



DORSET FOOTNOTES

Newsletter of the Dorset Area of the Ramblers Association

ISSUE NO. 72

Autumn 2015

SOUTH DORSET GROUP HOLIDAY NAJAC, AVEYRON, FRANCE MAY 2015

It was 3am on Election Day and a number of bleary eyed individuals were moving around the streets of Weymouth and Dorchester apparently motivated by some collective purpose. If there had been any bystanders, their suspicions of collective malign intent may not have been alleviated by the precision with which these people were collected and transported whither? However, any such fears were groundless. All had already done their civic duty, and were bound far off from Jeremy Vine and his Swingometer.

By 1pm these weary folk, numbering 23, were seated around the hospitable board of Le Belle Rive in Najac, enjoying an excellent lunch, to be followed by an energetic climb up to the centre of the village. This walk, like those to follow, was led by Mary and Clive Walter, two of our members, who, being fortunate enough to own a house in the village, had very generously offered to share their part of France with us. We then strode off in hot sunshine into the surrounding countryside, returning once again to Le Belle Rive for dinner.



There was a storm overnight, and on Friday we set out in rain and hail, and the news that the election had achieved a more clear-cut conclusion than had been expected. Then the sky cleared, and the rain stopped, and remained so for the rest of the holiday.

Our route again was centred on the village, with a visit to the castle which dominated the village, and was securely anchored to a rocky pinnacle. We also visited the church, which while externally imposing, has an interior of simple, almost austere design. The streets of the village are so vertiginous and the exercise on the part of the inhabitants in moving about during the course of their daily lives so beneficial to health, that of the population of 760 in 2009, until recently no less than five were centenarians. Following this introduction to the village, we were entertained to champagne and canapés by Mary and Clive at their home, this was followed by a reception by the Maire at La Salle des Fêtes, he gave a welcoming speech, to which we responded in French.



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On the third and fourth days, we wandered further afield through villages (including Puycelci and St Antonin-Noble-Val) woods and meadows, and along rivers and streams in lush green countryside with a profusion of wild flowers, orchids and butterflies.

On Wednesday, our 'day off', most of us visited Albi, with its impressive 13c brick-built cathedral, designed to heighten the power of King and Prelate over the local people and against the Cathar heretics of the day. The city also has an excellent museum devoted to its son Toulouse-Lautrec, and, of course, many excellent restaurants.

Our penultimate day's walking took us from La Croix Blanche (where Eric, our coach driver, again demonstrated his expertise in manoeuvring his vehicle by completing a three point turn amidst a small copse) to the attractive village of Belcastel, passing through the remains of a former Maquis (or French Resistance) camp, then along the river Aveyron.

So, regretfully, we came to our final walking day, starting from Cordes-sur-Ciel, another hilltop village, judged the most popular village to visit in France. Our walk took us through vineyards and through the small village of Souel, where we had lunch. We then returned to our start point, and ascended through three layers of fortifications to the cafe at the summit, where, as was by now customary, we shared a convivial glass or two. Our amiable hosts at Le Belle Rive, Jacques and Nadine Mazières and their staff, who had looked after us so cheerfully and so well throughout our stay, then (together with the Mairie, and the boulangerie which had supplied our lunches during the week) provided aperitifs followed by an excellent dinner, which served to mitigate the impact of the morrow's early start.

After leaving this idyllic location, we returned to Bristol Airport in the middle of a deluge, and so were sharply brought back to the realities of the real world!

Steve Ryder

Court of Appeal ruling will help us save more lost ways

Ramblers are celebrating the Court of Appeal's recent ruling that the judgement in the original Andrews case, back in 1993, was wrong, and that section 10 of the 1801 Inclosure Act did authorise Inclosure commissioners to set out and award public footpaths and bridleways when making inclosure awards.

