

SOMERSET RAMBLER

RA's Somerset Footpath Campaign

Total length of Rights of Way: 5916 km
 % 'ease to use' (2004/05): 50.2 %
 Position in County Council league table: 32 out of 34

Somerset's rights of way network is in an unacceptable state. The RA has launched a campaign to get the investment and robust policies needed to turn the situation around. If you would like to help this campaign – anything from occasionally writing to your councillor to help organise campaigning, receiving updates on the campaign or submitting your experiences of walking in Somerset – contact Adrian Morris (adrianm@ramblers.org.uk or 020 7339 8524)



GETTING A PATH PROBLEM RESOLVED

The resolution of footpath problems is one of the main ways in which the RA's work benefits walkers. You can help to get paths open by taking action yourself.

Report a problem to the relevant local authority

The quickest and simplest way to help the Ramblers campaign on footpaths is to report any problems you come across on the network. Reports should be made to the relevant highway authority e.g. in Somerset to the Public Rights of Way Officer Somerset County Council.

Report a problem to the RA

If you let the RA know about problems you have reported to the highway authority you will ensure that the local Ramblers representative is aware of the problem. They will be able to monitor progress towards the resolution of the

of the problem and bring to bear on the relevant authority. Please note: Some authorities have a poor record in dealing with reported path problems. If reported obstructions have not been dealt with, you may want to consider the more formal method below.

Formally request the removal of an obstruction

The local authority is more likely to act, and promptly, if you use this procedure to make a formal request, because they know that it allows you to apply for a magistrates' order if the obstruction is not removed within 2 months. (However you are not obliged to take it to the stage applying for a magistrates' order, and in most cases so far, the obstruction has been removed without the need for this.)

For more detailed information visit the RA's website at www.ramblers.org.uk and follow the link – footpaths.

Don't forget to visit the Area Web Site www.somersetramblers.org.uk



HELP US GET CHILDREN WALKING

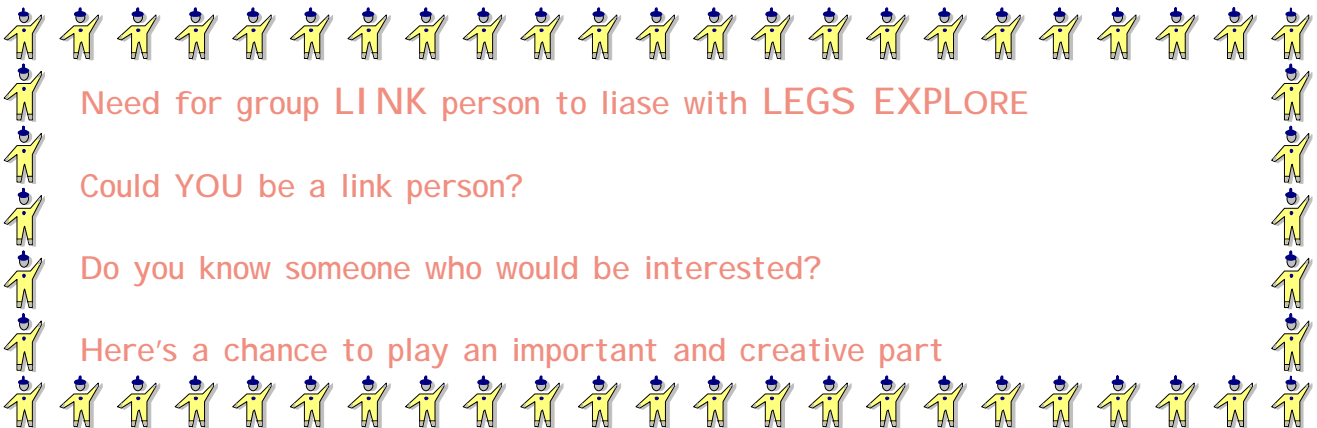


Somerset area organises and co-ordinates work done to encourage families and young children to enjoy using their legs and to explore the countryside.

Do you think it is important to help children to be physically active, in fresh air and to learn about nature? (And to keep the RA young!) If so, here is an opportunity to help make this possible.

