

**A sign of
the times!**

No. 25

**December
2025**



Welcome to the our Winter Newsletter

A Message from our Chair



Welcome back to another bumper newsletter and the end of a bumper year of walks, socials and fun! Many thanks for all that attended the AGM on 15th November and especially to those that made cakes and helped out with the teas, coffees and set up.

I am looking forward to another year at the helm of our fabulous group and committee and would like to welcome, and thank, our new committee members Trudy, Hilary, Mo and Vanessa. It has been a fantastic year for NDR and there's more information on everything we've been up to in our AGM reports available on our website.

Thanks to all that contributed on the Ideas Stations and we have included all the comments we received within this newsletter. If you have any thoughts on any of these or would like to echo any of the comments then please get in touch as we will be discussing these at the January meeting. As always, any members are more than welcome to come along and have their say at the meeting.

To all walk leaders, please don't forget to update your GDPR preferences in your account (more info below). Thanks to all walk leaders who have completed the required certification in time for the 31st December deadline. If you still need to complete this then please check your email for the link from Ramblers and get in touch if you need support with this.

Our new Walks Programme has just been released by Sarah, her final one. Thanks always to Sarah for all her work over the years! We have loads of excellent walks on offer for you this coming year and more details on these can be found below. As usual, anything you need from me, I'm just a message or email away!

Committee Changes

Sarah McRae has finished as Walks Programme Secretary, being replaced by Trudy Austin. Our very, very grateful thanks to both. Sarah is staying on the committee as an "Ordinary Member". You can read messages from Sarah and Trudy later in this newsletter.

Thanks also to Janet, who has stepped back from Media and Publicity, in order to concentrate on being Secretary, and now Holiday Organiser. And we welcome Maureen Bennett and Hilary Hale, who have stepped up to share the Media and Publicity role. (see their messages below, too)

Ordinary Committee Member changes – Vanessa Marshall has joined and Janice Hurdle has left. Vanessa will be shadowing Ruth in the Treasurer's role, aiming to take over when Ruth "retires" at the 2026 AGM. For names, roles, and contact details of all the committee members, please see our [website](#).



New Media and Publicity Officers

Hi, I'm **Hils**. I am a relative newcomer to North Devon Ramblers. My first introduction to the group was a cold, if rather muddy, walk around Arlington on the first day of a New Year almost 3 years ago. Having been invited by my friend Mo, I received a very warm welcome. I have enjoyed walking all my life and being able to walk with like-minded people only makes it better. Being a member of ramblers offers the opportunity to appreciate our beautiful countryside whilst enjoying the benefits of being outside and the possibility of making new friends.

My role will be in supporting Mo to promote the benefits of the NDR group. Any suggestions and ideas to help with this and increase our profile will be most welcome. Hils

Hi, I'm **Mo**. I have been a North Devon Rambler for what seems like forever - at least a decade, probably more. I love walking and joined the group with a certain sense of trepidation as I stepped into the unknown. However, people were very welcoming and in time, I became a Walk Leader with a particular fondness for Exmoor and Dartmoor. At this year's AGM I decided maybe I should give something back to Ramblers and offered to take on the publicity role, supported by my great friend Hils. But we, in turn, need your support.

If you have any ideas on how we can:

- ◆ Make NDR more appealing?
- ◆ How we can reach more people?
- ◆ Improve our publicity?

...please, please share your ideas.

I would also ask you to support our Facebook page and follow us on Instagram. Let's aim for a greater presence in the North Devon social scene. Mo

New Walks Programme Secretary



Hello, I'm **Trudy**. I joined North Devon Ramblers last summer, after attending the Tuesday evening walks that Gemma introduced. Thank you to everyone who has made myself and Crumble (my beautiful little dog) feel so welcome, and thank you so much to Sarah for guiding me through my new role and very kindly offering to stick around to offer me any assistance with my first programme.

