



SOMERSET RAMBLER



WESSEX WANDERER – PUBLIC WALKS FROM STATIONS ON THE HEART OF WESSEX (BRISTOL – WEYMOUTH) RAILWAY LINE



The summer programme of walks linked to this line has been produced by the Heart of Wessex Community Rail Partnership for many years, with Ramblers' Association members supplying the leaders.

The walks have been particularly popular with South Somerset and Mendip Groups due to the railway line serving these areas.

Bristol Temple
Meads
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Keynsham
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Oldfield Park
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Bath Spa
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Freshford
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Avoncliff
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Bradford-on-
Avon
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Trowbridge
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Westbury
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Frome
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Bruton
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Castle Cary
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Yeovil Pen Mill
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Chetnole
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Maiden
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Newton
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Dorchester
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West
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Upwey
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Weymouth

In the autumn of 2008 the Rail Partnership announced that it could no longer fund the production of the programme of walks and it looked like the end of the line for the rail walks. However, the walk leaders decided the programme should continue and action has been taken as follows. There have been two meetings of leaders from the Avon, Dorset, Somerset and Wiltshire Areas and an hoc group formed chaired by Peter Gould of Avon Area. All the Areas were approached for funding. All agreed and put an amount into their budgets for approval by Central Office. First Great Western has agreed to provide passes for the leaders and companion for pre-rambling and for the day of the walk. The local Community Rail Partnership has been approached for a grant and through them the Association of Community Rail Partnerships and at the time of writing we are awaiting a decision. Dorset Area Council agreed that it will be act as the banker as the Walks Co-Ordinator already has a paying in facility. The funds will be ring fenced and accounted for in due course.

The funding agreed will allow for the production of a modest A4 3 fold leaflet. The printing of this will be left as late as possible to enable the times of the trains to be as accurate as possible. First Great Western continue to tweak its times right up to the introduction of the new timetable in May. Avon Area will host the programme on its website and Areas and groups are invited to link to this.

The summer 2009 programme will provide a series of walks from Bristol Area in the north via Wiltshire, Mendip and South Somerset, Dorset and the south coast. The walks will start in late May and finish in early October. If you have not been before, why not come on one of these "rail" walks and find out what it's all about.

Norman Browne, South Somerset Group, 01935 479129, will distribute programmes to that Group. Any questions you may have should be directed to him.

If you would like a copy of the programme when it is produced, please send a stamped addressed envelope to the Walks Co-Ordinator, 19 Shaston Crescent, Dorchester, Dorset DT1 2EB

A Dotted Line across the Map

In July 2007 we reported that the Ramblers was celebrating a remarkable victory in what became known as the 'Dorset' case. A popular Berkshire path was one of two used in this pioneering test case. Over the years we chronicled the campaign, from its beginnings in 1994, when a local Ramblers representative, Dr Leslie Drain, applied to claim a well-used path as an official right of way. There followed an appearance at a public inquiry, hearings in the Divisional Court, a subsequent appeal in the Court of Appeal and finally a successful trip to the House of Lords, the highest court in the land.

All the time we were fighting for an extremely important principle of rights of way law – that attempts to stop paths being recognised as public rights of way should be transparent to the public. What was sometimes forgotten in the fog of rulings, private agreements and appeals for money was that there was an actual path out there that people wanted to walk down, and believed they had a right to walk down. Since June this year you have been able to exercise this right because the path in west Berkshire claimed all those years ago was finally confirmed as a right of way. Of course the dotted green line does not feature on OS Explorer 170 yet but its three-quarters-of-a-mile length runs from grid ref. SU560802 to SU572802 and because it crosses the Aldworth/Streatley parish boundaries, the western section becomes Footpath 25 Aldworth, whilst the eastern section is Footpath 17 Streatley.

If you should decide to walk this right of way you might want to ponder that the fight to save this one path has secured the future of many others across England and Wales, which in turn benefits the entire walking public.

AREA HOLIDAY Isle of Wight October 2008

Fifty eight members from five different Groups enjoyed superb weather on the Isle of Wight in mid-October. The added complexity involved in catching ferries was more than compensated for by the excellent range of both coastal and inland walks available. We were based at a Shearings Hotel near the railway station in Sandown. Plentiful and readily available hot water and food are important to ramblers and the Broadway Park did not disappoint!

