

Newsletter



RAMBLERS

Isle of
Wight

Introduction

Welcome to our latest Isle of Wight Ramblers Newsletter. We do hope that you will find some interesting articles to read and perhaps pass it on to any friends. Feedback is important to us, so please submit your own ideas and articles for future inclusion.

Best rambling wishes,

David Yates

Chair Person and Newsletter Editor

Combined Committees

Despite a membership of just over 400 members, due to the lack of volunteers to fill all posts, our combined Area and Group committees now meet just four times a year – instead of each committee meeting every two months. However, despite this streamlining and a still with almost 400 members, we are really struggling to fill vacant committee posts. As well as Chairing the combined committee, producing this annual Newsletter, acting as the Parish Footpath Representative's Coordinator, being the Parish Footpath Representative for Shorwell and leading a large number of long distance walks, I am also currently covering the vacant Secretary and Membership Secretary roles. This is clearly far too much voluntary responsibility for one person to carry – and I do not intend to do so for much longer. In addition to this alarming situation, we also have a vacancy for Countryside Office. The committee cannot function fully without these key positions being filled, so we urge all members to consider stepping forward and helping to share the administrative load in any way possible. Please contact me if you have any spare time available. The future of Isle of Wight Ramblers is in YOUR hands.

Wight Sole

Wight Sole membership is gradually increasing with regular walks taking place and walkers from both groups attending. It's great to see the groups mixing and everyone enjoying a walk on a Sunday. Any Rambler's member or prospective members are welcome on any ramblers walk.

Walks Programme

Sadly, despite having about twenty-five registered walk leaders, we appear to have only about four of these who regularly lead walks, so we are urgently seeking to increase the number and variety of walks on offer to attract a wider audience. If you are able to lead walks, please try to commit to leading a few walks every year. If you are a regular walker, please consider becoming a walk leader. Full training is available. If you are not keen on leading, but would like to share a favourite walk, please contact Steve Gibson with your ideas and he will try to team you up with someone to lead the walk for you. Any type of walk will be considered, be it at weekends, during the week, evenings, short or long distance; even night walks and beach walks, or walks with a particularly interesting rest stop or after-walk feature. Please volunteer to lead some walks and/or submit some new walking ideas.

Isle of Wight Walking Festivals

Equally alarming is the dwindling support for our Spring and Autumn Walking Festivals. Very few Ramblers now seem to submit walks – whereas in the not-too-distant past we formed the majority of the programmes. Please consider leading a walk during the festivals. They are a great way of advertising Ramblers. If you are not confident of entering a walk on the Visit Isle of Wight website, please e-mail them: info@visitwight.org

New and Improved Guidance for Walks – by Steve Gibson, our Walks Programme Coordinator

I thought that I should write a little to you all regarding new procedures for our walks. These are very recent, arriving in May, and they are currently being discussed by Areas and Groups of the Ramblers countrywide. In particular there is a document dealing with the Ramblers' approach to walking on the Island, which you will get when it is ready.

This new slant began largely as a result of the pandemic and the restrictions that we had, and the national Ramblers' desire to introduce something which was 'tighter' as far as walk leading was concerned. For several years we found ourselves with a number of new measures, initially coming out of the pandemic, including the need on every occasion to do a walk recce and retain a written risk assessment. Both of these were unnecessary, as far as walks on the island were concerned. Indeed they resulted in some people no longer leading walks - a serious blow to a central activity of the Ramblers on the island.

However we now have what is, in my opinion, a good result, and it comes after a lot of consultations taken by the head office. The new Walk Leader Handbook describes the national Ramblers' revised approach. Critically "As a walk leader, you must always plan and assess the risks in advance", but there is no longer a requirement to save a written risk assessment, though obviously the need for suitable planning remains. Similarly doing a recce may be good, in terms of finding out about the terrain, the likely length of time that it will take and any obstacles, but it is not compulsory.

The handbook outlines the approach to walk leading and breaks it down into eight guiding principles:

We work as a team

We lead walks within our capabilities

We manage the group size

We help walkers come prepared

We plan in advance

We prepare for emergencies

We pack the right kit

We are flexible and adaptable

If it sounds sensible, that is because, in the main, it is.

