

Newsletter

Summer 2013



Hello,

I hope summer is on its way and this time we can look forward to a drier year! It still seems like winter as I write this and you sometimes forget there was a time when you complained that it was too hot! Anyway, despite the freezing weather, our leaders got together on a cold January night to begin the process of creating the summer programme – in fact over twenty of us, not just the leaders, came along to the Bay View Hotel with the promise of a Thai meal and a spot of socialising - then in the background we started to put the walks together. The next Thai social will be on July 1st so do come along for what should be another good night when we can leave our boots behind for a get together and have a laugh while we get ready for the winter programme – Wow! That was a quick year!

Roger Brown, Bob Denley, Richard Beale, Peter Jones and myself have been busy checking the programme, crossing the 'i's and dotting the 't's (*at least I thought it was that way around!*) but the occasional typo may have got through so if your entry isn't quite up to scratch – well apologies but we're only human! So a big thank you to all involved in putting the programme together, not least the leaders because without you there wouldn't be any walks. A few new members have volunteered to have a go at leading for the first time so please give them your support, turn up on their walks and welcome them into the world of leading. If you've never led a walk before, there's no mystery to it and you could start with a very easy short walk with the help of an experienced leader to build up your confidence.

Ramblers Holidays and HF Holidays

Remember that when you book a holiday with either of these two walking holiday companies, your group gets a donation. Be sure to tell them that you belong to Swansea Ramblers when you book your holiday and they'll send us a donation towards the group funds.

All Wales Coast Path

Well it's open and out there now on the coast (except in name only in Carmarthenshire where they send you along busy roads with no pavement but then that's Carmarthenshire and Gwynedd who couldn't be bothered to get things sorted in time and are still working on it - so more inland walking there). Luckily here in Swansea and Gower they took it more seriously and we have a continuous path through mostly fine scenic beauty. Having with Zetta surveyed the entire route between Chepstow and Ferryside and provided the councils with the Ramblers' preferred route, it is good to see many of our proposals taken on board.

New Secretary

Talking of Zetta, most of you know by now that she stepped down as secretary at last year's AGM. Zetta has been an absolute stalwart of the group behind the scenes, taking phone calls from the public enquiring about walks and blocked paths, answering members queries, liaising with Ramblers Central Office and Ramblers Cymru in Cardiff, keeping us all under control in committee and doing all those things that keep the group running that many of us wouldn't even think about! A **very** big thank you goes out to Zetta from all of us because without such dedicated volunteers, we wouldn't be able to run the group (or have our Christmas Dinner in the King Arthur!)

After a long period when it looked like nobody was going to take up the reins we were fortunate to receive a call from John France, volunteering to become our new secretary. Thank you John, we look forward to your input since new committee members bring fresh ideas to the group and we are always ready to welcome any member who wants to come along and participate during meetings. If anyone wishes to come along just let us know.

Weekend Away 2013

The weekend away to Newquay in Cornwall will be on the weekend of 17th – 20th May. These weekends away tend to be arranged a year in advance so ask on a walk about the 2014 one and see if you fancy it.

How can we keep in touch?

We have about 240 members but only hold 75 email addresses. That means we can't let you know about social events, changes to walks, additional walks or information that may be of interest to you. Don't be left out of the loop, email me today so I can collect your email address and add you to the mailing list. Contact me on webmaster@swansearamblers.org.uk

Evening Walks

Last year in July we had a national festival of evening walks. Combined with our entries in What's On, we had a number of new people come along but the continual wet weather of 2012 dampened our (and their) spirits somewhat and to the extent we even had to cancel some walks! This year there's no festival but it's still always nice to get out after work for a short walk. Not many members volunteered to lead a short evening walk this year so if you feel you are missing out on a nice stroll after work why not volunteer to lead one yourself? If a few people are prepared to lead these weekday evening walks we can email around a supplementary list of walks.

