

October 2024

Newsletter of the Glamorgan Area

VOLUNTEERING

As a member of The Ramblers, you clearly enjoy walking, whether it is with a formal group or with family or friends. Much of the work that you can read about in this year's edition is about the provision of led-walks by the Area's groups, which, for many members, is a prime reason for joining.

However, a common thread that runs through this edition is the need for volunteers. Even if you do not feel the desire to lead a group walk, you will see, in reading through the reports, there are many other skills that are needed if The Ramblers are to flourish in the Glamorgan Area. These range from administration skills, financial or computer knowledge, a knack for organising social events or an interest in legal issues concerning the path network.

So, do see where groups are asking for help and consider stepping for-



A Cardiff Ramblers walk in February to commemorate the legacy given by Trevor Whateley which allowed four new kissing gate, each with a memorial plaque, to be installed in the Pentyrch area.

ward. Not only is there is plenty of help on offer, both in training and mentoring, but you will be warmly welcomed.

Diane Davies - Editor

CHAIR

Hi everyone,

I hope you all enjoyed your group walks this year despite the mixed weather.

GLAMORGAN AREA AGM (open to all members) SATURDAY 23rd NOVEMBER 2024 at 2:00pm

At

Murchfield Community Centre

Sunnycroft Lane, Dinas Powys, CF64 4QQ . [///safety.traps.when](https://safety.traps.when)

Guest Speaker: Bethany Handley, Ramblers Cymru Ambassador.

Morning walk from the venue starting at 10:00am.

A warm welcome to all new members, whichever group you have joined; they will have a variety of walks for you to enjoy. Going for a walk is a simple thing, but its impact can be life changing. Soak up the sights and sounds of the countryside, get a healthy dose of vitamin D, breathe deeply and relax.

As a volunteer walk leader, Footpath Officer and Area Chairman, I get a lot of satisfaction knowing I am contributing to a positive and worthy organization, that embraces inclusion and diversity. I thank all group committees and walk leaders for their outstanding work during the last year. Anyone interested in the work of a committee can attend meetings as an observer.

Finally, I thank my fellow Area committee officers and members for their support during the past year.

Les Meachin

GENERAL SECRETARY

The year's major Ramblers happenings have been:

WELCOME TO:

- **Ramblers refreshed strategy for 2024 and beyond:** This sets out Ramblers' ambition for a future

where everyone can enjoy the benefits of walking in nature. Working along with the wider outdoors sector to create a healthier, more equitable and more inclusive society, the strategy sets out to prioritise the needs of communities who have the least access and face the most barriers to walking outside in nature.

- ***New Walk Leader Handbook:*** The handbook sets out the Ramblers' eight guiding principles to leading safe, enjoyable and welcoming walks. It offers helpful insights and reminders and, for new walk leaders, it is the perfect place to start.

- ***New Walk Leaders' Induction and Training:*** For new walk leaders (and for those Walk Leaders wanting a refresher) there are two online walk-leadership modules to complete. These bring the *New Walk Leader Handbook* to life and cover the skills and knowledge needed to lead group walks. The training is arranged into useful bite-sized modules, so you can dip in and out, completing the courses at your own pace.

FAREWELL TO:

- ***Assemble:*** This possibly overambitious development understandably failed to achieve general acceptance by the highly diverse Areas and Groups within Ramblers. Volunteering resources and training are now available through the Ramblers' website with every-

thing you need for your role just a few clicks away.

CONTINUING WITH:

- ***Walks Manager:*** Walks Manager enables groups to manage their group walks and events online and share these with walkers on the Ramblers' website. Adding group walks to Walks Manager helps both new and existing walkers to find, join and enjoy the walks. The majority of Glamorgan Area Groups are using Walks Manager, though the inclusion of photos is patchy.

- ***Volunteering Online Training:*** Ramblers' online training library has courses relevant to volunteering roles and they are available on Ramblers' website to those who have set up a My Ramblers Account. New volunteers need to be added to the Ramblers' systems as a volunteer by the Lead Volunteer (possibly Group Chair, Walks Programme Coordinator, or Project Coordinator) so they are able to access the online training.

- ***Leading Group Walks:*** Ramblers' website has guidance and resources for walk leaders:

Getting Started as a Walk Leader, The Walk Leader Handbook, Walk Leader Checklist, Walk Leader Resource Pack, Writing a Walk Description, First Aid on Group Walks, Managing Group Size, A Beginner's Guide to Navigation, Recommended Kit for Leading Group Walks and



Volunteers from the two Brecon Beacon Mountain Rescue teams preparing to take an injured walk down from Fan Hir after an incident on a walk in February.

Where You Can Walk in England and Wales.

LOOKING FORWARD TO:

• Ramblers Cymru AGM 2025:

Ramblers Cymru meets annually to debate and recommend policies that are specifically related to Wales. The Ramblers Cymru 2025 AGM is to be held at The Metropole Hotel, Llandrindod Wells on 22nd and 23rd March 2025. Our Groups can send one Voting Delegate, whilst Glamorgan Area can send six Voting Delegates. Members interested in attending this expenses-paid celebration and organisation of Ramblers Cymru activities should make themselves known to their Group Secretaries.