After the ferry crossing to Fishbourne on Friday we assembled at the nearby Firestone Copse in sunshine. Both walks returned via Havenstreet but the longer one also included a loop north to the coastal path at Quarr Abbey.



It was also very sunny for Saturday's walks from Alum Bay, both of which started and ended along parts of the coastal path at Headon Hill and Tennyson Down.

The hottest day was Sunday for walks which finished at the Botanical Gardens near Ventnor. Both walks went over St. Martin's Down and Luccombe Down and finished with a stretch of coastal path through Bonchurch and Ventnor. The

longer walk also included Appuldurcombe Down and Wroxall.

It would have been too much to ask for a fourth day of sunshine but nonetheless Monday, though overcast and cooler, was dry. The short walk was again linear



and started with a train trip to Brading, from where it was a pleasant coastal walk back to Sandown. The longer walk went through Alveston to Brading Down and returned via Bembridge Down and the coast path.



This year's area holiday will be based in Berkeley and involve walks in South Gloucestershire and the Cotswolds. It is already fully booked!

Owen Star
Area Vice-Chair
10th January 2009
ostar@btopenworld.com

LED WALKS DATABASE

The 'Led Walks Team' at Ramblers' HQ have been busy finding out who volunteer Walks Leaders and Programme Co-ordinators are. This information has never been collected centrally before but the increased capacity and functionality of the new database enables them to do this for the first time.

Collecting this information means that HQ will be able to communicate directly with Walk Leaders and Programme Co-ordinators. It is planned to communicate hints and tips, success stories and the latest Led Walks news via occasional newsletters – directly to Walk Leaders and separately to Programme Co-ordinators (sometimes known by other titles e.g. Programme Secretary). Direct communication will supplement existing communications from Programme Co-ordinators, which are often more personal. It is hoped that the two forms of communication will work in tandem.

Many Programme Co-ordinators and Walk Leaders will have reported their role to HQ by completing an online form at www.ramblers.org.uk/volunteer/ledwalksform. If you have not reported your role as a Walk Leader don't worry as Programme Co-ordinators will be receiving lists of those that have and will be asked to add those that are missing. Once all the lists of Walk Leaders have been returned to HQ they hope to be sending out the first Walk Leaders Newsletter.

Future plans hope to develop an online form to allow Walk Leaders to notify when they start or stop leading for a particular group or stop leading altogether.

Partnership with Cotswold Outdoor

In order to raise the profile of the Ramblers' Association and reach out to new audiences, the RA have recently embarked on a new partnership with the outdoor retailer "Cotswold Outdoor".

The aim of this partnership is to increase take up of Ramblers membership through various promotions in Cotswold stores (e.g. sale of Ramblers membership, Walk magazine and Walk Britain in Cotswold stores) and through other Cotswold communications, such as brochures, catalogues, their website and e-newsletters.

Cotswold was specifically chosen as a partner because they are committed to supporting Ramblers Groups at a local level. Like us, they share a passion for the outdoors and their stores have strong links with local communities. Rather than adopting a "pile it high, sell it cheap" approach, they pride themselves on offering a high quality service with staff who are gear experts and understand the outdoors.

The partnership will launch in March 2009 and will run for 5 years, with a review at year 2.

From the launch in March , Cotswold will issue all Ramblers members a one-off 20% discount voucher valid for 3 months. (Please see terms and conditions below*). Details of how to redeem this discount will be promoted in the spring issue of Walk magazine. After the 3 month period, members will be offered a discount of 10% on an ongoing basis. All discounts are at the discretion of Cotswold.

Cotswold Outdoor was voted best online retailer by Ramblers members in our Walk Reader Awards, so we are delighted that they will use their online expertise to launch a jointly-branded Ramblers/Cotswold online gear shop where Ramblers members can take advantage of discounts. A percentage of all the sales will come to the Ramblers' Association, so we are encouraging members to use this facility. Cotswold is keen to seek opinions from Ramblers members about what they would like to see as part of an online shop. If you have provided us with an email address, you may receive an invitation to share your views.

