

October 2025

Newsletter of the Glamorgan Area

### GATEGATE: A SUCCESS STORY

It is not often that a rights-of-way matter gets into the newspapers, but this year the “Gate-gate” saga has received a fair amount of publicity. The roots of the story go back to the 1980's, when the then Forestry Commission decided to sell off a small patch of land between their forest and the village of Cwmparc, in the Rhondda Valley. At the edge of the land was their access track to the forest, sold to the new owner with the condition that the Forestry Commission (not mentioning the general public) had continued use of the track.

For forty years, the first two owners were happy for the public to use this track - the only access to the mountain for miles around. It was well used by locals and visitors, including a



Before ~ March 2025



After ~ Sept '25

(Left) The gates erected to block access to the Forestry Commission road and (right) the walk held on 6th September to mark the reopening of access.  
Photo Mike Kohnstamm

number of Ramblers groups for their walks. Then, this year, a new owner moved in and decided to erect two huge six-foot high gates to keep the public off his land, and consequently off the mountain. At first sight, he had the right, as it was his land and the short stretch of track

was never recorded as a public right of way.

However, the locals had other ideas and were not content to find their neighbouring mountain suddenly cut off from access. A campaign was launched, with a number of lo-

**GLAMORGAN AREA AGM (open to all members)**

**SATURDAY 15<sup>th</sup> NOVEMBER 2025 at 2:00pm**

At

**Llantrisant Leisure Centre**  
**Southgate Park, Llantrisant, CF72 8DJ**

What3words for car park: wounds.thinking.zoos

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

cals involved, very ably led by Richard Clarke. By the time The Ramblers became aware of the issue, the campaign was well underway, with large posters all over Treorchy and articles in many local papers. Ramblers Cymru supported the campaign and nationally The Ramblers gave advice and support. Kate Ashbrook, The Ramblers and Ramblers Cymru Vicepresident, took a personal interest. Councillors were approached and were generally favourable to the cause.

Ultimately, the Council highway authority agreed that access had freely and willingly been available for well over the statutory twenty years and that the short length of track should have been recorded as a public right of way. This decision was eventually approved and the gates were ordered to be removed. After some delay, and with a few threats of legal action, the gates finally came down, one hundred and sixteen days after they were erected. Use of the path since then has exceeded the usage beforehand, doubtless down to the amount of publicity received. Once again, the public have access to the forestry and to the spectacular scenery of the mountains beyond.

**Mike Kohnstamm**

## **EDITORIAL**

It is not often that I am able to include a story about walking that has reached the national media. So, it is a pleasure to include the front-page article about the campaign to keep open a much-loved path in Cwmparc in the Rhondda. The campaign against the erection of gates to block access to an essen-

tial route leading to the forest and mountainside surrounding Cwmparc was exemplary and everyone who worked hard to ensure a successful outcome is to be warmly thanked.

Looking at the reports, it is clear that the issue that is of most concern to groups is the new rules relating to walk leaders. Many groups are clearly worried about the impact they will have on current leaders and on the willingness of new leaders to step forward. They also highlight the steps groups are taking to ensure leaders are able to meet the requirements that will soon come into force in the New Year.

Finally I hope you enjoy reading this overview of a year's work in the Glamorgan Area and note the details, on the front-page, of the AGM, which all members are entitled to attend and where you can raise any concerns you may have.

**Diane Davies - Editor**

## **CHAIR**

Hi Everyone: a warm welcome to you all, especially to new members. I hope you all have enjoyed walking during the past year as much as I have. With varied walks and good company, I feel glad I did the walks.

This year The Ramblers has decided that all walk leaders must have basic training by an online training course. I have been a walk leader for twenty years, but I decided to take the training course, instead of the twelve walks option. The course is informative and easy to complete although it takes a time to complete the course. There are four

sections, and you can complete one at a time. I encourage all walk leaders to take the online training course, even those eligible to use the twelve walks option. PLEASE, PLEASE take the online training course. Walk leaders are the backbone of our groups, we cannot afford to lose any. I thank all walk leaders and group committees for their outstanding work during the last year; without these volunteers there would be no walks.

This year the Vale of Glamorgan group celebrated their fiftieth anniversary with a festival of walks.

Lastly, I thank the Area committee members for their commitment and support this year.

**Les Meachin**

## **GENERAL SECRETARY**

A belated Happy Ninetieth Anniversary to the Ramblers and a guarded welcome to two major Ramblers' initiatives:

### **Updated approach to Ramblers Walk Leader Training**

By 31st December 2025, walk leaders will need to have confirmed that they have read the Walk Leader Handbook, and

**Either (a)** completed The Ramblers two online training modules (Walk Leadership Foundations and Preventing and Managing Incidents) which can be completed at one's own pace;

**Or (b)** choose to record their experience as a Group Walk leader for either Ramblers' Group walks or Ramblers Well-being walks (or both) over the last three years;

**Or (c)** record their Mountain Training qualification (Lowland Leader Award, Hill & Moorland Leader Award or Mountain Leader Award). This can be done via simple online form or by speaking to Group's walks programme coordinator.

A Big Thanks to walk leaders who have undertaken the above Walk Leader Training and a reminder to the Walk Leaders who have yet to do the training that the deadline is rapidly approaching.