I started walking in 2021, when I joined a wonderful ladies walking group. I went from struggling up a hill to completing the UK 3 peaks challenge (Climbing Ben Nevis, Scarfel Pike and Snowdon in 24 hours) in 2023, followed by the Inca trail in Peru a few months later. I then decided to get Crumble, who unfortunately didn't seem to like walking! luckily, I've managed to persuade her it's not so bad and she will now happily walk 10 miles and still be ready to play when we get home.

I am really looking forward to walking with everyone and getting to know you all and if there is any way I can help anyone with my new role, or if anyone has any suggestions of anything I can change, please feel free to get in touch. Trudy

Sarah's Farewell to Walk Leaders

"Yes, the time has come to say goodbye ...this is my last posting to you all, and I would just like to say the HUGEST THANK YOU to all of you walk leaders for putting up with my nagging and whinging, and for providing our members with a fabulous selection of walks, rambles and evening strolls across Devon's 2,661,914 acres (or 2641 square miles if you're being awkward!) of moorland, farmland, woods, valleys, tors, scenic villages, beaches, beacons and clifftops.....you have all been so generous with your time (because walks don't just fall from the sky!) and energy in keeping the NDR bandwagon steaming ahead.

I am delighted that Trudy Austin has stepped in and will be taking the walks programme forward, so please support her and carry on the great work.

I honestly hope to be out and walking more in 2026 as I've missed catching up with many of you, so here's to putting my best foot forward in the new year." Sarah

And we hope that Sarah can come out on lots of walks next year too as we've missed seeing her!

Annual General Meeting

It was great to see so many members at the AGM, and the atmosphere was really friendly and supportive. The cakes were delicious (as always!), the teapot magically refilled, and we were blessed with dry weather, and even some sunshine, for the walks. (See some photos on the next page).

We asked some questions on our “Ideas Tables” and were thrilled with the many comments received. Here is what you said:-

What do walkers expect from Walk Leaders?

- ◆ A safe and inclusive walk
- ◆ Checking on new walkers that they are comfortable and being included
- ◆ Keep an eye on walkers at the back. Appoint back marker who knows the route. Group should keep together at the pace of the slowest walker.
- ◆ Pause at junctions to make sure group together
- ◆ Keep group together and pace for all walkers
- ◆ Good planning and understanding of the route and any issues e.g. Weather
- ◆ Mindful of pace set
- ◆ Make regular checks for numbers – liaise with back marker
- ◆ Very happy with what we get already. Grateful we have so many knowledgeable, capable and caring volunteers.

What do walk leaders expect from walkers?

- ◆ Try to keep together
- ◆ Pay attention to leader and back marker. Look out for new joiners. Turn up on time.
- ◆ Look out for each other
- ◆ Inform walk leader if wandering off or going ahead, wait where walk leader asks them to wait
- ◆ Welcome new walkers and be social
- ◆ Respect everyone no matter their ability
- ◆ Not to rush ahead, be considerate to slower walkers
- ◆ Take note of the level of walk and walk accordingly
- ◆ Keep walk leader in sight at all times

What specific training or assistance would support you to become a walk leader?

- ◆ OS Maps/Map Reading
- ◆ New leaders walking alongside an experienced one for a first time out
- ◆ Help to plan a route and assist on a walk. Test walking.
- ◆ Walk leader training does not include map reading and navigation which to me seems the most important element
- ◆ How to make full use of the OS Maps app

What social events would you like to see?

- ◆ Quiz
- ◆ Lundy island annual trip
- ◆ Treasure Hunt with a drink afterwards
- ◆ Skittles + fish and chips
- ◆ Darts
- ◆ Games Night
- ◆ Meals out

Is there anywhere you'd like to walk that we haven't recently? Or walk type, brisk, shorter, leisurely etc?

