

3. **Cropping of Paths** – If a cross-field Right of Way is found to be cropped it is important to report it to the Highway Authority (Somerset County or North Somerset). See page 2
4. **A303/A358 Dualling** – we have been consulted over the detailed route of the section between Sparkford and Podimore and been able to agree safe alterations to the RoWs. The detailed proposal for the widening of the A358 has been delayed.
5. **Long Standing Obstructions** – Little action appears to have taken place on the key obstructions that we have identified to SCC. I would welcome suggestions on how we could proceed. The routes identified are seen as key in the network.
6. **SCC Classification of RoW** – The County Council has contacted all Parish Councils to ask them to check the classification of all RoWs in their Parish. The CC previously classified all RoWs about 10 years ago and wants to up-date these. The Area Chair has tried to ensure that Ramblers point of view on the classification is also taken into account. The tendency is to downgrade them wherever possible to avoid maintenance costs.

Carl Earl

**Annual Membership stands at 102,312 (down 2% on last year).
Area membership is also down 2%.**

A NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

If you have any news that you feel would be of interest to Somerset members or would like to comment on any current issue then please send them to me. Entries for the next issue should be sent by 15th June to email: mavis@monahan.co.uk

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SOMERSET RAMBLER



Volunteer Check In - please take a few minutes to update your account details by [logging into your account](#). Some current profiles will be inaccurate.. For further details please contact Cleo Parthenoglou, Volunteer Check -In co-ordinator, on 0203 9613188 volunteersupport@ramblers.zendesk.org.uk.

Website incident - please remain vigilant

On 18 November 2018 the Ramblers' website suffered a ransom-ware incident. It is under investigation and there is still no evidence that any personal information was extracted. Any questions or concerns? Please contact our data protection officer, Felix Wilkey, who will be happy to help: felix.wilkey@ramblers.org.uk or 020 3961 3254

Data transformation - Would you like to try the next version of the app?

Ramblers' developed and piloted a mobile walk register app in 2018. Following the feedback version one (v1) was developed and has been tested by groups across GB. You can [find more about the app and how to download and use it](#). V2 was ready in February 2019. In addition to registering walks, new features will include the ability to look up your group members, search for walks across GB and a mobile membership card. If you would like to try out v2 as soon as it arrives please email MobileApps@ramblers.zendesk.com.

Path maintenance volunteers - please make contact

George Redmayne (an experienced delivery officer) is now leading a GB project on path maintenance. George will be working with volunteers to compile a comprehensive picture of our current path maintenance groups: how they are currently supported by both local authorities and the Ramblers, to find better ways to celebrate and support the fantastic work being done. For more information, or if your team is facing challenges, george.redmayne@ramblers.org.uk 0203 9613180.

An apology from the Editor

My apologies for errors that crept into the last issue especially my naming of Somerset Walking Group as 'West Somerset Walking Group'

Who Owns Public Paths ?

Many people, including some Ramblers, assume we walk public paths and bridleways with the kind consent of the landowner. This is not the case as you have the same right to walk them as you have to drive your car on a public road. While the landowners interests and needs should be taken into account the right to use recorded Rights of Way is absolute unless a legal, usually temporary, closure by the Highway Authority is in place.

If many people, including many path users, believe that public paths belong to the landholders whose land they pass over are they right? The National Farmers' Union, the Country Landowners' Association, and the Countryside Commission, in an early edition of their booklet "Managing Public Access" said: "In simple terms, the surface of a highway, whether a public right of way or a road, is owned by the Highway Authority rather than the owner of the land over which it passes."

If local 'landowners' understood that they do not, in the majority of circumstances, own the surface of the paths, or at least that any ownership is subservient to the Highway Authority's ownership, then they might not feel such a sense of personal possession of these little public highways. They could then treat them more like they treat the public roads which cross their holdings, and be less concerned at public use and less likely to try to move or to disturb these little ways.

If Highway Authority officers fully understood that the paths are their official property then that would help to direct their actions when for example local 'landowners' plough up their paths or obstruct them. Indeed in certain cases the Path Officers can act at once under common law as owners of the paths without waiting for the sometimes tediously lengthy and time consuming statutory processes.

