

Hi everyone and welcome to our winter newsletter. Somehow this has become a bumper issue! I hope you enjoy reading about the different topics and events that group members have been talking about and enjoying.



Committee Changes

As you know, Gill has stepped down from a great 3 years as Walks Programme Secretary, and Sarah has now taken on the mantle officially.

Maggi has done excellent work as Media and Publicity Officer for the group, but stepped down at the AGM. As yet, no-one has come forward to take on this important role, which is now vacant. Jo Thorne and Peter Loombe have volunteered to maintain the Facebook page for the group temporarily, and are hoping that one other person will come forward to help with this.

You can read messages from Gill, Sarah and Maggi later in the newsletter.

We are delighted to welcome Janet Ellis on to the committee as an Ordinary Member (apologies Janet, that's not the most flattering term!).

All other committee members agreed to continue in their roles and were voted in accordingly. See an updated list of committee members at the end of the newsletter.

A Farewell from Gill as the Walks Programme Secretary

For those of you that didn't make it to our AGM this year you may not be aware that I stepped down at that meeting from the role of Walks Programme Secretary, passing the crown to my very capable successor, Sarah McRae.

At the meeting I was presented with a lovely plant and gift token and I am writing to say thank you to everyone. I didn't expect to receive anything so was thrilled to receive both gifts. I wanted you to be able to see the plant so I grabbed a neighbour and asked him to take a quick photo of the plant and me. As you will see from the photo he didn't appear to hear the 'and me' bit.

As I reflect on my three years in the role, I recall producing my very first walks programme. Nervously I asked, pleaded, cajoled for walks, and followed that with much sweat and toil checking the details, rechecking them and again, just to be trebly sure. Finally it went into print but this was March 2020 and Covid arrived and not one walk, not one, was ever walked in that programme! And there it sits, in our records for posterity, still in its pristine, virginal state, mocking me.

I am near certain that I am the only Walks Programme Secretary in the Group's history to have produced a totally useless programme and that ladies and gentlemen is my dubious legacy.



Hello!, I'm Sarah the New Walks Programme Secretary

I joined North Devon Ramblers in February for a walk in a howling gale and lashing rain as we slogged our way around Duckpool and Kilkhampton! It didn't put me off and now here I am, ready to start my new role as walks programme secretary!

Firstly I'd like to thank ALL of you - members, walk leaders and committee members for making me so welcome to NDR, and giving me the boost I needed to climb some long steep paths over Exmoor!. It's been a great time getting to meet new friends and being able to walk some magnificent paths and trails, woods and moors in this lovely county, many walks in areas I've never explored before. Secondly a big hand to Clarice, Janice and Peter for answering my many questions and queries about being walk secretary, websites and uploads, and thirdly but by no means last, a HUGE round of applause to Gill, whose patience, knowledge, advice, coffee and pain-au-chocolates have given me much support and encouragement as I take on this new role. I couldn't do any of this without you - Thank you!

During my hikes over hills and trails up dales, I've chatted with walk leaders and many of them have suggested the possibility of a shorter 4 month walks programme - meaning they wouldn't have to commit to walk leading as far in advance as they do now. With this in mind and to offer as much help to walk leaders as I can, a new walks programme will soon be available every 4 months, starting with walks in May 2023. I hope this will work for everyone as it will hopefully mean you won't have to look too far ahead in your diaries or calendars (or fancy app on your mobile!) to mark-up which walks you want to go to. The new programme for walks in May, June, July and August will be available at the beginning of April, and walks for Sept, Oct, Nov and Dec at the start of August. Of course, things may be different when the new Walks Manager system from Ramblers is fully implemented, which may be in place sometime during 2023.... and indeed may not! We can only wait and see!

In the meantime I look forward to walking with you all and if you find you'd like to join in and be a walk leader, please do get in touch, I'd love to hear from you. (Contact details at end of this newsletter).



Media and Publicity Role

**We are looking for a Media and Publicity Officer for the group. Could you help with this?
Have a read about how Maggi came to volunteer in this role and how you might help**

Seven years ago a couple of us attended the AGM to put communication onto the agenda. We wanted to get the committee and members to consider up to date ways to communicate with members and the wider public about the campaigns and advantages of being a member of the local Ramblers Group. This led to my starting the Facebook page and along with Angela we posted details of walks and events that our local group were organising. This was well received with people often interacting with the page. It is always difficult to judge the effect that this has on recruitment but along with other areas of publicity, it helps to get the group 'out there!' Several years ago I took on the organisation of the North Devon Show and have enjoyed running our stand at several shows despite Covid interruptions. We have come a long way, and now have a WhatsApp group so that members can share photos and lift requests amongst others things, as well as the regular newsletter and open invitations to attend committee meetings. (not all my doing by a long way).