Cotswold currently has 37 stores in most major cities from Plymouth to Glasgow. They are planning to expand over the next 12 months. But wherever they are, all members can enjoy discounts via our jointly-branded online shop at www.ramblers.org.uk/gearshop when it launches in March 2009. Shopping online via this site also generates income for the Ramblers' Association.

Cotswold Store Locations are as follows:- Belfast, Betws-y-Coed, Bicester, Birmingham, Bournemouth, Brecon, Cardiff, Cirencester, Droitwich, Durham, Exeter, Glasgow, Grasmere, Harrogate, Keswick, Kingston, Liverpool, Livingston, London, Maidstone, Manchester, Norwich, Nottingham, Orpington, Plymouth, Preston, Reading, Southampton, St Albans and Tunbridge Wells.

For store addresses, please visit www.cotswoldoutdoor.com or phone 0844 557 7755.

***Terms and Conditions of 20% discount offer**

- A one-off 20% discount will be available to all current Ramblers members, from March 2009 for a 3 month period only
- This discount is only valid on full price items, excluding Ramblers membership, gift vouchers and postage. This discount cannot be used in conjunction with any other offer or discount.
- A 20% discount voucher will be required to redeem this discount. It will be issued to Ramblers members in March 2009
- The discount is not valid in the Leeds North Face store

Mendip Ramblers would like to remind all the Somerset Area groups of their August Bank Holiday Walking Festival – it was great to see so many of you supporting us last year, thanks. We are usually blessed with good weather, there is a variety of walks and, back by general approval, tea and cakes afterwards, so why not come along. For programme secretaries there is the added advantage that you can list the walks within your own group's programme if you choose to, just let me know (paularuddock@btinternet.com) and I will forward details.

MENDIP RAMBLERS WALKING FESTIVAL

AUGUST BANK HOLIDAY WEEKEND

Saturday 29, Sunday 30 and Monday 31 August 2009

ALL WALKS START FROM

THE RECREATION HALL, ZION HILL, OAKHILL

Grid reference: LR 183 – ST633474

Four walks each day:

Starting at 10.00am:

Choose from 10-12 miles or 8 miles or 5½-6 miles

or

Starting at 1.00pm:

3-3½ miles

For more information see www.mendipramblers.co.uk

Telephone Paula on 01458 860751 or Alice on 01373 474695.

There is no charge for walking: Please bring drink/food as there will be a short drink stop in the morning plus a longer lunch stop: Please wear/bring appropriate clothing, especially footwear (plus waterproofs if applicable).

Well behaved dogs under close control welcome but must be put on a lead when requested by the walk leader.

The Coleridge Way

The Coleridge Way is now being walked not just by ramblers from Somerset but by other groups from across the Country. Below is an account from Dave & Lynne Shepherd who led a group from Eastleigh in Hampshire last May:

In May fifty three members travelled to Nether Stowey, in Somerset, to the start of the Coleridge Way. This is a total of 36 miles through the stunning Somerset countryside of the Quantock Hills, the Brendon Hills and Exmoor, a landscape that inspired Coleridge to produce some of his best known work, and which finishes at Porlock.



Outside of Samuel Coleridge's cottage in Nether Stowey

Four days of walking

On the first day, Nether Stowey to Westquantomhead, everyone was able to picnic in the sunshine but it came on to rain later. The views on the second

day from Westquantomhead to Roadwater are amazing and the leaders really wanted the group to experience the same views as they had had when they pre-walked the route but it was not to be! On day 3 most of the group walked from Roadwater to Wheddon Cross, but the visibility was practically nil particularly at Lype Hill, the highest point of the walk (430 metres). Everyone was very jolly and made the most of the inclement weather.



Views along the way on the first day

A very wet day!

Unfortunately on the fourth day the heavens opened and there was torrential rain for most of the day. Not to be beaten by the weather 30 members of the group (the remaining 23 were taken to Ilfracombe for the day) left Wheddon Cross and proceeded to walk across Exmoor. What had been little streams when the leaders pre-walked the route the previous year were now raging



A tree that fell very near the group just before entering Porlock

rivers. An alternative route was found and the group eventually walked into Porlock some six hours later. At one point the group had to clamber along a tree trunk which had conveniently fallen over the swollen river. Everyone was very damp but spirits were still high.

