



Newsletter

Summer 2017

Hello,

Summer is on its way and we can again look forward to an extensive programme of walks. This is due to the support of our members who have volunteered to lead walks, some for the first time and the coordinators who have been busy gathering all the walk details together. Our thanks go all those who have made this programme possible. We are always happy to assist new leaders to begin leading so if you think you'd like to give it a go then - have a word with us and try it out on the winter programme.

Membership

Membership continues to grow and we may soon exceed the 400 member threshold. We are the 2nd largest group in Glamorgan and one of the fastest growing in the UK. This is down to the friendliness of our welcome to new walkers and the publicity to let people know we're there!

Publicity

Talking of publicity, has anybody seen us on Bay TV Swansea? Richard Beale and I are on most weeks to discuss walking and show videos of our walks to viewers. We are now regulars on the chat show, 'Down the Bay' that is on about 1pm with a repeat later in the afternoon. The day we appear can vary but if you don't get to see it on channel 8 on Freeview or on Virgin Media 159, you can see the recording on their Facebook page. Our other publicity via Swansea Life magazine and What's On continues to attract new walkers and we put up posters of monthly walks around Swansea. If you know of somewhere that would display posters, let us know and we can email them to you each month.

Committee news

Clive Scott has agreed to become our new vice-chair. Clive has been a member for a few years and has now taken on this important role in the group. Andrea Dawkins and Karen Gibbs have also volunteered to join the committee. In addition, we have set up a sub-committee for socials that organises events during the year. We are always pleased to hear from other members who would like to help with group administration by taking on roles on committee.

Committee minutes

What does the committee do? Well we monitor events affecting paths and walking, as well as ensure the group events run smoothly. We produce minutes of each of our monthly meetings and copies of these are available to members, on request from the secretary. Please quote your membership number and the minutes will be sent to the address or email address on our records.

Social Events

Our social events continue to be very popular and many of them are fully subscribed within hours of the email going out to the group. Our thanks go to the sub-committee for their work in making these events

possible. Some of these events are printed in the programme and others may be announced by email at short notice. If you have not yet provided your email address then you could be missing out. Join the mailing list and you'll start to receive group updates about socials and other information relating to the group. Email me on: infoATswansearamblers.org.uk (replacing 'At' with @).

Christmas lunch at The King Arthur

Again a very successful social event with over 80 people enjoying the largest social event of the year. The King Arthur is again booked for December 2017. One noticeable downturn was the number of people attending the pre-meal walk. We think this is due to people not wanting to get wet and muddy before the meal and so just come along in their Sunday best for the meal only – which is fine! We've therefore decided that next December we will just organise the meal and there will be no walk beforehand.

Coaches for linear walks/trips further afield

The social sub-committee maintains a social fund raised from member donations such as raffles. This is separate to the annual membership fee that we all pay to be members of the Rambler's charity. This social fund can be used amongst other things, to subsidise the cost of coaches for walks, so if you are planning a long, all day walk in the mountains or maybe a short stroll, you can request funding from the sub-committee. If you are thinking of leading a walk that may require a coach/minibus, please contact one of the members of the social sub-committee to apply. Funding will be, of course subject to available funds in the social fund at the time.

Topping up the social fund

To continue to subsidise events such as the coach hire mentioned above, we need to raise funds and we do this by holding raffles. If anybody has any unwanted items that would be suitable as prizes for a raffle, please let Myra or Joanna know. Contact details are on page 2 of the programme.

Footpaths are online!

Each council is required by law to maintain a definitive map of all the registered footpaths within their boundary. Each path has an ID, made up of its parish and a number, e.g. IL10 = Ilston 10. An electronic map of paths in the City & County of Swansea is now available on their website. You can zoom into an area, identify a path about which you would like to report a problem and find its ID to quote to the council or to our footpath officer. A number of other councils have similar mapping on their web sites. Swansea can be viewed at: <http://www.swansea.gov.uk/rightsofwaymap>

Pathwatch App

And yet another way of recording a problem with a path is to install the Ramblers' free Pathwatch App onto your phone. You can download free Ordnance Survey maps to your phone for use without a mobile signal or data usage charge (download over WIFI first). The app then shows you on the map where you are and you can record an issue at that location. Back home, upload the report to Ramblers GB and they will notify the council.

Dogs on walks

We welcome dogs (*and their owners!*) to join our walks where a leader is satisfied that the route is suitable to take a dog. We will state in the programme that dogs are welcome on the walk but must be at all times on a short lead. We have had instances of dogs weaving in and out of the group on narrow paths with a significant drop to one side so it is important that dogs are kept close to the owner. Where it is not suitable to take a dog, we are required by the Disability Discrimination Act to advise 'Registered Assistance Dogs Only', even though the walk is not suitable for dogs. Should any of our members with a 'Registered Assistance Dog' wish to come on such a walk, they should first telephone the leader to assess the practicality of completing the walk through potentially dangerous livestock and if there is a need for the owner to lift the dog over stiles and other obstructions.