The Family Countryside Walkers group has been running for 4 years and a lot has been learned. Recently it has changed its name to reflect the qualities which appeal to walking families. It is now **LEGS EXPLORE - Countryside Adventures for Children and Parents - CAFCAP**.

This family group is in new RA territory. This means learning by experience and being open to new ideas. While there is need to retain its own identity, it is not possible to autonomous like local groups. There is need for crossing the lines with local groups and openness and flexibility. This seems essential for viability.



Need for group **LINK** person to liase with **LEGS EXPLORE**

Could **YOU** be a link person?

Do you know someone who would be interested?

Here's a chance to play an important and creative part

Tasks would include: -

1. Draw your group members' attention to **LEGS EXPLORE** and of its welcome to all members and ages of the family on its walks, to any RA member and newcomer alike.
2. Ask if any member could identify walks suitable for families and young children.
3. Ask if any member would be willing to lead occasional walks for the family group.
4. Seek your members' ideas about **LEGS EXPLORE** publicity. At present we would like to know if any group members have links/knowledge of GP/HV practices and also under 5's provision.
5. Act as a **LINK** person between your local group and **LEGS EXPLORE**

For some groups this LINK role would not mean starting from scratch as good links/help is given by individual members or the group itself. The aim is to establish a linked system for the whole area and between its 'special' and our local groups.

Contact **LEGS EXPLORE** co-ordinator, Mary Henry for more information about this role - 01823 333369



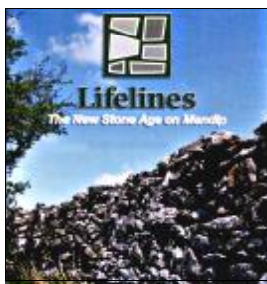
HELP RECORD HISTORY WITH THE MENDIPS LIFELINES DRY STONE WALL SURVEY

Lifelines aims for everybody who already gains great enjoyment and recognises the beauty of the Mendip Hills, as well as encouraging those that are new to Mendip, to look a little closer and discover even more about the Area of outstanding Natural Beauty by way of its dry stone walls that are a key feature of the landscape.

You may be aware that some walls are gradually disappearing, This doesn't mean they're all going to be gone by next year, but since the majority of them were built well over 100 years ago many are reaching an age that if they are left to the elements those that are currently in a dilapidated state may melt further into the ground and evidence of their existence will vanish before too long.

As keen walkers an integral part of this leisure pursuit is no doubt coupled with a love of the countryside. Lifelines aims to record what exists of the walls today, what wildlife they support and what historical features, names and stories they may hold purely as a record for future generations.

If you would like to be involved and volunteer to record what exists today then by choosing an area to survey would be a fantastic help. Survey areas are 500m x 500m (one quarter of an OS square) surveys consist of one side of A4 per wall within that square. Please call Merryn, Community Link Officer on 01761 463458 to discuss where you would like to survey or see www.mendiplifelines.org.uk



TAKEN FROM ACCESS The Annual Newsletter of SCC's RoW Team

Over the last few months our Rights of Way Rangers have been working with volunteers from Sedgemoor Ramblers Group to carry out various rights of way maintenance and improvement across Sedgemoor.

In November the group met in Chapel Allerton near Cheddar. In one day 6 members of the group installed 2 new stiles, a sleeper bridge and a couple of signposts. Andy Coleman and Andy Stevenson, the Rights of Way Team's Rangers explained: "We



Dave Morris rests on a stile that he has just helped build

usually work with volunteers from Sedgemoor's Rambler Group one day a month. It's great to spend a day with such a bunch of hard working people who are keen to get stuck in and help us look after the local rights of way network. Their help is invaluable and we really enjoy spending a day with them. We're looking forward to working with them and other groups in the future".

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WALKING IN THE SIERRA DE GREDOS, SPAIN

The Sierra de Gredos is an area of wild, dramatic natural beauty in central Spain, less than 2 hours' drive from Madrid. This turned out to be an excellent location for our walking holiday in September 2006.