Weekday walks

A lot of people would like to walk at times other than the weekend. We have a few weekday walks on the programme and if you would like to see more of these types of walk, why not volunteer to lead one? The more volunteers we have, the more walks we can do. If you feel you are missing out on some midweek walking then do contact us and we can build up a regular series of walks to support our members who may not wish to walk at the weekend.

Saturday Short Walks

Lynne Esson volunteered last summer to begin a series of regular short Saturday walks to fill a gap in our walking programme. Research shows that the majority of the public (and many Ramblers members) prefer short walks. Although it had been suggested we wouldn't get any leaders or people wanting these walks, Lynne has proved that short Saturday walks are the major success of the programme. Lynne has done a fine job of co-ordinating the short walks programme and these walks attract a large number of people each time. We are also getting new members signing up because we are now providing the sort of walk they want and at least two new members have offered to lead walks on the summer programme. Thank you, Lynne for your contribution to Swansea Ramblers. Lynne has put together another excellent series of walks each Saturday throughout the summer so why not come along and enjoy the socialising and fun that these walks provide?

Saturday Long Walks

Let's not forget the long walkers! Our Sunday long walks remain a success and are aimed at a different market segment to the short walks. Is it worth putting your boots on for a short walk? Well that's a personal decision but if you are fit enough then a long walk takes you places where short walks fear to tread! We of course only offer a long Sunday walk every other weekend which means some of our members miss out on a walk every other week. We also have a number of long walkers who have other commitments on a Sunday. Some go to chapel or church whilst others have to be on duty to welcome family or friends to Sunday lunch!

So how about some long Saturday walks? We used to have all our long project walks (e.g. Pembrokeshire Coast Path) on Saturdays. This year we have four long Saturday walks arranged by Glamorgan Area Ramblers to complete the whole of the Coed Morgannwg long distance path (details in the programme). We could perhaps run some Saturday long walks every other weekend when there is no Ramblers Sunday long walk. These would be possibly a minimum of 9 miles so as not to clash with the short walks programme (maximum 6 miles). Is there anyone out there with a long distance project or other long walk in mind that we could run on a Saturday? There's better public transport for linear walks and more places open for a drink on a Saturday. It's something to discuss amongst ourselves and see if there's an appetite for Saturday long walks and of course - leaders to volunteer to lead them!

Area Walk 2013

Sunday 12th May sees the annual Glamorgan area short, medium and long walks take place in Bridgend. On the same day a new leader, Myra Lewis will be leading her bluebell photography short walk in Dinefwr Park so if you're not doing one of the longer area walks, please try to support Myra on her first ever walk for us.

Committee News

Richard Beale has joined us as Publicity officer and we welcome him to committee.

Peter Jones has volunteered to become our social secretary and has already organised some successful evenings. If you have any suggestions for social events we could do then let him know on peterlj0nes@yahoo.com (*Yes! That is a zero instead of a letter O !*).

We are always pleased to hear from anyone who would like to volunteer to help with the running of the group or who would like to come to committee meetings to see what we do and have some input to the running of the group. Of course the major piece of admin every six months is putting together the new summer or winter programme. Lynne Esson does the Short Saturday walks but Roger Brown has to do everything else and it's not fair on one person that we all enjoy six months walking without giving him a helping hand to contact leaders and collate the various types of walk.

As well as sorting out the Sunday long walks, we would also like to hear from anyone interested in:

- Organising Sunday short walks
- Organising the really short 1-3 mile walks that would attract new members,
- Organising summer weekday evening walks
- Organising the mid-week walks
- Organising different types of walks, such as night walks, history walks or train walks.

Anyone want to liaise with our social secretary, Peter Jones and set up social weekday evening pub crawls? We used to start at one pub, walk a mile (in the dark with head torches?) to a second pub for a pint then back to the first pub for the rest of the evening. Alcohol is optional of course if you're the driver but you'll still get in a walk after work!