All those who completed the whole of the walk were awarded a well-earned certificate from the Porlock Visitor Centre.

Reproduced by kind permission of 'Hampshire Rambler'

Somerset Campaign Update

The Somerset Footpath Campaign Team was established in 2006 and is made up of Ramblers volunteers from the Somerset Area as well as a Campaigns Officer from Central Office. The campaign was established to try and tackle some of the problems facing the Rights of Way network in the county, most noticeably the lack of funding available for the Rights of Way Team within the County Council.

An objective of the Campaign Team was also to foster a better working relationship between the Ramblers locally and Somerset County Council, with a view to establishing joint projects that would benefit the path network.

The Campaign Team have involved Parish and County Councillor's in its work, holding a Councillor's walk and publishing a Parish Councillor's Newsletter. The newsletter discussed the various reasons why Somerset's path network was so important and the ways in which local councils could get involved in the work of the Ramblers.

With the County Council elections taking place soon, the Campaign Team will be working hard to ensure that each of the main parties manifestos have a commitment to improving the Rights of Way network in Somerset. We will also seek to build strong relationships to new and returning County Councillors after the elections have taken place.

We hope that 2009 will bring many successes for the Campaigns Team and a marked improvement to the local path network; if you would like to be a part of the Campaign Team, or would like any further information about the campaign, please contact Sarah Jones, Campaigns Officer at Ramblers Central Office, Tel: 020 7339 8582, email: sarah.jones@ramblers.org.uk

GREAT NEWS!

Coastal Access confirmed in Queen's Speech!



Happily, after much speculation, we can now confirm that the Marine and Coastal Access Bill is on the government's legislative agenda for this year and will be made law. The Queen announced it at the State opening of Parliament on 4th December saying,:

My Government will bring forward measures to protect the environment for future generations. A Bill will be introduced to manage resources and create a new right of public access to the coastline.

This is wonderful news and a big landmark in our campaign. The Bill to is beginning its progress through the Lords so things are moving very quickly.

Ministry of Magic Thwarted

The Ramblers recently joined forces with the witches and wizards of Diagon Alley to wage a short but successful alley-gating campaign against the Ministry of Magic. In an attempt to stop 'muggles' exercising their right to use the alley, the Ministry of Magic erected a gate at the intersection of Diagon and Knockturn alleys, due to claims of increased activity by dementors. The gates were erected using the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act, blocking 'muggle' access but having no impact on the wizarding world.

However, disgusted with the lack of consultation, the owners of shops such as Weasley's Wizard Wheezes contacted the Ramblers via our website for help (www.unlockingpaths.org.uk). Local Ramblers organised a petition that gathered over a 1000 signatures and contacted the local councillor. Eventually, as if by magic, the gates disappeared in plenty of time for the Christmas rush to the shops.

National Walking Charity Takes MPs On A Walk For Better Health

11th November 2008

The Ramblers' Association took taking Ministers and MPs on a walk in their own backyard, to help launch the Ordnance Survey's pioneering new urban mapping technology at Westminster on 11 November 2008.

The national walking charity joined with the Ordnance Survey and the British Heart Foundation to highlight the benefits of walking and regular exercise for physical and mental health.

The route, which included many historic highlights, left Parliament Square and passed Buckingham Palace and St James' Palace, before returning to the Houses of Parliament and an organised reception in the House of Commons.

Ramblers' CEO Tom Franklin, impressed politicians with the need for cross party support for the benefits of walking, as well as alerting them to the mapping technology available to make the task easier.

Parliamentary Officer, Ed Turner, said: "We are engaging with MPs, Ministers and policy makers across all parties to highlight the role walking can play in improving the mental and physical health of the nation. Just 30 minutes of walking a day five times a week can make all the difference."

A NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

Many thanks to all contributors to this issue.

The number of contributions is decreasing. It would be preferable for the newsletter to have more news and comments on the issues in Somerset rather than the national issues that currently predominate. If you have any news that you feel would be of interest to Somerset members or would like to comment on any current issue then please send them to me.

Entries for the next issue before 1st June 2009 please to:

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Or by email to: edwrlevy@aol.com



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