

## Chairman's Chat Phil Guest

Last month I attended the annual Ramblers conference, which was held in Liverpool. I found the whole weekend to be well organised with well organised sessions that were fully attended.

Apart from electing Officers and Trustees, reports from the Executive were received, motions were debated and three discussion sessions were undertaken.

Motions carried, included promoting publicity on 2026 (see below), way marking, guidance for footpath workers, access points for access land and the misuse of barbed wire bordering footpaths and on stiles. The discussion workshops covered volunteering, governance and 'our vision of walking!!' The Executive reported that the Ramblers were now in a better financial state than they had been for some time, but this was due more to legacies than members' annual contributions although the decline in membership appears to have been halted.

Having met a number of representatives from groups across the country I was impressed by the wide variety of groups with some still struggling to manage a full programme of walks, whilst others are experiencing a growth in numbers and an encouraging number able to set up under 30 and 40 age groups.

A weekend that has provided me with an insight into the Ramblers and was spent with an enthusiastic group of interesting fellow walkers.

### 2026 is it a sword of Damocles?

The Government has decided that 31<sup>st</sup> December 2025 is the last date when a footpath can be added to the definitive map. An Act of Parliament is being prepared to accelerate the process of putting historical footpaths onto the map, at the moment there are over 4,000 applications which are being processed at only 300 a year, clearly the passing of the Act is vital if all of these footpaths are to be recognised and recorded by the cut off date. The Act has the support of Landowners, the Local authorities (who process the applications) and walking groups including the Ramblers. The MP Maria Eagles spoke to conference and reported that although there is widespread support in the Commons, problems could be experienced when the Act comes to the Lords for approval but we should be confident that it will become law.

### Committee

**Chairman - Phil Guest**  
Tel: 07918 687683

**Secretary - Kevin White**  
Tel: 07922 147135

**Treasurer – Ian Mottram**  
Tel: 01270 623926

**Membership – Eileen Dorman**  
Tel: 07846 464736

**Programme Secretary –  
Kath Adlard**  
Tel: 07999 562912

**Footpath Secretary –  
Tim Lloyd**  
Tel: 07832 356798

**Acting Website Editor –  
Eileen Dorman**  
Tel: 07846 464736

**Newsletter Editor – Bev Brady**

**Publicity – Paul Boniface**

**Committee Members: David Smith, Phill Keogh, Diane Birkenhead, Carole Bentley, Judith Spowage**

## Turned Out Nice Again by Paul Boniface

March 2014 Trip to Formby, Lancs

For those of us of a certain age the name 'Formby' conjures up childhood memories of Sunday afternoon TV and pre-war films starring a cheeky Lancashire lad called George whose catchphrase was "Turned out nice again". The memory of those black and white movies recall the innocence of youth, and there were echoes of that as eighteen young-at-heart South Cheshire Ramblers spent a day on the beach at Formby in Lancashire early this year.

Admirably and democratically led by Philip Lund, our day at the seaside unfolded like the plot of one of George Formby's mad cap films. It was as if someone had put a black and white filter on our normally super coloured modern world and cranked up the Standard 8 home movie camera.

Two pages of closely typed instructions handed out to drivers in Acton Car Park directed us in a Keystone Cops-style car journey to our destination. I believe we all took different routes caused in part by a slip road closure causing SatNavs across the group to utter the heart-sinking "do a U turn when you can".



At the meeting point in Formby, a picturesque National Trust property with pines and red squirrels (plus its own mobile Italian coffee stand) we were invited to refer to page two of the instructions which contain details of the options (three) for the day's walk. Our leader then suggested a vote. I was quite excited at the introduction of a slice of democracy into the occasion and was avidly weighing up the routes and listening

intently to the various arguments for and against doing the full circular walk, doing a linear walk or doing a shorter circular walk followed by a trip to Crosby.

After much discussion the final vote ended up with equal votes for each of the options. In the end therefore Philip very kindly decided for us and we set off on option 2 followed by parts of option 1 with an additional option to extend the route via elements of option 3 although this would be decided by a further vote along the route. Gosh, who'd have thought that democracy could be so exciting?