This new judgement is a tribute to the tenacity of John Andrews. John was Ramblers Area Footpath Secretary in Suffolk for many years, and was responsible for many successful claims to add paths to the definitive map in that county. John, working closely with historical map expert Dr Yolande Hodson, led the Ramblers' research project which studied many inclosure awards to find evidence to help back this appeal. It has taken nearly 15 years of research and legal debate to get this result.

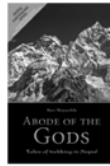
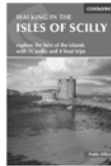
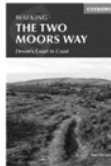
John Andrews commented "It has taken an astonishingly long time to achieve this 'break through', but in reality this is only the first step towards the formal recognition of many ancient public paths whose continued existence had been threatened by the views of High Court judges." This will be of enormous help to all those who are researching lost ways in the run-up to the 2026 cut-off date for recording old routes on the definitive map." <http://www.ramblers.org.uk/get-involved/campaign-with-us/dont-lose-your-way/historic-paths-and-definitive-maps-timeline.aspx>

Now that the 1993 court ruling has been dismissed, an important source of evidence about the existence of historic public rights of way can again be fully utilised by researchers working to make sure that the rights of way network is properly recorded.

You can read the full judgment at <http://www.bailii.org/ew/cases/EWCA/Civ/2015/669.html>.

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Just enter the code RAMBMD25 at the checkout at www.cicerone.co.uk



Area Council Report

This report gives a summary status of Dorset Area Ramblers' Association. A full report will be available at the AGM or can be obtained by writing to the Area Secretary enclosing a C5 size (6 3/8" x 9") SAE after November 1st 2015. It is also available at <http://www.dorset-ramblers.org.uk>

Overview

The last year in Dorset, with respect to Rights of Way, has been affected by yet another reorganisation at Dorset County Council but notwithstanding this the Coastal Access plans for Dorset are progressing with the section from Lyme Regis to Portland having reached the stage where the proposals from Natural England have been published.

The current major initiative from the Ramblers is the Big Pathwatch where it is hoped that all, or at least the vast majority of Rights of Way in England and Wales will be walked and the state reported. The aim is for about half of the reports to be from non members using a smart phone app. This started in July with the intention that it will be completed by the end of the year.

Nominations for Area Council

Following the change in the Constitution at the 2013 AGM nominations for all positions on Area Council can be made at the AGM although prior nominations can also be sent to the Secretary. In view of this we no longer nominate existing holders of the various posts in advance so as not to inhibit other members from volunteering.

As such all positions are open for nomination but I would like to draw your attention to the fact that after 4 years in post Keith Seymour has stated that in accordance with the guidance notes in the Constitution he will not be offering himself for re-election as Chairman.

Membership

In 2013 I reported that there was a steady decline in membership from 2004. Fortunately since then the rate of decline has reduced to a point where we should now be looking at recruiting more members than we lose through natural wastage – largely although not entirely due to age and infirmity.

It may be of interest that nationally the reasons given for leaving are:

- No longer interested in led/group walks
- Poor health
- Limited personal funds
- Age - too elderly to walk
- Not enough time

Annual Area Picnic

This was held again this year and seven group walks were arranged to meet at the picnic site on the Open Access Land on Giant's Hill, Cerne Abbas. Unfortunately it rained all morning and by the time the groups started to meet up the weather had deteriorated even further. Usually the highlight of the day our picnic was a damp affair. We hastily ate our lunch and parted company. This is the fifth time that we have run this event and the only time that the weather has been so unkind. Here's hoping for better weather next year!

General Council 2015

General Council this year was held at Robinson College Cambridge and was attended by Jan Wardell and Margaret Kettlewell as delegates from Dorset Area plus Kate Gocher and Mike Heckford as guests. For Mike Heckford's full report on General Council see Page 5.

Area Footpath Committee

It has, as always, been a busy year for the Dorset Area Footpath Committee and a brief report on this will be included in the full report previously mentioned.

Group Activities

I have not reported on Group activities. The formal report, available at the AGM, will report on individual group activities.

