

**A sign of
the times!**

No. 28

**August
2026**



Welcome to our August Newsletter

A Message from Our Chair

We are coming to the end of a gorgeous (if warm) summer and I hope you have enjoyed plenty of time outdoors with the group. Thanks to everyone who led walks or contributed in any other way this summer. But let's not be fair weather walkers! We have plenty coming up in the Autumn too, and hopefully some indoor events. I hope to see lots of you at the AGM and look forward to discussing lots of ideas for the year ahead. As discussed last year, Ruth will be stepping down as Treasurer this year, and Vanessa has offered to take on the post. However, if you are interested in taking on any of the committee roles, please do get in touch with myself or the incumbent member to discuss further, we would love to have you on board.

Enjoy the walks ahead! ...Gemma

Publicity and Social Media Vacancy

Mo and Hils are doing a brilliant job with publicity for the group, and have proved that the role can easily be shared. However, they are both stepping down at the AGM in November, and we are hoping that one/two or even three people will come forward to continue the good work. Our Facebook presence has grown hugely in the last year, and we all enjoy Mo's reels of photos and videos from the walks. It would be a real shame for our Facebook presence to slide away if no-one continues with regular posts. Maybe you have some different ideas of how we could publicise and celebrate our group? Or maybe you would prefer a more "backroom" role, and submit our walks to local magazines. Several people have found our group from these magazines.

If you think you could help with some of the group publicity or social media, have a chat with Mo or Hils, and find out a bit more about what is involved.

No Entry; No Access; No Trespassing:

By the late 1800s, aspirational walkers would have found nearly half of England's countryside inaccessible to them. From the 1600s to 1860, Parliamentary Enclosure Acts had effectively "fenced off" vast swathes of countryside, much of it being enthusiastically guarded by wealthy landowners unwilling to compromise through any legal channels.

The importance of spending time in the great outdoors was already being recognised in the early 19th century with poets Byron, Coleridge and Wordsworth writing about the inspirational beauty of the 'untamed' countryside, but it wasn't until 1884 that the first freedom to roam bill was introduced to Parliament. Although the bill failed, the campaign was underway...

The early 20th century saw a growing appreciation of the health benefits of exercise in the countryside, especially for people working in industrialised towns and cities. Their demands for greater access led to increasing conflict between landowners and people demanding the freedom to roam. Discontent further increased when no action was taken following a government inquiry in 1931 which had recommended the creation of a 'national park authority' to select areas for designation as national parks.

Frustration at this lack of progress led to an escalation in the numbers of disputes between landowners and walkers, culminating in the Kinder Mass Trespass in the Peak District in 1932. This mass protest was led by 20 year old Benny Rothman. In his role as Lancashire secretary of the British Workers Sports Federation he organised walks and cycling trips for young workers from the cities and mill towns.

The protest that he coordinated involved approximately 400 ramblers in 3 groups. Their plan was to approach Kinder Scout, the Derbyshire Peak District's highest point at over 2000 feet, from 3 different directions. Violent scuffles ensued as landowners sought to protect their land. The protest led to 6 arrests amongst the walkers, 5 of which resulted in prison sentences of up to six months.

In his defence trial at Derby Assizes, Benny Rothman made this statement - "We ramblers, after a hard weeks work, in smoky towns and cities, go out rambling for relaxation and fresh air. And we find the finest rambling country is closed to us....our request, or demand, for access to all peaks and uncultivated moorland is nothing unreasonable". He was imprisoned for 3 months for riot, inciting riot and assault.



No Entry; No Access; No Trespassing: cont.

This harsh treatment of the protestors led to a huge wave of public sympathy which helpfully galvanised the right to roam cause and marked the start of a movement that eventually saw the establishment of the UK's National Parks. In 1931, prior to the trespass, several regional federations had joined forces to form the National Council of Ramblers Federations which subsequently became the Ramblers Association on 1st January 1935.

In 1936, a voluntary sector Standing Committee on National Parks was formed, arguing the case for National Parks and urging the Government to act. The parties who lobbied government included The Ramblers Association, the Youth Hostels Association, the Council for the Preservation of Rural England and the Council for the Protection of Rural Wales. This resulted in the eventual passing of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act in 1949 thus laying the groundwork for the development of National Parks and National Trails.

2026 marks 75 years since the first four National Parks were opened in England and Wales. These were the Peak District National Park in April, the Lake District in May, Eryri/Snowdonia National Park and the Dartmoor National Park in October. Since then, 7 more English National Parks have opened including Exmoor National Park in 1954, and 2 more in Wales.

Scotland's 2 National Parks were added later, Loch Lomond and the Trossachs in 2002 and Cairngorms in 2003. There are also now 20 National Trails across the UK, the latest of which is the King Charles III England Coast Path added this year on 19th March.

