

Hi everyone and welcome to the final newsletter of 2023

Winter-Spring Walking Programme

Sarah has just finished compiling the next walks programme for January to April next year. The printable copy is now available to download from the website. Sarah has done a brilliant job given our shortage of walk leaders. And we are immensely grateful to the wonderful walk leaders we do have for providing a great choice of walks. There are still some gaps, and we welcome Pop-up walks submitted with 3 or more weeks' notice. At the AGM Sarah shared that pre-covid, the group had 45 active walk leaders. Now, we have just 27. Even if the "missing 18" used to lead just one walk a year, 18 more walks would make a huge difference in filling up our programme. If you think you may like to lead a walk for the group, please come forward and contact Sarah, or talk to any walk leader or committee member.

Within the next Walks Programme, we have 2 special occasions. First is **The Festival of Winter Walks** from 4th to 7th January. Just 4 days this time, given our shortage of leaders, but still 4 great walks showcasing our beautiful area. Please publicise this as much as you can, and let's hope for some good weather to bring out new people to walk with us. The second occasion is the **Area Meet up Day** at Wheddon Cross on 13th April. We have 3 walks of different lengths, and hope that many members from other Devon groups will join us on the day. It has been arranged with the Rest and Be Thankful pub, for us to have use of a room in the afternoon for a bit of socialising with a cuppa, and maybe some quiz questions, and a photography competition. The pub will also be open at 10.00 if people want to get a coffee before walking. More details to follow.



Featured articles

- ◆ [Update from our AGM](#)
- ◆ [An introduction to our new Membership Secretary](#)
- ◆ [Walking the Dartmoor Way](#)
- ◆ [North Devon AONB](#)
- ◆ [Safety on Group Walks](#)

Annual General Meeting

The AGM was held at Bishop's Nympton Village Hall on 25th November, with 29 attendees. It was a beautiful winter's day, and walkers enjoyed a choice of 2 (muddy!) walks in lovely sunshine with far-reaching views. The hall was modern and spacious, and we had a fantastic array of very tasty cakes. Many thanks to those who baked, and/or made teas and washed up. Again, we had display tables to present several topics of interest, and to ask lots of questions.

Here are our questions (*in italics*), and what you answered (in **bold**)

Topic 1 - Social Events

Skittles is popular and we would hope to repeat next year. But what other social events would you like to see? One suggestion is ... How about a group trip to Lundy Island? Probably in the Spring or Summer, and with a walk around the Island, or you could "do your own thing". What do you think? Would you like to come on a trip like this?

- **Skittles was a great success.**
- **Leon planning to organise Games &/or Card Evening.**
- **Summer tea party, in accessible location.**
- **Would love to go to Lundy, even staying rather than day visit.**
- **Love to go to Lundy! – Group walk, maybe with a ranger to impart history, wildlife, info?**

Topic 2 - Car Sharing

In the past, North Devon Ramblers had a car sharing arrangement with a meeting place in Barnstaple, but this was totally disrupted by the Covid 19 pandemic. Since when, we have arranged car sharing on a more informal basis, either personally, or by our WhatsApp group, "Rambling Rogues". What do you think about reinstating a more formal car sharing policy? Would you be willing to meet up at a designated car park in case others want a lift? It wouldn't HAVE to be Barnstaple, it could be, for instance, Bideford, or Torrington, depending on the walk location. Should it be left to the Walk Leader to decide if car sharing is suitable? Or are you happy with the current informal system?

- **Willing to use/provide car sharing from Barnstaple.**
- **Maybe the walk leader could suggest a suitable time/place for car sharing, then people respond on the WhatsApp Chat if they want to take part.**
- **Ramblers can make their own car sharing arrangements & if a lift needed use the WhatsApp group. I suggest that NOT a leader's responsibility.**
- **Happy to Car Share, needs an easy system to work. Would like to consider public transport options too.**

Topic 3 - Group Holidays

We are looking forward to our Sidmouth Holiday next year, and would like to be able to offer a choice of 2 walks on each of the 3 days. So far, we have 2 short walks offered in the Sidmouth area. Are you coming on the holiday? Could you lead a walk for the group? All offers gratefully received. And maybe we could have a walk on the way there? What do you think? What about future holidays? Do you have any suggestions where?

What do you think about an HF group holiday? They are geared up for walkers, and can provide walk leaders.

We have been approached by www.elanvalleyleisure.co.uk/walking which offers accommodation and group walks in the Elan Valley, near Rhayader, in mid Wales, and seem to be reasonably priced. Might this be a good idea for a group holiday? Would you want to travel this far?