If you are a walker primarily, then there is also some good advice for you. Regardless how new a walker you might be, (or one with lots of experience) you should always try to make sure you choose the right walk. It should be within your capabilities. If you are unsure about anything then you can discuss it with your walking group or walk leader. Clothing and footwear are also important for

walkers. Checking the weather forecast can help you select the clothing and footwear you should bring on the day. It's important walkers follow any instructions shared and you should also observe the Countryside Code.

Overall the emphasis in the handbook is about leading walks. I don't plan to go into this now, but I thought that it might be good to talk about the Ramblers' online training programme for walk leaders. It is worth saying that this training is open to any Ramblers member, and you don't have to intend to lead walks to book on it. And the speed that you go at is entirely up to you. If you want to feel better equipped then maybe the walk leader training is for you.



Please note that people who were recorded on the Walks Manager (that's the new system for publishing walks) up to 15 May (in other words people who were existing Walk Leaders then) will NOT need to go through this training. If you want to be a new walk leader now you will have to go through this online programme, which is said to take about two and a half hours, before you can publish walks on the system.

There are three training modules, which are mandatory:

Walk Leader Handbook (that simply involves you saying that you have a copy of this document)

Walk Leadership Foundation, which takes about 90 minutes

Preventing and Managing Incidents, which takes around 60 minutes.

As well as the formal training, there is an awful lot of information for all walkers on the Go Walking section, from ideas of where to walk to buying kit. The Walking Advice section has good tips for you, including a very good section on navigation, with lots of easy, but useful hints. I would particularly recommend the "Beginners Guide to Navigation".

I hope that this short intro will encourage you to get online and check out the latest iteration of the Ramblers' guidance. Hopefully I'll be doing the same myself and finding out exactly what the new training includes, and be getting back to you with some more thoughts next time.

The Walk Leader Handbook is a free 16-page online mini-book. You can download it at <https://cdn.ramblers.org.uk/media/files/walk-leader-handbook.pdf>

Forthcoming walks are as listed in our Isle of Wight Ramblers website:

www.iowramblers.com/walks/walks-programme



Unfit for a King

6 May 2024 was a historic day for Isle of Wight Ramblers when a protest rally was held in East Cowes. David Howarth explains how the day unfolded.

Background

Legislation was passed in 2009 to create a 2700mile National Trail, The King Charles III England Coast Path. About half of the route has been implemented and enjoyed by users. However, no part of the Island path has been implemented and the stretch from East Cowes to Wootton has not yet been published. It could be the very last section to be decided. Indications from Natural England suggest that the path will be diverted from the coast and onto the busy A3021. English Heritage are refusing access along 300m of the coast saying that security of the Royal Collection is at risk.

Our Campaign Rally

Three walks were arranged leading into East Cowes. These walks highlighted the fact that there are no public rights of way between East Cowes and Whippingham. The residents of East Cowes have no access into the countryside.



An exhibition was staged in East Cowes Town Hall and an open meeting held which was chaired by Kate Ashbrook, Vice President of The Ramblers. Mike Slater gave the presentation. The ample venue was full to overflowing with members, local residents and numerous politicians.

A picnic in the park was arranged by Carol Henley and her team where our rally team met and gathered placards and a banner. The rain did not dampen spirits as the large group proceeded to Osborne House where there was further press coverage.



A film of the event was made and can be seen here. <https://youtu.be/WvCzfC0zF2I>

Effectiveness of the campaign

It was pleasing to see so many people engaged with our campaign. There was a lot of coverage in social media, the cover story in County Press and major articles in The Guardian, The Times and the Telegraph.

Further discussions are on-going with senior staff at English Heritage and Natural England who are responsible for the implementation of the new trail.

The Future

Natural England say that their report will be issued in December. We will discuss this with our new MP Richard Quigley who has been supportive of our campaign. We are also encouraging members of English Heritage to write to their Chief Executive complaining about their approach to access at Osborne.

Barbecue at Shanklin and Sandown Rowing Club – Wed 14 July

Our annual barbecue was once again held at Shanklin and Sandown Rowing Club for Ramblers and anyone else interested in walking and our footpath network on the island. Numbers were considerably lower than last year's 45, but a good time was still had by all. Ideas for a different, perhaps more central Island location, would be welcomed for next year. Volunteers to actually organise and produce the barbecue are also sought.