Jim Scott - Area Secretary

Dorset Area AGM – 21st November 2015

This year's Area AGM will be held at 2:00pm on Saturday the 21st November 2015 in the D'Urberville Centre, Colliers Lane, Wool, Wareham, BH20 6DL - OS Grid Reference SY 843865. There will be a morning walk starting at 10.00am via Lulworth Estate with the intention of returning by 1.00pm. Please consult your walk programme for further details.

Elections of Members of Area Council and Officers not on Area Council

Positions which will be available for nomination and election at the Annual General Meeting are
President **

Vice President **

Chairman

Vice Chairman

Secretary

Treasurer

Area Footpath Secretary

Newsletter Editor++

Coastal Access Officer ++

Publicity Officer ++

Countryside Secretary ++

Individual Members (3)

Note: all positions are open for nomination at the AGM or
Prior Nominations can be sent to the Secretary

*Keith Seymour has been Chairman for 4 years and will
not be seeking re-election*

*++ Officers who are not necessarily required to be
Members of Area Council*

*** Honorary Positions where the holder is not a member
of Area Council*

Guest Speaker

The guest speaker this year will be Des Garrahan, Chair of the Board of Trustees, who will hopefully be explaining where we are on the revised Governance Procedure and 'One Member One Vote' which was the subject of an initial report and survey last year - See Mike Heckford's Report opposite.

Jim Scott - Area Secretary

General Council 2015 – Cambridge – Good, Excellent and Chaotic

General Council 2015 was held at Robinson College, University of Cambridge on 28/29 March 2015, Jan Wardell and Margaret Kettlewell attended as the Dorset Area delegates and Kate Gocher and Mike Heckford attended as visitors. Robinson College is the newest of all the colleges that form the University of Cambridge, founded in 1979 and accepted its first under graduates in 1981. Its benefactor is Sir David Robinson who made his fortune from renting out televisions in the 1950s and 1960s as Robinson Rentals. Do you remember renting a television at that time, certainly my parents did?

The overnight accommodation at the College was extremely good as were the meeting rooms for General Council, the food provided was some of the best that I have experienced at any of the General Councils that I have attended. This is the good part.

The excellent and the highlight of the weekend was an event that was entitled in the programme as 'Kate Ashbrook in conversation with Dame Fiona Reynolds'. Dame Fiona has been appointed to many illustrious positions in her career, to mention a few of the more recent, a senior position in the National Parks Authority and the CPRE, a spell in the Cabinet Office as the Director of the Women's Unit, Director General of the National Trust from 2001 and from 2012, Master of Emmanuel College, Cambridge. She became a DBE in 2008. An accomplished lady who openly discussed her career and experiences and ably answered numerous searching questions from delegates with ease on many subjects. A keen supporter and member of the Ramblers and a lady who obviously enjoyed walking and appreciated the opportunities that simple walking and access to the country was giving and had given to her and her family - a really joyous hour.

The Chaotic, well to describe the rest of General Council as chaotic is unfair but certainly parts were, let me explain.

Jonathan Kipling, the Board of Trustees' Chairman, was unable to attend and chairmanship was left to the Vice Chairman, Naseem Akhtar. Naseem admitted that this was probably her worst nightmare because the last thing she expected when she was elected Vice Chairman was to Chair General Council. It was obvious she was inexperienced and the 2015 General Council was probably one of the most difficult to chair that I have experienced; Naseem did her best, congratulations to her, but in my humble opinion it has to be said that the organisation did not support her well enough to do this job well.