- **Happy to travel anywhere for group holiday! User of HF holidays so happy with that option too!**
- **Elan Valley Holiday – Yes, good idea.**

Do you agree with these comments? We welcome your feedback, ideas and opinions about these topics and anything else, at any time, so please keep your thoughts coming

Committee News

All last year's committee members have agreed to, and been voted in to, continue their roles next year, with the exception of Membership Secretary. We are delighted to say that Dune has volunteered to be Membership Secretary for the group, and we offer her a warm welcome.

However - there is some big committee news. Janice gave notice that she will step down from the group Secretary role at next year's AGM. And Clarice has given notice that she will step down from the Chair role at the same time.

SO- the group will need a new secretary and a new Chair. Ideally, people will come forward in the next few months, so that we can have a period of handover and support. Janice is willing to stay on the committee and/or organise group holidays in future. Clarice is also willing to stay on the committee, if it suits the new Chair.

Yes, this will be a big gap to fill, but what an opportunity for new people to come forward with new ideas and enthusiasm, to help guide the group into the future!

Introducing Our New Membership Secretary

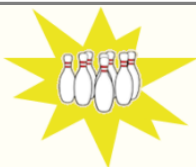
I thought I had not been walking with you for very long but it is almost a year now, it certainly does not feel that long. My short-term membership, along with not being such a seasoned walker like most of you, I was hesitant at putting my hand up for the Membership Secretary role. But nobody else volunteered, so here I am.

Firstly, I would like to say what a pleasure it has been walking with our group, I have thoroughly enjoyed every walk I have been on. I did miss a lot of walks over the summer, due to life, but my presence has been more consistent since autumn. My enthusiasm and interest also increased to the point where I attended the Public Rights of Way training in September. This was really interesting and completely new ground for me!

I hope to do the Walk Leader training next. I love the walks and really appreciate the effort of the walk leaders and volunteers.

I believe it makes such a difference to new members to receive a warm and effective welcome.

Thank you to Clarice and Janice for your mentoring and support. ... *Dune*



SKITTLES EVENING

We had another great evening playing Skittles at The Mariners Arms in Branton, with fish n chips from Squires. The pub was very welcoming, and we had lots of space to play and eat. We hope to use this venue again.

*Pop-up walks
Can you offer a walk at short notice to help fill the gaps in our Summer Programme? Just let Sarah know the details 3 weeks before so she can add the walk to the online programme.*

Walking the Dartmoor Way.. Janice

The Dartmoor Way is a waymarked 108-mile (173km) long circular route around Dartmoor. This new way travels along quiet footpaths, bridleways and little-used byways passing through many of the attractive towns and villages that nestle on the edge of Dartmoor. The route explores wooded valleys; sparkling streams that tumble off the moor; deep drove-roads and bridleways used for generations by farmers and travellers. We have also found lots of prehistoric evidence from stone circles to standing stones inside a pub.



We have been enjoying the route throughout the year from “the freshness and colours of Spring, through the glories of high Summer and wonderful colours of Autumn, to the stark beauty of Winter.”

The High Moor Link crosses the moor from Tavistock through to Buckfast, enabling two smaller circles of either the Northern or Southern Moors to be completed. North Devon Ramblers is planning to use the High Moor Link to create a circle of north Dartmoor.