- ◆ Walks seems pretty varied in area and type
- ◆ We haven't walked the Halwill Junction area for a long time or Chumleigh and Eggesford
- ◆ Leisurely walks during the week. Shorter walks but not at a fast pace. Time to admire views. More weekday walks.
- ◆ Dunster
- ◆ Please could we have mid-week walks on another day than Wednesday occasionally e.g. Thursdays or Fridays?
- ◆ Maybe Saturday morning walks – social and short
- ◆ Leisurely walks weekdays
- ◆ Local 4-6 mile walks with no stops so they don't take so long would be nice
- ◆ Walking with a theme egg, churches/archaeology/local history

As you can see, there's a range of thoughts and opinions, especially around walks. The committee will be discussing these at the next committee meeting on 19th January, why not come along and join in the discussion? Everyone is welcome.

**And if you have an idea for, or could organise, a social event for the group
please come forward and share it with the committee**

Pre-AGM Walks - thanks again to our walk leaders, great to get some fresh air before the meeting. Here are a few pictures.



How to report a footpath problem

If you see a problem with a footpath such as overgrown vegetation, broken stile or signage, then please report it so that it can be fixed. If possible, take a photo (or 2) which shows the problem, and make a note of the location so that you can pinpoint the exact place. An OS map reference is best, or you can use What3words.

If you have the OS App (paid for) – take a screenshot at the location. OR (some phones may vary) with the App in Map mode (not following a saved route), touch the 3 dots top right, and a “Locate me” option appears. Touch this and it gives an OS map reference and you can Screenshot this.

If you don't have the OS App, you can download the separate, and Free, OS Locate app, which gives the OS map reference of your location, and you can screenshot this.

With this (or at least some) information you can **either** email, call or message one of our Footpath Officers –

Jon Bennett covers North Devon Area. jontybennett@gmail.com

Mike Kelly covers Torridge. michael.p.kellyt21@btinternet.com

Don't worry if you are not sure which area your footpath is in as they do talk to each other and can pass messages on quite easily.

Or you can report the problem direct to Devon County Council on their website.

[Report a problem with a public right of way - Roads and transport](#)

If the problem is not in Devon, each County Council should have a similar way of reporting footpath issues.

Devon Area AGM

On 29th November, I attended the Devon Area AGM in Bovey Tracey. It was great to catch up with members of groups from around Devon and to see what they have been up to. Most groups shared that they had had success with walk leaders completing the required training and I was able to do the same. There was also discussion of a compendium of long-distance routes around the region to ensure that these are maintained and well way-marked and do not get forgotten. There was discussion around an EGM on 6th December of the Ramblers General Council to vote on how trustees will be selected in the future. The proposal that Devon representatives took forward was that of the 12 trustees, 6 should be appointed for their expertise and 4 should be voted on by entire membership. 1 trustee will be selected by Scottish members and 1 by Welsh members. We also had excellent talks by Gordon Guest from the Dartmoor Wheeled Access Group and Amanda Head, an able-bodied guide for the Wheeled Access Group. Gordon explained how simple adjustments such as the widening of or removal of gates and small changes in paths can make the outdoors accessible to a huge number of people. He asked us to keep our eyes out when walking for circular routes that could be made accessible by a small change, or are already accessible. Gemma

Devon Area Members Day, 20th September

I would like to thank Nikki and Ian Wroe and Jane Yarrow, from the Exeter Group, for leading the two walks on the Devon Area Members Day, which was held at Okehampton on 20 September 2025. We were based at The London Inn, a local pub with a community ethos

The day was very wet and windy at times, and we decided to cancel the eleven-mile moorland walk. Despite concerns over whether people would turn up to walk, 23 walkers set off on a nine mile walk with Nikki and Ian, through Simmons Park, ascending beside the beautiful East Okement river, before arriving at Belstone. We had our lunch sheltering from the weather in the Church, with its mysterious 7-9th century inscribed stone or cross. Jane led seven walkers on a four and a half mile walk around Okehampton and the surrounding area, on which walkers were told a little about the town's long history which is quite fascinating.