Work Party

As mentioned above, paths do get blocked. Our work party assists the City and County of Swansea to clear paths and install path furniture (bridges, stiles sign posts etc.). We go out every 2nd Wednesday and there is a reminder in the programme when we are due to go out. Please contact the work party coordinator if you would like to come along.

How high will we climb?

In the programme, some of our mountain leaders already advise participants of the amount of climb to be undertaken to complete a walk. We have been requested to ask that if a volunteer is leading a strenuous hill walk, could they please add the amount of climb to the programme entry. This is normally added using the narrative format, 'Ascent x,xxx ft (yyy m)' below the 'Strenuous' heading.

Weekend Away 2017

The weekend away in October will be to Kington on the English border where there is some lovely walking to be had! More details are at the back of the programme but already the hotel is fully booked with eager members looking forward to the trip. If you can find your own accommodation then you are welcome to come along but please let the coordinator know so we will know likely numbers on the walks and the evening meals!

Future Trips away

Our social committee continues to look for walking opportunities further afield. If you know of somewhere, in UK or abroad that may appeal to members and at a reasonable price, let us know.

Organising more walks!

We are always looking for different walks to increase opportunities for members to walk. To make this possible, we would like more of our members to offer to lead walks. It would be good to offer more introductory walks, usually about 3 miles and mostly on a Monday although we can consider other days as well. Sunday short walks are particularly underrepresented. These could be 6 miles like the Saturday walks or a bit longer such as 7-8 miles but still within the capabilities of our regular 6 mile walkers. Evening walks are starting to take off with more new leaders coming forward this year to offer just one on the programme. In return they then get to walk another week on somebody else's evening walk! Other types of walks could be head-torch night walks or walks by train. Have a think and see if you could perhaps lead just one easy walk on future programmes. Our more experienced leaders may wish to consider a series of walks to complete long distance paths such as the Pembrokeshire Coast Path. Let us know – and remember, we may be able to subsidise coaches.

Don't lose your way !!

Footpaths haven't always had the legal protection that they now enjoy. Many of the rights to use public footpaths have been laid down in law over the last 100 years or more as landowner pressures began to threaten the routes the public had used for hundreds of years. A formal process began in the 19th century, then, in the 20th century, every footpath was supposed to have been recorded, documented and legally registered to protect them from development. However, only about 50% of paths were recorded and 'Urban boroughs', such as the old Swansea Town Borough were exempt altogether from recording paths. Today in Swansea, we have a situation where paths registered just outside the old borough boundary just end on the map at the historic county boundary (but of course continue on the ground). In other places, some of these unprotected paths have been built over or disappeared behind barbed wire. There is an urgent need to identify and register the remaining paths before they are lost forever. Ramblers GB have launched the 'Don't lose your way' campaign to recover such paths. We need volunteers who are prepared to delve into the archives and locate evidence of public highways in old documents so that we can rescue and protect the remaining paths. If you would like to help in this important project, please contact us.

Leaders' meeting and Ramblers Roadshow

The January meeting to put together the summer programme is always very well supported. Over 30 people came along to the Woodman in Blackpill for a meal and to give their summer walks to the coordinators. The June meeting for the winter programme attracts less people, so this year we have combined it with the national roadshow that comes to Swansea on Saturday 24th June. Do try to come along to the roadshow that showcases how volunteers can develop skills to support their local group. Afterwards, there will be a walk onto Kilvey Hill.

Area walk

Once a year, all the groups in the old county of Glamorgan get together for long, medium and short walks. This is an opportunity to meet Ramblers from other parts of the county and sometimes we can arrange joint walks to visit places we don't normally walk. This year the walks are held in Aberdulais and details will be emailed to members. This year we had already planned a social event that unfortunately clashes with the walks but if you are not attending the social, perhaps you may like to try out a walk in Aberdulais.

Big Welsh Walk

Ramblers Cymru are promoting walking by arranging a festival of walks on 6th May in Ceredigion. If you don't fancy travelling that far, we will have some walks of our own a bit closer to home.

Just how many people were on that walk?

Leaders may wonder why we ask for the number of people coming out on the walks. Swansea Council, like many councils are unaware of the popularity of walking and therefore do not fund maintenance of paths as well as we would like. The council's Walking Forum, of which we are a member, uses our statistics and those of other groups to demonstrate just how many of us are out there walking and using public footpaths. By raising the profile of walking, we can try to persuade the council to adequately fund the footpath network which then generates tourism income from visitors who walk and spend in the community.

See you on a walk,

Andrew Morgan