While we accept that changes need to be made from time to time to the RoW network, Ramblers view is that RoW are historic routes and they should only be altered for good reason and we should have the opportunity to consider any changes before they proceed.

This is one of the key jobs that our hardworking footpath secretaries undertake on your behalf.

Carl Earl, Area Footpath Secretary

MENDIP RAMBLERS' AUGUST BANK HOLIDAY FREE WALKING FESTIVAL: 24/25/26 August 2019

This year's festival is based in **Shepton Mallet**, the Somerset town noted now mainly for its cider making, but with a long history. There are Neolithic and Iron Age remains and Bronze Age burial sites nearby. The town sits just off the Fosse Way: the old Roman Road and evidence of Roman settlements can still be seen. Shepton features in the Domesday record as Sceptun meaning sheep farm with the second part of its name deriving from the French Malet family who acquired the land after the Norman Conquest. There are Norman effigies in the Church of St Peter & St Paul.

For many years it was a prosperous market town whose wealth came from the woollen trade. Now, as well as the cider, it offers excellent walking opportunities for all.

The Walking There will be 4 walks each day. The short morning walks (3/4 miles) can be extended after lunch with the short afternoon walks of similar length. The medium walks will be 7 miles and the long walks 11 miles.

We hope that the availability of two short walks will encourage walkers of all abilities to join us. Children with their families are especially welcome.

Morning walks start at 10.00am and the afternoon walk at 1.30pm.

As usual, tea and cake will be available at the end of each walk.

Walks will start from: Shepton Mallet Leisure Centre, 11 Charlton Rd, Shepton Mallet, Somerset BA4 5PG.

For more information go to www.mendipramblers.co.uk or contact Kevin on 01749 672996

Area Footpath Secretary's Report

- 1. Claim for path at Blue Anchor** –West Somerset, applied to the Secretary of State to require the County Council to process the application. The Secretary of State agreed our request and the County must now deal with the application this year.
- 2. Changes to the definitive map** – we continue to receive consultations on changes to RoW which are sent to the relevant Group FPS for consideration. This provides the opportunity, if we do not object to the proposal outright (which may result in the application being withdrawn), to suggest alternatives which the highway authority can put to the applicant.

Woodspring Ramblers

A relatively quiet period except for the Christmas festivities. Our annual pre-Christmas walk over the Mendips from Priddy was changed this year because the group had really outgrown the Queen Victoria. We were getting well over 30 members trying to have a meal in what is a very nice pub but, unfortunately, is a little too small. We changed our venue, walk and the day from a Sunday to a Thursday and started from The Burrington Inn at Burrington with Nina and Janice providing a lovely 5-mile walk in the area. The group returned to the Burrington for a very nice lunch. There were still about 30 members so changing everything did not affect the numbers attending. We will discuss this venue again but are not sure if the Burrington will be available next time as it has been taken over by the Yeo Valley group.

The group also enjoyed the annual post-Christmas walk around Wavering Down with mince pies and mulled wine during the walk. Our walk leader nearly always manages to get good weather for the stop for the food and drink even though we have sometimes had rain and snow just prior to it. Probably something to do with Robin being an ex Met. man.

The footpath maintenance team continue at full strength with the installation of many kissing gates, ped. gates and repair of footbridges in the North Somerset area. At one point a small number of the team had to become herders to remove a herd of cattle along the footpath where they were to install new gates. It makes a change from the cattle eating a car as happened a few years ago. Planning for our 2019 holidays is well underway, going to St. Ives in March and then a weekend in the Fire Service College at Moreton-in-Marsh: an interesting venue but we have received some excellent reviews. Our annual week-long holiday will be in the Lake District, based in Windermere. After such a successful holiday in Austria last year we are looking at a return trip (but a different area) in 2020.

Membership has risen to 203 from 200 or just below. It doesn't sound a great increase but it is pleasing to know that new members are joining and walking with some of the members that have not actually walked, leaving the group. Not sure how we can entice non-walkers out because some members are happy to support Ramblers without actually taking part.

David Thompson, Chair

Group Reports

South Somerset Ramblers

Membership has fallen from 263 to 258 as at 1 October 2018.

Our Christmas Lunch was once again held at the Muddled Man, West Chinnock and was attended by 68 members. The team at the pub produced an excellent meal, enjoyed by all. The walk beforehand was organised by Daphne Denny in the local area.