Gwyn Lewis

TREASURER

Expenditure by Area continued to be low. In 2023/24 all groups accepted their basic allocation, except Maesteg who required no funding, and Taff Ely who submitted a budget to include first aid training.

The total Budget Payments to Groups is £3,598 (2022/23 £3,237). Area again submitted a funding request of £3,000, less than group funding, in order to reduce our reserves. As of 30th June, our reserves were £5,845. The final quarterly payment was received of £750, and no major items of expenditure are expected. Our reserves at year end should be approximately £6,600, down from £8,000 for the previous year.

Our Budget Application for 2024/25 has been submitted and is awaiting approval. We have again requested funding of £3,000, which just covers payments to groups of, £3,312. This is less than 2023/24 as all groups have accepted their basic allocation (£95 per group plus £1.06 per member), except Maesteg who required no funding.

I give comparative figures in the summarised Receipts & Payments Accounts which are shown in the Table below.

I have kept our budget expenditure the same as 2023/24 as this reflects the current level of expenditure, including £1,000 for grants to projects. Area Officers and groups

should be encouraged to initiate projects, for example, for promoting walking. I would not like our funding request to fall any further.

Walking is a popular form of recreation but, for that reason, we have a lot of competition. We have the resources for both Area and Groups to improve our publicity and increase membership.

Ian Fraser

FOOTPATH SECRETARY

Whether criss-crossing the countryside or winding through our urban green spaces, our path network is the main way most of us get into the outdoors. Unfortunately, in too many places preventable barriers are stopping people experiencing everything that the network has to offer. Earlier this year, the BBC published its investigation into blocked paths in England and Wales, uncovering a staggering 32,000 places where paths are blocked or obstructed.

Whilst, within Ramblers Glamorgan Area, footpath related matters are undertaken by the Group Footpath Officers, we all have a role to play in protecting our footpath network by:

- Reporting footpath problems to the appropriate local authority and/or your Group Footpath Officer. This year has seen the “retirement” of *Ramblers Pathwatch* as a footpath problem reporting mechanism due to difficulties in matching it up with the assortment of reporting systems employed by local authorities. Instead Ramblers have created *Ramblers Local Highway Authority Look Up* which uses *Google My Maps* for us to use, if you are not sure about where or how to report a problem on the path network.
- Supporting the efforts of your Group Footpath Officer (see table on page 4).

Ramblers’ webpage *Problems on Public Footpaths* has information

		9 Months to June 2024	2023/24 Actual	2024/25 Budget
	2022/23 Actual	Actual	Budget	
Reserves b/f	8,634	7,767	8,000	8,600
Total Income	3,000	2,250	3,000	3,000
Group Funding	3,237	3,598	3,598	3,312
Newsletters/publicity	188	150	250	260
Practical work	59		1,100	1,100
Meetings	358	404	400	400
Admin	25	20	250	250
Other				
Total Payments	3,867	4,172	5,598	5,322
Surplus/Deficit()	(867)	(1,922)	(2,598)	(2,322)
Reserves c/f	7,767	5,845	5,402	4,278

Glamorgan Area Footpath Officers		
Bridgend: Les Meachin	Cardiff: Gwyn Lewis	Maesteg: Neil Perry
Merthyr: Alan Hancox	NPT: Terry Griffiths	Penarth: William Milne
Swansea: Clive Rees	Taff Ely: Tony Yule & Andrew Fellows	Tawe Trekkers: Phillip Nicholas
VoG: Ian Fraser		

and guidance relating to problems you could encounter on paths: *Dealing with problems on public paths, Problems on Paths with No Public Right of Way, Signposts and Waymarks on Public Rights of Way, Disabled Access on Public Rights of Way, Rules around Keeping Animals in Fields with Paths, Ploughing and Planting on Public Rights of Way, Trespass, Get Off My Land, Planning Applications and Rights of Way, Closures and Diversions on Rights of Way Network, Getting Obstructions Removed from Paths, Resolving Problems with Path Surfaces, Claiming Unrecorded Public Rights of Way and Actions to Resolve Issues on Public Rights of Way.*

The Ramblers is a charity dedicated to removing barriers, so that everyone can enjoy walking in green spaces, and to preserving and improving hundreds of thousands of miles of well-loved paths, tracks and trails across England, Scotland and Wales.

Ramblers' webpage, *Campaign with Us - Protect the Places We Walk*, details on-going campaigns:

- **Outdoors Unlocked:** calling on the Government to introduce a transformational new bill that will break down the barriers to the outdoors.
- **Expand the Freedom to Roam:** calling for it to be expanded to cover woodland, watersides and more grassland.

• **Don't Lose Your Way – Saving Lost Paths:** research of historic maps across the country found over 49,000 miles of paths which could be lost forever.