For Devon and the South West, the South West Coast Path National Trail added in 1978 along with the already established Dartmoor and Exmoor National Parks provide and protect access to unique and diverse landscapes, memorable walks and spectacular scenery: Dartmoor with its vast, wild moorland and rugged tors and Exmoor, where high moorland meets the dramatic coastline of the Bristol Channel incorporating as well, some of the most challenging sections of the SW Coast Paths 630 miles of cliffs, beaches and estuaries. Both parks are home to distinct and ancient breeds of ponies and herds of red, fallow and roe deer.

These achievements represent an impressive and lasting legacy for Benny Rothman and his accompanying ramblers. In 1982, on the 50th anniversary of the Kinder Mass Trespass, Benny Rothman recalled the moment he addressed the gathering of protesters in the Peak District as they made ready to set off on the Mass Trespass. He said, "There were hundreds of young men and women, lads and girls, in their picturesque rambling gear; shorts of every length and colour, flannels and breeches, even overalls, vivid colours and drab khaki... multi-coloured sweaters and pullovers, army packs and rucksacks of every size and shape".

The Ramblers Association (becoming simply The Ramblers in 2009) is now the primary advocate for walkers in the UK, maintaining thousands of miles of paths and continuing to lobby for the expansion of access to local woodlands and waterways. They are also dedicated to removing barriers so that everyone can enjoy walking in green spaces.

Now across Britain there are 500 ramblers groups with over 100,000 members in all. The North Devon Ramblers group has over 300 members; 800 kilometres of footpaths and covers 1000 square kilometres of land. Regular walks are led weekly over a variety of terrains and distances, often incorporating National Park areas and sections of the South West Coast Path National Trail, but also many of the lesser known footpaths and lanes that risk being lost in the undergrowth through lack of use or maintenance.

Evidence based research now underpins what our forebears knew instinctively - that walking outdoors is good for us!

The pioneering and risky lengths that Benny Rothman and his fellow protesters went to in order to achieve more accessible and protected landscapes marked the start of what is an ongoing campaign to retain and increase access to unspoilt and diverse natural spaces, countryside and coasts. ... Jen Gatehouse

This feature was originally published in the North Devon Gazette. We are always looking for articles to fill our regular slot in the Gazette, to help publicise our group. If you are inspired by Jen's effort and want to get writing please get in touch.

Walks Programme

Trudy is doing a great job with the Walks Programme, and is looking at ways to make it easier for walk leaders to submit walks. We no longer print out a walks programme as many of our walks are now added in as Pop-ups and a printed programme would be quickly out of date. So Trudy is removing the deadline for walks to be submitted a month before a programme period starts, which should help walk leaders by not having to commit so far in advance.

And remember - Pop-up walks can be submitted 7-10 days in advance – they just have to be publicised on the National Walks Manager website for at least 7 days in order to comply with Ramblers insurance.

With the changes in how the walks programme is prepared, and the advent of frequent pop-up walks, some members are finding it a bit disconcerting that walks have appeared that they didn't know about previously. Some members may like to plan their non-walking activities around favourite walks, only to find another good walk has suddenly appeared, and they cannot go as they are busy elsewhere.

As previously described, the facility to add in pop-up walks is really beneficial to the group (more walks) and to Walk Leaders (not having to commit so far in advance), and it is unlikely that the group will return to previous ways/methods of programming. So... how do you think things could be altered to improve people's experience? Do we all need to remember to look at the walks programme online more frequently? Should we ask Walk Leaders to put a message on WhatsApp when they submit a pop-up walk? Should this be a topic of discussion at the October Committee meeting? What a good reason to come along and give your views and ideas, and join in the discussion. Let us know what you think.

Another idea for the future is for Walk Leaders to be able to access Walks Manager "in progress", to see the walks already booked and on which dates, and be able to submit their own walks. Trudy would still have the overall supervision to check location information etc, and be the one to publish the walks "live". Many other Ramblers groups have adopted this facility and find it works well. It also has the advantage that Walk Leaders can access their walk details and edit them – perhaps after the reccy when they might find alterations or particular advice are required.

This facility is not at all compulsory and walk leaders can still submit their walks in the same way that they have been doing. But if any walk leader is interested in having access to Walks Manager, please contact Trudy for more details.

Trudy and Gemma are also looking into ways of describing walks more accurately regarding pace, terrain and breaks. This has long been a tricky area as one person's idea of, for instance, a "moderate" walk is different to the next person's. There will be more information about this topic, and a proposal to look at and comment on at the AGM in November.

Walks

We are always looking for more walks, and walk leaders. Please think about leading a walk yourself. It really doesn't have to be anything "extra special", or "extra anything". We all so enjoy walking with others, that all of our walks are special. There's some really helpful walk training online that Trudy can help you access. Current walk leaders are happy to help with advice on choosing, leading and reccyng walks, and can support you during the walk. Just ask one of them. A walk in an area you know well is a good place to start, and it won't be so well known to others.

