

**A sign of
the times!**

No. 20

**August
2024**



Hi everyone and welcome to a bumper summer newsletter

Highlights include articles about the group holiday in May, as well as the group trip to Lundy in June, and a wonderful poem about walking boots



Arrival on Lundy



Outside our hotel in Sidmouth



NDR at the North Devon Show, thanks to all who helped

And did you see Gemma's article about walks using public transport in The North Devon Gazette recently? Wasn't it great! Another brilliant advert for our group. If you have an idea for a future article, please let Janet know.

Visit to Lundy

What a wonderful day trip we had to Lundy!

Tuesday 11th June found 26 of us queuing at Bideford Quay to board the Oldenberg to Lundy. We left at 9.30 arriving back almost 12 hours later. Although it was chilly out at sea, (the more experienced Lundy goers knew to wrap up warmly), once we arrived, it was a beautiful sunny day.

We were lucky enough to have the services of a Lundy Ambassador, Richard, who gave us an introduction to the geology and plant-life there. Several people then stayed with him to learn more about the island while some intrepid explorers set off to walk the length and back, and others did their own thing!

Under the guidance of Ruth T, I was in the intrepid explorer group and it was great to learn all about the history of the island while visiting the North Lighthouse, the Battery and the old lighthouse and of course, plenty of puffin-spotting on the way. It was the first time that I had seen these mysterious little birds.

Not only did we have a lovely day for our walk but we all came away far more knowledgeable about that far-off part of Devon. Let's hope it becomes a regular date on our schedule. ...Janet



An Ode to Walkin Boots

By a North Devon Rambler

If you walk towards number 7 and stand at the door,
Tread carefully. For there, heaped on the floor, are
walking boots, sort of stored.
Not one pair, or even four.
No, a collective amount of nine pairs, or thereabouts at the last count.

The problem is most are for one person who happens to have, so the family say,
an eccentric passion for walking, over heath and dale, the odd wet mountain scramble,
forest rambles, over peaks as well.

"These are my friends" I cry, as I stand and defend 'em against insults, harassment, for the uses I need 'em.
So what if they take up most of the porch.
"They're doing no 'arm. Carry your torch so you
see 'em in the dark and don't go splat,
over the laces that have splayed and strayed onto the mat."
That teenager's night out, they didn't ask for you to be sick in 'em, fumbling to place your key in the door.
They didn't ask to be peed in, or squashed, as you slumped to the floor.

"Let them be" I wail,
They look after my feet more than you,
when I cross certain pastures they protect me from cow turds and dogs do's.
Together we have scrunched over ice, over stones and rocks,
We've waded fast flowing streams, have climbed craggy outcrops,
Have slithered and slid through mud ridden tracks,
through peat bogs, been gripped by crevices and cracks.
My boots have changed more colours than the best bruises you have seen,
from shop new blue, to slimy blackened green,
Those ink, oiled puddles of rotting leaves 'ave clung to the sides leaving rancid smelling purple splodges to
dampen their pride.
The grey yellow clay is still stuck to my friends cos the bristles on me cleaning brushes 'ave come out of their
ends.

"I haven't got too many boots". I plea, there is a reason,
for keeping so many pairs when there aren't so many seasons.
"They all do have a purpose" I urgently keep insistin', how could I possibly throw them out, I stand defiant
and keep resistin';
"I can't replace those ones, they're not made like that anymore, with leather as hard and thick as the varnish
on our front door."
"I can't get rid of those ones cos they are my winter boots", they take the strain of crampons to climb snowy
routes,

Although they are much heavier and harder on the feet, they make my coming down much faster as I'm taken
by gravity.
"I can't chuck out those blue pairs, they've a lot more yet to go", they have been more than seven hundred
miles each and I'm nurturing that growth.
Although they're tatty on top, the soles are solid and sound,
"Don't you even think of binning those!
I'd go to court on sentimental grounds."

An Ode to Walkin Boots cont.

Last night I was a reflectin'
My friends those boots;
We have kept going you and I,
My feet always comfortable, blister free and dry.
When laboured breathing has afflicted me on a climb, oh what a strain as my lungs have gasped for air and my knees, red hot with pain.
When the bleak, rain swept moors, have battered me from all sides. When my long hair wouldn't stay out of my mouth or my eyes; And my nose has dripped in sequence with the continuous rain, and water had seeped into my rucksack, drowning me sarnies again.