• **Green Routes:** to transform how we access nature on our doorsteps by creating a network of green routes.

As ever it is a **Very Big Thank You** to the Group Footpath Officers and the Group Path Maintenance Teams for their efforts during the year **AND** Best Wishes to Roger Luke who has “retired” as Maesteg Group Footpath Officer.

Gwyn Lewis

WGL151
2 GLAMORGAN GAZETTE THURSDAY, OCTOBER 19, 2023 @WalesOnline

News

The hills are home to some wild and wonderful sights – such as members of Bridgend Ramblers out on a fundraising walk for Children in Need. Club secretary Graham Crocombe tells all...

ON A sunny Sunday, 13 of our members, including one clown and two dogs, walked almost 12 miles in glorious weather, completing a Ogwr Fach Horseshoe Walk.

Setting off from Wilfred Way Tonyrefail, on October 8, we followed the cycle path in a westerly direction, to cross the A4093 main road.

From here, we climbed up via Cwm Ogwr Fach and the forestry to the west of Giffach Goch, stopping for a coffee break at the top of the climb.

We then continued in a northerly direction to pass fairly close to the Pant-y-Wal Wind Farm on the mountain.

From here it was downhill, descending through Ogmere Forest, and alongside the stream flowing down Cwm Dimbarth.

Dimbarth Lane then took us on to Glynogwr. Taking the steep track down past Glynogwr Church, we descended into the valley.

After crossing the stream, a long steep climb took us up onto the Ogwr Ridgeway, where we stopped for a well earned rest and a lunch stop.

On such a sunny October day there were wonderful views across the valley to the wind farm.

We then continued in an easterly direction along the ridgeway to finally descend to our starting point near Tonyrefail and some refreshments in the nearby pub.

Many thanks to our walk leader Angela for leading such a great walk and to Mark for walking the entire 13 miles dressed as a clown to promote Bridgend Ramblers and his fundraising efforts for Children in Need.

Our full Sunday and mid-week program of winter walks (October 23 to March 24), are displayed on our website: bridgendramblers.org

Potential new members are always very welcome to join us on any of our walks by getting in touch with walk leaders beforehand to find out more details.

Ramblers raise a laugh and cash on charity walk



Report in the **Glamorgan Gazette** of 19th October 2023 about the Bridgend Ramblers' 'Children in Need' walk.

MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY

Glamorgan Area membership numbers are staying fairly constant and, at the moment (September), are at 2,459. This is despite a quite large turnover each year with on average 15% to 20 % leaving and being replaced by new members. About half of these leavers continue to be people who joined in the last two years and it would be interesting to know, what they were expecting when they joined, that is not being provided. Clearly, we would grow our numbers substantially if we could convince them to stay! Several groups saw a slight decrease in numbers; that was counterbalanced by a 30 % increase in new members choosing to belong to no group at all!

Robin Pitcher

PUBLICITY OFFICER

I am sure that some groups, including my own Swansea Ramblers Group, are struggling to recoup members lost as a result of COVID. (I do not mean those who sadly died).

Here are some ideas that I have used to promote my Group:

- I have recently made use of The Ramblers Publicity Catalogue which includes free pens and stickers, which I have used along with our own publicity leaflet at The Gower Show. I recommend that Publicity Officers use the catalogue, which includes the loan of pop-up banners;
- Swansea Ramblers' public Facebook group continues to grow with well over a thousand members most of whom are not members of The Ramblers. That gives an opportunity to promote our group's activities to a wider audience;
- I have also used the Swansea U3A noticeboard to promote our group;
- Another idea I have tried is to give a short talk to a group of people who take part in Swansea

Council's Well Being Initiative, which offers weekly short walks around Swansea Marina.

However, as always, the best publicity is recommendations from a group's own members.

Richard Beale

WALKING ENVIRONMENT OFFICER

Another year has passed with very little to report. The only issue that comes to mind is that the proposals to develop Kilvey Hill in Swansea have hit the headlines again this year. The Open Spaces Society have lodged an objection to the loss of open space but it seems likely that the development will go ahead in some form as it has the backing of the Council.

If anyone is aware of any threats that will affect the local walking environment, please speak to your group's Walking Environment Officer, if there is one, or email me at: mike.kohnstamm@btinternet.com.

Mike Kohnstamm

GROUP REPORTS

BRIDGEND

Bridgend Ramblers' walkers started the year in somewhat unusual way last October, when thirteen walkers, including one member dressed as a clown, and two dogs raised a laugh and cash on a Children in Need charity walk. It was a warm sunny October day and it was no mean feat for Mark, who walked the entire thirteen miles dressed as a clown to promote Bridgend Ramblers and his fundraising efforts for Children in Need. As well as raising money, the walk was featured in the *Glamorgan Gazette* (19th October 2023 edition), and a photo was featured in the Ramblers' *Walk* magazine.