Our group of 17 spent the first two nights in Madrid, which gave us a chance to enjoy a day's sightseeing before picking up our hire cars and heading up to the Gredos mountains and Hoyos del Espino, our village base. We stopped on the way to look around El Escorial, one of the UNESCO World Heritage Sites, with its enormous palace and vaults where the Kings of Spain are buried.

On arriving at Hoyos, we soon settled into our lovely house, welcomed by a roaring log fire and a glass or two of the local wine. The house was very comfortable, spacious and well equipped for 12, with all home comforts and all amenities close at hand in the village. Those of us staying in a nearby hotel looked forward to joining everyone at Casa Tio Juan for our very lively breakfasts and evenings relaxing by the fire. We did have the advantage of a wonderful view over the mountains, enjoyed by all when we sat on the terrace of the bar next door enjoying our well-earned 'after walk' refreshment. Our water bottles were filled daily from the fountain opposite the house, fresh mountain spring water, and our bread and pastries were bought from the bakers opposite, cooked in traditional wood-burning ovens. On the evenings that we decided not to cook in the house, we enjoyed some lovely meals in the local restaurants, all a few minutes' walk away so we only had to stagger back a short distance.



An ancient bridge over a swimming spot on one of the walks

An easy walk from the village, on our first day to ease us in gently, took us along the valley, following the river. The weather became hotter during the week and we were able to start our walks at various points along the river, walking back to the village. These were perfect walks to do on hot days and we discovered lovely areas for relaxing and swimming, the brave ones, that is, as the water, although crystal clear, was very cold.

Barbara and Adam, the owners of Casa Tio Juan, walked with us on two days and shared with us their local knowledge. On the first day, we climbed to around 2,400 metres and the views were spectacular. This range of mountains boasts a wide range of fauna and flora with some species being unique to the area, with over 100 varieties of birds including all of Spain's major birds of prey. We were joined for lunch that day by a young and curious Ibex. Our second day walking with Barbara and Adam took us across the plains and followed cattle droves and old Roman roads, again with breathtaking views. For those of us not wanting to walk every day there were wonderful places to visit – Salamanca, Segovia with its amazing Roman aqueduct, Avila, Toledo and the towns of Extremadura, steeped in history of the Conquistadors.

We had enjoyed discovering 'the real Spain' when we lived and worked in Madrid and it was a pleasure sharing our experiences with the Group, and arranging a holiday that was a little different, in a beautiful and unspoilt area of Spain. Details of the house and area can be found by visiting www.vivagredos.com. We would be happy to give further information – Tel: 01278 455180.

*Jenny & Tony Fawle
Sedgemoor Group*



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A DAY LEADING THE “LEGS EXPLORE” GROUP

Mary Henry telephoned asking if I would lead a walk for Family Countryside Walkers Group (now renamed Legs Explore). I was a little worried regarding what sort of walk I should do. Mary said that she regarded the walks as adventures for children and she had found that mud and water was an essential element. With all the rain that has fallen since October I knew that finding mud and water would be no trouble but was a little worried as to what other elements there should be to make the walk an adventure. I thought that the children might like spooky things so I decided that I would take them along the part of the old Strawberry Line path that passed through the tunnel at Shute Shelve and then along a bridleway, which I knew, became very wet and muddy after rain. The bridleway also went past East Well Spring which I thought might interest the children where it came bubbling up out of the ground immediately forming a quite substantial stream.

The walk was set for News Year Eve at 11am. Five children turned up for the walk, three being brought by their parents and the other two by their grandparents. Florence was the youngest aged 5 and the others were, Rowan 6, Harvey 7, Jacob 8 and Sorrell 9.



The children who took part in the walk

The rain forecast had thankfully not materialised and we set out in dull but dry conditions. We soon reached the old railway tunnel. The older children were quick to run into it enjoying the dark nooks and crannies and the dripping water coming from the tunnel roof. Florence was not quite so sure of going into the dark but when I handed her the torch I had brought she soon became quite bold and enjoyed herself shining the light and finding her way through the tunnel.