There were nine motions. The major debate was on two special motions on 'One member, one vote' and it was obvious from the outset that there would be strong opposition and procedural issues. There were problems, and after much debate, this resulted in the motion being sensibly withdrawn. This was after a straw poll indicated that the motions were unlikely to succeed in getting the necessary 75% vote in favour. It is likely that the motion(s) will come again before the 2016 General Council. Five further motions, some with accepted amendments, were moved, debated and carried. The subjects being: 'Ramblers Vision' (for the next 10 years), 'Governance consideration' - (delayed for another year), '80th year congratulations', '2026 – cut-off' - (let's get a move on) and 'Fracking'. Two further motions on 'Pedestrians and Cycles' and 'Rail Crossings' were remitted to be dealt with by the Board of Trustees as time prevented debate.

The chaotic part of the proceedings can be levelled at the 'Candidate Hustings' (what a waste of time) and the necessary elections for the Board of Trustees afterwards. Yes, there were complications this year with nominations being rejected and two elections becoming necessary but it seems that nobody had planned what was likely to happen and the result was that it took far longer to complete than the time allowed. Elected to the Board of Trustees for a 3 year term were Mike Church, Moira Fraser and Jeremy Kenyon, for a 2 year term Teri Moore and for 1 year Roy Hunt.

I have not reported on everything, only what I considered to be important but overall my heading says it all.

Mike Heckford

Changes to Rights of Way in Dorset

Orders affecting changes to the following rights of way have been confirmed since Issue 71 and effectively cover the period from May to August 2015. If you would like more details please send a DL (9"x4½") stamped, self-addressed envelope marked ROW to the Area Footpath Secretary (address on page 7)

Note: PINS is the abbreviation for the Planning Inspectorate – the Government agency that deals with opposed Orders which are seeking to either:

- create, divert or extinguish rights of way
- modify the definitive map and statement for an area

They also deal with unopposed orders which require modification in some way.

Confirmed Orders (# identifies any New Numbers)

Thorncombe FP37 (part): Modification to delete part.

(Note that unless otherwise stated, the above Orders are also confirmed under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981(Section 53A (2))

Creation Agreement

Holt BR74: Between GR SU 0245 0577 and SU 0325 0584. Agreement between National Trust and DCC, signed 19 June 2015 to create a new bridleway.

Long Term Temporary Closures/Diversions

under Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984: Section 14(1)

(Note that unless otherwise stated, the following Orders are Under Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984: Section 14(1))

Langton Matravers FP33 (20m): Near Quarry Cottage, Acton. From 27.07.15 to 24.01.16. Building works. Alternative route available.

Portesham BR11 (part)[1] and Portesham FP13[2]: Extension of previous order. From [1] SY 630 866 to SY 634 867 and [2] SY 634 867 to SY 630 857. From 08.07.15 to 06.01.16. Repairs to bridleway and footpath, due to collapsed badger sett. Alternative route available.

Symondsburys FP19: From 09.06.15 to 08.12.15. From GR SY 457 918 to SY 459 913 Waste Centre construction.

Symondsburys FP33: From 29.06.15 to 27.12.15 From GR SY 456 906 to SY 452 909. Path affected by landslips making it non-existent on the ground. Alternative route via SWCP.

Weymouth FP125 (part): From 01.06.15 to 29.11.15 Damage to FP making it unstable. Alternative route available.

(Note: The above closures are for Health and Safety reasons. Anyone who uses or permits the use of the footpaths in contravention of any of the above orders will be liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding £1,000)

The Big Pathwatch – An URGENT Request

<http://www.ramblers.org.uk/get-involved/join-the-big-pathwatch.aspx?gclid=CLzztP711ccCFUoCwwodfEMzA>

Please don't hold back with your squares for the Big Pathwatch. There is a severe shortage of completed ones in some areas and we have only until the end of the year to complete it! Personally I have found it easier to fill in the results on the website rather than use the app, but whichever way you do it, please give it a go! Want to know more – use the link above.