The Members Day was enjoyable an enjoyable event, there was at least one member of every Devon group, and it was good to hear friendly conversations taking place. That is the joy of good company that people share on Ramblers group walks.

Before the walks, the results of the Devon Area Photographic Competition were announced. The photos were judged by Tom Usher, the CEO of the Dartmoor Preservation Association. The theme was 'What makes walking in Devon special' and he was impressed by the quality of the twenty-eight entries submitted. The Winner was John Howell, second was Jane Price, and third place was Sue Howell, all from the Exeter Group.

John Howell, Devon Area Chairman



Devon Area Photographic Competition



“Approaching High Wilhays in February”
Photo taken by John Howell.

Tom’s comments are that ‘this image immediately conjures the feeling and experience of a winter walk. This is what the Ramblers are about, confidence in the outdoors, a like-minded group of walkers and inclement weather. The group is striding off, together, some deep in conversation, into the mist, confident in their ability, safe with one another. It is easy to imagine oneself there in the mist and cool air, boggy ground underfoot and the prospect of dropping off the windy hill and into the valley soon. It’s all there in this photo’.



“The rise and fall of the Pomeroy’s.”
Photo taken by Jane Price

In Tom’s view ‘this is a striking image, full of winter and the lowering threat of the huge un-finished and un-lived in Berry Pomeroy Castle. The tonal matching of the light and the trees and the castle are beautiful. The winter trees exactly shadow the shape of the castle’.



“Striking Jurassic Coast at Ladrup Bay “
Photo taken by Sue Howell

Tom considered this photo as capturing the fact that ‘the South West has some of the best coastline in Europe, including this UNESCO recognised stretch. The vibrancy of the green grass and blue sea and deep red cliffs are wonderfully captured in this photo. As is the framing of the cliff pushing out into the sea and the



Two Moors Way Devon's Coast To Coast

50th Anniversary 2026

As part of the 50th anniversary, The Two Moors Way Association are organising a series of walks from points along the route during Spring and Summer next year. The proposed walks are:-

- ◆ Saturday 28th March – Lynmouth and Valley of the Rocks. 11 miles
- ◆ Saturday 11th April – Simonsbath and Cow Castle. 8 miles
- ◆ Saturday 25th April – Holne, Venford Reservoir, Huntingdon Warren. 11 miles
- ◆ Saturday 16th May – Withypool and Tarr Steps. 10 miles
- ◆ Friday 29th May – Anniversary event with choice of 2 x 7 mile walks from Morchard Bishop. Possible Photo competition and other festivities.
- ◆ Saturday 30th May – Drewsteignton and Chagford. 10 miles
- ◆ Saturday 6th June – Ivybridge and Ugborough Beacon. 10 miles

Keep an eye on the walks programme, visit The Two Moors Way [website](#) or ask Gemma for more details.



WOODY BAY AND PARRACOMBE

On a gloriously sunny but chilly morning in September, 18 walkers and one dog gathered at Woody Bay Station Parracombe for a North Devon Ramblers 5.5 mile walk around the village of Parracombe and the surrounding countryside.

First, however, was a one mile ride to Killington Lane and the start of the walk, on the only steam railway in the UK where passengers travel in Victorian railway carriages designed in the 1890s. The passing scenery was beautiful. The views stretched across fields to the coast at Heddons Mouth and the Greater and Lesser Hangman above Coombe Martin.



Leaving the train at Killington we started the first loop of the figure of 8 walk. Returning to Killington halfway round meant anyone who would like to could catch the train back to Woody Bay rather than walking back. The first part of the walk involved a half mile bridal path walking downhill before branching off across fields with lovely views of Parracombe below. Another downhill path brought us to Bodley, just above the village before dropping down via a narrow path between cottages. Nestling in the Heddon Valley, Parracombe and the surrounding Parish is home to around 300 people. There is a pub, shop, village school and a Church.



