



SOMERSET RAMBLER



The new chair of the board of trustees, Kate Ashbrook can be contacted on ramblerschair@ramblers.org.uk and you can also follow Kate on her blog: <https://campaignerkate.wordpress.com/> or follow her on twitter @CampaignerKate

The Don't Lose Your Way project which is looking at how Ramblers' supports volunteers working on restoring historic rights of way, is now in full swing. During 2018 the project will be scoping the additional resources needed to ensure that we make the most of this one-time opportunity to correct the definitive map before 2026. We are looking at improving and enhancing our guidance and training, recruiting more volunteers, getting greater access to archive material and identifying any required IT solutions.

To find out more and the work of the volunteer advisory board, contact our D L Y W project manager, Jack Cornish, via jack.cornish@ramblers.org.uk.

Suffolk level crossings - please note that Ramblers' role in this inquiry has now come to an end. The inquiry is yet to finish. We await an update on when the Secretary of State for Transport will announce the result. For further information please contact our senior policy officer, Eugene Suggett, via eugene.suggett@ramblers.org.uk.

Agriculture Bill - Let HO know if you have examples of best practice to share

Almost 13,000 people signed the petition. The Agriculture Bill is due to be published in the summer, and will continue to need your active help in making the case for countryside access. As part of the campaign on this issue HO would like to shine a light on those farmers and landowners who are already doing great work, who engage with Ramblers' members on path maintenance, who go above and beyond in their duties, or who simply never let a path on their land fall into disrepair. If you know of any farmers or landowners who meet these criteria and/or you are interesting in being involved in this campaign, then please do get in touch with the campaigns team at campaigns@ramblers.org.uk.

The Ramblers website can be found at: www.ramblers.org.uk

GDPR Updates 23/05/2018 (see page 8)

Retaining historical archives

A number of people have flagged the important issue of retaining historical archival documents and images. This is a grey area and Ramblers' awaits further interpretation from external sources such as case law as it develops to fully understand what constitutes personal data that may be held in the public interest. This may take months if not years. In the meantime there is no need to destroy your archives if you stick to the GDPR principles particularly with regard to minimising any significant risk to individuals and securely storing the data.

Newsletters and walk programmes

Another grey area: initially Ramblers' issued guidelines which classed local newsletters & walk programmes as "direct marketing" communications – which meant that they legally required explicit consent from a member before groups sent them out, whether by email or post. After further examination of the ICO guidelines, it is believed that we can class these when sent by post to members as "legitimate interest" – ie not as "direct marketing". However, please remember that email legally requires specific consent - even for administrative communications - so this means sending local newsletters & walk programmes by email will still require an explicit opt-in to be captured (see page 8).

Ramblers' is defining emailed newsletters and walks programmes as marketing because, from your feedback, there is no agreed standard format or definition for the content of these communications.

Some areas and groups email their newsletter/programmes to non-members, and include advertising, this is therefore clearly selling/promoting products and is therefore electronic direct marketing.

The ICO now has powers to levy fines of up to €10 million or 2% of a company's global annual turnover for serious non-compliance.

Media consent for photos

The media consent form has been updated to ensure it is compliant with the new regulations. We strongly recommend that you delete all old media consent templates and use the updated template. We have also heard some concerns that GDPR means you cannot collect or use photographs showing identifiable people or that you need to blur or pixelate images of people on your website or social media feeds. Please be reassured that this is not the case as long as you have clear verbal consent or have a completed media consent form for the use of images. Consent forms should be kept securely, ideally in a locked drawer or filing cabinet and/or scanned and kept digitally for as long as you retain images or stories featuring that person.

Maintaining local lists and sharing personal data

Some members may not wish to share their contact details with Central Office but are happy for their details to be held locally by groups. This is not a position that can be maintained. Ramblers' is a national and a local organisation and members join groups, areas and the organisation. It is very important that correct up-to-date contact information for all our members is held on our central system.

There are a variety of legal requirements for the Ramblers' to maintain up to date information (including Financial, Insurance and Safeguarding regulations as well as for general GDPR compliance) which require members to share their contact details with Central Office as well as local groups and areas (see page 8)

Walking for Health –and the Ramblers continued support for this programme

For the past six years Ramblers' has run a successful Walking for Health programme in England, in partnership with Macmillan Cancer Support. This finished at the end of March. National support will continue to be provided from April to December 2018 through funding from People's Postcode Lottery and Macmillan Cancer Support.

The newly restructured short group-walks staff team will support local Walking for Health schemes to maintain quality standards, train those who deliver local short group walk leadership training, communicate with local schemes (through webinars, teleconferences, phone and email), encourage local schemes to foster learning and partnership working and develop relationships between schemes and local Ramblers groups.

