



# Newsletter

**Autumn/Winter 2018**

***Hello,***

The summer heatwave is fast becoming a distant memory and the weather seems to have returned to its traditional changeable nature! This has led on occasions to cancellation of some walks but we will keep on walking through the winter, enjoying the change in the countryside as autumn gives way to winter then the welcome arrival of spring.

## ***Loss of our chair***

It is with sadness that we note the passing of our long-standing chair, Vernon Davies. Vernon served Swansea Ramblers well for many years, attending meetings to promote walking and to protect the places we walk. A tireless campaigner for walking, he will be greatly missed. For the interim period, Bob Denley has agreed to be the acting chair and Karen Gibbs, our acting vice-chair. At the AGM members will need to vote for their choice of a new chair and vice-chair.

## ***AGM at Purple Badger, Llanrhidian, Saturday 20<sup>th</sup> October***

We will have a short walk before the AGM commences followed by a meal in the inn. This year's AGM is very important as we need to vote for the members who will take on the role of chair and vice chair so we encourage everybody to attend.

## ***Thank you to our leaders***

We cannot enjoy our countryside walks without those dedicated volunteers who take us on such enjoyable voyages of discovery into the great outdoors. Thank you from all of us to all of you. Many of our members would never be able to explore the countryside without you. If any member would like to become a leader, do get in contact with us. If you feel you don't have the confidence to lead, we can advise what's involved and maybe suggest an easier walk to build up your confidence.

## ***Thank you to our committee***

A small band of volunteers help to run the group and ensure our 400 plus members have access to the countryside. They arrange socials, deal with issues that affect where we walk and publicise walking to meet our charitable aims of getting more people walking. So thank you to all those who give up their time to make sure Swansea Ramblers continues to offer walks and that the countryside where we go is still accessible. Volunteers to help on committee are welcome so get in touch if you'd like to know more about what we do.

## ***Did you know we clear footpaths?***

Every month, we have a small group of volunteers who go out with the council to maintain paths. This work ranges from clearing undergrowth to building bridges and stiles. This is practical work that really shows Swansea Ramblers is not just a walking group but a walking charity that aims to promote countryside access to as many people as possible. Thank you to Steve Robson for co-ordinating this important work and to all of the volunteers who make such a difference to where we walk. It is enjoyable to go out to clear a path and you get the satisfaction of seeing the improvement you have made to the route. Do come along and enjoy being a member of the work party.

## ***Our annual Christmas dinner, Sunday 2<sup>nd</sup> December***

Remember to complete the booking form and send to Lynne Esson by 31<sup>st</sup> October or you'll be missing out on our popular social event.

## ***Your new (and FINAL?) programme***

Due to 'General Data Protection Regulation' (GDPR), if you have not consented to receive information by phone, post or emails then the only time you'll receive group updates is with the AGM mailing. Only half the membership has consented to receive emails but there are over 100 members who have not provided an email address and a further 100 members who have provided their address but have **NOT** re-consented to continue receiving updates. Please phone the London office 020 7339 8595 (Mon – Fri, 9am - 5pm) or go online to register your consent <http://www.ramblers.org.uk/my-account>

## ***Gower walking festival***

The festival made a welcome return in 2018 with a number of Ramblers' leaders flying the flag for our charity by leading for the festival and spreading the word about walking with Swansea Ramblers. If any leaders would like to lead in summer 2019, let us know now so we can liaise with the festival organisers to again promote our walking group as the first choice for all-year walking in and around Swansea.

## ***We're getting bigger and better!***

Membership continues to increase as more people discover the enjoyment of walking with our friendly group. By the end of August, we had another 56 new members, taking our total membership to 423. We continue to offer more walks for existing and new members, such as a summer evening walk each week and some shorter walks on Sundays and Mondays. Watch out for our winter evening torchlight walks. Our socials are very popular and offer an added benefit to being a member of Swansea Ramblers. Day walks by coach are often oversubscribed and there will be more of these next year, following our Christmas visit to Bristol and Westonbirt. So please spread the word to people you know that they would also enjoy becoming a member of Swansea Ramblers.

## ***Weekends away***

In September we again visited Kington and in April 2019, we will enjoy walking in the countryside around Ross on Wye. These events are very popular and many of our members find these a very enjoyable weekend away.

## ***Project walks***

Our last project was St. Illtud's walk when in stages we walked from Pembrey Country Park to Margam Park. We would like to hear from leaders interested in organising a similar series of walks, such as the Pembrokeshire Coast Path.

## ***Introducing people to walking***

### **Monday 2-4 miles**

Our Saturday six mile walks are very popular with new members but for those first needing to build up stamina and confidence, we occasionally have some shorter, easier walks on Mondays. If anyone could volunteer to lead additional Mondays then we could offer a Monday walk more often.

### **Sunday Figure of Eight, 3 miles plus 3 miles**

New with the winter programme are some shorter Sunday walks. These include a couple of 'Figure of Eight' walks where we set off in the morning for a 3 mile circular walk that brings us back to the car at lunchtime.

Participants having enjoyed just the morning half then have the option to leave the walk or to stay and do the second section of 3 miles in the afternoon. Other '*afternoon only*' walkers have the option to join us just for the second 3 mile walk. Regular walkers can do both sections and enjoy a 6 mile walk.

These take a bit of planning both to get back in time for lunch and be ready to meet afternoon walkers at the advertised time but if you think you could lead this type of Sunday walk then let me know and we can put on some extra walks. The two Figure of Eight walks in the programme are on 18<sup>th</sup> November and 10<sup>th</sup> February.

## ***Just in case you are ill on a walk...***

Ramblers produce a hard-wearing, waterproof card to which you add your personal emergency contact details and medical information. Keeping this card in an accessible place (such as the top pocket of a rucksack) will allow us to provide your important information to the emergency services. The *In Case of Emergency* (ICE) cards can be obtained from Richard Beale (Publicity Officer) or you can download a version from the national website (Walk Leader Toolkit section).

## ***Resources for leaders***

**Walk Leaders Check List:** Leaders new and experienced can access some very useful information and gives advice on how to prepare for the walk and what to do on the day. This information is contained in the Walk Leaders Check List which leaders are encouraged to use.

These can be obtained from Richard Beale or you can download from the national website (Walk Leader Toolkit section).

**Two-Way Radios:** The Group has purchased two sets of two-way radios for use on Group walks. Walk leaders are encouraged to use these, especially where there are large numbers on a walk and where the walk is in a remote area.

**Emergency Shelters:** The Group has purchased two lightweight shelters: one to accommodate three to four people and the other for eight to ten people. These can be used to shelter a casualty or to protect walkers from adverse weather. They can be obtained from John France (Secretary).

### ***Leaders: how many people came on your walk?***

Local councils/Welsh Government have no idea how many people walk the footpath network. By informing local councils just how many people walk each month informs those responsible for allocation of public funds why it is important to continue to clear footpaths.

So thank you to all our leaders who continue to provide this information after a walk. Each month we let the council's walking development officer know how many people were out walking then armed with this information, he can argue the case that it is important that Swansea continues to support maintenance of the footpath network.

### ***Printing the programme***

We are again grateful to the generous contribution of our member, Wayne Pulman for the free printing of our programme.

See you on a walk,

Andrew Morgan