



SOMERSET RAMBLER



Lockdown Edition

From the Editor

I do hope that many of you will have been able to take advantage of the wonderful Spring and early Summer weather and the dry paths (!!) as I have and are all keeping fit and well despite the restrictions. I have been able to explore many paths that I have never used before and got to know some old friends that have been impassable due to water and mud for such a long time.

The Bluebells were heavenly this year.

Mavis



Bluebell Woods off Cleeve Hill Road

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Update about staffing from HO Ramblers

Since late March, the Board of Trustees have been meeting more regularly to oversee and steer the organisation, while the country and the Ramblers is affected by Covid-19. Together we have been doing some work to:

- update our business plan and budget
- pause some of the Ramblers' work that cannot take place at this time,
- temporarily close the Ramblers' offices and move staff to working from home
- make changes in line with the government advice on Covid-19.

As part of this, we have decided to take part in the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme which the government introduced in March 2020. Employees included in the scheme by their employer are placed on furlough leave. This is a short term, temporary change. During this time the staff member cannot work for their employer, but they will remain employed and be paid. This scheme supports the cash flow and reserves for the charity as the government covers the costs of some staff salaries. The full details of the scheme are available on the **main government website**.

At Ramblers we have asked 34 of our staff (which is one third of staff) to go on furlough leave across England, Scotland and Wales. This leave is from Thursday 9 April to 31 May 2020.

For volunteers this means there will be less staff to ask about your Ramblers activities and some work is being paused during April and May. The reduced staff team are keen to continue to work with you and support us all to adapt to the changes we are all having to make. However, with less staff, some queries may take longer to answer and some of your regular staff contacts and email addresses will not be available (from 9 April to 31 May 2020). So please do bear with us, while other staff members respond to your questions.

How to contact us

If you are not sure who to contact, the best way is to email: volunteersupport@ramblers.zendesk.com or telephone 020 3961 3180.

Currently it is better to email or phone us and not to use the post. If there is something you have to post to us - please email us first as we can often help to find a better way.

Look out for the Ramblers Manifesto if you have not already seen it: It can be found on the Ramblers website under 'Technical stuff' and then 'Site Map'.

The deadline for submissions for the next Somerset Rambler will be 10th October 2020. Any items of general interest would be most welcome. mavis@monahan.co.uk

Join the Ramblers community of walkers roaming close to home **#RoamSweetHome**

Whilst we can't all walk in the way we would like to during this period, wherever you are, whatever you do, we are in this together.

Whatever activity you do to keep up your walking fitness, stick to the Government guidelines and protect us all. [Read our guidance.](#)

We can still roam for leisure, health and happiness at home, in our outdoor spaces and within our one daily exercise.

Staying active is more important than ever, for both our mental and physical health, and getting moving feels great!

Support Covid-19 research – optional if you wish to

University College London is running a study into the psychological and social effects of Covid-19 in the UK.

The results of the survey are being used to understand the effects of the virus and social distancing measures on mental health and loneliness in the UK and to inform government advice and decisions. It is entirely optional.

If you have any questions contact the delivery team at volunteersupport@ramblers.zendesk.com

Remember these ways to brush up on your walk leadership skills!

Check out the [walk leadership resources](#) on Assemble and the website, where you can find plenty of top tips for new and experienced walk leaders.

Brush up on your map-reading and compass skills! We have [lots of information](#) on our website.

Add your favourite walk to [Ramblers Routes](#) – ready to recce and include in your next group walk programme, once Ramblers activities re-start.

Keeping active and walking responsibly during the lockdown – support for members (as at 12/5/20)

All Ramblers Group walks and social activities remain suspended until further notice. We will make sure these resume as soon as it is safe to do so.

Fresh air and gentle exercise can do a world of good for our mental and physical health. As a member of the Ramblers you can continue to access independent walking routes on our members' app and on our [website](#).

Look out for the latest edition of Walk magazine, due to land on your doormat in a few weeks' time. And remember, you can discover more tips and support on staying active at this time on our [Facebook](#) page, website and by signing up to our [#RoamSweetHome](#) campaign.

Thank you for standing with each other and continuing to support the Ramblers as

a wonderful community of members – stay safe and well, until we walk together again. Sarah Marfleet, Director of membership and fundraising

Assemble

All of our volunteers, that we know of, are recorded on Assemble. Everyone should now have had an email about it explaining how you can access it yourself. **If you've missed that email or need to read the introductory guide, you can get it here.**

Assemble, like all of the newer Ramblers systems, uses the Ramblers' single account. This is not the same as the current website's login – although this will be changing soon – so you may need to use the sign-up tab the first time. **You can get the short step-by-step guide here.**

Do let us know if any of your details or roles are wrong. Some of them you'll be able to update yourself, for example your contact details, but just send us an email if you prefer or if one of your roles isn't listed.

We know that there are still quite a few people who volunteer, but are not registered yet. It's really important that we have an accurate list of who volunteers, so that everyone who carries out authorised tasks on behalf of the Ramblers is properly supported and protected. This includes walk leaders, footpath wardens, those on group committees, and Ramblers Routes volunteers. We'll be gradually adding in those missing volunteers over the next few months - so if you, or someone you volunteer with, is not recorded on Assemble yet, let us know.

The link to Assemble is **ramblers.goassemble.com**

If you have any questions please contact Wendy Halley – project manager, volunteer website (Assemble) **Volunteersupport@ramblers.zendesk.com**

Ramblers Routes

One outcome of the current lockdown is that more people are exploring local routes, and discovering the joys of walking. This is a real opportunity for the Ramblers.

There are over 3000 **Ramblers Routes** available on the app and website – and we want to make our routes accessible to as many people as possible. We're keen to hear from you if your group or area has created a library of local walking routes (on your website or in walk booklets), which could be shared for more people to access.

