



Newsletter

December 2014

Hello,

We are well into the winter programme and with over 80 winter walks from which to choose, we should all be able to find somewhere in the countryside to enjoy!

New (old) holiday partner

Ramblers Holidays was formed by the Ramblers some 60+ years ago. Over the last three years, Ramblers GB has promoted HF Holidays as their recommended holiday partner. A new three year agreement has been reached, restoring Ramblers Holidays as 'Walking holiday partner'. Our chief executive has this to say:

"Ramblers is pleased to announce that from October 2014 it has entered into a three year agreement with Ramblers Worldwide Holidays. The agreement is focused on online opportunities to promote each other and we hope that it will bring in more members who want to support our work. Ramblers thank HF Holidays for its support over the last three years."

Ramblers Holidays Charitable Trust donates some of the profits from Ramblers Holidays to Ramblers GB and groups. This year £300,000 has been promised to support Ramblers projects over the next three years. When you book with them, they will make a donation to Swansea Ramblers so do make sure you tell them you are one of our members!

Go East young man!

Ok, before I receive complaints, maybe I should say "Go East young person" but then for many of us, 'young' may not apply either! Seriously though, it has been interesting to hear the perceptions of members about travelling North, East and West of Swansea to walk in new areas (*Go south and you'll need your swimming costume!*).

Of those prepared to drive to a distant walk, many will be happy to drive north for over an hour into the Brecon Beacons and travel west for a similar distance into Carmarthen and Pembrokeshire. So why not go the same mileage East? I recently led a walk at Castell Coch, north of Cardiff which was supported by 17 members who were surprised at how enjoyable walking in the East could be.

Perceptions seem to be that East means the built up industrial and urban areas of Cardiff and Newport. Yet there is some very enjoyable country walking to be had both in the Vale of Glamorgan and the rural areas of Cardiff & Newport counties. Beyond those two cities lie Chepstow and the Forest of Dean. We used to visit these areas more regularly than we do now and everyone then seemed to enjoy the day out.

So let's put aside thoughts of industrial mayhem and rediscover the countryside delights of South-east Wales!

Timely booking for social events

Our social secretary sets a deadline for joining some social events. This is because venues need to know how many to cater for and sometimes even the menu choices to order enough food.

On a practical point, cheques received to pay for the event need to be banked and cleared so a deposit can be paid to the venue. This means a volunteer has to give up time to add up the totals, drive to the bank, pay in the cheques and in so doing incur car park charges.

If people then request to join an event after the deadline, the volunteer has to make that trip to the bank again with additional petrol and parking costs, not to mention use of their free time. Even more troublesome when a day or so later someone else tries to book late!

So, when a social event is announced, could we all make the lives of organisers easier by booking and paying at the latest by the deadline? After all they are volunteers!

Social events – where to dine out next?

After organising several successful evening socials this year, our Joint Social Secretary, Myra Lewis is looking for ideas for future venues in 2015. If you have any suggestions where we could have a group meal and/or social, please let her know. Myra can be contacted by email myralewis@ntlworld.com or by phone 01792-429804 (or you could even speak to her on a walk!).

Chester Weekend Away 7-9th November 2014

The weekend away was well supported with everyone enjoying the walks and socialising. Thanks go to Clive Scott for leading two walks over the weekend and thanks to Myra Lewis for organising the weekend. On Friday, we had an Indian meal alongside the rejuvenated canal side then on Saturday, we went for a Thai meal before watching the firework display at the race course. On Remembrance Sunday, we paid our respects at the cathedral where a military parade took place then walked all the way around the historic town walls. Apart from a brief shower on Saturday, we had lovely dry weather, although we understand it was a bit wet in South Wales! Another enjoyable weekend away is in the planning stages and you can read more about it later in the newsletter.

Bethlehem walk 29th November 2014

We started Christmas early with a return visit to Bethlehem after an absence of 5 years! This was a chance for Saturday walkers to experience a walk up onto Pen y Bicws Mountain which we had done every year for 25 years. The weather was sunny and mild and we had views which were fantastic as always. A nice and slowly-paced walk for those not used to uphill climbs, we then rounded off the walk with a pub lunch at the Cennen Arms and some enjoyable carol singing. Our thanks to Linda Williams for leading the singing and preparing the carol sheets.