The staff team are now exploring whether short group walks can be integrated into, and financially sustained by Ramblers' beyond December 2018. Staff will be consulting with Ramblers' areas and groups and with existing Walking for Health schemes to develop and test proposals for short group walks in the future. Staff will also consider how people with specific health and support needs might benefit from taking part in short group walks (building on recent pilot projects with the British Lung Foundation and Kent Carers). For more information please contact rob.wallis@ramblers.org.uk.

Data and digital transformation - please note the new QR codes on membership cards

The new Ramblers insight hub (intelligence centre) is now being tested by a group of around 60 volunteers and staff. We are now including QR codes on membership cards for the first time, so that, in due course, our walk leaders can start registering who is participating in our group walks. Registration will be done through the new walker registration app (version 1) which is in development and is being piloted over the summer in Essex, Wiltshire and across Scotland. In the future, anyone renewing their membership will receive a fantastic new card with a QR code. If you have any questions about QR codes, please contact our membership team via membership@ramblers.zendesk.com.

The Area website can be found at:

www.somersetramblers.co.uk

All groups walks provided to the Route Finder can be found there and all Ramblers' members can walk with any group.

GROUP REPORTS

Mendip Group

At the 1st of June 2018 our membership is 335, up by 10 from this time last year.

The working party remains very active and is out virtually every week.

This Year's Walking Festival will be on the 25th, 26th and 27th of August in Ditcheat. Details are on www.mendipramblers.co.uk.

We had an interesting holiday in Torquay in March. It was the first time many had seen Palm trees with snow on them. The walks were at times a little challenging due to deep snow drifts. Unfortunately many of the group went down with a sickness virus and were unable to walk on the Thursday and the Friday Walk had to be cancelled as the leader was unwell.

Bob Berry led a group of 15 around the Melton Round at the end of April. It was a very well marked route and easy to navigate as stiles and gates in Leicestershire have a yellow high post by the side of them making them easy to spot from afar.

Pork pies were enjoyed by most at Dickinson and Morris in Melton Mowbray,

A group of ladies walked around the Isle of Wight in May and another group are looking forward to completing the Dales Way in June.

Les Stather, Chair

Taunton Deane Group

The Group generally continues to offer four walks per week - on Wednesday afternoons, Friday evenings and Sundays (all day and half day). Numbers attending have generally been holding up and some new members have been attracted. Andy Norris has joined the Group Committee, bringing a welcome injection of new ideas and enthusiasm.

During the spring and summer, the Group has been running a series of walks along the West Deane Way; a designated route on the OS map which members re-waymarked some years ago. These have been attracting a good cross-section of membership. Similarly, the Group has been covering the 38-mile Quantock Greenway in three point-to-point stages as part of its Sunday all day programme.

Another new idea that seems to be attracting good numbers of walkers has been for walk leaders to offer their 'Favourite Walks' which are then identified as such in the Group programme.

On Sunday 3rd June, Colin and Heather Flood organised a repeat of a very popular coach outing to Topsham, with a 6 mile walk from there to Exmouth and a boat trip back. Some of the Group's members also organised a Barn Dance on 9th June at Trull Memorial Hall. Both events were well supported.

To celebrate the 25th Anniversary of the Group, on Tuesday 17th July from 13.30 to 16.30, there will be an 'Open Afternoon' at Trull Church Community Centre: an opportunity to meet old (and new) friends and, maybe, also to plan future events. There will be a range of activities including a village walking quiz, photo displays, and a walk-leader workshop. It is hoped to advertise the event on some of the kiosks in Taunton town centre.

Philip Bisatt, Chair

West Somerset Group - May 2018

The Group was pleased to host the Area AGM at Holford Village Hall and even more delighted that 5 stags and a large herd of hinds joined us on our pre-AGM walk on the Quantocks. We were also pleased to share both the walk and the meeting with walk campaigner Kate Ashbrook. Our speaker Dan Barnett from Exmoor National Park plus cake and tea added to this well attended occasion.

Our group was founded in 1978 by Gordon Everitt and we began our celebrations with a lunch at the Northfield Hotel, Minehead attended by 50 active and less active Ramblers who shared memories and the excellent food. June Everitt the widow of the founder who now lives in a retirement home was able to attend. Pam Drew and Ann Brady, our two longest serving members (totaling 77 years of membership), cut the celebration cake complete with chocolate walking boots. Old scrap books and photos were shared and the occasion was crowned by an excellent talk on how Exmoor was tamed by the Knight family, given by Rob Wilson-North of Exmoor National Park.



Our 40th year continues with the completion throughout the summer of a number of favourite walks of both past and present members. On Saturday 16 June (apologies for clashing with the Area Meeting) there is a repeat of the first walk taken by the Group from Horner near Porlock followed by a Tea Party at Allerford Village Hall.