### **Ramblers Governance Review**

At the time of writing, the Trustees have proposed that:

- **Groups** should be the primary formal organising unit for The Ramblers with simplified requirements as to their constitution and direct funding from The Ramblers central funds.

- **Areas** will cease to exist and Hubs will be established to cover every part of the country.

**Ramblers Cymru and Ramblers Scotland** will remain distinct entities within the organisation each with an Advisory Forum.

- **Gatherings** will be held at least annually for members and volunteers and attended by Trustees and key staff, to enable discussion and debate on key issues, and allow engagement with the Board.

- **GB-wide national gathering** will be held at least every three years.

- **Current motions process** will be replaced by a new, formalised process of discussions and debates in these Gatherings.

- **All fully paid-up members** of one or more year's standing will become company (i.e. "voting") members of The Ramblers with the right to attend the Annual General Meeting (AGM) and elect trustees.

- **AGM** will focus only on the required formal company law requirements and be held online.

- **Elections for trustees** (eight as a minimum and a maximum of twelve) will be held online in advance of the AGM and the results of elections confirmed at the AGM and take effect immediately. Six will be elected by members; four will be appointed by the Board; two will be selected by the Board and appointed subject to ratification by members at the AGM. There will be one trustee elected by members in Wales one elected by members in Scotland. The Chair and Treasurer will be selected by the Board and appointed subject to ratification by members at the AGM. All trustee appointments will be for a term of three-years, with trustees eligible to be re-elected or reappointed for a further three-year term. Trustee elections and appointments will be on an established rolling cycle.

The proposals will be discussed and decided on at an EGM in December. Details of the proposals can be found on The General Council page of The Ramblers' website.

**Ramblers Cymru's office in Cardiff** has closed and its new postal address is: Tramshed Tech, Unit 3, Goodsheds Lofts, Hood Road, Barry, CF62 5QT. This is a postal address only, and no Ramblers staff will be permanently based at this address. Staff will be working from home but email and phone numbers remain the same:

Email: [RamblersCymru@ramblers.org.uk](mailto:RamblersCymru@ramblers.org.uk)  
Telephone: 020 3961 3310 (Monday: 10am – 5:00pm; Tuesday - Friday: 9am – 5:00pm)

**Is your Group webpage contact details correct:** Every month, around 10,000 people search for their local group on The Ramblers website through a find your local group function. Ramblers has asked that groups check that their Ramblers website contact details are correct. Email [ramblers@ramblers.zendesk.com](mailto:ramblers@ramblers.zendesk.com) if you need to update your Group's details.

**Is your Group using the right Ramblers logo:** Do check that you are using the correct Ramblers & Ramblers Cymru logo and branding. If you're still using an old logo on any Ramblers digital and physical materials, please update it using the new logo, which can be found in the volunteer resources library.

**Gwyn Lewis**

## **TREASURER**

The Area continues to incur planned deficits. In 2023/24 £1,231 and in 2024/25 to date £2,086. This will reduce our reserves to around 80% of total expenditure.

In 2024/25 all groups accepted their basic allocation, except Maesteg who required no funding.

The total Budget Payments to Groups is £3,312 (2023/24 £3,598). Area again submitted a funding request of £3,000, less than group funding, in order to reduce our reserves. At 30th June our reserves were £4,450. The final quarterly payment was received of £750, and no major items of expenditure are expected. Our reserves at year end should be approx. £5,200, down from £6,536 of the previous year.

	2023/24 Actual	9 Months to June 2025 Actual	2024/25 Budget	2025/26 Budget
Reserves b/f	7,767	6,536	6,600	4,693
Total Income	3,000	2,250	3,000	4,300
Group Funding	3,598	3,312	3,312	4,242
Newsletters/publicity	150	150	260	210
Practical work	59	503	1,100	1,100
Meetings	404	371	400	400
Admin	20		250	250
Other				
Total Payments	4,231	4,336	5,322	6,202
Surplus/Deficit()	(1,231)	(2,086)	(2,322)	(1,902)
Reserves c/f	6,536	4,450	4,278	3,061

Our Budget Application for 2025/26 has been submitted and is awaiting approval. Merthyr Valley Group has made a funding request including £500 for replacement path clearing equipment that had been stolen. Group Funding has increased to £4,242 (2024/25 £3,312). All other groups have accepted their basic allocation (£100 per group plus £1.10 per member). In accordance with our policy of recent years, we have requested funding of £4,300 (2024/25 £3,000) to cover the payments to Groups.

I give comparative figures in the summarised Receipts & Payments Accounts shown in the Table above.

I have kept our budget expenditure the same as 2024/25 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, for example, promoting walking. We have reduced our reserves to recommended levels so our fu-

ture funding requests should be maintained at current levels. Many of you will be aware that there is a governance review being undertaken which proposes that Areas will no longer have a formal governance role. Serious consideration will need to be given to the change in financial control procedures, including funding and annual returns.

**Ian Fraser**

## FOOTPATH SECRETARY

After much campaigning by The Ramblers and others and several false starts, both English and Welsh Governments have repealed the “2026 Cut Off” that would have prevented the use of pre-1949 historical documents to gain right of way status for a “lost” path. Whilst Ramblers rightly celebrates this success its “Don’t Lose Your Way” campaign continues and opportunities exist for interested members to get involved in developing their local footpath network.