The bridleway was as wet and muddy as I had expected. The children splashed through it whilst the adults squeezed along the edges trying to miss the worst. When we reached the spring the children were keen to explore and caused me some concern as I thought they might fall in. However they suffered no mishaps and it was an adult that caused them much amusement when he slipped on a greasy stone and almost fell in the water.

We walked on into Winscombe where we stopped for a picnic lunch under the old yew tree in the church graveyard. Whilst lunch was being undertaken I went ahead to set up a treasure hunt in the woods. After lunch the children quickly found all of the treasure and we then marched on to the top of the Mendips before turning down through Kings Wood and back to the start. On the way through the wood we came across a tree with a swing in the form of an old tyre attached to a rope. Some of the children soon climbed on this and had a swing. We then stopped at an old tree with a very large trunk where we held hands and formed a circle around the tree with the children all making wishes.

The walk had just under 3 miles in length but the children had done more because of all their extra running around. We reached the end with 5 damp and muddy children who appeared to have enjoyed their walk. I had certainly enjoyed leading them and answering their questions.

The programme for April to July is shown on page 7. If you have children or grandchildren try and take them along to one of the walks I am sure you will all have an enjoyable time.

Ed Levy

PANDA CROSSING?

Sometimes it just seems like a jungle out there. Nearly 6000 large cats have been reported stalking the countryside over the past 6 years. According to Beastwatch UK they have now been joined by a host of other dangerous beasts from wolves to crocodiles. The South West is the big cat hotspot, while raccoons seem to favour Leicestershire and wild boar roam freely in Kent and Sussex.



The 'reported seen' list includes:

5931 big cats and 332 wild boars

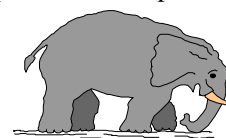
51 wallabies and 13 raccoons

10 crocodiles and 7 wolves

3 pandas and 1 penguin



Which begs the question whether any of our members have spotted a panda on a footpath?



STEVE BARNARD A FINAL WORD

My first reaction on seeing Johns article was to think "Oh Lor, what a rotten photograph, I don't really look like that do I?" My second reaction was "Oh Lor, why use the word animosity?"

It was unfortunate that John, ever the stormy petrel, should choose to make such a reference. It would have been sufficient to express satisfaction at the undoubted success of the Taunton Deane Group, a success in which John played a major part, and to have left it at that.

At the risk of repeating old arguments it is clear that the setting up of Taunton Deane RA Group was a positive step forward for the RA. It had been apparent for some years that there should be a fully fledged Group in the County Town, both to strengthen the various submissions made by Somerset Area RA Committee to the Somerset County Council. My recollection is that no RA member of the Walking Club disagreed with those basic considerations. There may have been a certain amount of tepid enthusiasm and different opinions of as to how an RA Group could best be formed.

It was particularly pleasing that there was a representative of the Walking Club at the inauguration of the bench, this is a good indication of the continuing fellowship between the two Taunton walking groups.

Steve Barnard

Wanted

Occasional Senior Walking Club (SWC) Minibus Drivers.

To take members of the SWC from Taunton (Castle Green) at 10 O'clock, on some Wednesdays or Thursdays, to start of walk and return to Taunton in the afternoon.

It will also be necessary to pick-up and return the hired minibus.

All expenses paid. Drivers are very welcome to enjoy taking part in the 5 to 8 mile easy-paced walks and other club activities.

If you are interested, or want more details please contact John Rhodes on 01278 424694

e-m john.Rhodes@care4free.net or Ken Walker on 01823 271622

DOGS ON WALKS

In previous years the information sent by Central Office to Areas and Groups has given the impression that dogs are not allowed on Ramblers walks. Following clarification of the policy for 2006/07 this is no longer the case.

A walker taking a dog on a led walk does not invalidate the insurance cover for that walk.

Individual dog owners are responsible for ensuring that their dog is kept under control. There are guidelines that apply to dogs in the outdoors and which outline what is meant for a dog to be "under control"

In some places (e.g. Some access land in England and Wales) there may be restrictions against dogs at certain times of the year or through local byelaws. It is the dog owners who are responsible for being aware of their responsibilities and adhering to them. Information about dogs in the outdoors is available from Central Office and online on a [Walking in Britain fact sheet](#).