Social Programme

A varied and vibrant social programme is important to our group. Ann Cable leads our Social Committee, keenly supported by Carol Henley, Ann Parker and myself. We aim to provide some sort of social event every few weeks. Ideas to expand our social programme and attract more walkers would be warmly welcomed. Future events are as follows:

Jamaican Goatober Buffet Evening – Viv's Cooking, Sandown ***Saturday 19 October***

Try a variety of goat and other Jamaican dishes

Halloween Fancy Dress Trick or Treat Buffet Evening – Castle Inn, Newport ***Thursday 31 October***

Perform a trick, sing a song, read a poem,
tell a spooky story, bring a treat for the raffle

Christmas Lunch – Shanklin Conservative Club ***Date and times TBC***

HOLIDAYS – Jackie Hough

As many of you may know, I have organised a fair few holidays over the past 30 years, it started with a long weekend walking in Dorset, progressed to an annual week with HF Holidays and since the Millenium have enjoyed many walking weeks abroad. In 2010 I was contacted by Travelsphere who had just won an award for Best Group Tour Operator and to celebrate they were offering 12 places for Group Organisers to sample a holiday in Kenya. I had to write in less than 200 words why I thought I should be considered for a place and to my surprise I was chosen. I had an amazing time and met other Group Organisers who encouraged me to join the Association of Group Travel Organisers, subsequently becoming Membership Secretary. This opened up a whole new world of travel and led me to organising group holidays with several companies including Travelsphere to Kenya, Vietnam and India, Cruising to Scandinavia, the Caribbean and the Baltic with P&O Ferries. Many countries in Europe have been the destination for our group walking holidays and in recent years I have used Travel Editions who now tailor make our Itinerary to suit the ability of our walkers and include for non-walking partners.

Our latest holiday being:

SICILY'S AEOLIAN ISLANDS – October 2023

Following a Familiarisation Trip in April which showed me some good walking trails on these little known Islands, a holiday for 25 persons was arranged. The Aeolian archipelago is made up of seven Islands of important volcanic origin, the island of Stromboli contains one of the most active volcanoes in the world. The Group flew to Catania in Sicily, transferred by coach to Milazzo and onwards by Hydrofoil to the Island of Lipari before a short walk to the Hotel Rocce Azzure which sits on a rocky outcrop right by the sea!

The first days walk was through the paved cobbled streets in the old part of the town, still home to fishermen, to the Diana quarter to see the Greek/Roman necropolis and up to the Cittadella, a site which has been inhabited since 5000 BC, ending in Marina Corta, the charming fishermen's square with its quaint cafes.

The photograph shows the Group at Quattrocchi Viewpoint, the panorama is one of the most impressive in the Aeolian Islands with views to the Island of Vulcano. A walk from here taking the old stone mule-track, crossing olive groves, with great views of the Islands of Alicudi, Filicudi



and Salina, to the St. Calogero Spa, a Thermal Baths dating from the 4th century BC. After a rural lunch on a family Agriturismo the walk continued through the villages to pumice quarries with spectacular views of the Islands of Panarea and Stromboli.

Travelling to the nearby Island of Vulcano by private boat for a tour of the Island, followed by a walk up to the crater of Vulcanello. It is considered extinct, but past volcanic activity has led to the creation of bizarre rock forms from the lava sculpted by the sea breezes, it is known as the Valley of the Monsters. Lunch followed in a family fish restaurant back down in Vulcano.

Following a free morning where some swam off the Sun Terrace in the warm Aegean Sea, an early lunch, then the Group headed for the Harbour. Again travelling by private boat with a stop on the Island of Panarea for a short guided walkabout of the village of Saint Peter, they continued by boat to Stromboli where a steep walk up to Saint Vincent was well worth it for a pizza dinner in the oldest restaurant in the village. The group then boarded the private boat to a safe distance at sea to watch the almost daily event of the volcano's spectacular light and fire display from the craters, arriving back at the Hotel late evening.

With walks on four days and leisurely sightseeing including exploration of Lipari, a walk up to the great crater on Vulcano and the spectacular Sciara del Fuoco lava flow on Stromboli, island hopping by local ferry and excellent local cuisine, a holiday in these wonderful islands was a superb experience.