Members interested in getting involved should look out for “Don’t Lose Your Way” invite to a training session communicated in Ramblers Volunteer Updates.

### On-going National Campaigns:

- Expand the freedom to roam to cover woodland, watersides and more grassland.
- Cities to have a network of high quality, easy to follow walking routes that link up green spaces and enable everyone to explore cities on foot without losing sight of nature.

### Ramblers Cymru Initiatives:

- Step Forward Walks for Women in North Wales working with young women to develop free walking groups in Rhyl, Wrexham and Holyhead.
- Bringing a new National Park based on the current Clwydian Range and the Dee Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty a step closer.

In addition to discovering “Lost Ways” Ramblers recognises members’ efforts undertaken by path maintenance teams keeping paths open, useable and enjoyable.

To enable Ramblers to measure and demonstrate the impact of all this hard work, it has created a tool for recording path maintenance work and vegetation clearance by footpath wardens. If your group is involved in path maintenance or path clearance, please do record your activities on the Path Improvement Tracker.

Though not a Glamorgan project, the Ramblers Cymru Pathways Partnership project, run alongside Carmarthenshire County Council shows what can be achieved. Thanks to the ded-

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

ication of seventy-nine volunteers, a whopping 571km of public rights of way have been surveyed in Carmarthenshire in just twelve months! This vital survey data provided evidence to secure funding for twenty paths to be improved, with work already completed on ten of these paths; so far this means fourteen more accessible gates and twenty-six other issues resolved so far. Ramblers Cymru will be sharing Carmarthenshire County Council successes with members of the Rights of Way team for each Welsh county council to foster wider engagement within Wales.

Members wishing to be involved in Footpath related activities should contact their Group Footpath Officer (see Table above).

Guidance Notes on footpath issues can be found on The Ramblers website which includes topics such as, *Rights of Way Law*; *Reporting Problems with Rights of Way* and *Path Maintenance*.

Ramblers regularly have on line Footpath Forums that discuss Footpath related issues and all are welcome to attend.

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.

Special Mention for Tony Yule who, during the year, stepped down from his role as Group Footpath Officer for Taff Ely Ramblers. I have no records to check how long Tony was Taff

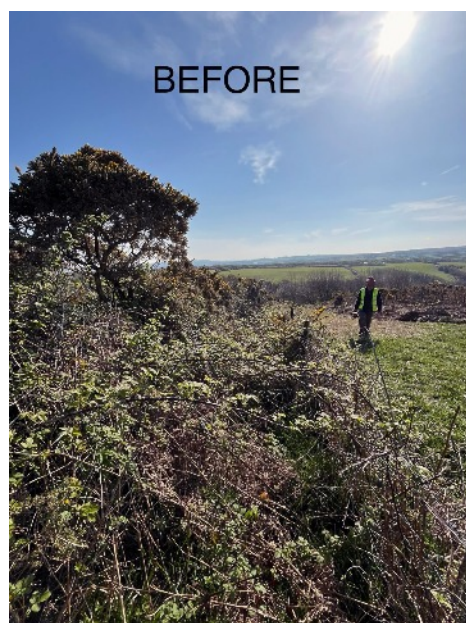
Ely Group's Footpath Officer, but it was for many, many years and throughout that time his knowledge and commitment to footpath work was unrivalled: **Wishing Tony a "Happy Retirement"**.

**Gwyn Lewis**

## MEMBERSHIP

Membership for the Glamorgan Area stays resiliently constant around the 2,500 level, although there was a roughly a one hundred increase last year from 2447 at June 2024 to 2541 at end June this year. The number of members not belonging to any group went up by about 40 % this year (actually in a three month period) and we eventually found out that Ramblers have been employing an outside company to manage new members and not allocating them to a group. If this applies to you and you would like to be in the group where you live (or another), you can get it corrected quite easily. Just log into your account with Ramblers, click on 'My Groups', then 'Change Ramblers Group', select your preferred group, and Save.

We continue to see 50% of new members leaving again within two years. We do not know why this is: for example, whether they were given a gift membership that has expired or whether



Swansea Group's Maintenance Team at work.

Photo: Andrew Morgan

they feel they do not get what they were expecting from membership. But please do your best to welcome new members and make them feel a part of your group.

**Robin Pitcher**

## **PUBLICITY**

Earlier this year I conducted a desk study to audit the publicity methods used by Rambler groups in the Glamorgan Area. This was subsequently presented to the Area Committee.

Methods used were varied. All had a website and most used Facebook as a private or public group. The key thing to remember is that our walks should be publicised widely so that our members as well as members of the public can easily see what is on offer. To have to email somebody to find out what walks are on offer is really not helpful or welcoming. The Ramblers Walk Manager is the best way to do this, so it is important that as

much information as possible is entered into it.

Do not forget that, as a member of The Ramblers, you can walk with any group of your choice. For example, I made use of this over the August Bank Holiday weekend and walked with Red-ditch Ramblers in Evesham and over forty people turned up from various Rambler groups. We had a walk through the apple and plum orchards and were informed we could help ourselves to what was left on the trees as the bulk of fruit had already been harvested. I would advise anybody wishing to walk with another group to contact them first as a matter of courtesy.

If anybody would like a copy of my report, please contact me.