Throughout the year, thanks to our various walk program coordinators and walk leaders we have been able to put on a comprehensive programme of six walks every week. We really pride ourselves that our walk programme caters for all ages and abilities: from three or four mile strolls, shorter walks of about



Bridgend Ramblers on the platform at Cymmer railway station (which is now a restaurant and pub), before setting off on their pre-Christmas Lunch walk.

five miles, medium walks of about eight miles, to more challenging full day walks of ten to thirteen miles. It has been especially encouraging to see more mixing between our various walk sections.

All our Sunday and mid-week Group walks are displayed in spreadsheet format via drop down menus on our excellent website: www.bridgendramblers.org.

Members of other Ramblers' groups regularly join us on our walks and some have also very kindly volunteered to lead walks on our behalf. At the time of writing this report, thanks to the efforts of our dedicated team of walk programme coordinators and our team of over ninety registered volunteer walk leaders, our forthcoming October to March Winter Programme is nearing completion.

Our membership numbers have continued to generally steadily increase. It has also very encouraging that a number of our members volunteered to become registered volunteer walk leaders, before the new Ramblers' requirements came into force! With our band of experienced walk leaders there is always someone to help if necessary.

During the year, our walk leaders have lead walks from Gower and the Swansea Valley to the West, to the Brecon Beacons to the North and to the Newport area to the East. We are also endeavouring to continue to put on as many local walks as possible. With the impact of high fuel prices, and because of environmental issues, we are now encouraging as many people as possible to once again car share.

Our Sunday short walks regularly attract over thirty walkers and many medium walks attract around twenty walkers. Although we have had very little summer weather, our fortnightly summer evening walks still proved to be popular. As well as welcoming quite a few new members, we have also welcomed members from oth-

er groups who now join our walks on a fairly regular basis.

On the social front, we have organised number of very successful events. At the beginning of December our Tuesday walkers organised a lovely Christmas lunch after a walk in the hills near Cymmer. Nearer to Christmas we organised an evening Christmas meal and night out. In the New Year our short walkers enjoyed a lovely lunch following a walk in January.

About forty of our members have been on two highly successful coach trips: one to the Forest of Dean in June and a trip to Bath in September. We have also held a number of informal pub social events which have proved to be very popular.

A number of our members have been on various trips and treks. These have included visits to the west coast of Scotland and the Lake District, as well as overseas treks.

Graham Crocombe

CARDIFF

A twice-yearly walks programme booklet continues to be sent out to members. Our membership clearly values receiving these booklets, which give them a physical reminder of the walks that the Group will be offering throughout the year. In addition, it is strongly felt that such a booklet is tangible evidence for members, who may not walk with us, of their connection to the Group. Being a group with around 670 members it is difficult, otherwise, to ensure that we remain in touch with all our members.

So, once again, many thanks to all the walk leaders who provide the huge variety of walks that provide something for everyone; with walks ranging from four to eighteen miles on Wednesdays, Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays plus Thursday evening walks in the summer. A selection of these walks are coach trips (four this year), so many thanks to Karen Walters who organises these events. These have again proved very successful with the majority once again being



Cardiff Ramblers on the summit of Pen y Fan in June to celebrate (though, unfortunately, not see) the summer solstice sunrise in June.



Cardiff Ramblers on a walk from Goytre Wharf to Folly Tower near Pontypool in June.

sold-out. In April the Group did its first holiday away organised through Ramble Worldwide Holidays: this was a trip to the Sicily Islands to explore five of the islands. We were fortunate that it was under the leadership of Roma Whiteley, one of our own members, as she had to contend with some difficult weather conditions which caused severe travel disruptions both in getting there and in travelling between the islands – she coped with it all magnificently. Thanks again to Roma for organising a very successful back-packing walk along the Mull of Kintyre Way in early May.

The work of putting a programme together has been very much a team effort: thanks must go to Jan Aplin, Leighton Hill, Barry Southwell and Gwyn Lewis who act as co-ordinators and inspire leaders to put forward walks for each programme; thanks also to Andrew Price, the Publications Officer, for putting it all together ready for the printers. Thanks also to Jean Board, our Membership Secretary, for organising the mail-out and Mike Kohnstamm, Webmaster, for the uploading of the information

onto the website and The Ramblers walks' database.

All this has all been done despite the fact that we still lack a Rambles Officer; so we are still on the lookout for someone who is willing to co-ordinate all the work needed to produce a programme, which has at least half-a-dozen walks per week.

We held a series of training courses for walk leaders in October and November of last year to show them how to enter their walks directly onto Walks Manager. Nearly all active walk leaders took up the offer and have been directly putting their walks onto Walks Manager making the job of con-

structing each six-month programme a lot easier for the Publications Officer. Many thanks to Jean Board and Mike Kohnstamm who organised and ran the sessions.

Diane Davies

MAESTEG

Our Group continues to grow in number as do our planned walks and new routes. We are more a family than a group, each supports the other, be it within personal or group circumstances, and I am very proud to be counted amongst its members.