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This years planned holiday in September is a two centre holiday, flying to Corfu for a couple of days, transferring by Hydrofoil to Sarande to pick up the coach for our journey through Albania to the little known mountainous region of Epirus in northern Greece to explore the Pindos National Park.

I feel the time has now come for me to "hang up my boots" so to speak or perhaps it's because my Travel Insurance is increasingly higher but for these holidays and day trips to continue, we do need somebody keen on travel to take over. I have agreed to arrange next year's holiday which is likely to be in Portugal, a destination we haven't yet discovered on foot so if anyone would like to shadow me with this one with a view to taking over, then of course I would be happy to give any help and advice to get someone started and now recently made an Honorary Member of the Group Travel Association I have some good contacts with Travel Companies.

J.hough2012@btinternet.com

Footpath Secretary – Mike Slater

Mike leads our largest sub-committee, with a wide range of commitments. Here is a snapshot of some of the main things that are regularly or currently being dealt with.

Parish Footpath Representatives

We have roughly 550 miles of rights of way on the island and some time ago these were sectioned off into parishes of about twenty-five miles. Some of these were subsequently divided and we now have a total of thirty parishes. I coordinate the recruitment of new representatives as and when vacancies occur. The responsibilities are quite simply to visit all footpaths within the parish at least twice a year – and report any problems to the Council's Public Rights of Way department. Full training is given. If you are interested, please drop me a message. We currently have no vacancies, but we are always on the lookout for 'deputies' to support our Reps, so if you would like to assist with any footpath survey work anywhere on the island do let me know and I will pass on your details to the Rep concerned. If you happen to spot any problems when out on a walk, you could of course report the problem directly to PROW, where Jennine and the team will welcome your reports. jennine.gardiner@iow.gov.uk

Footpath Maintenance Team

Tim Marshall leads our Footpath Minor Maintenance Team, who meet up on a regular basis to help fix footpath problems that are perhaps out of the range of the PROW department. Repairing or installing new steps is a common feature of their work. The team are always looking for new volunteers with practical skills.

Footpath Minor Maintenance Team – by Tim Marshall

My advice to those about to retire is “Don’t tell anyone!” Within a fairly short time of retiring from P&O, I had been persuaded to become the chairman of the village association, recruited to be the editor of Wightwash (the Isle of Wight CAMRA branch magazine) and landed the job of coordinator of the IW Ramblers/Public Rights of Way Department (PROW). I’m still slightly puzzled about the last one, as at the time I wasn’t a member of the Ramblers and I certainly didn’t work for PROW. I inherited an email list and a shed full of tools in various stages of decay. It soon became apparent that resurrecting the work party wouldn’t to work. The few who responded to my email told me that, in general, time had taken its toll. I was a bit disappointed, however, after a discussion with a couple of experienced footpath enthusiasts, it occurred to me that several jobs could be tackled by individuals, which, in turn, could free up the PROW department to deal with other issues. I set up the Minor Maintenance website. Have a look - www.mmiwp.co.uk Since its inception, we have dealt with around 50 issues. You will not be surprised to learn that we could do with a few more volunteers. If you can wield a pair of secateurs or have a portable stepladder and jiffy cloth, please let me know. My email address is tim@rookley.net. I’d be very pleased to hear from you. Oh, I’m now an official member of the Isle of Wight Ramblers. Cheers! Tim Marshall (chair of RVA, editor of Wightwash, president of CGHS, webmaster of Minor Maintenance, bass player for various am-dram productions, footpath surveyor for ROW... etc.) – You’ve been warned!

Historic Lost Ways – Gaps and Links

Mike Slater and Linda Jones are leading a project to research and recover historic lost ways. Together with their small team they are researching amongst other things Estate Maps, Holloway Records, and IOW Highway Commission documents. This work ties in nicely with another project of Mike’s – to identify gaps and create better links in our Island’s footpath network. If the right historical evidence can be found, many new routes could be established.