Christmas walk and meal 7th December 2014

Another successful social, thanks to Peter Jones and Roger Brown for giving us a walk beforehand and many thanks to Zetta for all her hard work gathering together everyone's choices, printing the cards (*I don't remember just how many people came up on the day and said they'd forgotten what they'd chosen!!*) and doing all the admin of collecting cheques, making special journeys to the bank and dealing with the cancellations, alterations and queries that over 80 people can generate!

Festival of Winter walks 20th December 2014 to 4th January 2015

Our contribution to the Ramblers national festival of winter walks will encourage people to get out and explore the countryside. Instead of sitting around the TV at Christmas, come along and enjoy some winter walking! For those of you planning to catch the bus to join Helen Gough at Rhos (Pontardawe) on Saturday 27th December, she advises that there are no alterations to the bus time table. On the following Sunday, 28th December, Roger Brown has had to change his walk due to some blocked footpaths. The updated details are in the latest online version of the programme.

Thai Meal and leaders' meeting 12th January 2015

The Thai meal at the Bay View Hotel on 12th January should make a welcome break from all that Christmas turkey! We've enjoyed food there on a number of occasions and the evening is proving very popular, with over 50 people last summer coming along for the social.

We'll also start to put together the summer programme while the others are eating. So an early request to all leaders to have a think now about what walk you would like to lead. We need walk leaders for Saturdays, Sundays, weekdays, evenings and very short walks for beginners. Also, if we can get some of your walk details before the New Year, we may be able to get a few published in the council's environmental brochure.

Short 2-4 mile walks anyone?

We are always looking for ways to increase the walks we offer so have begun to provide short 2-4 mile walks as an introduction to walking. Our thanks go to Richard Beale for leading a number of extra walks on a Monday during the last few months.

If you think you could also lead a short, easy midweek walk, maybe stopping for a pub lunch then do contact us as we would like to provide more of these walks which attract new members. Maybe you could also lead a second easy 2-4 mile walk *after* the pub lunch so you can get a longer walk in yourself!

Evening walks

Evening walks were very popular last summer and led to new members joining us. If you think you could also lead a short evening stroll, have a chat to Helen Gough who will be co-ordinating the evening walks. Hopefully we can then have an evening walk every week throughout the summer.

Annual Welsh Council 11th -12th April 2015

Group delegates and interested onlookers from all over Wales will descend on The Royal Victoria Hotel in Llanberis for the annual conference to discuss Ramblers in Wales. Our Chair is on Welsh Council and will be representing us there.

Ramblers Big Welsh Walk Festival and Area walk May 2015

Ramblers Cymru have a month-long festival of walks in May. We in Swansea will be concentrating on the first Bank Holiday weekend 2-4th May to run a series of walks to introduce new people to walking. If you have led a walk in previous years for the May festival and can do so again or would like to lead a festival walk for the first time, please let me know as soon as possible. Also in May, the annual Glamorgan area walk will be hosted by Penarth Ramblers and will take place out of Bonvilston on Sunday 10th May. Details will be in your summer programme.

Malvern Weekend Away: Friday 29th to Sunday 31st May 2015

Myra Lewis, one of our Social Secretaries, has arranged a weekend away in the Malvern Hills. This is an area which offers a variety of walking opportunities along well defined footpaths with dramatic views over the surrounding area. It is proposed to have a long and a short walk on both Saturday and Sunday. Richard Beale used to live in the area and has kindly agreed to lead the longer walks on Saturday and Sunday. Another volunteer will be required to lead the shorter walks. If you think you could lead one or both of the short walks, please let Myra know.

Malvern is only 2 hours away by car and can also be reached by train. In addition, Colin Warlow has kindly offered to drive a mini bus for those without transport or who do not wish to take their own car. Numbers on the minibus will be limited. If a second volunteer is available to drive we may be able to hire a second minibus.

Myra has obtained details of group rates from two hotels, both of which are located in the centre of Great Malvern from where we can walk directly onto the Malvern Hills.

