping the river on your left. 3. When you reach Plymouth Road leading into Plympton turn left cross over the river then go across the road at the traffic lights and walk down Longbridge road. When the road bends left go straight ahead over a wooden bridge and

now with the Plym on your right follow it as close as you can for about a mile, going behind the caravan park passing a playing field and walking through a wood. 4. When you reach a pedestrian only bridge cross over into a field. With the Plym on your left walk straight ahead until you reach Plym Bridge. You have now walked just over 3.5 miles.

5. Leaving the field turn right go under the railway bridge and take the ramp up to reach the shared cycle track. With the Plym initially on your left walk along the West Devon Way/Route 27 shared track. Immediately the other side of the second viaduct fork left off the track up a short steep slope and then keeping left get down the hill to walk under the viaduct. Then with the Plym on your right walk to Bickleigh Bridge which is 3 miles away. (The last bit is quite steep)

8. When you reach the road at Bickleigh Bridge turn right and walk down the hill. Take the first left turn and after about a quarter of a mile turn right to go down a footpath. Go over the river Plym on a footbridge and keep going past the pheasant enclosure up through the wood and turn left when you reach a road. 9. walk along the road for just over a mile keeping left at all junctions until you reach Shaugh Bridge. You have just walked another 2 miles.

10. From Shaugh Bridge walk up the long flight of steps from the car park along the edge of the wood and then up the pipe track signposted to Cadover Bridge which is 1.75 miles away. From Cadover its another 2.5miles to Ditworthy Warren Farmhouse (3.5 to the Scout Hut car park) and 5.5 miles to Plym Head.

11. Go over Cadover bridge. On the other side take the track on your right. This next section is walkable but in places it is quite soggy and impossible when the river level is very high. You will quickly encounter a minor lake but you can easily get around it and back on the track that passes next to a barn. After half a mile further on climb over a metal gate and here it gets quite wet in places but I managed it ok, and very soon you are walking on a bank well above river level.

12. Go past pillow mounds and through prehistoric settlements passing near Meavy Pool soon reaching Ditsworthy Warren Farmhouse. You can easily pass the farm house at river level, otherwise stick to the main track which is a bit further way from the river. 13. With the river on your

right walk along the wide track over a few streams and passing stone rows and menhirs walk on up to the top of Hart Tor as it really isn't very easy to go through Evil Combe. From Hart Tor keep going to reach the Eylesbarrow track. 14. Turn right walk down to Plym Ford then with the river on your left go and find Plym Head which when you get there you will discover is a small muddy pond with the whitened bones of a cow in it.



Devon Area Members Day 2025.

Saturday, 20 September 2025 – 10.00am – starting from The London Inn, Okehampton.

After our successful first Devon Area Members Day, wonderfully hosted by the North Devon Group, based on the 'Rest and be Thankful' pub, at Wheddon Cross, we have decided to organise another event for members to meet each other and join three walks. The Exeter & District Group have kindly offered to host the event this year.

They have chosen Okehampton as it does have public transport connections, rail links from Exeter and bus services from several places. (118 from Tavistock)

Parking is in local car parks which are pay and display, there is nearby on street parking which will require a short walk.

The London Inn has offered us an upstairs room, where we may leave stuff during the day whilst walking. There is no charge for the hire of the room, but they expect us to order food and drink from the bar. The pub is a genuine local with a community focus and it would be good to support it. There will be free tea and coffee available from a machine at the entrance.

There will be **three walks** offered by the Exeter & District Group.

1 A long and moderate **10/11-mile** walk.

2 A medium walk which will be around **7/8** miles

3 And a shorter walk, which will incorporate some of Okehampton's local history which will be **5** miles.

All the walks will leave at **10.30am**, further details will be confirmed in June.

There will also be a **Photographic Competition** which will be judged independently, for which there will be a **£25.00** prize.

The theme for this year's competition is **'What makes Devon a special place to walk'**.

Photos to be taken between 1 September 2024 and 1 September 2025, maximum of three entries per person. The result will be announced at 10.15am before the walks start.

Entries to John.owl@btopenworld.com

John Howell

Devon Area, Chairman.



Last years winners



Walking with Dogs

The walk Leader has a Duty of Care to the people attending the walk. The Leader's decision is final, if he/she considers that the walk is not suitable for dogs OR the dog is to be kept on a lead.