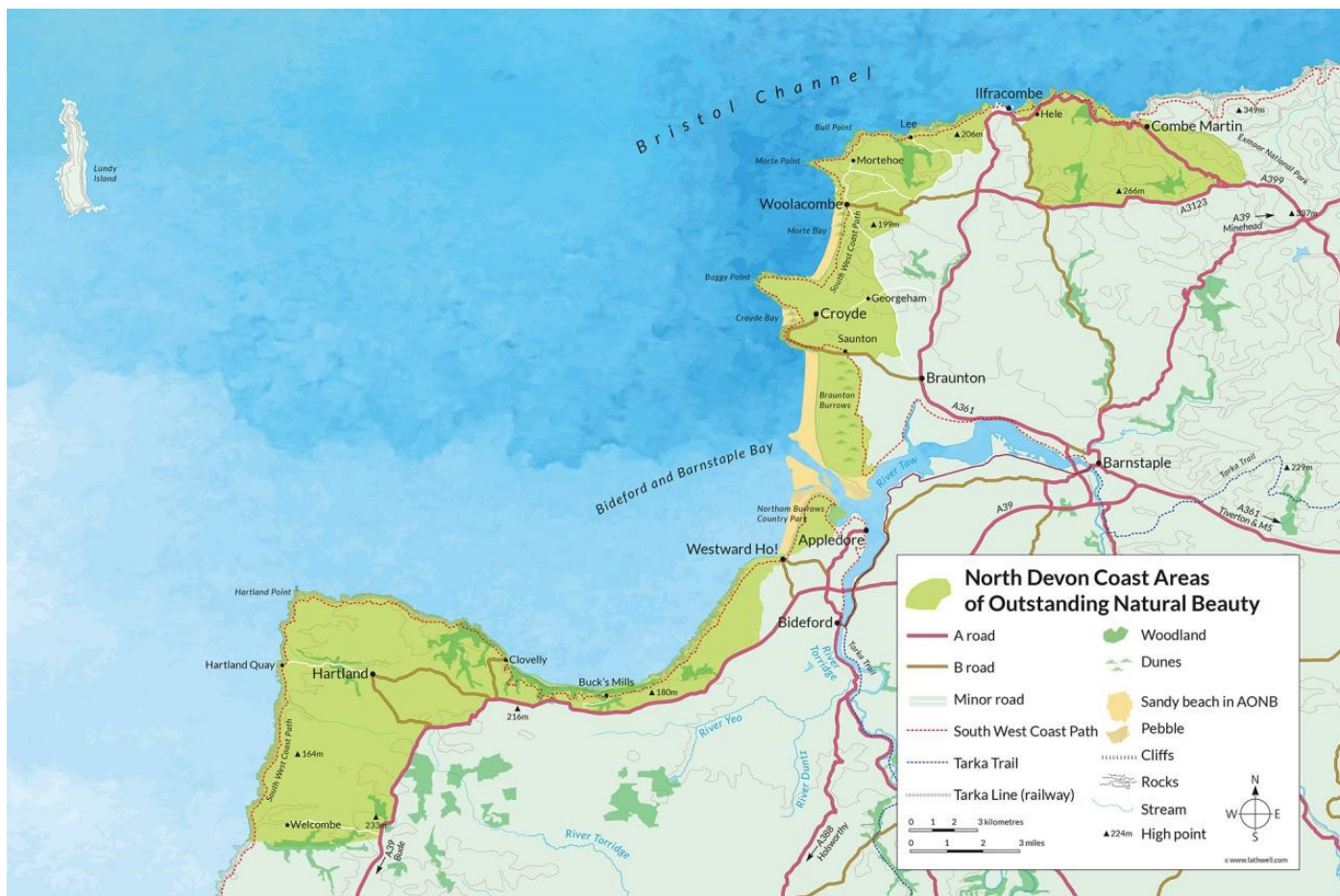
The adventure continues in 2024

- Dartmoor Way 6 starts from Okehampton to Sourton Tors walking 9.5 miles along the West Okement Valley & Granite Way on Sunday 4th February 2024.
- Dartmoor Way 7 will start from the Pewley Waterworks and go to Lydford, Great Nodden & Sourton Tors.
- Dartmoor Way 8 will start from Lydford to Mary Tavy & Willsworthy Camp.

WHY NOT COME AND JOIN US?

North Devon AONB

The North Devon AONB wants our help. They have been given some extra funding called ‘Access for All’ to improve physical access to the coast and countryside in AONBs and National Parks. They will have the money from April 2024 to March 2025, to spend on practical works and/or interpretation such as leaflets, signs, boards or online materials etc.



They want to get the view of users about what improvements are needed at sites or in information, rather than just rely on landowners to decide what they want to do and where. They thought the Ramblers might have views on places they regularly go to that need improvement or don't go to because of difficulties. They want to make the AONB more accessible.

CAN YOU HELP IMPROVE NORTH DEVON AONB?

- Are there paths which need improvement? Are they often waterlogged? Would a better surface be an improvement?
- Would creating a permissive path help to create circular walks with using other footpaths?
- Are there paths that would benefit from rerouting?
- Where would you like to see gates instead of stiles?
- Is there somewhere you would like to see a seat?
- Where would you improve information on routes? Would new signage help? What are key points of interest?

Please note that the AONB teams have recently rebranded and now refer to our area as the “North Devon Coast, National Landscape”. Take a look at their [website](#) if you are interested.

Ramblers – Safety on Group Walks

Ramblers are in the process of writing new guidance for walk leaders, with an emphasis on safety on group walks. The first draft document was sent to walk leaders for comment in November, and the feedback is being used to compile a second draft document for comment early next year.

One aspect of this emphasis on safety, will be access to ICE (In Case of Emergency) information for each and every walker. And it looks like it will become a shared responsibility, between Groups, Walk Leaders and individual walkers, to ensure that ICE info is available, should it be needed.

Most of us will think that this would be an obvious and sensible step. After all – if you were to collapse and lose consciousness whilst out on a walk – how many of your fellow walkers would know who to contact? And even if they do know that you have a partner/best friend/parent/son/daughter – would they know their phone number or address? And if contacts are stored on your phone, - would they be accessible if you are unconscious?