Publicity and communications don't stop. People need to know that we are an exciting and vibrant group always ready to welcome new members and campaigning for better access to the countryside. The role of Media and Publicity Officer can easily be split between two or more people with different skills, for instance Facebook and maybe developing Instagram or other pages, making contact with local newsletters and the local press, contact with local radio stations and events, are all ways to make us known to people locally. Could you help with this? ... **Maggi**

Click on the Facebook icon on the right and have a look at the North Devon Ramblers Page. If you have any pictures or other contributions please send them to Peter who is temporarily maintaining our Facebook presence whilst we find other volunteers.



MEMBERS' CORNER

Navigation Training with Amanda

The Map Reading and Navigation sessions, led by Amanda, proved to be a great success. Please take a look at these comments from Bridget and Rachel. It is hoped to run a further course in 2023: Contact Clarice if you are interested.

I was fortunate enough to attend the Navigation Training Course with Amanda in September. Having spent 9 years in Scouting as well as completing Ten Tors when I was at school, I thought it really was time to learn to read a map correctly! This will then allow me to consider leading a walk with our group and to complete the Dartmoor sections of the Two Moors Way, with the comfort of knowing that hopefully I will not get lost!

We completed two 'classroom' sessions with Amanda, learning about Grid References, Map Symbols, Compass use (I can now find North!) and general navigation skills. Amanda's patience with us all was remarkable! After a practice in Pilton Park, where we literally had to find our way back to the same spot using 'pacing' and of course a compass (this took a few attempts for me!) we headed off to Exmoor on Saturday 17th September to put all our skills to the test.

Amanda had prepared map laminates for us all to use and divided the route into 10 sections, each of us taking our turn to 'lead' two sections each. We each led our sections, with Amanda pointing out different map symbols to help us truly understand the importance of knowing where exactly we were. It was a most enjoyable day; the weather was kind to us, and we all successfully completed our sections and returned safely to our starting point.

The important thing I took away, is to keep practicing everything we learnt, practice, practice, practice..... And hopefully, once I'm super confident I will be able to lead a walk for you all.

Thank you, Amanda, you are an excellent (and patient) teacher and role model. **Rachel.**



When this course was offered on our Ramblers Newsletter, I thought I should give it a go. I owned a couple of maps but confess I didn't have much idea how to use them. I had first met Amanda on an HF holiday so had already experienced her excellent leading skills.

The course was held in the town at Amanda's office and she was infectious and inspiring to our group as we embarked on the course. As a complete novice she needed patience too as I wasn't very quick to pick things up!!



We learnt phrases like – finding north, grid references, setting the map, taking a bearing, interpreting the map, measuring distance, estimating time, pacing, route planning etc. I had only heard of map symbols and grid references before the course but I'm now even the proud owner of a compass!!

We had a couple of theory sessions and exercises in the office, and then our first test outdoors was a pacing and compass exercise in Pilton Park.

Our finale was a day out on Exmoor starting at Hillsford Bridge. Each of us provided with a section of the map and taking it in turns to lead the walk, with Amanda correcting us when needed. A fun day gaining a bit more understanding. There is a lot to learn and I've not cracked it yet, but I shall have some more fun trying!

I can recommend this course 😊 **Bridget.**

NEWS IN BRIEF

AGM

26th November dawned cloudy and drizzly but members were not downhearted as 16 people set off for the longer walk around Fremington, and later 7 people for the shorter walk. On their return to the Parish Hall they enjoyed lunch and a natter before the official part of the meeting at 2pm, followed by tea and lots of delicious cakes. Thank you to the walk leaders, tea makers and cake bakers, and all others who helped on, and preparing for, the day. And thank you so much to all those who came to the meeting, and for taking the time to look at our displays and comment accordingly. Here is the feedback we gathered:-

COMMENTS ON AGM

Good display, good venue,
Photo comp.

No to having a speaker, keep it informal
Day time start preferred (after a stroll)

Too long a break between walks – lunch - AGM
Swap shop good idea, unsold items to charity.

SOCIAL EVENTS

More Skittles

Summer evening walk with fish 'n chips, al fresco
Bring and share lunch at "Eastacombe"

Quiz?

Possibly repeat previous NDR Holiday locations

The committee will use this feedback to help plan future events.

And talking of planning future events, don't forget that we would love some members to come along to our open committee meetings to give a wider range of views when we plan things for the group. There will be no pressure to do anything or join the committee, (although of course you can if you want to) Just come along once or twice and help us discuss things. Next Committee meeting is at The Castle Centre in Barnstaple, on Tuesday 18th January at 7pm.