Two of our Group members have celebrated their eightieth birthdays this year. Does that mean they are slowing down? Not a chance! Always first in line for planned walks and usually one of the first to reach the hill summits. These two gents, one of whom is our Chair, are simply inspiring and a motivation for the whole group. A few of our Group members over the last year have pushed their endurance to the limits on challenging charity and fundraising treks to raise much needed funds for good causes. Well done to the intrepid explorers amongst us.

Everyone is getting excited in the build up to this year's holiday, planned for November, when our Group will invade Exmoor. (Arranged through HF Walking Holi-



Maesteg Ramblers celebrating their trip to Curch Stretton in October of last year.



Maesteg Ramblers on a walk in the Cwmavon area in January.

days). Last year in October we went to Church Stretton. We met wonderful people, enjoyed some amazing walks with breathtaking views of the Shropshire hills and had plenty of laughs along the way. We all have memories to treasure from our time there. We have held a very energetic music and general knowledge quiz, complete with bazoorkas and bells! We cannot wait to see what is in store for us next year.

We have introduced a Group Holiday Rep and a Social Secretary, so there is no end to the additional

Group activities, from film and quiz nights to meals out and, of course, the essential night-out for walk planning!

Rambling and utilising local footpaths and keeping them accessible is an ongoing passion for us all and we will continue to explore our beautiful countryside for many years to come. Anyone thinking of joining our little happy band of ramblers will get a very warm welcome.

Trudy Harris

MERTHYR VALLEY

Merthyr Valley Ramblers have a steady number of members. We walk every Saturday and often have visitors who join us; some from other Ramblers groups, some non-members just giving it a go. We have had walkers from other countries too, such as the Netherlands and Kuwait, who have liked comparing our weather, scenery and terrain to their own. We are a friendly and welcoming group. Walking helps to promote good mental and physical health. People often comment on how they have enjoyed the walking.

Some walks are more memorable than others. Walking in Wales means we must be prepared for all kinds of weather, such as a recent walk at Rhossili, when the forecast got it wrong and the skies emptied on us all day. It really tests your waterproof gear! It can also work the other way: some skies look like being wet but become bright and clear. It is an adventure, and it is best to be prepared for unexpected situations. One walk, which we did a few months ago, took us down a flooded lane. The walk leader had very thoughtfully brought us some knee-high plastic



'The mid-walk teach your dog to swim session didn't go quite as expected.'

boot coverings, so that we could wade through it. Our dogs were not all as enthusiastic to do so.

It is not all walking: we are a social group too. For any member who wants to socialise, we meet every month for a meal and quiz. We also get together for a meal and bowling every couple of months. We have a Christmas do annually which includes a raffle, quiz and an awards ceremony. This is when we mention all the memorable events of the year and give certificates such as the one for leader of the muddiest walk, or 'sheep rescuer'. In May we organise a walking weekend away. This year a few of us went to Lynmouth in Devon and enjoyed some lovely coastal walks, lots of laughs and socialising.

We had a successful time at Garwnant open day this year. We were able to talk to people who were interested in walking and took a group on a short taster walk. We were supplied with lots of publicity materials from the Ramblers' office in Cardiff, which helped to spark interest.

We have recently formed a path-clearing group. Lots of our local rights of way have become overgrown and need clearing. We have just finished clearing a path near Heolgerrig which was badly overgrown. It had not been used for many years and was completely lost. We had help from groups like NRW and the local council with equipment, training and a new kissing gate at the entrance. We had a small opening ceremony on 25th September to advertise this path, encouraging people to enjoy walking and volunteering. The path leads from a lane, through trees until reaching a long forestry path at the top. This in turn leads to many other walkable paths, some still to be cleared of course. There are fabulous views of mountains, including the Brecon Beacons and the Merthyr Valley. Hopefully this will have an impact: by helping to maintain and draw attention to

paths everyone can use and by promoting walking and appreciation of the outdoors and beautiful countryside which we are so fortunate to have around us.

Alan Hancox

NEATH PORT TALBOT

Being a small group, NPT Ramblers are pleased to report that our membership has grown in 2024. During the past year we have enjoyed a variety of walks including joint walks and welcomed new walk leaders to our Group which is encouraging.

A big thank you to Brian and Jean for all their hard work in planning two thoroughly enjoyable trips away for us. We had a wonderful few days staying at Loch Awe in the Scottish Highlands. Despite the inclement weather, members enjoyed walks in stunning surroundings. For those who chose to avoid the wild Scottish weather, there were day trips to historic towns. These included Oban and its world-renowned distillery with a fascinating tour and not forgetting the generous whisky tasters on offer. Also, Inveraray, a popular des-

tinuation with a wealth of history, particularly its 1850's jail that attracts visitors worldwide.

We also had an excellent stay in Llanberis, North Wales with perfect weather. Our walk leaders led some lovely walks with stunning views. We even managed the Rhyd Ddu path to Snowden's summit without getting wet on this occasion.