If everyone who walks with the group, was involved in suggesting/leading/back marking just one walk a year, we would probably fill at least 6 months with 2 walks a week. And as you know, some walk leaders lead many more than one walk a year.

A big thank you to all our wonderful walk leaders who are so generous with their time, and who lead us on such a brilliant variety of walks in our beautiful area

Day Trip to Lundy

Ten of us took a trip to Lundy on the Oldenburg on 1st August. What a lovely day. Both crossings were smooth and the weather was perfect. On arrival, the majority of us split in to two groups. Once up the big hill, the four of us in our group had a leisurely stroll around the south part of the island. We walked past St. Helen's church, headed towards the Castle and along a little path round the southern tip. We continued on the westward side up to Rocket Pole pond, where we had our lunch. Continuing up, we reached Quarter wall and then walked back to the pub for a well earned pasty and drink. We all enjoyed the peace and tranquillity of Lundy and spotted sika deer, wheatears, highland cattle and lovely butterflies.

The other group walked up the midway path on the East side, past the Harman memorial stone in the old granite quarry, past the bird catcher to the end of the path which took them nearly to the North end of the Island.

They went down to the North Light and then made their way back to the Old Light via the western side where they found the Devils Slide.

Marisco for a quick pint then got lucky to get on a boat that was going to Bideford.

A Super Duper Day !!



A Gallery of pictures from Lundy

SOCIAL EVENTS

We recently had another wonderful meet up opportunity at Vanessa's beautiful garden. Many thanks to Vanessa for hosting the day. The sun shone, and it was very lovely to sit in dappled sunshine and enjoy conversation, a yummy barbeque as well as plentiful tea and cakes. And there was even a hammock!

Some ideas for future social occasions currently in the planning stage are:-

- ◆ Bridget has offered to organise another group lunch in February. This year's event at Park Hotel was very popular, and all that went, felt that it would be good to go there again. But if anyone has another suggestion for a suitable venue, please let Bridget or one of the committee know.
- ◆ Janet is looking at venues suitable for a quiz – and food, of course! So watch out for news on Rambling Rogues or our website, www.northdevonramblers.org.uk.

And don't forget our regular Coffee mornings, 10.30 at Queen Anne's in Barnstaple on the first Thursday of the month. All welcome. And the cakes are really good!

If you have an idea about social activities the group may enjoy, please let us know

Group Funds/First Aid training

At present, our group funds are reasonably healthy, but groups are only allowed to hold a certain amount. If funds exceed the limit, Head office will stop issuing further payments until the balance drops. So - we have some funds to spend for the benefit of the group.

Great, we all think, Where shall we go? What shall we do? BUT (there's always a but) there are rules about what we can spend it on, and social activities are not allowed. Nor, for instance, could we pay for the hire of a coach to take us further afield for a day's walk. Or donate money to another charity.

We can use the money for things like printing and paper and postage costs (we have reduced these hugely in the last couple of years) room hire for meetings, travel expenses for distant Ramblers meetings, and for "educational purposes" such as walk leader training and First Aid courses. With that in mind, Peter is looking into some First Aid training with St John Ambulance service, and will be in touch soon.

We are also looking into whether group funds could pay for room hire for having a speaker. What sort of topic would you find interesting? Maybe Exmoor/Dartmoor Search n Rescue? Or Exmoor/Dartmoor National Park? There must be other ideas – let us know what you think.

If the speaker is a professional or independent, group funds could pay their fee. But if the speaker is from another charity, group funds can only pay for their expenses and possibly a gift, in which case, we might ask attendees to pay a small charge to cover their fee. Would this be acceptable to you? Let us know what you think.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Exmoor National Park

Mike Kelly is one of our Footpath Officers, and he is also on the committee for Exmoor National Park. Mike has also recently been voted on to the Exmoor Access Forum. This gives us a brilliant extra link with all things Exmoor National Park. Any concerns relating to access, footpaths, signage etc on Exmoor can be relayed to [Mike](#).

Car Sharing

Once again, the cost of fuel is rising. And, as lovers of the countryside, we all want to try and “reduce our carbon footprint” where we can. One way is to promote car sharing on group walks. And we would like to encourage all walk leaders to try and offer a suitable car sharing meet up point for walks as part of their walk description. Suggestions for free parking are - Park School car park Barnstaple, Atlantic Village (Affinity) long stay in Bideford, Torrington Commons lower car park. If you know of another suitable place – do let us know.