Ramblers Skittles Evening

A big thank you to everyone who came along to the skittles evening. There were some who were completely new to the game but still every ball was played with enthusiastic determination. Joe kept score and organised the games brilliantly so we all got to play plenty of bowls. And a few brave souls risked limbs to set up the skittles for the next go! Half time found us in the bar tucking into a tasty array of food laid on by Carol. And the evening was completed with a friendly competitive game of 'killer' accompanied by plenty of cheers, commiserations and rounds of applause. Well done everyone. **Anne**

And great thanks to Anne for organising a really fun evening!

North Devon Ramblers Winter Walking Festival

The 30th December sees the start of our Winter Walking Festival, with 7 walks over 10 days when we welcome non-members to come along and walk with us for free. Walk details are in the programme. Please can you help us to publicise this by spreading the word or putting up a poster.

Printed Programme

We are really trying to reduce our Walks Programme printing and postage costs by asking members to access the Walks Programme online from the group website. But we don't want to disadvantage anyone who does not have access to the internet and email. We have asked all our "posting" members to let us know if they need to receive a printed programme in future. So far, less than 20 people have contacted us which I hope means that our printing and postage costs will be greatly reduced. However, I am concerned that the message may not have reached everyone it needs to. Do you know someone who does not have access to the internet and would still need a printed walks programme in future? Please could you ask them? And then let us know. Thanks.

FOOTPATHS

Volunteers Needed — Save Those Paths - DLYW

Throughout the 130 parishes of North Devon & Torridge, volunteers have been identifying hundreds of miles of lost paths. Many of these old paths have been now confirmed as candidates for the next stage and we are looking for further volunteers to help in the task. Getting a path converted to a Public Right of Way (PROW) takes 'detective like' work: gathering historical evidence from old OS maps, Bartholomew maps, tythe maps, highway records, parish records, enclosure records, personal statements, etc. Volunteers can work from home looking at many online resources, but some volunteers may fancy a trip to London to visit the National Archives at Kew.

So if you enjoy research, detective work, history and enhancing local access then it would be great to hear from you. For further information click [HERE](#) to read an article in the Winter edition of the 'Walk' magazine,

If you would like to get involved, please speak to a committee member or contact me, Steve Evans, DLYW Co-ordinator, North Devon, sandaevans@me.com, 07974 374308. Thank you.