AGM 2013

We had a fine turnout of members last October for the AGM. Apart from committee, **ONE** member out of 240 turned up!! We are required by charity commission rules to hold an AGM which means we have to pay your group's funds for a venue to hold it. So why weren't you there? We don't bite and we won't force you to do anything you don't want to!! Would you prefer, like other groups to have a social night and we can then hold the AGM meeting during that then get back to the social? Would it be more convenient on a weekend? Do you want it on a Saturday afternoon rather than in the evening? Let us know over the spring months and we can see what can be done to improve the evening. It's your money and it's going to be spent whether you're there or not!

Footpaths

There is often some rotten stile on a walk or a piece of barbed wire where it shouldn't be. The Swansea Rights of Way team do a splendid job in keeping paths open (compare for example Pembrokeshire and Carmarthenshire where you have to expect paths to be closed rather than open). Our local team can't be expected to check every section of path all the time so when you spot something wrong, take a photo, record the location (preferably with the grid reference) and let Bob Denley know the details (footpaths@swansearamblers.org.uk). He will liaise with the council and see what can be done.

Work Party

We have an enthusiastic team of volunteers that go out with the council to clear vegetation, build bridges and do what's needed to keep you walking. Have a look on the national web site for a video of our team working in Gower. The work can be fun, therapeutic and social. Bob Denley will be happy to hear from anyone who fancies giving it a go so ring him on 01792-371248.

National Web site

The national Ramblers website has been revamped and updated. Have a look and see what the wider world of Ramblers is doing.

Ramblers Routes

On the new national web site is a database of members' walks that you can access and print off with Ordnance Survey mapping and route descriptions.

Swansea Ramblers web site

Don't forget we have a web site with details of programmed walks and photographs of previous ones. The news section tells you about what's been happening and the contact us pages tell you how to get in touch with the committee. Remember when people ask you about the group to tell them we have a web site so they can see the walks we do and hopefully encourage them to come out with us. Do you need a grid reference? Don't forget the 'Evening Post' page allows you to hover the cursor over an OS map then you can read off the grid reference for your walk or footpath report.

Evening Post/What's On/Swansea Life Walks

I now write each month for Swansea Life as well as What's On and the weekly Evening Post article. Each gives us another opportunity to promote the group and encourage more new members. Remember to tell people that our web site features some of these walks that they can go out and do for themselves.

Annual Christmas Meal

The King Arthur is booked until 2015 since everyone seems to enjoy the food, atmosphere and of course the pre-meal walk! Once again thank you Peter Jones for leading the walk. Access to the empty bedrooms to wash and change was well appreciated by the muddy but dry walkers. Cynon Valley Ramblers were in the area and were going to pop in but they got caught in that rain and were too wet to join us!

This year's meal will be on **1st December**. Booking details will appear with the winter newsletter. Meanwhile, make a note of the date for this Christmas as some of our members were disappointed to find they had already arranged something else that day.

The Big Welsh Walk 2013

We are again taking part in the Welsh Ramblers weekend festival of walks. This year we have teamed up with Swansea Council to promote walking and are leading walks from County Hall. See programme for details and do try to come along and support your festival.

Gower Walking Festival 1st to 16th June 2013

The ninth annual Gower Walking Festival takes place this summer. We led the first ever walk of the first festival but have not been officially involved with it since then, although a number of our members still lead walks for the festival and a some of our members pay to enjoy a walk with them. If you are leading any of these walks in 2014 then please ask the festival organisers if they could mention in their literature that you are a member of Swansea Ramblers and of course tell the public who turn up that we lead walks all year round.

Macmarathon

The annual charity walk this year will take place on Saturday 7th September.

Autumn Walks & The Festival of Winter Walks

Spring has only just arrived but it's time to start thinking about the winter programme. Are there any favourite autumn and winter walks you could do? Autumn colours could attract a lot of new members out. Over the Christmas and New Year period if you could lead some short walks during that fortnight festival we may encourage more people to make a New Year's Resolution to join Swansea Ramblers.

Leader Training and First Aid Courses

We may be able to arrange free courses for both types of training. If you are interested, please register your interest with Richard Beale (r.beale1@gmail.com) so we can gauge numbers.

See you on a walk,

Andrew Morgan