We recommend that dogs are kept under close control at all times, and kept on a lead on roads, near livestock or sensitive wildlife, where the terrain requires careful foot-work and wherever the law or other official regulations require it. Dog owners must ensure their dog does not alarm other people and they must clean up after their dog. We encourage leaders to remind walkers with dogs of their responsibilities at the start of the walk.

Insurance liabilities aside, individual walk leaders or Groups are not under any obligation to allow dogs on walks and it up to each Area or Group to decide their policy on this matter. Many Groups have plenty of good experiences allowing dogs to take part in their walks.

Source: Ramblers Association Website



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FOOTPATH CHALLENGE UPDATE

We're at the midway point in the Use **Your Paths Challenge** and it could definitely be described as so good. As at 1 December 2006 there were:

24,438 squares completed

20,899 reported as having no recorded rights of way

almost **1,400** participants

We set a target of 25,000 squares completed by the end of 2006 and to speed us on our way in 2007 here's 7 'resolutions' for the remainder of the **Challenge**:

1. If you haven't walked the square you live in and/or work in try to walk it as soon as possible
2. Log on to www.useyourpaths.info and update all the squares that have no recorded rights of way in your area (use a 1:25,000 paper map to assess this if possible)
3. Lots of groups are including **UYP Challenge** walks in their programmes; why not encourage yours to do the same
4. If you are planning to lead a walk in the near future try to complete some squares during the 'walk out'
5. If your group are planning some walks out of your area check www.useyourpaths.info to see if any squares can be completed
6. Make sure you update www.useyourpaths.info (or let the Team know) of any squares you've completed
7. Offer to help adjoining groups complete their squares.

In some areas of Somerset large areas are showing green (completed squares) on the interactive map especially around the Quantocks and Minehead. Clevedon Group has made a plan to walk all of the paths in their area by the end date of the Challenge. Bill Tate has divided their area into numbered squares; he has supplied maps and roamers so that participants can identify the sites of problems; he has devised a set of codes so that they may be applied to a problem e.g. no finger post, broken stile etc. Members of the group have undertaken to walk certain squares and report back, using the codes. In doing this Clevedon Group are also receiving co-operation from Nailsea Walkers.

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## LEGS EXPLORE



### Programme April to July 2007

#### Countryside Adventures For Children and Parents

| <u>Date/Time</u>                |                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | <u>Leader</u>                           |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|
| 22nd April<br>Sunday<br>10.30am | <b>THURLBEAR WOODS</b> Nature Reserve. Woodland with wild flowers & views. 2 1/2 miles. Could be muddy. Option of picnic lunch followed by gentle climb up Stoke Hill - fine views and Stoke St Mary village - 1.7 miles. | Mary<br>01823-<br>333369                |
| <b>MEET:</b>                    | Thurlbear Church, roadside<br>Grid ref: 266211                                                                                                                                                                            |                                         |
| 29th April<br>Sunday<br>10.30am | <b>COTHELSTONE</b> Beacon and Paradise Wood. Fine views & bluebells in Paradise. 2 1/2 miles.                                                                                                                             | Mary<br>01823-<br>333369                |
| <b>MEET:</b>                    | Cothelstone Hill CP<br>Grid Ref: 200328                                                                                                                                                                                   |                                         |
| 6th May<br>Sunday<br>10.30am    | <b>BLACKROCK</b> Nature Reserve and <b>LONG WOOD</b> . Gentle climb above Cheddar Gorge, woods & bluebells. 2 1/2 miles.                                                                                                  | Sue<br>01934-<br>713278                 |
| <b>MEET:</b>                    | Blackrock Nature Reserve Gate in lay-by at top of Cheddar Gorge.<br>Grid Ref: 482545                                                                                                                                      | Or<br>01823-<br>333369                  |
| 17th June<br>Sunday<br>11.30am  | <b>KILMERSTON</b> - Father's Day: <b>JACK &amp; JILL</b> Railway Walk. Fields, woods and railway track. Look for J & J well. 3.8 miles. Bring picnic lunch.                                                               | Richard<br>12 Years<br>01373-<br>474369 |
| <b>MEET:</b>                    | Kilmerston Village Hall CP<br>Grid Ref: 695523                                                                                                                                                                            |                                         |
| 22nd July<br>Sunday<br>2.00pm   | <b>LINE WOOD WALK</b> (private) Hatch Court & Church. Look for hidden features flowers & birds. 2 1/2 - 3 easy miles. Bring picnic tea.                                                                                   | Mary<br>01823-<br>333369                |
| <b>MEET:</b>                    | Line Wood CP, off Belmont Road, 1 mile NE of Hatch Beauchamp village.<br>Grid Ref: 309214                                                                                                                                 |                                         |