**Richard Beale**

## **WALKING ENVIRONMENT**

Yet again there is little to report. Nothing has been reported to me from our local groups, and I

have not spotted anything in the local news that requires action. As usual, I would urge anybody who feels that their walking environment is being threatened to get in touch with me or your group's Walking Environment Officer.

**Mike Kohnstamm**

## **GROUPS**

### **BRIDGEND**

Any annual review always tries to pick out the highlights, and maybe the lowlights, from the previous twelve months. If you're a sports fan, which I am definitely not, then I imagine it is quite easy to look back and choose the biggest wins as the highlights and the most embarrassing defeats as the lowlights. That's it. Everyone will get it. But with rambling it is more difficult.

Rambling is about people and places and participating in the simple pleasure of walking outdoors. The Bridgend Group has just under three hundred members and each week we arrange five or six group walks from three to twelve miles in length. And over the past twelve months we have had two coach trips, a couple of social evenings and at least two Christmas dinners. We have had a trout fall from the sky beside us (really, we have, a marauding cormorant dropped it in our path with a gentle *thwack*), we have seen the studio where Queen recorded *Bohemian Rhapsody* and one of our members has demonstrated how to tame a bull by tripping it up. (OK, that is a slight



Bridgend Ramblers following in miners' footsteps near Gilfach Goch in March.



Bridgend ramblers at the top of Ysgyryd Fawr in July.

exaggeration, but only a slight one).

We have been part of a Remembrance Walk and marked the ninetieth birthday of one of our still active members. We have walked up hills, through sand dunes, along beaches and old mine tracks steeped with history, into parks and beside rivers. We have had no accidents and, bulls and trout aside, no near misses. So how on earth do you pick a highlight from all that. The answer, or at least, my answer, is that you cannot really.

So, how about our year in (*approximate*) numbers. Let us try that:

- Average membership: 296.
- Total value of our members subscriptions: £12,700.
- Total number of group walks: 286.
- Average number of walkers on each walk: 15.
- Average walk length: 7 miles.
- Total distance walked: 30,000 miles,

- One trout encounter. (Only the trout data is accurate, the rest are guestimates amongst friends, give or take quite a bit).

Of course, the numbers themselves tell a story. So, to contradict my earlier comment, I would say that our stable membership and the variety of walks we offer are real highlights. The latter is, of course, entirely down to the hard work of our walk coordinators and walk leaders. The whole group is massively indebted to them. After all, getting people out walking in the great outdoors is what The Ramblers is all about.

And if I had to pick a lowlight, it would be that somehow, we have not inspired all our local members to come on our walks. Of course, people join The Ramblers for many different reasons. All of them are good. And everyone is totally free to use their membership for whichever of its benefits appeal to them. But as another estimate, I would say

that we have only attracted around a third of our membership to regularly join us on a walk. (I wonder if it is the same for other groups?). So, if you're one of the two thirds reading this, please think about trying out one of our walks. I can promise you a warm welcome, although not necessarily warm weather or more trout.

And to end on a formal note, earlier this year Hopkin Thomas, our Chairman, handed over the reigns of stewardship to Mick Harris; and in October, Brian Jones, our Treasurer plans to pass on the cheque book to an as yet unknown successor. Ten thousand thanks to both of them for their hard work and dedication.

**Steve Townsley**

## CARDIFF

This year has seen the end of an era, as the committee decided to discontinue producing a printed programme. The Cardiff Group has been providing a printed programme ever since its founding in 1983 but that all ended with the publication of the April to September 2025 programme. A letter explaining the reasons behind the decision was included in the mail-out. From October onwards members will be relying on information on our own website, Gwyn Lewis's weekly newsletter and The Ramblers website (as our walks' information is organised using The Ramblers' Walks Manager).

A clear majority of our members are able to access the Internet and so should be able to access information about our walks



Cardiff Ramblers above Talybont Reservoir in July.

Photo Sue Johns

should they wish to. A letter was sent to those who have not provided the Group with an email address asking if they would have problems with the decision but only one responded to this request.

Regarding the walks programme, huge thanks must go to all the walk leaders who provide a range of walks that provides something for everyone; walks have ranged from four to eighteen miles on Wednesdays, Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays plus Thursday evening walks in the summer. This year there were three coach trips, all on a Wednesday, and they again proved very successful: so many thanks to Karen Walters who organises them. In addition, Roma Whiteley organised another successful back-packing walk: this one following the Teesdale Way from Dufton to the mouth of the Tees.

The work of putting a programme together is very much a team effort: so 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; thanks also to Andrew Price, the Publications Officer, for putting it all together ready for the printers. Thanks also to Jean Board, Membership Secretary, for organising the final mail-outs-out and Mike Kohns-

tamm, Webmaster, for the uploading of the information onto the website and The Ramblers walks' database. The Group continues to produce a six monthly programme as this is the preferred option for the majority of walks coordinators so



Cardiff Ramblers on a coach trip walk to Chipping Sodbury in July.  
Photo: Claire Edwards

that enthusing walk leaders and monitoring the sorts of walks being offered does not become a constant chore.

The impact of The Ramblers new requirements for walk leaders is being closely monitored by the committee. All our current walk leaders have been contacted about the new requirements and the committee has organised training sessions where walk leaders can complete their training as part of a group.