Climbing up out of the village we passed railway buildings still there beside the road and, crossing a small bridge, we looked down on what would have been the railway line as it entered Parracombe station. We visited nearby St Petrock Church, looked after by the Churches Conservation Trust, and open daily. Set up on the hilltop it is a medieval building with a light Georgian interior with painted texts and furnishings that have hardly changed in 200 years.

We then walked on to the village stores, built in recent years and run by the community for the community. It is stocked with West Country produce and everyday groceries. There is also a cafe, picnic tables and a recreation ground ideal for our lunch stop in the sun. Next came a series of 3 stiles to give access across fields before walking the short distance back to Killington station. Stiles are barriers to many while out walking and there is a gradual replacement of them to gates on many paths, always bearing in mind the safety of livestock.

Back at Killington we said goodbye to those returning by train and followed a long bridle path beside the railway before dropping down and over a stream before a steep climb up to the Woody Bay road, again with beautiful views of the surrounding countryside and the railway line far below. Turning right we followed the road back to the station, and the end of our walk.



With grateful thanks to Exmoor National Park for clearing footpath 12 to enable us to walk it and the Moorview Hotel and Lynton and Barnstaple Railway for all their help. Linda

For more information about the train take a look at the Lynton Railway [Website](#)

Walks Programme

Have you had a good look at the new Walks Programme? Isn't it great? You may have noticed some "different" styles of walks listed.

Janice is offering some "Long and Slow" walks, which are of a good length – 7- 10 miles, and of moderate difficulty, but walked at a slower or more leisurely pace than normal. This will give walkers more opportunity to look at and appreciate the views, without the pressure "to keep up" with faster walkers. Faster walkers are, of course, welcome to come on these walks, but hopefully will be mindful of the slower pace, and adjust their walking accordingly.

And in response to many requests from members, In April, Mo starts a series of shorter, leisurely walks (both in pace and terrain) usually with an optional café enroute or at the end. See programme for details.

And..... Tuesday 7th April sees the return of the very popular "Time Out Tuesday" evening walks lead by Gemma. In 2026, Gemma is widening her repertoire of walks, with some in Ilfracombe and Braunton, as well as Bideford and Barnstaple.

We are always looking for more walks, and more walk leaders! If you would like a different style of walk, or have an idea for a walk – do please share it with us. And do please consider becoming a walk leader. Yes there is now some training to be done, but it is pretty straightforward, interesting and useful. And any of the existing walk leaders would be happy to support you, talk through things, reccy walks with you etc, until you become more confident. Just ask. Many of us lead in pairs, which is a great way of sharing the responsibility and the fun. Map reading skills are not always necessary, and can be learned with experience. And remember – your favourite local route is not usually familiar to others, who would be delighted to walk it with you.



Rambling Rogues is our popular WhatsApp group for the sharing of photos, publicising walks and possible changes to walks, and offering car shares. For anyone wishing to join Rambling Rogues, please go to the www.northdevonramblers.org.uk website, and click on the [WhatsApp icon](#) to find a joining "form". It is very easy to do – honest! And this process gives Anne direct confirmation that you are happy to have your name and number on the group. It is also a good opportunity to look at our brilliant and informative [website](#).

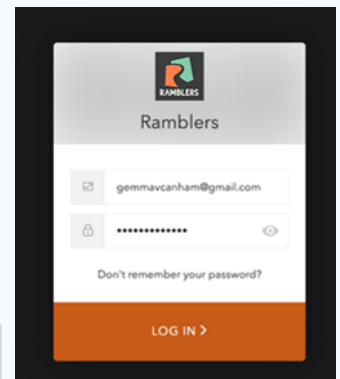
Winter Walking Festival

We have a fabulous 4 day walking festival lined up this winter, with a walk each day from 1st to 4th January. Gemma is trying something different, by leading a 4 mile family walk from Barnstaple Clock Tower on New Years Day. Vanessa is walking at Bampton for 5.5 miles on 2nd January. Janet is leading 8.5 miles from Hartland on the 3rd, and Steve an 8 miler from Hillsford Bridge on the 4th. All great walks, and hopefully something for everyone. Everyone is welcome on our Festival walks, non members as well as members, so do tell all your friends and families about them, and encourage everyone to come along and find out how friendly we all are and how great