#### NORTH SOMERSET

Information about walks/adventures in North Somerset will be available when group programmes are completed in February. Look for local group programmes or contact Mary Legs Explore co-ordinator for details

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NEWS FROM AROUND THE COUNTY

Clevedon

Now that we are able to look forward to spring and summer days, we can reminisce about the joys of winter walking – the mud, the wind, cold fingers and toes, yet, nevertheless we have all enjoyed the many outings. Also we have enjoyed tea and cakes put on by Gordon and Sheila, mince pies put on by Sue and Trevor – both very welcome finales to the days' walks.

Our get-together for a Christmas dinner was held in December – thanks to Sue for her efforts in arranging it all for us; the obvious outcome of everyone having a good time is that they all want a repeat performance next Christmas.

On our contribution of the 16 September to the FCW programme, which was also included in the *Welcome to Walking Week* programme, the children who came with their grand/parents had a very good time – it is just rather disappointing that so few took part.

More successful has been the publication of our *Walks' Programme* in the local free 'news' Papers for Clevedon and Portishead. The entries are free and they have led to several people learning about the Group and joining us on walks.

There have been the hilarious moments :-

walkers sitting on a seat – one gets up – the seat tips depositing one of them on the ground;

the general taking-off of boots, before going indoors for tea and cakes, which led to their being some confusion about who owned which boots and one gentleman finding out that the boots he had put on actually belonged to someone else;

crossing a sodden field, trying to keep to the tussocks of grass, some of which were 'floating' resulting in one walker landing face down in the mud;

all part of the joy of walking and providing memorable moments which we will talk about for years to come.

Di Knight - Programme Secretary - Clevedon Group

Mendip

The group have been busy in the past few months undertaking and planning the following:-

1) Festival of Winter Walks.

Walks were arranged in the Glastonbury, Wells and Wedmore areas. These proved to be very popular, attracting many potential new members. Prevailing weather conditions made the going heavy for all walks

2) August Bank Holiday 2007 Walking Festival

The traditional August Bank Holiday Walking Festival will be based in the village of Highbury(Coleford) some 6 miles west of Frome on the north-east side of the Mendip Hills.

Twelve walks are planned over the three days of the Festival, with walk distances from 3.5 to 11 miles. Mendip Ramblers have planned and surveyed the walks and the serious business of repairing and replacing stiles, footbridges, kissing gates etc. has started.

3) Fortnightly Path Clearance Group

Valerie and Jean are organising a fortnightly path clearance group. the work will entail path clearance and cutting back excess vegetation. Please bring stout gardening gloves and secateurs. (Some tools and gloves are available to borrow). Please contact Valerie on 01749 347129.

4) Christmas Period

Twenty five years ago, Mendip Ramblers Boxing Day walk saw them encountering snow drifts of up to three feet in depth. the morning's route was over Ingsdon's Hill to the comfort of a warming fire at "The Poachers Pocket", Chelynch; while the afternoon's more gruelling route went over Doultling Sheep Sleights. Our 2006 Christmas Eve walk saw us warming up with mulled wine and mince pies in the thick fog of Rowberrow Warren and Blackdown.