Prices are as follows, based on two people sharing a room

Abbey Hotel
Tel: 01684-897897
£66 pp per night (B&B)
£86 pp per night (Dinner B&B)
https://www.sarova-abbeyhotel.com/
Foley Arms Hotel
Book online using www.laterooms.com . (Pay when you get there or cancel with no fee 48 hours before)
£153.00 pp (Room only), when booking two nights for two people in a double or twin. (£69 Friday & £84 Saturday)
(Add £6.00 pp per night if breakfast is required)
http://www.jdwetherspoon.co.uk/home/hotels/the-foley-arms

Evening Meals

The Abbey Hotel does have a dinner deal but there will also be a reasonable choice of venues in Malvern should some of us decide to eat together in the evenings. Please let us know if you wish to eat together so we can gauge numbers.

Important: What to do next

Accommodation bookings will be up to the individual but if you are interested, please contact Myra **AS SOON AS POSSIBLE** so we know who is going **and especially if you wish to go on the mini-bus as she will be going away for a month on 29th December.** Myra advises booking your accommodation as soon as possible and in the case of the Foley Arms, booking accommodation at the rear. When booking with The Abbey Hotel, please inform them that you are part of the Swansea Ramblers group booking.

Myra can be contacted by email myralewis@ntlworld.com or phone on 01792-429804. If not available, please contact Richard Beale (email r.beale1@gmail.com or phone 01792-207833).

Gower Walking Festival June 2015

The festival is now run as a separate body to the Mumbles Development Trust. Next year's dates are 6th - 21st June. Some of our leaders have volunteered to lead walks so if anybody else is interested, Barbara Parry would like to hear from you before Christmas so she can finalise the programme for printing. Remember to ask for them to refer to you as a Swansea Ramblers leader and to let us know you when you are leading your walk.

Volunteer training Friday 3rd July 2015

There will be a 'Volunteer Development Day' in Cardiff from 9.30am to 4pm. Previous events have helped volunteers to gain the knowledge needed for subjects such as footpath issues, publicising our walks and growing our membership. We'll provide more details later next year.

Footpaths

Bob Denley continues to monitor issues with footpaths so if you become aware of a problem on a path, let him know and he'll advise the council.

Work Party

Steve Robson has now taken over co-ordination of the work party from Bob Denley. Our work party does essential work to keep footpaths open and the council advises Steve when there is work to be done. If you would like to help out, please contact Steve.

New Membership secretary

Thank you to Sarah Goodall for volunteering to take on the membership secretary role. Sarah will make a valuable contribution to our committee as we continue to grow our membership. We have had 80 new members this year and interest in walking with us continues to grow.

Need to call 999 ?

If you are out on a walk and don't have a signal to call emergency services, it **may** still be possible to text them. Text messages can sometimes get through where voice calls fail. See <http://www.emergencysms.org.uk/> for information on how to register for 999 texts.

Additional walk added to Programme, Sunday 1st February 2015

Mike Lewis has provided us with an additional walk to fill one of the still vacant slots on the programme. Details are available online. If you think you could also lead a walk for any of the other vacant slots, please let us know.

Ramblers National web site Walk Finder

Overleaf, Richard Beale has provided information about using the GB walks finder which allows you to find walks either led by a Ramblers group or details of routes you can do yourself.

See you on a walk,

Andrew Morgan

Group Walks Finder

This useful feature can be found on the home page of the Ramblers GB website. It enables you to search for walks organised by any Rambler group in Great Britain. The Ramblers launched new software for the system in September making it more user-friendly.

How does it work?

Go to the website: <http://www.ramblers.org.uk/> and on the left hand side in blue you will see a box which says 'Where do you want to walk?' Here you can enter a postcode or location, (the example below is for postcode SA2 7NN).