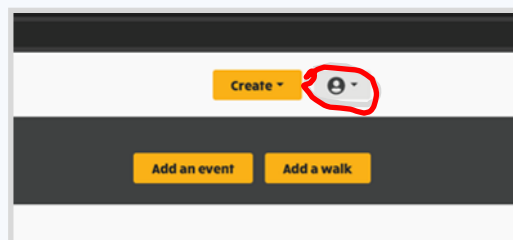
Walk Leaders Contact Preferences

Calling all Walk Leaders. Have you checked your contact preferences on www.ramblers.org.uk?? Yes, we have been banging on about this for a while, but it does make life a lot easier for you, your committee, and any walker who wants to contact you about a walk you are leading. **You** have to give specific permission to be contacted by email and phone, or the message goes to someone on the committee who may not have a clue about your walk. Here's how to do it.

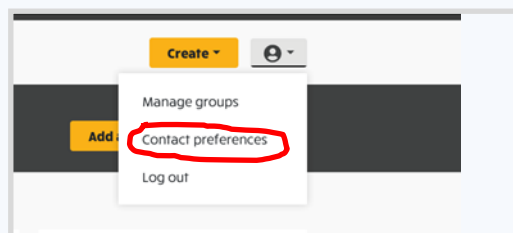
Step 1: Log in to Walks Manager at the following link: <https://walks-manager.ramblers.org.uk/walks-manager>



Step 2: At the top right of the page, click on the person button:



Step 3: Click Contact Preferences



Step 4: Update your permissions and click Save

rg.uk/user/contact-preferences

Use this form to manage how your display name (first name & initial) and contact information are shown on group walks you are leading. We recommend including your name and contact details so that walkers know who to ask if they have questions about the walk, or need to get in touch on the day.

Your display name

Gemma C.

Contact number

07305728883

Email address

gemmavcanham@gmail.com

To change your contact information, please go to My Account, then My Details.

Permission

- ☒ I give permission for my **display name** to be displayed on walks and events
- ☒ I give permission for my **email address** to be used to receive messages via the walks and events contact form
- ☒ I give permission for my **contact number** to be displayed on walks and events

Please note: if you share your display name or phone number, this information will be visible on group walks you are leading which are listed on the Ramblers website and app, or on some group/area websites. If you choose to receive messages to your email via the contact form, your email address will not be publicly shown.

If you choose not to give permission, a group contact number and/or email will be used on group walks you are leading.

Save

Please note, if you chose to not provide either your email or phone number, please let Trudy or Gemma know so that we can update our internal records. Please also let us know if you are doing so because you prefer not to receive communications by email or by phone so we can add these details to the walk information.

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 on the Strand in Barnstaple. Next meeting is 5th February (No meeting in January).



- **1st – 4th January.** Festival of Winter Walks. See programme for details.
- **19th January** – Committee meeting, 7 – 9pm, Castle Centre, Barnstaple. All welcome
- **8th February** – Annual group lunch at The Park Hotel. See Bridget for details or to book a place.
- **6th March** – Skittles evening at The Agricultural Inn, Braunton. See Anne for details or to book a place.
- **16th - 20th March** – Group holiday to Shropshire.

Annual Lunch

Hopefully, you have all heard about the Group's Annual lunch At the Park Hotel on Sunday 8th February 2026. Places are limited, and are filling up fast, so please contact Bridget 07773 023056 as soon as possible if you would like to go.

Skittles

Anne has booked a Skittles evening at The Agricultural Inn (The Aggi) in Braunton, on Friday 6th March 2026, with a finger buffet for £10 each. Again, places are limited, so please contact Anne 07592 880760, as soon as possible if you are interested.



Putsborough Beach taken by Bridget

Thanks to all of our contributors