Richard Plant - Programme Secretary

Sedgemoor

We had our AGM on 17th November. Our Chairman Peter Thomas submitted his resignation which was as a result of increasing family commitments. Peter had served for 5 years and we are grateful for his work in the post. Chris Hewett was appointed new chairman and was thrown straight into the mill by being asked to continue the chairing the rest of the meeting.

Looking back at the past year and in particular at the groups' walk programme we find that we have undertaken 79 walks. 28 of these have been within Sedgemoor, 15 on Exmoor, 13 on the Quantocks, 9 on the Mendips and 14 further afield in other areas of Somerset or across the borders into Gloucestershire, Wiltshire and Devon.

The walks have been undertaken by 23 walk leaders and have ranged in length according to the programmes from 3 to 12 miles. However those of us who went on Bob's walk on Easter Sunday which, in the programme was shown as 12 miles, would have been prepared to have sworn was nearer to 15 to 16 miles. Bob told us at the end that his GPS showed we had gone just over 13 miles. Whatever the distance it certainly was the longest walk during the year.

In total according to the programmes the mileage of the walks in the year totalled 582¾. So if members had gone on all of the walks the distance they would have covered would have taken them from Bridgewater to a point half way up Loch Ness.

Daphne Lyon organised the group's Christmas Lunch which took place at the Cottage Inn Keenthorpe. 45 members attended and took-over the inn's dining room. There was a great party spirit and with an excellent meal a good time was had by all.

On 17th December the group had it's last walk before Christmas and New Year. The walk was lead by Jackie & Dave Morris from Burrington Combe around Dolebury Warren, Rowberrow and Beacon Batch. During the stop for lunch mince pies were served together with a glass (plastic) of wine.

The group is now well into it's winter programme of walking. Despite the wet and muddy conditions that prevailed throughout January attendances have been good and now with spring almost on our doorstep we are looking forward to dryer conditions and plenty of good walking.

Ed Levy - Programme Secretary

GRANNY TREK SPONSORED WALK 14 APRIL 2007

In April last year, a walk was held at Charlton Farm, Wraxall – site of the new children's hospice for the south west region – at which 'Granny' Beryl Griffiths presented the money so far raised through her Granny Trek – a solo walk from Lowestoft, Suffolk, to St David's Head, Pembrokeshire, with only her two dogs for company (www.grannytrek.co.uk).

Two hundred walkers attended last year's event, raising £10,000 in sponsorship for the Barclays Bank personnel who participated under the Bank's £ for £ scheme. The subsequent doubling of this amount to £20,000 by Barclays for Children's Hospice South West has encouraged Beryl to establish an annual Granny Trek (you don't have to be a Granny to join in!).

This year's date is 14th April, starting again at Charlton Farm (which will open to the first families two weeks later). Barclays' staff will again be participating. There is a choice of 1 easy or 6 moderate miles and everyone, of any age or ability, is invited to come along at 10am. Parking will be available.

To help make adequate provision for refreshments, please telephone Beryl on 01278 685698, or e-mail info@grannytrek.co.uk, with anticipated numbers of walkers, as well as requests for sponsor forms, which may also be printed from the above website.

The families cared for at the hospice have little or no opportunity to experience the pleasures of outdoor pursuits. Please join this walk in beautiful countryside and raise as much money as possible.

PLANNING DISASTER!

You have a right to be involved in decisions that affect your local environment, such as the building of new roads and incinerators, supermarkets and housing, reservoirs and runways. The planning system provides one of the best ways for you to get involved.

This is now under threat.

The Treasury has decided that the planning system is a barrier to business. They want to remove what they see as obstacles – including you and your community getting involved.

Our town and country planning system plays a crucial role in protecting our environment and communities. We believe that involvement from local people improves the decisions made and is the key to successful developments. We work to safeguard your rights and to protect your environment.

The Treasury has carried out a series of reviews, including the Barker review, on land-use planning. They have recommended major changes to the planning system – cutting you out of the picture.