Controversy over the closure of the seafront footpath at Blue Anchor continues to occupy our Footpath Secretary Ivor Sutton who has just submitted an application to Secretary of State for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. This formal notice requests that the Somerset County Council be directed to determine the application to add the public footpath to the definitive map. This action has been taken to speed up the SCC who otherwise could take over 16 years to get to this matter.

The Group continues to enjoy a full programme of walks and full committee except sadly for an Area Representative hence my continued presence at Area Meetings. We have enjoyed delightful spring flowers on a coach trip to the Wye Valley and will be walking around Westonbirt Arboretum in the autumn as this is a favourite walk of one member.

We are organising a walking weekend in the Brecon Beacons 29 March - 1st April next year and spaces are available for other Groups to join us. A booking form is on our website under "Articles".

Gerald Swayne, Chair

Woodspring Ramblers Group June 2018.

The weather has slowly improved to an extent that we can get out and start to enjoy the warmth of spring and early summer. It takes an inordinate time for the mud to dry out and allow everyone to get walking without continually getting plastered. Just as things started to dry out the storms in late May and early June created the never-ending mud baths. This has not stopped our group and we have had a number of holidays and trips around during the last 4 months or so.

We had a long weekend on Dartmoor staying at the Dartmoor Lodge in Ashburton. The group has been there on a number of occasions and had some excellent walks throughout the weekend. Our thanks to Pat Hicks for organising it this year and to Pat and Robin Downton for leading the walks. The weather was excellent and the hotel did everyone proud.



Bluebells on Dartmoor

We were supposed to have a coach trip to The Malvern Hills in April but, due to ever increasing costs for coaches, it was decided to get members to car share as it is quite a distance. Unfortunately, the weather that day was not particularly good and we were unfortunate to spend the morning in cloud and fog and the afternoon with light rain. The tea, cakes and beer at the hotel at British Camp were much appreciated at the end of the day.

About 11 members of the group enjoyed a most exhilarating week walking the high fells of the Lake District during the first week of May. We were based in a number of guest houses in Glenridding and, most unusual for the area, we had a week of almost perfectly dry weather. It rained just one night but was clear before we set off the next morning. For the fell baggers amongst you I can report that we completed 28 'Wainwrights' during the seven days, walking 88 miles with just over 24,000ft of ascent.

I am unable to provide details of membership figures for this quarter as our membership secretary has been unable to open the membership database. Probably something to do with GDPR!

The footpath maintenance team continues to install new gates and bridges across the area. With approximately 12 to 15 members in the party we are installing up to 7 pedestrian and kissing gates at one meet. The area around Butcombe and between Butcombe Farm and Lye Cross Farm has been especially well managed, creating a very pleasant walk through what was once unwalkable territory. The group is now looking forward to our one- or two-week holiday to St. Anton in Austria during August and September.

David Thompson, Chair

Sedgemoor Group June 18

The cold and snow in March caused the cancellation of some of our walks where the starting points became inaccessible. Since then the walking programme has run well although attendances on some walks has been rather poor. Our evening walking programme commenced in April with a weekly walk on either a Tuesday or Thursday.

Our footpath working party has continued to meet monthly and works on paths allocated by Somerset County Council ROW team. They also allocate our quarterly survey of footpaths.

We had a very successful outing to London in March where we walked around the city viewing a lot of the major sights. A party of eleven has just returned from a week in western Ireland. The holiday was based on the Dingle Peninsular and walks were undertaken over mountainous terrain and long sandy beaches as well as a walk on an offshore island. All walks were in glorious sunny and warm weather.

Our summer outing this year to Westward Ho! will take place on 8th July followed a few weeks later by our annual summer lunch at one of our members' homes.

Our walking programme for the August – November period is coming together and it looks as if it will be filled so that we can continue to give a weekly Sunday and twice monthly Saturday walk. The venue for our annual Christmas meal has been booked and bookings are building up nicely.

Edward Levy, Chair

Space left for South Somerset Group report which has not been submitted this time.

Further to GDPR: TO ENSURE THAT YOU RECEIVE GROUP INFORMATION SUCH AS YOUR WALKS PROGRAMME, please update your preferences on the Ramblers' web. There are 2 ways to do this:

<https://www.ramblers.org.uk/login.aspx>

then update the information, if required, and update your preferences.

<https://www.ramblers.org.uk/my-account/update-profile.aspx>

Or phone Ramblers' on 0207 339 8500

It is recommended that you tick **'yes' to email and post** so that Ramblers' can then guarantee you receive email about walks etc from your group.