The dog must not be allowed to run up and down the line of walkers. This can be very disconcerting, especially when the group is on a narrow path and/or the going is muddy.

The dog is ALWAYS kept on a short lead when approaching and in the presence of livestock (unless a farm animal chases you, when it is safer to let your dog off the lead).

The Countryside Code states:

"On Open Access land and at the coast, you must put your dog on a lead around livestock. Between 1st March and 31st July, you must have your dog on a lead on Open Access land, even if there is no livestock on the land. These are legal requirements

on a Tavistock Ramblers Walk

The dog is ALWAYS kept on a short lead when in the vicinity of road traffic. The dog is ALWAYS kept on a short lead at coffee and lunch stops. During the ground nesting season (1st March to 31st July) dogs should not be allowed to run free on open moorland as this may disturb birds' nests/eggs and the young will soon die without protection from their parents.

Walks Team News

New walk leaders



Some of you will already have enjoyed walks put on by some of our new walk leaders. They are a very welcome addition to our group of leaders and over the summer, we anticipate you will see more new leaders.



Evening walks

Tavistock Ramblers has traditionally run some evening walks during the summer, which generally take place on Thursdays starting at 7pm. They are shorter walks so that we finish before dark and with time for refreshment at a nearby pub. Last year, there were fewer evening walks and most were put on by the same person. We hope to do better this year and are encouraging walk leaders to put on some evening walks. Keep an eye out for them.

Training offered by Devon Air Ambulance



We understand that Devon Air Ambulance is offering to provide some first aid training to local groups, including local walking groups. We're not sure exactly what might be on offer, but are looking into this and will circulate information once we know more.

Dartmoor Search and Rescue Team Tavistock - 11 Tors Challenge



We hope to put together a Tavistock Ramblers team to take part in this annual challenge to raise funds for Dartmoor Search and Rescue Team. It's usually an 11 mile walk encompassing 11 tors. We'll share more information once we have it.

This year's fundraiser takes place on 13 September, which is the same day as the **Archangel's Way celebration walk**. We'll be working together to try to offer something for everyone on the two walks, maybe along the lines of shorter countryside walk versus longer moorland walk. This is a work in progress but we hope that between the two walks we will entice many of you out that day!

Ramblers App



We recently emailed members with feedback from the Ramblers helpdesk following reports from people experiencing problems. If you missed the email, the helpdesk explained that they are aware of problems with the app and that it would be some time before they are resolved.

If you are experiencing problems with the app, it might be worth checking that you are using the up to date version of the app as well as the up to date operating system on your phone.

If you still have problems, the helpdesk recommends using the Ramblers website as an alternative. For our own group's walks, our own website is a quick and simple alternative to the app and can be found at:

tavistockramblers.org.uk

Lifting the Iron Curtain (slightly)

A story by Graham Clarke one of our longest standing members

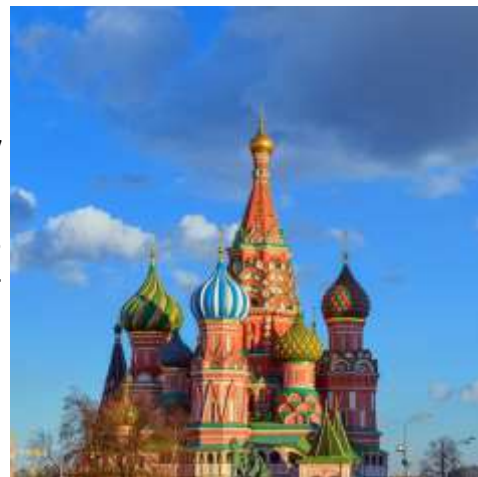
This narrative is part of an account of a trip I made, aged twenty two, in 1966.

Bear that in mind in the context with what I am about to relate. Already twelve of us had travelled across Europe in a Comer mini-bus. We lifted the iron curtain slightly a number of times, to gain access to and from East Germany, east and west of Berlin and across Poland.

It can be imagined that there had been a number of adventures and much to recount on the journey so far. To include that would lengthen this article.