But you,
I am amazed at your resilience; you have supported me in all I do,
You are as friends are, solid, reliable, and true.

And in this quiet moment of pontification I was briefly interrupted.
Front door opening, followed by commotion.
A resounding thud and blasphemous linguation, the returning victim had cried,
"Blinking heck Mum, (or worse), I'm claiming damages.
Keep your tenth pair outside!"

National Trust Doone Valley event

Plans are nearly set for our involvement in the National Trust weekend walking festival on 14th and 15th of September, to promote walking in the Doone Valley. Many thanks to the walk leaders who have come forward to lead 3 walks over the weekend, covering much of the wonderful walking opportunities from Malmsmead. One of the walks includes visiting "Joan's Gate" at Weir Water, which is a gate funded by donations in memory of our long time Chair, Joan Long.

We hope to have some promotional information about our group and Ramblers, in a Gazebo in the car park at Malmsmead, for the public to peruse during the day. If anyone would like to spend some time "manning the stand" the car park, and talking to the public about walking and our group, then please let Janet or Janice know. And calling all walkers – please come along on one or both days and support your wonderful walk leaders and have a great walk! See the walks programme for details.



North Devon Ramblers AGM

We are holding the AGM at Bishop's Nympton Village Hall again this year on Saturday 23rd November. Similar format, with 2 walks in the morning, bring your own lunch, tea and coffee provided, and the official meeting at 2 pm. All offers to help with tea making and cake baking gratefully received. All members are very welcome to come along. We keep the official bit to an hour, and treat the rest of the time as a walk with a bit of a social event, with tea, cake and chat. We also have some ideas tables, where we ask members what they think of certain ideas or proposals, and you can feed back anonymously or with your name. If you have any ideas you would like to see put forward or suggestions for the group in future, please let us know.

Our Holiday in East Devon

For the 2024 annual North Devon Rambler's holiday Twenty three Rambler's booked in to stay for four nights at The Royal Glen Hotel in Sidmouth, 14th - 18th May 2024. The accommodation, excellent food and friendly staff all contributed to a wonderful stay.

This family run historic and quirky hotel was an ideal location close to the esplanade and regency town centre. The hotel was built circa 1700 and Queen Victoria spent her first Christmas at the Royal Glen in 1819. She also celebrated her Diamond Jubilee there in 1897.

Some of us started our holiday by meeting at Steps Bridge near Dunsford and enjoyed a Bluebell Walk through the Teign Valley before travelling on to Sidmouth.



Then other walk choices included:

- A bus ride and then a linear walk on The East Devon Way & River Sid to Sidbury, Sidford or Sidmouth
- Sidmouth to the Donkey Sanctuary
- A challenging linear walk from Branscombe along the SWCP to Sidmouth
- A linear walk from Sidmouth along the SWCP to Budleigh Salterton & Otter Nature Reserve, visit to Otterton Mill and return to our hotel by bus. We were able to walk along the river this time, which had burst its banks and flooded the fields in March!!!

Each morning we collected our daily sandwich order from 'The Tasty Baguette' in the town who catered for everyone's diets and taste buds with the amazing choice of food offered.

We were blessed with lovely weather to enjoy the beautiful scenery of East Devon. This was such a contrast to our stay two months earlier when Margaret and I were privileged to join Janice and Clarice doing their recces, where we were walking in treacherous conditions at times and slip sliding in thick mud!!!!



Our grateful thanks to Janice for her impeccable organisation of this holiday, and to all our walk leaders Clarice, Janice, Peter and Helen, Pauline and Barbara who had previously recced the walks and offered us a daily choice of two walks.

We look forward to another North Devon Rambler's holiday next year .. Bridget

See more photos in the [May newsletter](#).

Walk leaders

At the committee meeting we had a discussion about the shortage of walk leaders and the resulting gaps in our walks programme. We recognise that there have been efforts by Rambler Head Office to formalise the role.

For example they have introduced some compulsory online walk leader training, which some people may find off-putting. But all those who have looked at the training say that it is actually quite fun to do, not arduous, pretty much common sense, and actually quite helpful and informative. So please don't be put off by the training.