John Oliver has organised another group walking holiday to Minorca in April 2019. Phil Bradshaw led a successful ramble near Alhampton, a new area for our group. This picture shows the group gathered on Boulters Bridge.



The Group AGM was held on Saturday 4 November at East Coker Village Hall. Derek Lucas led a walk beforehand and members provided a wide variety of cakes afterwards. All South Somerset walks now appear on the Walk Finder.

Linda Fawthrop, Joint Chair

Sedgemoor & Area Ramblers

The group's AGM took place at the end of October at a new venue, Berrow Village Hall, which was considered to be a more central point. All serving committee members had agreed to stand again for the following year and were re-elected. During the October – December period our walking programme continued weekly and our footpath working party also continued its work.

Another set of footpath surveys was completed for Somerset County Council and training for the task was arranged with a Rights of Way officer.

The Christmas meal took place at Enmore Golf Club and was well attended. The Mince Pie and Bubbly walk took place on 23rd December but was not as well attended as in past years possibly because it was so close to Christmas.

In addition to our usual weekly walks our plans for 2019 include an away-day walk in Plymouth. We are teaming up with Stowey Walking to lead two walks in their walking festival on Saturday and Sunday 23rd and 24th June. Holidays will take place in the Peak District in May, the Isle of Man in June and Eastbourne in September. Plans are afoot for the summer outing to Swanage in Dorset in late June and our annual summer lunch will take place in July.

Edward Levy, Chair

Mendip Group

On 1st of September our membership was 332 up by 1 from the time last year. The working party remains very active and worked 48 weeks in 2018 putting in 38 kissing gates, 27 Stratford gates, 16 bridges 46 fingerposts and achieved 76 path clearances and 34 stile repairs.

Mendip Ramblers 2019 walking festival will be at Shepton Mallet (see page 7).

Our group holiday this year is in April at Eastbourne. Bob & Rosemary Berry are running a self-booking holiday walking the Usk Valley Way from Newport to Brecon at the end of April and Tony and Jane Dyson are running a self-booking holiday at the end of September in St Malo.

Les Stather, Chair

Taunton Deane Group

The Group aims to continue offering four walks per week - on Wednesday afternoons, Friday evenings and Sundays (all day and half day). Numbers attending have generally been holding up, but it has been a struggle at times to find new walk leaders. Efforts continue, however, and some good ideas for events during 2019 have been coming forward - as the saying goes, watch this space.

The Group's AGM was held on 23rd November at the Friends Meeting House in Bath Place, Taunton, which everyone agreed was a very good venue. Many thanks are due to Dot, Lynda and Judi for the accompanying refreshments.

As a change from the normal Wednesday and Friday walks, Janice and Alan Cockett organised a 'Walls, Wharves and Würstchen' walk in Exeter, which included sections of the Exe, the City Wall, and an opportunity to partake of seasonal fare at the Christmas Market. Despite very dull weather, the afternoon was a lot of fun and was enjoyed by all who took part.

Continuing the seasonal theme, the annual Christmas Meal was held on 14th December at the Allerford Inn, a new venue for this event which was generally well-received. Following the success of the 2018 event, the post-Christmas Lunch was once again held at Somerset County Cricket Club - this year with a grandstand view of the ground from the Long Room.

Val Norris has taken over the role of Membership Secretary from Wendy Camp, who has carried out this important task for nine years. Many thanks to Val for offering to do this, and thanks especially to Wendy for all her efforts.

Philip Bissett, Chair

West Somerset Group

The West Somerset Group continues with the usual two and sometimes three walks per week with the exception that, following last years 40th Celebrations, we intend to repeat members' favourite walks and a Tea Party at Allerford during 2019.

We have a walking weekend 29 - 31 March at Brecon with HF Holidays and 30 members have now booked. There has been very little interest for a weekend in Derbyshire for March 2020 so this may be changed.

The spring coach outing will be to the Woolacombe / Ilfracombe area in May and the autumn coach trip will finish at the National Trust 's Killerton House.

We are hoping for a resolution of the closed Blue Anchor Bay footpath this year. The Somerset County Council has until the 2 October 2019 to determine the application.

Gerald Swayne, Chair