We begin this section of our account at the town of Terespol in eastern Poland from which we entered a barbed wired compound which was the border check point between Poland and Belarus. Eventually we were 'processed': passports and visas were checked, rechecked, phone calls made then we had to declare what we were bringing into the country including money which we were obliged to declare and change into roubles. Next what foodstuffs we had with us; fruit in particular was banned and rather than hand it over we consumed there and then. Passing through another security gate, papers scrutinized again, the gate was opened and our party, some with cherry juice stained faces, entered Russia. (Belarus to be exact)

Negotiating the town of Brest we set off along a forested, ram-rod straight road heading for the city of Minsk. I think we did some sort of guided tour of the city where we were fed the official party line of 'Monuments to the heroes of the glorious revolution, blah, blah, blah.' The following day the city of Smolensk was our objective achieved along a highway densely forested or cropped in all directions. Smolensk had taken a particular battering in the war which, we had explained, caused the absence of



men of a certain age. The thing I remember most was a market where there was little produce, some shabby well-worn second hand clothes, and from what I remember of the people there that was where they acquired their wardrobe, also we visited an internally ornately decorated orthodox cathedral in complete contrast to the drabness of the city.

Now that we were in sight of our objective city Moscow [Москва]. It is time to pause to explain how I came to be travelling with eleven others in a cramped mini-bus along hot and dusty roads to where, when I announced where I was going, the reaction was typically, "Aren't you afraid of being arrested? ." An ad in a Sunday paper offered 'Mini-bus to Moscow, three weeks, forty five quid' "Wow thought I that's for me" I signed up, got a passport, visa, got excited and twelve of us, mostly similar age set off to where I just paused.

Most of the way along we had camped: good clean sites where we were 'welcomed' not from a sense of genuine hospitality but from what could be found out. Particularly in the Moscow camping site where there was a communal area; everyone talking and 'friends' mingled amongst us listening for any information. One couple, sensing this, broke into a broad Geordie accent, difficult enough for native English speakers let alone those of non-English origins.

The following day we made our way to the city – Red Square [Красная площадь] dominated by that symbol of Russia St Basil's Cathedral, flanked on one side by the GUM [ГУМ] state department store and Lenin's mausoleum on the other. Part of the deal for staying in the Moscow camp-site was that we were to have a formal guided tour of the city. Accordingly Lena joined us. I remember her name as I remember her being a tall, drab, thick spectacled, lank haired specimen of Russian womanhood. Totally devoid of warmth or humour in her ideological towing the party-line spiel. "On the right we have the monument to the heroes of the glorious revolution, on the left we have the university blah, blah, blah"

She urged us to take bits of socialist art: **Aren't you afraid of being arrested?** photos of these characterless, groups of figures thrusting

skywards, tools of revolution in each hand etc etc. We had film cameras then, mine took eight shots to a reel, we held up our cameras and went through the motion of pressing the shutter with out actually doing so. When, weeks later we arrived back home I was showing my travelling companion around where I lived, I parodied Lena: "On ze left vee hav zee puplic lavatories und on zee right vee haf zee dustbins" Along the side of Red Square is Lenin's Mausoleum. The queue to file through stretched right around Red Square and right around an adjacent and bigger one. We did not fancy queuing for hours and hours. Some official sensing, this muscled a space for us near the front of the queue and muscled us into the space. Reverentially we filed past this waxen, spot-lighted figure of Vladimir Illyich, who was in a glass case. Stalin, who had been his mausoleum-mate, having been disgraced, had been removed and interred behind the main tomb.

We did the main sights of the city: Tchaikovsky's house, the Kremlin and the Great Bell of Moscow, the world's largest except that when it was cooling from being cast water was thrown on it and a large chunk cracked and broke away. A visit to the GUM state department store [Верхние торговые ряды] was next in the hope that I could get something to take back home. The grand and palatial exterior of the store belied its interior where there seemed to be very little. I ended up with a necklace for my sister and a fur hat for me.