If you are already a Ramblers Routes Volunteer, don't forget to update your volunteer roles on Assemble, so that we can be in touch with the latest news and updates. **If you've not added routes to Ramblers Routes before you can find out more here.**

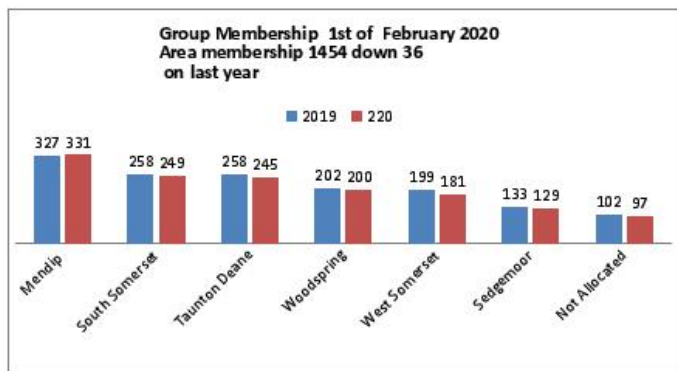
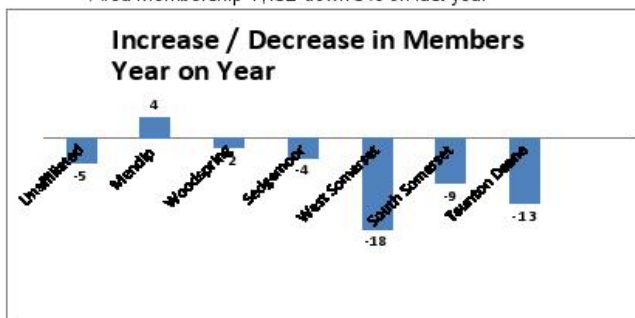
For more information, and any questions, please contact James Austin, delivery officer, **volunteersupport@ramblers.zendesk.com**

1st May 2020

Ramblers Membership 99,516

Down 2% from Last year

Area Membership 1,432 down 3% on last year



Area Footpath Secretary's Report May 2020

Don't Lose Your Way

This is Ramblers project to ensure that all unrecorded rights of way are submitted before the 2026 dead-line for claims based on historic data. The initial stage to record every potential route in England and Wales has been completed with a substantial number of potential claims recorded. This information will now be carefully checked before the on-line map showing all the potential claims is released in the next few months.

At that stage we will be able to check the Somerset and N. Somerset maps to see which potential claims have been highlighted. These will then be checked against claims already with the relevant Council to ensure that there is no duplication. In Somerset this can easily be done on the "Explore Somerset" on-line map. N. Somerset will need checking against record of claims held by the Council, which are available on-line.

Ramblers' is putting together guidance on making the necessary claims which will be available in the autumn. Ramblers' is also seeking to extend the deadline to 2031, which the legislation permits.

Checking Diversion Proposals

During the Covid crisis these have been on hold, but with the slight relaxation in England we are again going to be receiving proposals for diversions. These are initially sent to me and then forwarded to the relevant Group FPS to consider. We should normally receive these as a prior consultation which allows us to suggest changes to the proposal if we accept that a diversion is appropriate. We can then agree to accept the diversion if we are happy with it, see if an alternative is acceptable or indicate that we would object if it goes ahead. This latter may often result in the proposal being dropped.

Apart from keeping an eye on rights of way in their area this is an important role FPSs undertake to protect our network of rights of way.

Cropping of Paths

Now that we can walk privately more easily it is important that any paths that have been cropped and not cleared are reported promptly, using the on-line RoW maps. It is also possible to continue to report such cropping to the Rural Payments Agency, as the EU farm payments system runs for one more year before the new system going through Parliament as the Agriculture Bill replaces it with a new system from next year. Your local FPS has details on reporting to the RPA.

Carl Earl, Area Footpath Secretary

The easing of lockdown allows more freedom for walkers. However, the advice remains to **limit your contact with others**. **At this stage, all Ramblers group walks and activities remain suspended**. We continue to monitor the situation closely and will reintroduce these activities only when we feel confident it is safe to do so.

New government rules:

- People in **England** can exercise with up to five others from different households provided strict physical distancing guidelines are followed.

Our advice

Whether alone, with your family or with members of another household, we advise all walkers to:

1 - Be prepared

Some hotspots could be busy and facilities such as car parks, shops and especially toilets may be closed or access reduced, so plan ahead before setting out - including checking the relevant website for your destination. Some locations remain closed to visitors

2 - Be safe

Support our NHS, emergency services and rescue teams by avoiding riskier outings and abiding by the latest guidance for **England, Wales** and **Scotland** including on hygiene and physical distancing – particularly if you meet anyone from another household.

If you are showing coronavirus symptoms, or if you or any of your household are self-isolating, you should stay at home. People 70 and over, those with certain underlying conditions and pregnant women are more vulnerable than others, and so are advised to take particular care to avoid contact with others.

3 - Be considerate

Be sensitive to rural communities if considering travelling further from home to walk. In many cases, the best option will be to stay local and explore the local area on foot. Make sure you follow the **Countryside Code** (England and Wales) and **Access Code** (Scotland).

There is also nation-specific government advice regarding travel, which all walkers should observe:

- In England you can travel to outdoor open space irrespective of distance, as long as you can return the same night and do not put others at risk because of services you may need in the time you are away.

Know where you can walk

Guidance is changing regularly and the rules for accessing the outdoors differ in England, Wales and Scotland. **For an overview of the situation in each nation, including any restrictions on public access, click here.** If you are concerned that a path has been blocked illegally or restrictions have been put in place unlawfully, please report this to your local authority.