Report of Area Footpath Secretary – June 2018

1. Use of Ramblers Volunteers in Somerset County – After advice from Head Office and further discussions, an agreement with SCC has now been reached. The three groups with working parties have agreed and the new arrangements will be reviewed after a year.
2. Claim for path at Blue Anchor – West Somerset, with guidance from Head Office, has applied to the Secretary of State to require the County Council to process the application. The claim is made on the basis of safety and over 120 supporting statements from the public.
3. Changes to the definitive map – we continue to receive consultations on changes to RoW which are sent to the relevant Group FPS for consideration. This provides the opportunity, if we do not object to the proposal outright (which may result in the application being withdrawn), to suggest alternatives which the highway authority can put to the applicant.
4. Cropping of Paths - see item on advice to walk leaders.
5. A303/A358 Dualling – we have been consulted over the detailed route of the section between Sparkford and Podimore and been able to agree alterations to the RoW. The A358 dualling is at an earlier stage and we will be consulted on this section when we know the details and will be able to make suggestions to improve the ability to cross the new road safely.
6. 2026 Cut-off for Adding Routes to the Definitive Maps – Ramblers has appointed Jack Cornish to produce a programme of guidance and courses to advise Areas on how to claim paths on historic grounds not currently recorded before the 2026 cut-off date. I am a member of the advisory group of volunteers. The cut-off only applies to applications based on historic evidence, not claims based on 20 years unobstructed usage. Group FPSs have been asked to identify any potential claims.
7. Guidance to Walk Leaders – see article on page 10.
8. Coastal Path - Woodspring are now being consulted over the route in N. Somerset.
9. Section 130 Applications – I have requested an up-date on the long-term obstructed paths in Somerset that we have considered for Section 130, but have not received a response yet.
10. New British Standard for Gates, Stiles etc. – there is a new BS which seems unrealistic in a number of its requirements in respect of the rural situation. HO is being asked for advice and we need to ask the two highway authorities how they are intending to use the Standard.

Carl Earl, Area Footpath Secretary

LEADING WALKS –A Few Tips

Walk leaders can help ensure that our rights of way are kept used and any problems reported. Just a few tips for walk leaders:

a) CHECKING THE ROUTE HAS NOT BEEN CHANGED

Some printed OS maps are now over 5 years out of date. During that time quite a number of legal route diversions will have been enacted so even the latest OS map may not show the current route.

To avoid problems check the relevant on-line RoW map. All the areas we normally walk in (Somerset, North Somerset, Devon, Dorset and Wiltshire) have on-line RoW maps which will show the current line of RoW in that area. The maps can be accessed by Googling “Rights of Way in xxx”. For Dorset go straight to “Dorset Explorer”. Somerset’s new on-line site is fully interactive and can be used to report problems (also shown) which can be useful in planning a walk. The “Dorset Explorer” site also shows reported problems, but a different site must be used to report new problems.

b)CROPPING OF PATHS

It is important that walk leaders report any cropping at the earliest opportunity, preferably before the crop has grown. Maize and Rape seed can completely block a path. Somerset County have a clear policy on cropping and encourage reports. A recent statement from SCC stated : *“You may well know paths are well protected by legislation when it comes to ploughing and cropping. The enforcement and default powers available once initiated dictate a sequence of timely events if reasonable expenses are to be recovered”*. So what does that mean to those that use the paths? *The time that you report cropping or ploughing is critical. It helps Area Wardens to be efficient with their workload and to keep a good working relationship with farmers. It is similarly imperative for them to consider other factors and timescales when dealing with cropping and ploughing on paths. They have to decide the priority of the report within their workload. Factors the Wardens must consider are what the crop is, the point in the cropping cycle, what access (if any) is afforded, how the paths direction is obscured (for how far), what the definitive (or any alternative) paths surface is and how well the path is used.*

Late notification of fields being cropped is difficult to resolve as the serving of notice so close to harvest time may not achieve the outcome any quicker than the harvest. We recognise that enforcement action can have a positive effect if done in the right way although, we try where we can to work with landowners rather than against them. When a valid report of ploughing and cropping is received and investigated by a warden, warning letters are sent and landowners/occupiers added to our list for reminder letters for the following year. This is with the intention that if they offend again we can go straight to notice without any accusation of unreasonable behaviour on our part.

A little used requirement of the current EU farm payments system is that rights of way must be kept clear and usable. Ramblers issued advice last year on how to report such abuses to the Rural Payments Agency, which can withhold payments to farmers. Ramblers have been involved in discussions on post- Brexit farm support systems and are trying to ensure that similar provisions regarding maintaining RoW across farmland are in the conditions attached to any grant.

Carl Earl, Area Footpath Secretary

A NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

If you have any news that you feel would be of interest to Somerset members or would like to comment on any current issues then please send them to Mavis Monahan on mavis@monahan.co.uk before 30th September please.

Ramblers Membership 103,05

Down 2% on Last Year

Somerset Area Membership 1,517 compared with 1,513 Last Year