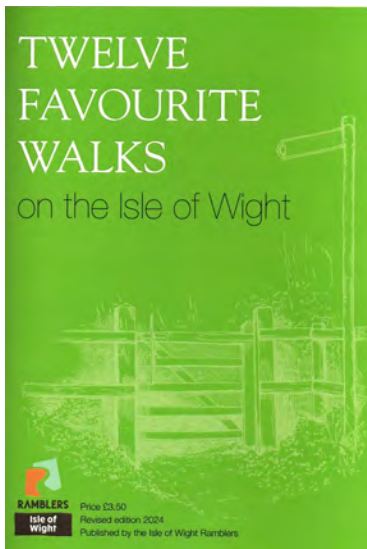
New Coastal Footpath

Planning, approval and implementation of Natural England’s new coastal footpath continues to progress – albeit painfully slowly from our point of view. Improvement works on some of the southern sections has begun. The routes for other sections are still going through the Natural England five-stage process – most notably at Norris Castle, Osborne House and Barton Manor. Their final report for the section East Cowes to Wootton is now expected next month – when they may also reveal a planned opening date for the entire Island route. The new coastal footpath will not only create a wonderful opportunity to broadcast the Island to the world, but also create a few employment opportunities – and help to promote Ramblers.

Coastal Erosion

According to a variety of reports, the global sea level appears to have risen by about 33mm in the past ten years. The increasingly melting polar ice caps and glaciers all over the world have also resulted in an ever-increasing moisture level in our atmosphere – with resultant increased rainfall. This has been much evidenced on the Island, where we have seen the increasingly frequent erosion of our coastline and river banks. The global sea level may continue to rise by as much as another metre, so far worse erosion and flooding is heading our planet's way! When out walking, please keep your eye out for consequential rainfall and flood damage – and report it to Jennine at the PROW office.

Island Walking Guidebooks



Isle of Wight Ramblers has published a series of five walking guides to assist walkers find attractive routes to follow.

Whilst many people use smartphone apps to navigate, the paper guides are still very popular and realise an important source of income for our charity.

Our latest update will be the 2024 version of "Twelve Favourite Walks" and will be published this Summer. The cost is £3.50

All publications are distributed by our wholesaler across the Island. We have an online shop at www.iowramblers.com and books sent by post via the wholesaler.

We will not be selling books or maps at Wolverton Show this year. We do have some stock and we can offer this to members at a special discount email **davidhowarth220@gmail.com** for details.

Spotlight on David Howarth

David Howarth was born in Bromsgrove, Worcestershire in 1948. After leaving school he completed an Open University degree as a he trained part time to become a Chartered Chemist, and an Environmental Manager. Later he qualified as a Chartered Manager with the Open University. He then worked in the Midlands as a Chemist and in 1972, David was appointed as the Chief Scientist for Thames Water, based at High Wycombe. Whilst there, he gained an increasing interest in the countryside. David was lucky to be able to retire at the age of fifty. After spending a year in Egypt, he returned to High Wycombe, where amongst other things, he performed voluntary duties for the Chiltern Society – eventually becoming a Trustee and Membership Secretary – and first encountered a Donate-a-Gate scheme. David joined Ramblers in the 1990s and regularly led short-distance walks. After moving to the Island in 2008, David met

photo required

John Gurney-Champion during a walking festival walk, and at the following AGM he was elected Chairman of Isle of Wight Ramblers – succeeding Mike Marchant. As Chairman, David has championed his own Donate-a-Gate scheme and generally seeking to improve access for all. Over the years, he has performed many voluntary roles for Isle of Wight Ramblers, most notably when he was Chair, Secretary, Treasurer, Walk Talk Editor, Publicity and Marketing Officer – all at the same time!

David's favourite walks are close to his Totland home – at Headon Warren and all over the West of Wight. Due to his relentless efforts, David has now helped to commission over 280 new gates for the Island. His funding-application prowess has also helped to gather large amounts of money for several access-improvement projects on the Island. With Mike Slater and others, he has played a major leading role in pushing forward proposals for the King Charles III England Coast Path – the full harvest of fruits from which he still pursues with great enthusiasm. David has been a great voluntary servant to Ramblers – both on and off the Island. Long may he continue to walk, talk and champion access for all.

Letters to the Editor

We received no letters or responses from any members following the last newsletter in July 2023, but we do encourage members to write in with any reactions, thoughts or ideas - particularly on the subject of volunteering to become a member of our combined Area and Group committee.

David Yates

Newsletter Editor

Chair of Combined Area Group Committees

Covering the roles of Secretary and Membership Secretary

Parish Footpath Representative's Coordinator

Parish Footpath Representative for Shorwell

Long Distance Walk Leader (and occasional shorter distances too)

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