Also Risk Assessments (I can hear the collective groaning from here) But they are just common sense. Honest. It is just putting into words, what you know, and would put into practice anyway.

As a group, we are looking into adapting the Ramblers Risk Assessments to make them more "user friendly" and useful, to walks in our areas. Watch this space!

We have some amazing walk leaders in our group, and they are all willing to chat to prospective new walk leaders, and perhaps "buddy up", talk through the process, help choose a walk, accompany on recces, and give support when leading.

Please have a big think about becoming a walk leader. If you could add just one walk to the programme, that would be brilliant. Start small and simple – a walk in your local area that you know well. It won't be so familiar to others, and they will be only too pleased to get out walking and talking. Have a chat to any walk leader, committee member, or to Sarah, our walks Programme Coordinator, and let's get some gaps in our walks programme filled!

However, if walk leading is something you feel that you just cannot do, then please don't feel guilty or pressured into it. Being a group member and coming along on walks is brilliant in itself. And if you want, there are other ways you can give extra support to the group such as coming along to social events and committee meetings, sharing ideas and views on things, offering to make the tea or bake a cake at the AGM, or writing a little something for the newsletter.

Exmoor NP 70th Anniversary

Many of you will already know that 2024 is the 70th anniversary of the opening of Exmoor National Park. And we marked this by having the Area meet up day with Exmoor walks from Wheddon Cross in April. Anne and Richard are leading another wonderful Exmoor walk on 20th October, to celebrate the anniversary month and weekend. The Autumn colours should be perfect.

Ramblers strategy

Head Office brought out the new Ramblers Strategy a few months ago with 4 main aims, and each Area and Group were asked to choose one of these aims and work towards monitoring and recording achievements. As an Area, Devon asked for volunteers from all the groups to form a working party to look at doing this, but alas, no volunteers came forward. If anyone is interested in helping with this, please ask me for more information.

Websites

A number of people have mentioned that they have difficulty finding the group website, and/or how to find group walks. It can be a bit confusing, and I thought we would try and clarify things a bit..

www.northdevonramblers.org.uk is the main website for our group, containing all the information, such as

- Details of our upcoming walks
- Access to the current newsletter
- Access to the printable program
- Link to the Walks Finder application (see below)
- Links to the [Ramblers Volunteering Documents](#) and [Ramblers Online Training](#)

Sub-menus from the home page provide

- Alternate formats for viewing the walks programme, including a calendar and map views. A useful utility to plot routes using OS maps
- Contacts - for our committee members
- AGM and Committee meeting documents
- Archive of [previous newsletters](#)
- Walkers and walk leader information and forms
- Links to local organisations that promote walking

A couple of years ago, Ramblers Head Office revamped their website, www.ramblers.org.uk, (where you can find information about Ramblers, campaigns, guidance on walk leading, insurance, access to training modules, your Ramblers account and more.) This website also includes group and area pages providing top level information only, about each area and group. The North Devon page is www.ramblers.org.uk/north-devon, and it includes a welcome to our group, a list of upcoming walks and links to our website and Facebook page. But there is no space for all of our “other” information, hence the need for www.northdevonramblers.org.uk as detailed above.

Find A Walk

Our group walks are clearly listed on our website. But if you want to explore further afield, are free on different days to our walks, or are visiting a different area, the easiest way to find walks is to use the “Find a Walk” from our home page. Then enter the town or postcode you are interested in, and walks will appear within a 25 mile radius of your chosen location in order of proximity. In North Devon, 25 miles doesn’t always yield many walks, but the page also includes options (filters) to change to 50 miles, and (I think most importantly) change to date priority rather than proximity. You should then see a list of walks in Devon, Cornwall, Somerset, and (bizarrely) South Wales in date order. You can also use the filters to opt for future dates, and walk grading.

There are other ways to find walks, of course, including using the Ramblers app, but I am not so familiar with them.

Following a suggestion from a member, we are now going to try and promote future walks on our Facebook page, as well as having photos and comments after walks.



Hi Vis Jackets

Recently, one of our members suggested that Walk Leaders should wear a Hi Vis jacket, so that all walkers would know instantly who the walk leader is. At the recent committee meeting, we discussed this idea, including with the 5 lovely non-committee members who joined us (thank you all so much for coming along), and the idea proved very popular. With the further suggestion that the Back Marker also ought to wear one. We are now looking into sourcing and buying Hi Vis jackets for the group.