Our Chair, Andrew Price, is standing down at the 2025 AGM so there is also a need for someone to step forward and take up this position. I am sure Andrew will be happy to give advice to anyone thinking about volunteering and there is plenty of training available from The Ramblers as well as help and support from the Committee.

The Group responded to the Cardiff's Replacement Local Development Plan which will determine the development of Cardiff up to 2036. Our response focussed on objecting to so-called candidate sites, many of which proposed new housing developments on the open coun-

tryside which surrounds the present urban parts of Cardiff.

Our committee member, Leighton Hill, was heavily involved with a campaign against the sudden appearance of gates preventing access to a long-established and popular track leading to the forestry area above Cwmparc; his walk for the Group in September became one celebrating the success of this campaign.

Membership of the Group continues to grow and in July a milestone was reached when it passed the seven hundred mark.

**Diane Davies**

## **MAESTEG**

Maesteg Ramblers are multiplying! Seven or eight years ago we would have just two walking some weeks; now we have twenty-one regular walkers. Our growing group is very much a social affair with lots of regular outings, from meals out to theatre visits.

Last November we did a fantastic group HF holiday to Holnicote House near Minehead. This year's group holiday is in

Bourton-on-the-Water near Cheltenham. We are all booked up and ready to go first week of November. We also managed to squeeze in a mini rambling holiday to Brecon this year and one of our Group even held a fantastic garden party for us all. Our walks are always something to look toward to, full of laughter and camaraderie. We keep each walk interesting and varied, some more challenging than others and some of cultural or historical interest. We have lots planned for 2026 including a fundraising walk in Tenby and a walking holiday in Crete for some.

In the meantime, we are on a serious mission to find the best bacon butty. We challenge other rambling groups to beat our latest find. We can be certain we are not the only rambling group that plans its walks around food stops and there is nothing like a bacon butty on route, or sitting down to a tasty Sunday roast at the end of a challenging hike.

Our group consists of all ages and is packed with friends you have yet to meet.

**Trudy Harris**



Maesteg ramblers at Sgwd yr Eira.

## MERTHYR VALLEY

Merthyr Valley Ramblers have had a busy year. We are a small group with around one hundred members. We are a 'dog friendly' group, which means that there are often several dogs among us for our walks. They seem to enjoy the walks as much as the people and provide a little extra something... the spaniels Bobby, Poppy and Gweni; seem to enjoy the walks with enthusiasm and energy (which some of us would like to borrow). Dixon is a little dog described as 'not people friendly' which means he does not want anyone to bother him because he has his own particular agenda. He loves water: his antics are very unusual - when he finds a pond, puddle or stream of the right depth, not too deep or shallow, he splashes around vigorously making little growling, barking noises at the moving water. He is very entertaining, especially for any new members among the group. Ruby, the beagle, is happy and friendly and spends most of her time with her nose to the

ground. Being incredibly greedy she often forgets her own name but responds instantly to the call of 'Treats'.

Our small path clearing team have had some successes getting back into the swing of things from March. We cleared and maintained several local paths. However, an incident in June shocked and saddened all of us. Whilst clearing a local path, our trolley, with our tools and equipment, was set alight and destroyed by some off-road motorcyclists. Most of our hand tools, spare battery for the trimmer and first aid kit as well as personal items were destroyed. Some kind of accelerant must have been used as all the fabric, plastic etc was incinerated leaving only the metal frame of the trolley and metal parts of hand tools. It is quite sickening to think what might have motivated such an act of vandalism. The incident was of course reported to the local police and Council. Even though the incident has made us more wary, the support of The Ramblers and many other people, includ-

ing the local council and community groups, have helped and encouraged us.

We organised a walking weekend in May at Aberaeron, where we had some very exhilarating walks with wonderful views, fresh sea air and great company. Our walks have followed disused railway lines, old tramways, canals, rivers, reservoirs and mountains. We have crossed farmland and roads, walked through forests, along beaches, climbed hills, and crossed stiles. We have been as far as Carreg Cennan Castle, Tintern Abbey and Three Cliffs Bay, to mention but a few. We have seen historic monuments, buildings and places. One local walk with Three Valleys Partnership was along the Tre-vethick Trail, which is full of the history of Merthyr's industrial past.

We gather socially each month for a quiz night at a local pub and every couple of months we have a meal and bowling evening. Our Christmas meal took place in January, and the raffle raised £50 which, this year, was donated to Brecon Mountain Rescue.

**Alan Hancox**

## NEATH PORT TALBOT

The walks programme has been interesting this year, including walks locally around Neath and then in Gower, Porthcawl, Merthyr Tydfil and the Brecon Beacons as well as walks further afield across the UK.

One of our biggest challenges this year has been securing walk leaders to lead a walk every Sunday. We are relatively small group with about eighty mem-



Dogs with lots of Merthyr Valley ramblers on Ysgyryd Fawr.



Neath Port Talbot ramblers: (left) in Scotland with The Cobbler behind them and (right) on the Welsh Coast Path at Pennard with Three Cliffs Bay behind them.

bers and about twenty regular walkers. Several of our very experienced leaders are aging and/or developing health conditions and inevitably are unable to lead walks in the way they did ten, twenty or thirty years ago.