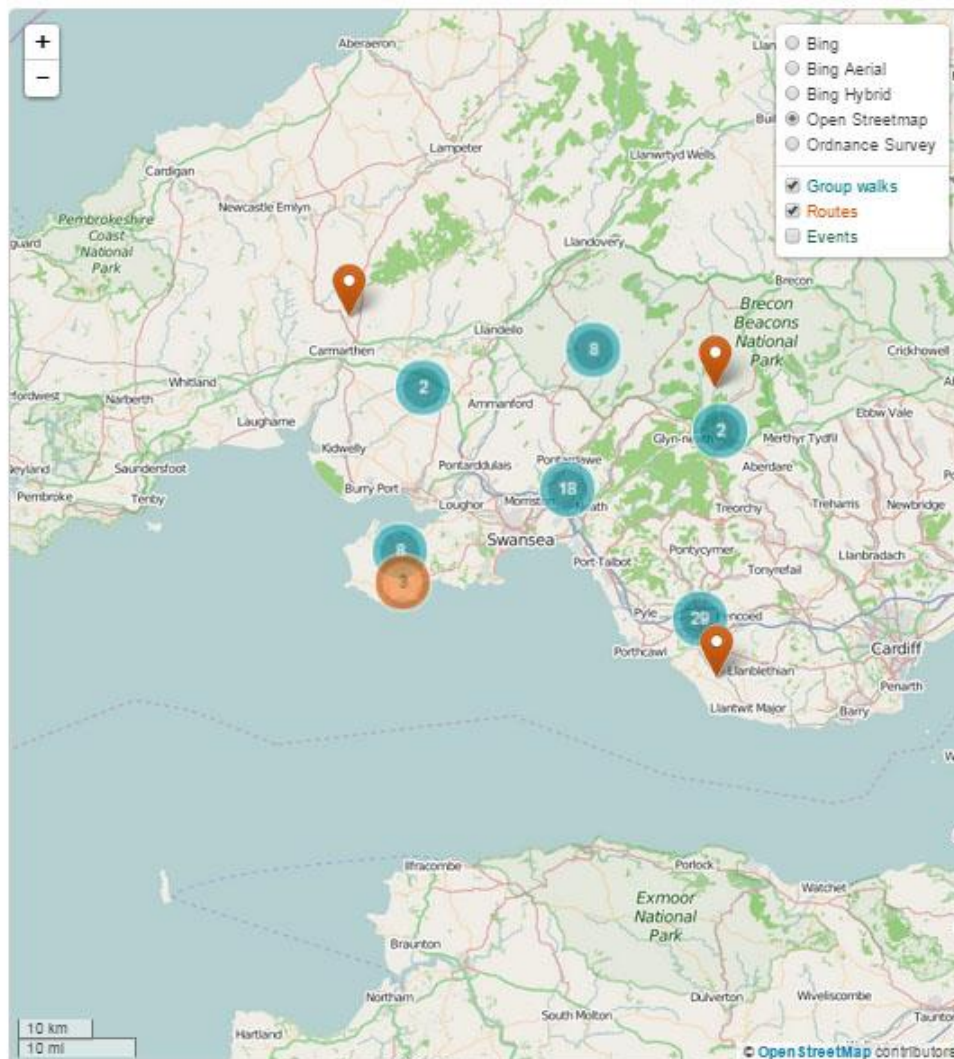
Britain > Go walking > Find a walk or route

Find a walk or route

Need help?

SA2 7NN Within 25 miles (40 km) Enter any keywords Search

- Map
- Group walks
- Routes
- Events



Date Hide

- 18/12/2014
- 18/02/2015

Day of week Show

Difficulty ? Hide

- Easy Access
- Easy
- Leisurely
- Moderate
- Strenuous
- Technical

Distance Hide

- Up to 3 miles (5 km)
- 3+ to 5 miles (5-8 km)
- 5+ to 10 miles (8-16 km)
- 10+ miles (16 km)

Suitability Show

Surroundings Show

Theme Show

Special status Show

Facilities Show

Festivals Show

Organiser Show

Routes Show

In the above example, the search criteria have been set to search for all walks within 25 miles between 18/12/2014 and 18/02/2015.

This can be refined using any of the criteria on the right hand side. Also, on the map from within the box on the top right, you can choose the type of base map (e.g. Ordnance Survey) and whether you want to find either group led walks, routes or both. Routes are self-guided walks compiled by Ramblers members and can be useful if you are on holiday and want to do your own thing.

If you want details of the walks just click on the map pin and a summary will appear. Further details can be obtained by clicking on the heading.

I have already entered the walks for both our current and previous Swansea Ramblers programmes into this system.

Some leaders have been reluctant to provide me with a start location and time for their walks for various reasons. However, it is really useful for users of the website to have this information as it saves them having to contact the leader. The location can be given as approximate but this should only be done in exceptional circumstances. Also providing the start time of the walk is equally important in addition to the meeting point time.

There are a number of other features on the Group Walks Finder which I shall cover in the next newsletter. If you have any comments or queries about the Group Walks finder please let me know.

Richard Beale. r.beale1@gmail.com