Here are some of the highlights of the Big Pathwatch so far:

- Over 10,000 of you have already registered to take part, adopting over 25% of all available squares.
- You have reported over 30,000 features on your travels, sending us photos of 15,000
- Your main concern is with paths obstructed by undergrowth (nearly 3,000 reports)
- But you are impressed with how welcoming signs can be on the path network (over 3,500 reports).
- Overall, nearly 20,000 of those features have caused you concern, including 5,100 that have stopped you in your tracks. But knowing about all these problems brings us one step closer to finding a solution
- On the other hand, you also reported over 14,000 positives. You seem to have been walking mostly in and around major urban areas
- Norfolk and the North East coast have been particularly well walked

Jan Wardell

WALKING AND CYCLING THE SOMERSET AND DORSET TRAILWAY

We are blessed in Dorset with having several defunct railway routes. The Somerset & Dorset Joint Railway, started in 1850 and closed in 1966, has been partly opened to the public as a walking and cycle path. Originally conceived to connect the Bristol and English Channels, the railway eventually connected Bath to Bournemouth, helping to make it a resort town. The famous Pines Express was a summer special that brought holiday makers from the grim midland towns to the bracing sea and sun of Bournemouth. It was anything but 'Express' as the Somerset & Dorset is one of the hilliest routes in England; two engines were required to haul the train up the two steepest hills at an average climb speed of only 10-15 mph. The only stations to remain are Midford (foundations), Spetisbury (foundations), Midsommer Norton & Shillingstone.

The section between Sturminster Newton to Spetisbury has been opened as a public path; the removal of the bridge over the B3075 to the south has stopped any southern extension. The northern extension was halted by the removal of the river bridge at Sturminster. A trip along this route in summer offers wonderful vistas of the rolling farmlands as the track darts into shady forests and over wide rivers. It also offers good views of Hambledon Hill Fort.

The route can be split into four easy sections.

3 miles from Sturminster Newton to Shillingstone. Park at the central car park in Sturminster. This was the old station, the cutting through which the trains arrived has been filled in and a park sits over the cutting. The Trailway runs directly off the car park. The path sets off across farm fields, after a short distance a detour can be made to Fiddleford Mill, Manor, and lavender farm - an old 15th century manor with wonderful exposed beams. In late summer pop into the lavender farm next door. Further on you cross the wide River Stour over a new bridge. The route is fairly flat, and culminates at a private section of the trailway where the route detours and joins a section of gravel road. You arrive at Shillingstone Road Bridge over the Child Okeford Road.

3.5 miles from Shillingstone to Stourpaine. Possibly the most picturesque section. Park in the Shillingstone bridge car park, on the Child Oakford road. A new car park has been created on the triangle. Proceed up onto the bridge, then onto the original Shillingstone station. Now operated as a preserved station. The café is open weekends. Stop for a cup of tea on your return. The route is through the tree lined path and across open fields. Half way along there is a steep hill, with seating at the top to recover. To the north are views of Hambledon Hill fort. Then onto Stourpaine, with the final half mile through a secluded wood, before entering the picturesque village of Stourpaine.

3.0 miles from Stourpaine to Blandford. Park at the Blandford Co-Op long term car park. In front of the river are the partial remains of the railway viaduct. Return across the traffic lights up the hill to Damory Ct Street to the site of the old station, now a car park. The railway bridge and the white house indicate one end of the station. The white house must have shook every time a train arrived at the station. Follow the Trailway north to Stourpaine winding along the side of the hill, before sharply ducking under the A350 at Durwestern.

3.5 miles from Spetisbury to Blandford St Mary. Park in West End Lane, north of Spetisbury, or the Blandford Co-Op car park. This section of the Trailway is more secluded, with the track lined with trees. Further on the track continues in a cutting and under several minor road bridges. To the north can be seen the old Charlton Marshall halt with its two remaining platforms. This is a halt without any station buildings. At the southern end is Spetisbury Station Halt which has been cleared by local volunteers to display the platforms and the foundations of the small station building. The Trailway terminates just south of here at the B3079.

Ding Ding All Change!

But don't wait. All sections of the Trailway are wonderful in the sunshine. You can download an informative leaflet from www.northdorsettrailway.org