As a group we have explored linking with other Ramblers groups and have successfully linked with Swansea. Other groups we have linked to do not seem to have the same problem and were oversubscribed. The approach of joint walks is not without its difficulties as each group has different approaches to detail, such as advertising courses, speed of walking, dog involvement and control and size of groups.

We have also tried persuading some of our younger walkers to become walk leaders by taking the online courses and carrying out the necessary assessments for walks. Again, this has been difficult because of the new requirements from The Ramblers. Many potential, but also existing, walk leaders have been put off by the new requirements and this is presenting a challenge for us and many other groups.

Despite the difficulties we have managed a good programme in-

cluding two 'away walks' and another to Church Stretton this September. Thanks to Brian and Jean for organising.

In October 2024 we went to Lake Coniston. Having three levels of walks organised for us was a godsend. The scenery and walks were really fantastic. Only two walkers, Gwyneth and Jenni, managed the strenuous and challenging walk on the last day - well done to you both.

In February 2025 we went with Lochs and Glens and stayed in Ardgarten. This provided us a second attempt at The Cobbler. We all got further than last time although it was really cold and Brian and Gwyneth had to turn back down before reaching the peak. The visit to Glasgow pro-

vided us with a respite from challenging walks!

As a Group, attracting younger members recently is very encouraging. We hope this trend persists and we continue to welcome new members, potential walk leaders and new routes.

**Richard Parry**

## PENARTH

It has been another great year for Penarth & District with many outstanding and enjoyable walks and the membership staying fairly constant, at around one hundred and ninety as some new members join and others leave – some of whom were regular walkers but sadly



Penarth ramblers with dogs at Jackson's Bay, Barry. Photo: Joy Strangward

passed away. One of those was Phil John, an avid walker and respected leader, who led for the group for many years, often with Barrie, putting on interesting walks together on mountains and hillsides you might otherwise not have thought of going! Phil left us in July and there was a memorial walk for him around Barry with his family and friends on 23rd August attended by thirty-nine people (and three dogs!) led by his friend of twenty-eight years, Barrie. (See photo).

The year actually started with the Group hosting the Area AGM last November on a very wet day, which prevented most but a few stalwarts from joining the walk beforehand ... but our ladies came to the fore and served very nice cakes to brighten the day!

We celebrated the group's thirty-second birthday with a delightful walk on Gower on 30th March and a 'Picnic in the Park' in Porthkerry in June, after a choice of three walks, but this was only attended by twenty one people which was a shame. The programme of walks continues strongly with over one hundred and fifty put on in the

last year, going to a variety of places including the Beacons, Gower, Wye Valley, and the Valleys, but mostly in the Vale. This included sixteen evening walks in the summer which were very popular with a total of two hundred and thirty-two taking part. In September William led a two-day break near the Heart of Wales Line at Llanwrtyd.

As always, we are dependent on a small but dedicated group of leaders, many leading for several years, to put on these walks and to whom we are very indebted and grateful to. We were pleased to welcome Geoff and Jackie as leaders this year (relocated from Eastbourne) and we thank especially Naomi, Sue, and Stephen of Cardiff Ramblers for leading walks for us as well! We would of course welcome more leaders so if you have any aspirations that way, please get in touch. Walks Coordinator William will be only too pleased to support you.

Lastly thanks to our committee members: it is not a very glamorous job, but the Group could not function without its committee in the background organising things. So, thanks to John, Jeff,

William, Joy, Pam, Krys, Sheila, Louise, Alison, and Josie (she of the cakes!), who was awarded a special certificate of recognition for many years' support of the Group .... thanks Josie!

**Robin Pitcher**

## SWANSEA

### Weekends away

We usually arrange two weekends away each year and our thanks go to the organiser of these weekends, as well as the leaders who recce the walks beforehand. We had an enjoyable weekend away in Machynlleth in April. There was a long and a short walk each day on the Saturday and Sunday which allowed members of different abilities to take part in the event. The weather prevented us from reaching the top of Cadair Idris but we instead had an enjoyable lowland walk in great countryside. A Sunday walk in sunshine above Aberdyfi provided spectacular coastal views, followed by locally made ice cream! Another weekend away



Swansea ramblers approaching Aberdyfi.

Photo: Andrew Morgan

is planned for October which we expect to be well-supported by the group.

### **Varied programme of walks**

We continue to offer both long and short walks each week and will look to expand the programme, although finding leaders is a common issue amongst groups. Walk leader training will need to be completed by the end of the year and those new leaders who have studied the material have found it interesting and beneficial.

### **Socials**

Adding greatly to the benefit of being a member are the social events arranged by our Social Committee. As well as being an enjoyable 'extra' to a walking membership, these events allow some of our members who can no longer join us on walks to still feel a part of the Group. We have had coach trips and meals out plus coming up is an evening 'Ghost walk' at Oystermouth Castle! We are very grateful for the hard work put in by all the members of the Social Committee to make these socials the great success that they are.

### **Path Maintenance**

Where would we be without walkable paths? Our Footpath Officer liaises with the Council to resolve problems found on the network and our Path Maintenance Team work each month with the Council to improve paths, build bridges and keep the paths open for all to use. A great, positive initiative to provide the under-funded Council Footpath Department with a free labour force to keep Swansea walking. Our thanks go to each member of the hard-working Path Maintenance Team.