Hi Vis waistcoats

It has become clear that the majority of walk leaders do not wear a hi vis jacket, and the committee wondered whether and how we should change our policy. After discussion, it was decided that In future – The use/wearing of a Hi Vis waistcoat will be the Walk Leader’s choice. But the committee strongly recommend that Walk Leaders and Backmarkers wear or display a Hi Vis jacket appropriately when walking on main or busy roads, so that they are clearly visible to oncoming traffic from the front and rear of the group. For instance – the Walk leader may choose to hold the hi vis in their outward hand and waft it around – this would be more quickly and easily visible to oncoming drivers (especially in dappled sunshine/shade under trees) than wearing it under a rucksack. Hi Vis jackets are also recommended in poor visibility conditions, and/or with large groups of walkers. Clarice still has some spare hi vis jackets – just ask if you need one. They weigh nothing and scrunch up very small in your rucksack.

Committee Meetings

The committee have decided to reduce the number of committee meetings to three times a year, to be held in October, February and June. If it is not successful, then there is the option to go back to four meetings a year.

The next meeting is on Monday 12th October at the Castle Centre in Barnstaple at 7 - 9pm. We would love for non-committee members to come along to the meetings and join in the discussions about the group activities, walks and other topics, as a wider range of opinions and ideas really help us to make better decisions. Many of the topics we discussed at the most recent meeting are in this newsletter.

!! A SPECIAL INVITATION !!

EXETER & DISTRICT RAMBLERS 2027 WALKING HOLIDAY, HF HOLIDAYS BUXTON MONDAY 18TH OCTOBER TO FRIDAY 22ND OCTOBER 2027

We would like to open up our 2027 walking holiday to our friends in the other Devon Ramblers groups. Our autumn 2027 walking holiday will be at HF Holidays' Lee Wood Hotel at Buxton in the heart of the Peak District. This is HF's latest acquisition which opens to guests at the end of January 2027 and replaces Peveril of the Peak which is to be sold. For more information about the house please visit: <https://www.hfholidays.co.uk/country-houses/locations/central-peak-district>

This location will offer us access to superb walking in the Peak District National Park. It is some 20 miles north of Peveril of the Peak where we walked in 2023 so the walking should be quite different. It is also near Buxton railway station which will be a definite advantage for some of us. We have been offered four nights commencing Monday 18th October. This is different from previous holidays being both longer and mid-week. There will be a full programme of walks led by Exeter & District group's walk leaders designed to suit varying levels of ability.

The price of your holiday includes breakfast, packed lunch and dinner. Transport to and from Buxton is not included. We encourage guests to make arrangements to car share or to use public transport. The cost of the holiday will be approximately £500 per person assuming that we get enough confirmed bookings to achieve sole occupancy of the house. If we do not, supplements will apply. Guests will be advised nearer the time of the final amount due.

As ever, there are only a very limited number of single occupancy rooms and these have already been filled although there will be a reserve list. We hope that some people will be happy to share so that as many people who wish to come can do so.

Next Steps: Please register your interest with Janet (buxton2027@gmail.com) as soon as possible. Please indicate your room preference (and whether willing to share), dietary and/or any other specific requirements. Details of how to pay your deposit will then be sent to you.

Key Dates: Initial deposit £175 per person due around 11th January 2027. Final balance due around 19th July 2027. Looking forward to another great walking holiday. ... Ian Wroe

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.



- **Monday 12th May** - Committee Meeting at Castle Centre, Barnstaple. All welcome.
- **Saturday 17th October** - Deven Area Meet-Up Day (details, see below).
- **Saturday 21st November** - AGM 2pm at Goodleigh Village Hall (See below).

Devon Area Ramblers Meet-Up Day

This year, South Hams Ramblers are hosting an Area meet up day on Saturday 17th October at South Brent, with a choice of 3 walks from The Station House Hotel. There will time to socialise afterwards, and a Picture Quiz. Details will be included in our walks programme.

It's a long way for us to travel, but it would be great if some could support the day. Maybe make a weekend of it, and explore more of the area? Meeting and walking with other Ramblers groups is a great way of networking and hearing about other ideas, as well as seeing more of our county.

Next AGM

The AGM will be at 2pm on Saturday 21st November at Goodleigh Village Hall, with a similar format to the last few years. A choice of morning walks, the opportunity to eat your packed lunch in the hall with a cup of tea or coffee provided, and a tasty piece of cake for dessert! The formal meeting starts at 2pm. Donations of cakes, as always, gratefully received.

We will have some "Ideas Tables" at the AGM, to ask members for their opinions, thoughts and ideas about a range of topics. Do you have an idea you would like the group to think about? Do let us know, and we may be able to display it during the meeting. You can be anonymous, or have your name displayed, tis your choice.

Southern Spain

Leon will be in Spain from 27th October for the season. If there are any members who are interested in doing some Spanish Walking later this year then please contact Leon directly. No commitment at this stage but if there is sufficient interest this can be taken further.

Fancy some Autumn sun, good walking, tapas and wine then contact **Leon** on **07836 552280**

Thanks to all of our contributors