The walk itself started with a delightful stroll through the pines to some of the largest sand dunes I have seen in the UK. Through a gap in the dunes we caught a glimpse of the sea. I think I broke ranks and rushed towards it, arms waving, and in my mind I was stripping off all my not-inconsiderable walking clobber in preparation for a spectacular dive into the surf. Mercifully for my fellow Ramblers I kept that thought in my mind and thus avoided the sort of publicity that accompanies the infamous Naked Rambler.

From this point it was an absolute joy to walk along the same sandy beach where Red Rum used to train. The sun and the sea breeze seemed to put extra life into my walking batteries. I could have walked for miles and miles; which, as it turned out, was quite handy because at the next polling station it was democratically decided by Philip that we would bat on to see the Gormley Statues at Crosby. I can't tell you how thrilled I personally was at this decision.

Off we set again and after stopping for lunch we arrived at Crosby beach to see the barnacled lumps of iron created by Angel of the North sculptor Anthony Gormley. Thanks to Philip's impeccable knowledge of the local tides we



arrived at low tide which meant we could have a close up view of the statues. Those who had been before spoke of the scene when the tide is further up and of the mist shrouding the figures. I would like to see that one day but for now a visit to the 'Gormleys' was another tick-in-the-box for me and many thanks to the Ramblers and to Philip in particular for arranging this.

The return journey to Formby (actually Freshfield) was to be by rail. I half expected a steam train to arrive such was the 1940's feel to the whole day. A delightful ride retracing our steps was marred only by the fact that Dominique left her walking stick on the train. The last I saw of Dominique and her friend Sally was of them sitting down outside the station entrance waiting for a lift after having been successfully re-united with the stick. I hope you got home safely ladies as I haven't seen you since.

The car journey back required fewer SatNav instructions and to my best recollection was undertaken without any major incidents culminating in a much needed half-a-bitter in the Star Inn at Acton. Many thanks to Philip for a truly memorable day which in the words of George Formby himself certainly "turned out nice again".

*Photos: Italian Mobile Coffee Station, Group Photo (1960s style) and Gormley Statue*

--- o0o ---

### Can bulls be kept in a field crossed by a right of way? Phil Guest

The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 section 59 makes it an offence, subject to important exceptions, for the occupier of a field crossed by a right of way to cause or allow a bull to be at large in it.

The exceptions are

- a) bulls not more than ten months old or
- b) bulls which are not of a recognised dairy breed and which are at large with cows or heifers.

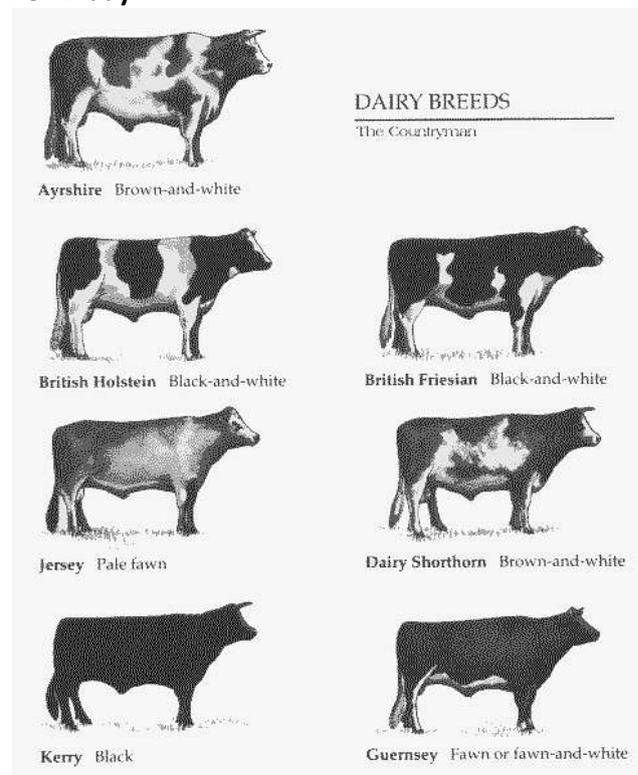
Any bull over the age of 10 months is prohibited on its own, and any such bull, which is of a recognised dairy breed is prohibited even if accompanied by cows or heifers.

Dairy breeds are Ayrshire, British Friesian, British Holstein, Dairy Shorthorn, Guernsey, Jersey and Kerry.

Walk leaders should take time out to recognise these breeds!!