I am going to pause to look at how, at that time, money worked. Back to Warsaw, individuals would sidle up to you, "Psst wanna change money" These touts were offering three times the official exchange rate for what ever western currency you had. The Polish Zloty and the Russian Rouble were at the time 'sort currencies'; they were not exchangeable for western 'hard currencies' Sterling, Dollars, Marks, Francs, etc. which would be needed for travel, if you could get permission anyway. Special 'hard currency' shops had been set up where better quality things could be bought using only Pounds, Dollars etc. Stuff for the home market was often poorer quality, often unavailable. Probably not fully realising that these black market dealings were illegal, we did take advantage of them, and ended up with loads of cash, problem being what to spend it on; you could not re-convert it when you left the country as

you had to have receipts to show you had changed it legally. We did a trip to the Ballet, and trip to a good restaurant. A very plush and ornately appointed interior; we were the only diners. Eventually a woman with a 'Yeah waddya want?' attitude made an appearance. We made our choice, she slouched off to return about three quarters of an hour later with the response that we had become used to "У меня нет никаких" "Haven't got any" : "Что у тебя есть" - "What have you got?" ; returning after another three quarters of an hour, pointing to the few things on this vast menu that were available. Yet another forty five minutes later what ever we had ordered arrived and with the time delay we could hardly remember what nor care.

The opportunity arose of going to Leningrad (as it was known then) by overnight sleeper train. This some of us did. Each carriage was a self contained unit which sported a gleaming polished samovar, together with an attendant who once she ascertained our nationality discreetly deposited a cache of propagandist literature and pamphlets in our language: stuff printed very coarse paper: it went on and on extolling the virtues of socialism. Did anyone ever actually read this? A page was enough for me. Early in the morning saw our arrival at Leningrad station and it was decided that we would visit the Hermitage museum. It houses some three million items from all over, in 365 halls, involving 24 km. It had been estimated that to 'do' it all would take 11 years – we had a morning.

I mentioned earlier that hard currency was much valued and sought. On my way along the street I was aware of some one tugging at my jumper "Сколько за это"- how much for this? Similarly pointing to my Levi jeans. Such things and particularly Marks and Spencer St Michael clothing was unobtainable there and highly prized and sought, even a status symbol. I could have named my price, even for my vest and pants – gone back starkers!. I went through this performance again with another young chap, repeating that I needed my jumper, jeans and what ever else I was wearing, when this individual spotted a press top Biro that I had in a pocket. These were also highly prized and a status symbol. It was a Christ- mas freebie I think from our local pub and partly empty. I could have named my price, even for my vest and pants "Just have it" I said "Compliments of the Queen" and I put it in his top pocket. He was delighted and lead me to a cafe where he introduced me to his friends, (I think being an English 'friend' was in itself self a status symbol for him), then he placed a steaming plate of borscht before me. That solved the problem of what and where to eat that day.

A return and meet up with the others boarding the Moscow bound train, with the same ritual as our outward journey and we arrived back bleary-eyed in Moscow.

Following a bit more touring around the city it was time to start our return journey across Belarus, and Poland; much the way we had come.

It was during this not very interesting return journey to the frontier that we reflected on our impressions and experiences of Russia, Moscow in particular: No market economy existed; service in what retail outlets there existed was virtually absent. A grunt or scowl, when anyone turned up, substituted for "what can I get you?" "how can I help?" There was no sales initiative and having asked for something someone would return, eventually with the phrase we had become used to hearing, a curt "У меня его нет" - ain't got none. A request for information, directions most times would be met with an indifferent shrug, "не знаю" - dunno. We had very little interaction with the local population apart from Lena who trotted out rehearsed official party dogma and the young person in Leningrad who was more interested in my clothes than me. The feeling was that we were viewed with some

suspicion and it was not done to be seen interacting with foreigners.

At the time I sported a beard which was uncommon. Returning to the mini-bus after some stop, often the word 'борода'- beard, would have been scrawled in the dust of the vehicle. - I must have made some impression. I had acquired a working knowledge of the language particularly the Cyrillic alphabet which enabled me to read. It is not as formidable as it looks as it is largely phonetic – one of the more useful reforms of the revolution.

As we crossed the border back into Poland; a much more relaxed and friendly country. I mused that, given the seeming indifference and apathy of the people; the lack of drive, speed, efficiency and organization, we had little to fear from the 'Ivan and the Russian Bear' Further motoring across Poland, East and West Germany, France not without incident. We arrived back in London.

Me, and my fellow travellers - different people.

Большое спасибо

Graham Clarke - Грэм Кларк