The manager of Drymmau Hall Care Home Neath invited the Group to talk to the residents about NPT Ramblers and our walks in the local area. Richard made a photographic presentation compiled of previous local walks in the picturesque surrounding area and hills. Gwyneth gave an excellent, engaging talk to residents about the local walks explaining where the photos were taken. Those present were very interested and enthusiastic to know about the photos' locations. Some residents recognised local landmarks they had visited or walked when younger with happy memories, leading to lively discussions. A big thank you to Richard and Gwyneth for all their hard work and engaging presentation.

During the upcoming year we hope to welcome further new members.



NPT Ramblers at Careg Bica on Mynydd Drumau: one of the images shown in a talk given to the residents of Drymmau Hall Care Home, Neath.

We look forward to developing our walks' programme, particularly to provide more distance options and to explore new areas.

Maureen Griffiths

PENARTH & DISTRICT

It has been another busy year for Penarth & District. The Group maintains its strength just below two hundred and on one occasion during the year hit that magic number! Our small band of walk leaders continue to do a magnificent job putting on a wide variety of walks for the Group. We would love to have more walk leaders, so if you feel it is something you would be interested in, please let us know and our Walks' Coordinator, William, will be eager to support and mentor you - remember all walk leaders started by going on other people's walks!

As reported in the last edition, the group celebrated its thirtieth anniversary last year. This year the occasion was marked by a short walk to Porthkerry Country Park where the aforesaid William planted an oak sapling which hopefully will flourish and grow. Twenty people came along to enjoy the morning, with dogs Bruno and Bracken.

The Group continues to provide walks most weekends and on some weekdays. The annual *Shortish*



Penarth Ramblers enjoying Geraint's walk exploring the history of Penarth.

Strides which features local walks up to seven miles in length was held between September and April and featured sixteen walks led by Joy and was attended by 206 participants. Joy also continued her programme of Thursday spring/summer evening walks between May and August this year which were attended by 202 people and, despite the unpredictable weather, only one was cancelled because of heavy rain! Last September, William headed to the Malvern Hills for a two-day mid-week walking trip - they endured heavy rain and high winds on their total of twenty-six miles over the two days, but still seemed to enjoy it. This year he is headed to the Quantocks - let us hope the weather is better!

In December Geraint led a walk in the Penarth area which attracted twenty-three walkers to hear some of the interesting history of the town and the dockland, including hearing about the 'Happiest Man on Earth' who is buried at St Augustine's Church and did his utmost, often being criticised, to help the poor and needy. You may also have seen Geraint on *Weatherman Walking* when he gave some local knowledge on Michaelston Le Pit.

The group could not function without its committee. It is not a very glamorous job but essential for us to continue to operate and the committee members of John (Secretary), Jeff (Treasurer) Pam (Membership Secretary), Nick (Web), William (Walks Coordinator), Joy (Publicity), Krys (Social), plus Alison, Josie, Louise, Sheila all deserve recognition.

If you come to our AGM you will know that Josie and Krys regularly provide cake(!) and this year our group will be hosting the Area AGM on Saturday 23rd November in Murchfield Community Hall, when I am sure more delicacies will be on offer. So we hope to see you there!



Penarth Ramblers marking the 30th anniversary of the Group by planting an oak sapling in Porthkerry Country Park.

Robin Pitcher

SWANSEA

Our Membership number was falling towards the end of last year. In January, our membership number was 360. However, despite continuing to lose more members, we have also recruited new ones, so at the end of August, our membership stood at 374.

We have been making considerable effort to publicise our activities and so increase membership to former levels. Committee members have done a lot of work to this end. We continue to provide a very ambitious programme of walks of which the most popular are on a Saturday. These always start at 11:00am, are of a moderate grading and capped to a maximum of six miles. It is very pleasing to report that we have now been able to mount a full programme of Sunday walks, which are much longer, thanks to the efforts of some of our committee.

In addition, there are walks throughout the week with summer evening walks proving popular. Our walks often end in a local hospitality and we advertise these post-walk socials on each walk description. This social aspect to our group is magnified by our very active Social Committee which run all kinds of activities. Trips away are very popular and we have meals in restaurants, etc. We have two coach trips planned between now and December. Our social committee have already planned for the next twelve months to ensure members know the added benefit of being a member of Swansea Ramblers. Our Facebook Group is another way to reach the public and its current membership exceeds 1,000. It is open to all and we have hopes that it will prove a valuable recruiting arm.

The Group Committee have recently been very busy because of the changes which Ramblers UK are considering and making. This is producing a great deal of paperwork which places a heavy burden on our Secretary and some other

Committee members. We are all too happy to get out for a walk!

Through our Footpaths Officer we are constantly trying to monitor what is happening locally and we keep in touch with the Countryside Access Team of Swansea City Council. Another threat to paths is simply that they get overgrown and, in one way or another, decay to the point of being unusable. The efforts of our Path Maintenance Team, who work very closely with the local Council, has recently been highly praised by elected Council members and we are very proud of their work.