This might be helpful. .... \*\*\*

Bev Brady



\*\*\* [http://www.devon.gov.uk/index/environmentplanning/public\\_rights\\_of\\_way/faqs/bulls\\_on\\_prow.htm](http://www.devon.gov.uk/index/environmentplanning/public_rights_of_way/faqs/bulls_on_prow.htm)

### Can't join us for a walk at the weekend ?

Eileen Dorman

Would you be interested in a mid-week (**Wednesday**) Walk ?

To start with, these walks will be my tried and trusted favourites – no matter if they are already in the programme for weekend walks. They will be moderate in length and walked at a leisurely pace, with the usual stops for coffee and picnic lunch.

Keep an eye on the website for Wednesday walk dates.

If the idea of a midweek walks 'has legs' – no pun intended – we'll be glad of volunteers to Lead one of your favourite walks in the future !

## Thursday Morning Rambles Christine Howarth

We are constantly being urged to take more exercise and I cannot think of a more pleasant way, without travelling too far, than the Thursday morning walks being an excellent choice. The terrain is usually gentle with occasional up hill stretches and approximately 5 miles in length. There is always a welcoming group of between 8–15 with plenty of chit chat, friendly advice, knowledge of where to bag a bargain, holiday experiences, etc.

They take place mainly in Cheshire but occasionally passports are required to venture into darkest Staffordshire. If you think you know the area it is not until you go off the beaten track that you soon realise that just peering out of the car window is not the whole story. We have been treated to various little gems, from Wybunbury Moss to hidden country churches and historical facts - sorties around Bickerton with its iron age fort, copper workings and stunning views across the Cheshire Plain and more recently the Ravensmoor Lake District!



Rob and Judith have organised the lion's share with recent assistance from Kevin, Graham and David, all with a different approach to country walking. On one autumnal walk we helped with the collection of blackberries and rose hips sadly we didn't get to sample the produce. There is usually at least one knowledgeable person who is able to identify flowers, trees and relate local folkways.

Finally, there is the après walk lunch – always tried and tested by the walk leader beforehand – that must be a chore! And for those who don't count calories there is the Pudding Club.

Whatever your choice, be it history, botany, geography, oh, and walking, it's good fun and exercise. Give it a whirl.

-- oo0oo --

## West Country Wanderings Jim Eckersley

Having mentioned that I would like to visit Watchet in Somerset where I spent my early years, our esteemed leader said, 'why don't you join us on our trip to Dartmoor to make up the numbers'. On engaging mouth before brain, which seems to happen to me quite a lot these days, I said 'OK'. So was committed to making a long journey, my first from the local environs in 4 years. Oh dear!

The party of 11 hardy souls were accommodated at Moorlands, a Country House at Haytor in the Dartmoor National Park for two days walking. The group more or less evenly split between the medium and harder walks offered. The first day took in part of the South West Coast Path for the harder walk, joining the medium route after a short ferry crossing, into Exeter. The second day was spent walking across Dartmoor taking in Birch and Hockney Tors for the medium group and Hartland and Sittaford Tors, passing Grey Wethers neolithic stone circle for the harder walk, both walks finishing in Widdecombe. The weather was mostly fine and the walks were enjoyed by both groups.

On the final day the group made their separate ways home, however my plans were laid to spend a couple of extra days visiting Watchet. En route I visited the National Trust owned Coleridge Cottage in Nether Stowey and followed a 5 mile walk in the Quantocks from Coleridge Cottage which the poet reputedly took on his walks to visit Wordsworth, who at the time lived at Alfoxden. This was a pleasant interlude after the hustle and bustle of Moorlands. The next day I took the West Somerset Railway from Minehead to Watchet to look around the haunts of my childhood.

My first school had been demolished, now a car park, apart from that the buildings were much as I remembered them. The access to the rocks over the harbour wall, where my friends and I used to play, was still there. A statue of the 'Ancient Mariner' has been erected on the harbour, Watchet being the place that inspired Coleridge to write the poem after watching a sailing ship leave the harbour. I remembered the coal steamers that came and went in my time and the steam trains shunting wagons along the harbour. It is all very much quieter now. I walked past the row of terrace cottages where we used to live, no one was about. In my time I remembered it as a hive of activity and felt a strange feeling of sadness that so much had changed, my friends as I remembered them no longer there, but pleased that I had made the journey.

So the moral of the story? It's not always a bad thing to engage mouth before brain.