### **Membership**

We have had yet another challenging year in terms of membership, wherein, by August, we had attracted sixty-three new members but lost fifty-five existing members. This membership churn is not unusual but it is disappointing to lose so many. A number of retiring members have indicated health issues that come with the aging process so, for inclusivity, we will need to consider offering additional easier shorter walks as well as our regular long and leisurely walks.

**Andrew Morgan**

## **TAFF ELY**

This year has seen several changes within the Group, including our committee. At the last AGM, Tony Lawrence was presented with an award for thirty years as a member and the last thirteen years as the Group's Walks Coordinator. The membership number is slightly down from last year but there have been similar walk statistics, with ninety-three walks consisting of seven strenuous, fifty-five moderate and thirty-one leisurely, and an average of sixteen per walk totalling 9,416 miles over twelve months.

We have continued to offer weekends away with visits to Buxton in September, to Pembrokeshire in November, and to West Looe in May. We enjoyed a coach trip to Bath in June with two linear walks: a longer one from Keynsham and a shorter one from Saltford. There was a visit by a German group from Ravensburg to Pontyclun in June with a small group of our Ramblers going to Ravensburg this September. This follows an initial trip to Ravensburg in June last year, after an invitation to promote exchanges be-



Taff Ely Ramblers on their weekends away: (left) near Looe in May and (right) near Chatsworth in September 2024.

tween hiking groups from RCT and Ravensburg. We are already planning for trips in the next twelve months, weekends away, day coach trips and some longer trips abroad.

In December we held our annual Christmas meal at “La Luna” restaurant in Talbot Green. In addition to this successful event a lot of social activities have been organised, particularly by the large Solemates Social Group. Indeed, the Solemates Group has grown so much that we have agreed to let it flourish on its own. In July we had another summer social evening, kindly hosted at the house of member Catherine Lambert, repeating what did last year.

The annual Welsh Council was held at Llandrindod Wells and again addressed important aspects, focussing in depth on Barriers to Walking. There was a presentation on the community-led campaign GateGate in the Rhondda to have a path at Cwmparc reopened, after the owner had erected a barrier and gate blocking all access. Subsequent action by the campaign has now led to a successful outcome and the local council forcing the owner to remove the barriers and reopen access to the path.

We had a First Aid training day for a group of our members with practical sessions simulating real incidents given by the experienced trainer Allan Gibb, recommended by other Glamorgan Area groups. It was run very successfully at Clydach Vale despite the poor weather.

There remains a significant minority of active members who



Tawe Trekker ramblers on The Lawley near Church Stretton, Shropshire.

do not use or are even opposed to the increasing emphasis on digital and online communication and sources of information from the Ramblers. We try to assist our members to adapt to these changes and use the online tools. Previously we introduced a training session on using the online Walk Manager and we intend to follow this up with related sessions on aspects that members, especially walk leaders, have concerns over.

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

**Derek Wallis**

## Tawe TREKKERS

Our small but spirited walking group continues to stride forward, one footpath at a time! This year has been especially heartwarming as we have welcomed new faces into the fold and reconnected with returning members. We have also had the pleasure of hosting walkers from visiting Ramblers groups, adding fresh energy and camaraderie to our outings.

We pride ourselves on offering a diverse range of walks and, this year, has been no exception. Our boots have touched ground from the rugged beauty of Angle to the serene Wye Valley, with memorable stops in



Tawe Trekkers on the hottest weekend of the year at Barafundle Bay, near the NT Stackpole Estate.

Barafundle, Neath Abbey, and Sirhowy Valley to name a few. Of course, we have also enjoyed the stunning scenery closer to home on the glorious Gower Peninsula and the ever-popular higher walks in Bannau Brycheiniog (Brecon Beacons).

One of the joys of our group is its dog-friendly spirit. Many of our members bring along their four-legged companions, who are always warmly welcomed. Whether bounding ahead or trotting beside us, our canine friends add an extra layer of fun and companionship to our adventures. We encourage responsible dog walking and ensure our routes are suitable for paws as well as boots.

June saw a small group of intrepid Trekkers head to Shropshire for a long weekend of walking and unwinding. Based just outside Church Stretton, some camped under the stars while others opted for the comforts of self-catering accommodation. Saturday's adventure began right from the doorstep, tackling the challenging 10.5 mile Stretton Hills Walk including Caer Caradoc, The Lawley, Willstone Hill, and Hope Bowdler Hill - guided by the trusty Ramblers app route. Sunday brought a change of pace with a walk-through Carding Mill Valley, courtesy of The National Trust's route to The Long Mynd and Ratlinghope. Brief rain showers couldn't dampen spirits, though the modest trickle of Lightspout waterfall left us longing for our more dramatic falls back home! The climb to Pole Bank, the highest point on the Long Mynd, was rewarded with clearing skies and a descent to The Bridges pub for well

earned refreshments. The return journey via the Shropshire Way and Port Way led us back to Carding Mill Valley, where tearoom treats awaited. Before heading home on Monday, a few walkers took a stroll around historic Ironbridge, soaking in its rich industrial heritage.

Cheers to Our Walk Leaders! A heartfelt thank you goes out to our dedicated walk leaders, without you none of this would be possible. With three new leaders recently completing their online training, we are excited to offer even more walks in the coming year. Your enthusiasm and commitment keep our group thriving.