John France

TAFF ELY

Again a very busy year of walks around South Wales, with a few longer trips by coach, weekends away and small group tours in Montenegro and Minorca. We did eighty-eight walks consisting of three strenuous, fifty-three moderate, thirty leisurely, and two easy, and an average of sixteen per walk totalling 9,456 miles over twelve months.

To mark the thirtieth anniversary of the founding of the group we held a commemorative walk on 11th November around Llantrisant prior



Taff Ely Ramblers celebrating the 30th anniversary of the Group with a walk around Llantrisant together with Dai Rees, Ramblers Cymru Governance & Local Engagement Officer.

to the AGM. Then on 25th November we had a special meal at "La Luna" restaurant in Talbot Green combining our celebration of the thirty years and Christmas. We have had a long association with Llantrisant including working with the local council in the creation and maintenance of the Bunny Walks and more recently we have had the Badger Walks around Pontyclun. So we invited the Chair of Llantrisant Parish Council, Councillor Anne Callow, and Pontyclun Town Councillor Wayne Owen to join us for the meal, and a good time was had by all.

Just prior to Easter, we spent another rewarding and enjoyable weekend in the Elan Valleys, based at the Elan Valley Lodge. On 18th May we had a day trip to Skomer Island, where the abundant nesting puffins charmed everyone. Several members of the Group acted as



Taff Ely Ramblers on a walk during their stay in the Elan Valley in March.

walk marshalls on 8th June during the seven-yearly festival walk “Beating the Bounds” around the historic boundary of Llantrisant. Over the weekend 13-14th July we attended the annual commemorative Glo Aur walk from Cymmer to Insole Court, split into two parts to allow us to enjoy a summer garden party on the Saturday.

Social activities that have been enjoyed by members included a bowls evening on 2nd March. and the launch of a new social initiative via a WhatsApp Group “*Sole-Mates*” to support and share experiences amongst members.

The annual Welsh Council was held at Llandudno against the background roar of a storm that meant on Saturday the walk could not go up the Great Orme but otherwise the event was very instructive and the evening magic show most entertaining. Some of the debate on Sunday highlighted a distance between members feelings and concerns here in Wales against certain decisions taken by Ramblers GB. There remains a significant minority of active members who do not use, or are even opposed to, the increasing emphasis on digital and online communication by the Ramblers. However, we must find a balance between using new technology and methods of communication with the support of all the membership. To assist members with the online tools, we held a training session on using Walks Manager and we intend to follow this up with related sessions and a forum for walk leaders to discuss issues arising from leading walks.

Now we are planning for trips in the next twelve months, weekends away, and some abroad including a proposed visit in September 2025 to Ravensburg near Lake Constance in southern Germany. Ravensburg has been twinned with Aberdare for thirty years and subsequently Rhondda Cynon Taff in general. There is a great deal of interest in hiking groups from RCT

going to Ravensburg for joint walks with their hiking groups and then an equivalent exchange by our German partners.

Finally, may I again express my gratitude to all the hard-working and enthusiastic committee members who help make the group such a success.

Derek Wallis

TAWE TREKKERS

As a small group we have had another year of low attendance numbers on walks. We understand ‘life’ gets in the way sometimes and realise not all members can attend all walks. Having promoted ourselves on social media platforms we still have not had the turn out we would like, which is disappointing for our resolute walk leaders, to whom we are extremely grateful. It is a tricky balance, seeing so many ‘unofficial’ walking groups popping up on social media makes for difficult competition but we keep plodding on!

This year we’ve covered ground from Bannau Brycheiniog to the West Wales coast and everywhere in between! Most memorable of these (unfortunately for me) was in February, when we had braved the



Tawe Trekkers gathered around the giant redwood tree on the canal near Llangattock on a walk in June.

rain showers to hike a circuit of Llyn y Fan Fawr. A few of us had slipped that day as the ground was waterlogged from weeks of rain. While descending via Fan Hir to Tafen y Garreg my slip resulted in a full-on Mountain Rescue!

Fortunately, having attended Ramblers’ navigation courses in the past, we knew what to do. Keep the casualty (me) warm, call 999 request Mountain Rescue, let them know our precise location and get the rest of the group off the mountain safely. Unbeknown to me at the time, I had sustained a spiral fracture of my fibula. Both Western and Central Beacons Mountain Rescue Teams came to my assistance and, as the helicopter could not attend, they had the unenviable



Tawe Trekkers enjoying the view with the Stargazing Hare on a walk in the Crynant Forest in January.

task of carrying, wheeling, and sliding me off the mountain by stretcher. I am so incredibly grateful to my fellow Trekkers for taking care of me and for the MRTs, who did an amazing job in difficult conditions.

While I was off my feet our trusty leaders kept on rambling despite several low turnouts. To try and encourage new members, once I was able, I added some shorter, slower paced walks to our programme, this is ongoing as I rebuild my fitness level. It was great to finally rejoin the group for a couple of less strenuous walks during the Summer.

As always huge thanks go to our invaluable walk leaders. With their commitment and knowledge, I am hopeful that our group will keep plodding through the peaks and troughs gathering new/returning members as we traverse!