What do you think about making this a Group policy? Which colour is best? Would you wear one when walk leading or back marking? If you really objected, or if it was a hot day, it would be ok to fix the jacket to your rucksack rather than wear it, as long as it is still visible and obvious.

Dogs on walks – a gentle reminder

This is our current advice about having dogs on walks, which can be found on our website, under Information for Walkers.

Generally, dogs are welcome on our walks unless otherwise specified in the walk description. Dogs are the responsibility of the owner, and must be kept under control at all times. Please avoid extending leads as these can get tangled around other walkers and/or be a trip hazard. Many walks cross farmland or open moorland where animals graze. Many walks involve stiles not all of which are dog friendly. It is the owner's responsibility for lifting their dog over stiles, although quite often other walkers will help.

And on Dartmoor and Exmoor National Parks' websites, where we venture to on many of our walks, the advice is -

Please keep dogs under effective control: Keep your dog on a lead, or otherwise under close control at all times. Be aware of the breeding season: On Access Land, such as open moorland or marshland, dogs should be kept on the path and on a short lead between 1 March and 31 July, to protect ground nesting birds.

Whilst many members enjoy having dogs along on the walks, and don't mind the occasional bit of boisterous behaviour, some members are not as comfortable around dogs, and can find it difficult or feel quite nervous at times, for instance - when dogs weave in and out of their legs whilst walking on a narrow path, (especially if the walker is caught a bit off balance on uneven ground) or when dogs come sniffing around their lunch boxes at break times.

Devon Area

Devon Area Ramblers is currently functioning again in a limited capacity for a limited time period, as John Howells and Tim Spray came forward to act as Area Chair and Secretary respectively, with the aim of Devon groups and members deciding whether Area is necessary going forward, and if so how would it be managed in future. (given that Area went into abeyance because no volunteers came forward to be on the committee)

I agreed to be in a working group to look at Area future, and we have had one meeting so far, looking at the various roles Area has traditionally had and whether they are still current and needed. So far, we decided that the really useful roles are Area Footpath Officer (to include Walking Environment Officer and Access Officer), Area Treasurer, and possibly Area Webmaster. Also, some kind of Social role – to organise Area meet up days, such as the one our group organised in April.

If you haven't had any experience of Area functions, meetings, organisation, then it is easy to think "we don't need Area". But I have found Area meet ups in particular, interesting, informative, fun and a good source of ideas for our group. And I think it would be a shame not to have these meetings in the future. But HOW Area should function is the tricky bit. Could it be shared around the Devon groups a year or 2 at a time? Should Area try again to get volunteers to form a committee?

What do you think? What could Area do for you? Would you be interested in finding out a bit more?

Do let me know. ...Clarice

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 5th September.



- **14th and 15th September** - National Trust Lorna Doone Festival, Malmsmead
- **20th October** - Exmoor walk celebrating 70th Anniversary of Exmoor National Park
- **20th November** - Treasure Hunt and/or lunch – see article below
- **23rd November** - Annual General Meeting 2pm at Bishop's Nympton Village Hall

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
Media & Publicity Officer	Janet Ellis	07599 093 973	email Janet
IT & Web Editor	Peter Loombe	07453 194 985	email Peter
WhatsApp Manager	Anne Hunnibell	07592 880 760	

Treasure Hunt and Optional Lunch.

On Wednesday 20th November, we are planning to hold a Treasure Hunt around Barnstaple. Teams of 2 – 4 people, with staggered start times from 10.30 am, with the meeting point being The Watergate (Wetherspoons) on The Strand in Barnstaple. Optional lunch from 12.30 ish afterwards at The Watergate, when you can boast of your achievements, or find out from others which answers you missed! If anyone would like to come to lunch, without doing the Treasure Hunt, then please do join us from 12.30. (Tables cannot be prebooked at The Watergate).

Please contact Teresa on 01271 377652 to book a place on the Treasure Hunt, and you will be given a specific start time. Don't worry if you don't have a particular buddy to do the hunt with, as there may well be someone else who you can join up with.

With grateful thanks to Mike Long for suggesting, and updating this event, and to Mike and Joan for compiling the original route, and also to Lynne and Teresa for their time and involvement setting it up.

Thanks to all of our contributors