**Helen Thomas**

## **TIGER BAY RAMBLERS**

Yet another adventurous year of walks, weekends away, holidays and social events were enjoyed by members of Tiger Bay Ramblers. Our membership has fluctuated around 220, including some welcome younger members taking part in moderate walks since joining.



Tiger Bay Ramblers on walk in the Ystrad Mymach area with Hengoed in the background.

The weekly walks programme included sixty-five in number in a diverse range of fantastic locations around Cardiff, The Valleys, Brecon Beacons and Monmouthshire. To boost walk leader numbers, we continue to encourage existing members to lead walks, whilst welcoming new members irrespective of their age, although we are still hoping to encourage one or more individuals to form a young persons' group.

Our weekends away normally include two walks and at least one evening meal. There were three this year which included twenty-seven members seeing January into February with a sunny weekend away in Tenby. In April, fourteen members spent the weekend in Knighton and, early in July, twenty-two members enjoyed a weekend in Snowdonia. A particular thank you to Carrie Moss who organised the trip but broke her ankle shortly before. We all wish Carrie a full recovery and look forward to seeing her walking again.

Our 2025 Summer event took place on a sunny day in Barry Island, with a six-mile walk, fish and chip takeaway, followed by



Tiger Bay ramblers in Tenby in January.

tea, coffee, cake etc. served from a beach hut. Of the thirty-five members attending, three even had a refreshing swim in the sea at high tide. There were also eight other social evenings at various locations.

To encourage members to be as environmentally friendly as possible and help new members access our walks, this year saw the setting up of a TBR WhatsApp Lift Share Group, as well as some walks commencing at railway stations.

Looking ahead, we are very excited about our Christmas meal and disco to be held at Whitchurch Golf Club this year.

Finally, I would like to thank the committee for their efforts and all our committed walk, weekends away, holiday and social event organisers who not only sustain the group but bring a great deal of joy and companionship to our participating members.

**Andrew Osborne**

## VALE OF GLAMORGAN

This year is our 50th Anniversary as members of The Ramblers! Researching our history has been challenging, given that most records are paper-based and patchy! The digital age and the prevalence of social media have made a big difference. We originated as a small group of active locals, who became members of The Ramblers in 1975. This group has grown and thrived with a dedicated membership of locals and a number from outside of the Vale.

Our walking programmes have been full and well attended. The demise of a printed programme has led to more flexibility when needed. Our walks vary between long, short and Summer evening walks. Our membership remains fairly steady but with some lateral movement and is now one hundred and forty-six.

Our weekends away were extremely successful. Our first, last October was organised by Chris and Nicki, who were well acquainted with the area around

Kington and put together a great weekend of walks (long and short) plus a Birthday Curry evening to round events off! In early May we returned to Pembrokeshire and the lovely town of Narberth. The first day was based around Freshwater West and the Coastal Path followed on the second day with Stackpole and Bosherston, all in glorious weather with a fun-loving group of ramblers.

At the behest of our members, two items were re-introduced, a coach trip and our 'Walk with a Difference'. These disappeared with lockdown. Our coach trip was from Marlborough to Avebury with plenty of time to commune with the Stones, have tea and cakes in the NT café or find the way to The Red Lion! 'Walk with a Difference' was self-navigational whilst searching for clues *en route*. The tallying in the Vale Pub afterwards, with splendid prizes, drew the day to a satisfying end!

The Vale of Glamorgan Agricultural Show was held mid-August. Gwenda and team again created a very successful display and were delighted to have members of other Rambler groups visiting to say hello. Valeways joined us with their own small display on our stand.

We moved our AGM to daytime with a walk and lunch followed by the main business. Although numbers were not large, they were certainly an improvement on previous years. Our social events were, as always, well attended. Our path maintenance and litter picking continue. We join with South East Wales Rivers Trust, when the work is local to us near the Ely River.



50th Anniversary Festival: leaving Llantwit Major for the final walk of the festival - a morning coastal walk.  
Photo: Jackie Brett

Our 50th Anniversary Festival, this September, has been brilliantly supported by our walk leaders, allowing us to put on two walks a day over nine days. Members and visitors have come to join us, often despite the weather! Our celebration on Saturday was amazing and it was a pleasure to welcome past members, who can no longer join in our walks. We were delighted to welcome Kanishka Narayan, MP for the Vale, and

John Deakin, Mayor of Llantwit, on our morning walk. Both stayed for our event in CF61, where we were also joined by Jane Hutt, Senedd member for the Vale. Kanishka and Jane addressed our members, with both highlighting the benefits of friendship, health and co-operation as well as the care and appreciation of our natural environment. Our members were amazing with their

culinary contributions, before joining our bracing coastal walk. Our slide show selected from a huge collection contributed by members, brought back awe-inspiring memories to remind us just how important walking is in our lives. Wonderful chat, perfect visitors, excellent friends, food, drinks and a walk - a classic Ramblers celebration!

**Jackie Brett**



50th Anniversary Saturday afternoon celebration: John Deakin Mayor of Llantwit Major (left) and speakers Jane Hutt, AM for the Vale, (centre) and Kanishka Narayan, MP for the Vale, (right).  
Photos: John Dunbury