If the recommendations from these reviews are implemented, it could mean:

- o **Reducing public involvement in inquiries** to speed up major projects
- o **Increased domination of supermarkets** in town centres at the expense of local shops
- o **Reducing your right to have a say** in plans
- o **Wildlife, habitats and green belts under threat** from development

The land use planning system is the powerful and effective form of environmental and social regulation ever introduced in the UK. We need to protect our rights to be involved in local decision-making - but we need your help.

Take action :- Visit www.planningdisaster.co.uk and e mail a prepared letter to the Chancellor.

The RA campaigning jointly with :

Campaign to Protect Rural England.; Friends of the Earth; The Wildlife Trusts; The Civic Trust; RSPB; Transport 2000; Woodland Trust

BIRD FLU IT'S BACK ON THE AGENDA

We had not heard anything on bird flu since the start of April 2006 and most of us had began to think it had gone away for good. However it is now back with the recent outbreak on a Bernard Matthew's turkey farm in Norfolk. In view of this and just to remind you on it's effects to ramblers the RA's statement as produced in June 2006 issue is set out below:-

"There is no evidence to suggest that ordinary walkers are at special risk of spreading or contracting bird flu when visiting the countryside. In those few cases where humans have contracted the disease the patients concerned were in very close contact with Infected birds. If a strain of the disease arises that can be readily transmitted between humans, official advice will undoubtedly change.

The Ramblers' Association accepts that, following risk assessments, closing paths and public access may be justified in some circumstances to reduce the risk of infection spreading. All walkers are urged to comply with restrictions. Authorities have been asked to ensure that in such cases standard closure notices are used, and accurate information is available about closures on government websites.

The government response so far shows lessons have been learned from the foot and mouth outbreak, where indiscriminate closures and lack of reliable information resulted in billions of pounds of losses to the countryside tourist industry as visitors stayed at home.

WHAT IF I FIND DEAD BIRDS ?

The following advice is taken from the Defra website. If you find one or more dead swans, more than three dead birds of another species or more than five dead birds of different species in the same place you should contact the government helpline (tel 08459 335577). You will be asked for details of your finding and its location. This will obviously be of assistance in the on-going surveillance programme.

Wild birds can carry several diseases that are infectious to people. Avoid handling them, and if you do, wash your hands with soap and water as soon as possible. Avoid touching your face and certainly do not eat until you have washed your hands. Clean any soiling on clothing with soap and water."

*Source: Rambler's Association Press Release
11 April 2006*

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## Walk-in Caerphilly Caerffili'n Cerdded

12th May 2007

Following on from the ever-popular Twmbarlwm Trek, which ran for ten years and covered the eastern side of the county, Caerphilly County Borough Council's Countryside and Landscape Service is offering another challenge to walkers of all abilities. This year's event will be held on Saturday 12th May 2007, starting and finishing at Parc Penallta near Ystrad Mynach. There are routes of 26 or 15 miles for experienced walkers and a fun walk for families around the Parc Penallta.

The walks will take you through the spectacular valleys landscape of the county borough through woodland, farmland, and across open moorland. Weather permitting you will be treated to some fantastic views over the county borough towards the Brecon Beacons and over Cardiff Bay and the Bristol Channel to Somerset and North Devon, and will lead you past some interesting and unique historical sites including the imposing ruin of Ruperra Castle.

We expect as in previous years that demand to take part will be very high so early entry is strongly recommended. Please note that the low entry charge of £5.00 is made possible by European part funding and is likely to increase in future years.

If you need any further information or to request an application form, please call Phill Loveless on 01495 235881

Country and Landscape Section  
Rural Events  
Caerphilly County Borough Council  
Unit 5 Woodfieldside Business Park  
Penmaen Rd  
Pontllanfraith  
Blackwood  
NP12 2DG

### A NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

Many thanks to all contributors to this issue. All contributions are very welcome and I look forward to receiving your contributions for the next issue. I should like to hear from all of the Somerset Groups so that the newsletter can keep everyone updated on what is going on throughout the county.

Entries for the next issue before June 1st 2007 please to:

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Combwich  
Bridgwater  
Somerset  
TA5 2RF

Tel: 01278-651094  
or by email to:  
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