We will discuss this topic at our January 21st committee meeting – do come along and give your views. In the meantime, as a group, we will now strongly encourage all members to carry ICE information in their rucksacks. Pre-printed ICE cards are available – please ask Janice, or write your own to include your name, date of birth, address, medical conditions, allergies and medication, and an emergency contact number. If unsure, ask Clarice to email you a template.

The following recommended Apps/Services can help you call for help, if you find yourself faced with an emergency.

- [**what3words**](#) gives every 3m x3m square a three word name, which emergency services can easily locate.
- [**OS locate**](#) gives an accurate grid reference, which again, emergency services can locate.
- Register your phone to **emergency SMS**, which can transmit texts to emergency services when you don't have enough signal to make a call. Look at [**emergencysms.net**](http://emergencysms.net) for more information.

Help needed

Janet has arranged for the group to have a table in the entrance to Barnstaple library on Saturday 16th December to publicise the group, especially our Festival of Winter Walks in January. Can you help Janet for a few hours at the library? Please let her know. [**janetmellis65@gmail.com**](mailto:janetmellis65@gmail.com)

We also hope to have a table at RHS Rosemoor, Great Hobby Weekend again, which is being held in early May. Details to follow in next newsletter.

Annual Lunch

Change of date! We have arranged an Annual Group Lunch at the Pier House in Westward Ho! on 18th February. They offer a smaller or larger carvery, or you can choose a dish from the menu. If more than 10 people want to choose from the menu, we will need to pre-order. You can Pay on the Day, but we need to let The Pier House know numbers. Please book a place with Lynne, saying whether you would like to have the carvery, or choose from the menu, by 10th February. Lynne's contact details -

[**lynneeclement@hotmail.com**](mailto:lynneeclement@hotmail.com) 07757 384893

Walks Leaders contact details

With the new Walks Manager system, each walk has a contact email address as well as a phone number, so that people can contact the walk leader with questions about the walk. Unless walk leaders have given specific permission for their contact details to be published here, then the details will default to the group email contact, which is currently Janice, who then has to contact the walk leader concerned and forward the message etc. And Janice isn't always available to do this. It would be so much simpler if walk leaders give permission for their own contact details to be published. It is a fairly straightforward process, and you only have to do it once. And unfortunately, we cannot do it for you. Janice has written the following crib sheet – please give it a go. And if you have any problems, please contact Janice or Peter, who may be able to talk you through the process.

To update walk leaders contact details on Walks Manager

- ⇒ Log into Rambler's website
- ⇒ Scroll down to Your Volunteering
- ⇒ Click on Walks Manager
- ⇒ Click on the grey person icon in the top right-hand corner of the Walks Manager home screen
- ⇒ Select 'Contact preferences' from the drop-down list
- ⇒ In the 'Permission' section, tick the relevant contact preference boxes for display name, email address and phone number to indicate you give permission for them to be displayed. You only need to do this once and can change at any time

Are You Receiving Our Group Emails?

We have recently changed the application that we use to send out group emails to our members. If you are not receiving these emails and feel that you are missing out please contact **Peter**. There are several reasons why you may not be seeing the emails.

- Your current email address is not registered with Ramblers - *your email address can be updated by contacting Ramblers by phone or on their website.*
- Your preferences when you joined Ramblers do not allow us to communicate with you via email - *your preferences can be updated by contacting Ramblers, as above.*
- Our emails are landing in your spam folder and you are missing them - *please check your spam folder*
- You did not recognise the emails and deleted them - *our local group emails are sent from "North Devon Ramblers" with a the following logo.*



Our group emails contain useful information about our walks programme, including late changes and cancellations. We also use these emails to publicise our social events and our AGM.

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 meeting is 1st February as café is closed in January.



- **16th December 2023** – Table in Barnstaple Library – can you help? Contact Janet
- **4th to 7th January 2024** – Festival of Winter Walks
- **22nd January** – Committee meeting 7pm at The Castle Centre, Barnstaple. All welcome
- **18th February** – Annual lunch at The Pier House, Westward Ho! Book a place with Lynne
- **13th April** – Area Meet up day. 3 walks from Wheddon Cross
- **4th and 5th May** – Table at RHS Rosemoor, Great Hobby Weekend
- **14th – 18th May** – Group Holiday at Sidmouth

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Chair	Clarice Harwood	07972 510 903	email Clarice
Secretary	Janice Hurdle	07765 091 260	email Janice
Membership Secretary	Dune Simpson	07379 498 808	email Dune
Treasurer	Ruth Rouxel	07895 547 009	email Ruth
Footpath Officer (North Devon)	Jon Bennett	01271 375 906	email Jon
Footpath Officer (Torridge)	Mike Kelly	07495 048 339	email Mike
Walks Programme Secretary	Sarah McRae	07889 489 366	email Sarah
Minute Secretary	Lynne Clement	07757 384 893	email Lynne
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Thanks to all of our contributors