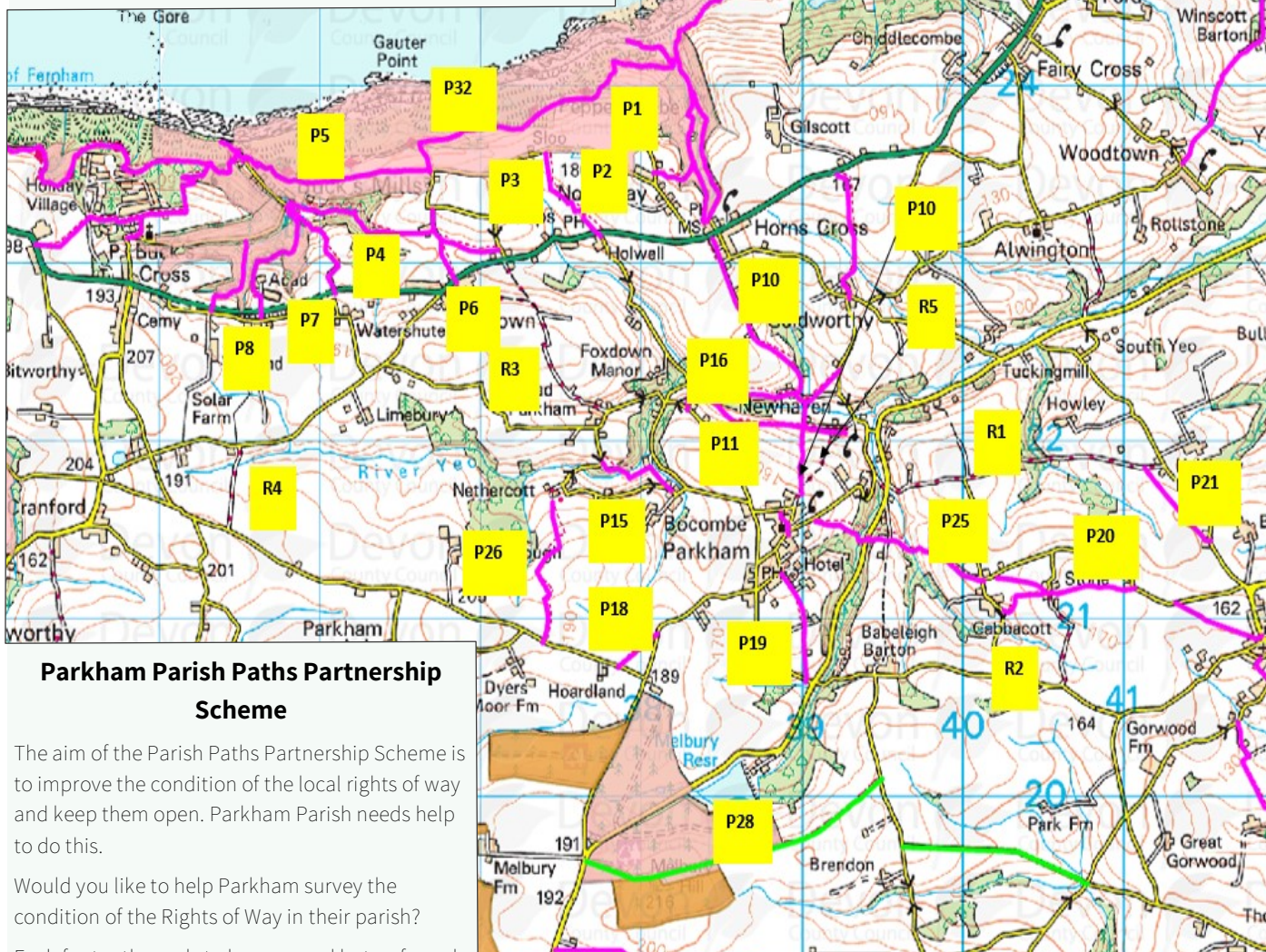
Reporting Footpath Problems

Did you know you can report footpath problems directly on the DCC website 'Report a Problem'. It is a site that anyone can access directly, and is in addition to contacting our Footpath Officers, Jon and Mike, who will of course take up the matter directly with the DCC PROW team:

Report a problem - Roads and transport (devon.gov.uk)

The link is OS based and by 'left clicking' on the map location a dialogue box will open that will allow text to be entered (i.e. the nature of the problem). The pages also have the facility to allow photographs to be added as well as requesting the respondent's name and email address to enable the receipt of automated messages from the system relating to the particular report.

Mike - Footpath Officer for Torridge Area



Parkham Parish Paths Partnership Scheme

The aim of the Parish Paths Partnership Scheme is to improve the condition of the local rights of way and keep them open. Parkham Parish needs help to do this.

Would you like to help Parkham survey the condition of the Rights of Way in their parish?

Each footpath needs to be assessed but so far only Footpaths 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 10, 11, 15, 25 & 32 have been done. Have a look at the map to see which footpaths you may be able to survey.

Please contact Janice Hurdle if you would like to know more or could help.

Memorial for Joan Long

Joan was North Devon Ramblers' Chairman for over 25 years until her death in 2021 and is much missed.

Thank you to everyone who contributed to a total of £420 to provide a memorial for Joan. After discussion with Joan's husband Mike, the money has been spent with CareMoor for Exmoor National Park. A gate, 6985 on the map on their [website](#) has been sponsored with a plaque which reads

JOAN LONG 1948-2021

"FONDLY REMEMBERED"

CHAIRMAN N.DEVON RAMBLERS

FOREVER PROTECTING ACCESS

The gate is on the Weir Water Walk, a footpath just off the A39, grid ref SS 824 462

The rest of the money has been pledged to provide trees at Bye Wood near Winsford.



We presented Mike Long with the card and certificate from Exmoor National Park at the AGM.



CareMoor
for Exmoor



Certificate of Dedication

The giver of this card has donated to the CareMoor for Exmoor Woods & Trees appeal, to dedicate a tree in a brand new woodland creation called Bye Wood, Near Winsford in Exmoor National Park.

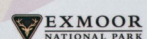
Thank you for supporting our aim to plant 13,000 trees over 12 hectares of land to create a sustainable woodland for future generations.

Read more at

www.exmoor-nationalpark.gov.uk/CareMoor

Signed:

Chief Executive, Exmoor National Park Authority



DATES FOR YOUR DIARIES



Coffee morning – It is great to see lots of people at the monthly coffee mornings. Do come and join us on the first Thursday of the month, 10.30 at Queen Anne's café in Barnstaple. Next one 2nd February (café closed in January)



- **Friday 30th December 2022 - Sunday 8th January 2023** – Winter Walking Festival. (see programme)
- **18th January 2023** - Committee Meeting, 7 - 9pm Castle Centre, Barnstaple. All welcome.
- **5th February 2023** - Group lunch, Barnstaple Hotel. All welcome, ask Lynne Clement for details..

Note that the booking deadline for the lunch has been extended to Monday 16th January.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

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