Helen Thomas

TIGER BAY RAMBLERS

This year has been vibrant and eventful for the Tiger Bay Ramblers. We have kept up a nearly weekly walking schedule, totalling seventy walks led by twenty-three of our dedicated members. Our diverse range of walks included "rail rambles" starting and ending at train stations and new collaborations, such as teaming up with Cardiff Metropolitan Walkers to establish a younger group for those in their 20s and 30s.

Our membership now stands at 219, reflecting a shift in demographics. To address this change, we have seen a rise in engagement with Meetup groups catering to younger walkers.

We kicked off the year with a memorable trip to Cheddar from 26th to 28th January. Thirty-eight members stayed at the Cheddar Youth Hostel, enjoyed a homemade curry, chose from three walk options



Tiger Bay Ramblers at Yr Allt in April.

and wrapped up the weekend with a meal at a local pub. In June, nineteen members explored the Elan Valley over a weekend, staying in various accommodations around Rhyader and tackling a 12.5 mile walk each day amidst breathtaking scenery. Our annual picnic at Cosmeston on 13th July celebrated its twelfth year. This time, due to local regulations, we swapped our traditional barbecue for a picnic but still enjoyed a lovely day with food provided by the committee and a short walk to the Captain's Wife in Sully. September brought our international walking holiday to the Croatian islands, where twenty-one members explored the area with our trusted local guide, who has also led our previous trips in Croatia, Serbia, and Montenegro.

Our monthly meet-ups continued on the first Thursday of every month at Chapter Arts, providing a consistent opportunity for socializing and planning. In April, nine members completed First Aid Training at the Ramblers office, enhancing our preparedness for future walks.

Looking ahead, we are excited for our Christmas gathering at the Tyle Morgurrug Hostel, following last

year's success. We are also considering offering a pre-Christmas meal option for those unable to join the full weekend festivities.

Overall, this year has been about maintaining our beloved walking traditions while embracing new experiences and adapting to the evolving needs of our members. Here's to another fantastic year ahead!

Asta Smith

VALE OF GLAMORGAN

The start of 2024 hit us hard with the death of our friend, walk leader and Group Secretary, Mike Holley. After a short illness, Mike died on the 18th of February. His passing has left a huge gap in our Group: not only was he an excellent Secretary, but he was an adventurous walk leader, leading us on many exciting walks each year, with co-leader Judy. Together they were a formidable team. We also miss him as a kind and generous friend. In the same month we lost Margaret Scott. She had been a Rambler's member for over thirty years, joining our committee in 2000 and



(Left) Mike Holley on a walk in the Brecon Beacons.
(Right) Margaret Scott in Tenby on a walk.



serving as Chair from 2008 until 2013. Margaret was also an active walk leader and more recent led many local history walks. Both are sadly missed.

Our walk programme has had another successful year with good numbers walking on Sundays and on our summer evening walks. Our membership has dipped from 151 to 148; a mixture of older members not renewing but some new members joining. We have had two very successful weekends away. One in Llangollen last October led by our former Chair, Gwion, and co-leader Chris to the Horseshoe Falls and the Valle Crucis Abbey, followed by one to Castell Dinas Bran and Trevor Rocks. In May we had a weekend in Yorkshire, visiting Gordale Scar and Malham Cove plus a walk along the River Wharf.

Gwenda organised another successful stand at the Vale Show, showcasing walking with the Ramblers. Her aim is to promote walking for mental and physical health and engage with as many members

of the public as possible, making them aware of their local groups. Thank you to Area for financial support.

Recently we have joined forces with South East Wales Rivers Trust to do footpath clearing around the River Ely and St George's. We continue to work with the Vale of Glamorgan Council to part-fund the replacement of stiles with pedestrian gates. The Council regularly holds User Meetings, attended by ourselves, Valeways and Penarth Ramblers, where we discuss footpath maintenance and PRO diversions. Our litter picking activities continue to be very successful. We have good contact with Keep the Vale Tidy, who collect and collate data from local groups. We will soon extend our litter picking to both Llandough and Barry hospitals.

On the social front we have had two well attended Group meals. One in January in The Duke and another in August in the now reopened Farmers Arms in St Brides.

We are finding that there are still many issues with transferring walks from Walks Manager to the app. We are continuing to liaise with HQ on these issues; it is important to resolve these glitches to make walk information more accessible, particularly to visitors. We register our walkers on the app with the encouragement of The Ramblers.

We are still without a Group Secretary or Membership Secretary. At present, other members of the committee are trying to fill the gaps. On a positive note, Chris Westoby in now our new Treasurer and Hywel Gravell has agreed to be our new auditor. Our gratitude goes to Patrick for undertaking this role for such a long time and many thanks to our two new volunteers, we appreciate their stepping forward. We are very grateful to walk leader volunteers and we thank all who have led for us in the last year. They are greatly valued! As is our Walks Secretary who organises our walks programme and keeps us all up to date.

Jackie Brett