



WALKERS ARE WELCOME

Towns and villages with something special to offer all walkers
www.walkersarewelcome.org.uk secretary@walkersarewelcome.org.uk

Happy New Year to all our member towns and villages

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Floods

Our hearts go out to all those affected with homes and businesses that have been flooded by the many storms over the Christmas period and in particular in our Walkers are Welcome towns and villages in northern England, Scotland and Wales. It was terrible to see WaW towns names appearing on the news like Hebden Bridge, Mytholmroyd and Newton Stewart. Once premises have been safeguarded, roads and bridges inspected, the devastation in the countryside will be fully realised. Landslides have taken swathes of rights of way, footpath surfaces washed away, debris blocks the paths, fingerposts and footbridges damaged. At this present time we can only be hopeful that funding will come forward from central government to cover the cost of repairs which cash strapped highway authorities are unable to cover.

Tell us about your problems so that Walkers are Welcome can get a picture of the challenge ahead and raise awareness nationally. Don't forget to contact your councils to ensure that all the damage is recorded and your MP's to hear your concerns, in preparation for when time and funding allows repair. A photographic record is always a useful tool.

Why not visit a WaW town that suffered from flooding this winter during the coming summer season. The message as always is that despite the devastation, we are open for business.

New for 2016

As you will be aware, for all accredited members, the Annual Returns should be submitted and your subscriptions paid in January each year. There are a few updates on this year's Annual Return form:

- No need to sign the form, just e-mail to webmaster@walkersarewelcome.org.uk
- Population of your town or village because this is now even more relevant with the additional steps in subscription rates to ensure that you are paying the right amount. Don't include the wider district council ward or constituency, just your own parish or town council area.
- The name of your group as not every town's steering group or organisation is called "Walkers are Welcome".
- Whether your group has a constitution and a bank account. The national committee believe that good governance is important and we wish to encourage all members to have democratic and a legal framework.

We were interested to read that this has been highlighted in HM Government's 'Sporting Future: A New Strategy for an Active Nation' [published in December](#) by the Department of Sport, Tourism and Heritage.

- Achievements & innovation 2015 has been put into one paragraph because what one town considers innovative may not be to another but it is essential to share and be proud of your achievements in 2015.
- There is a full contacts information update not just to ensure that we have your details correctly but the website link is appropriate. It is easy to make changes within your organisation and forget to tell us. We have also added twitter and facebook so that we can follow and like all the Walkers are Welcome towns using this media and promote your news.

If you have any suggestions for changes to the Annual Return form, we would be delighted to hear from you.

Forging Links with Japan

A chance meeting in the Cotswolds with someone from the Japanese Footpath Society has culminated in Sheila and Robert Talbot from Winchcombe WaW being invited to speak at two international conferences in Japan in November 2015. In February 2015 a Friendship Agreement was signed between WaW and the Footpath Association of Japan and then in August 2015 a group of Japanese academics visited 6 different Walkers are Welcome towns, forging new friendships. From a WAW perspective, the next big challenge is how we can work with Japan to develop this relationship.

A group from the Footpath Association of Japan is visiting again in February 2016, partly to continue talks on how our two organisations can work together more. If your town would like to welcome Japanese visitors and get more involved with this friendship, please let us know.

Read more this on our [website news section](#).

Some great news from the Long Distance Walks Association

The LDWA is an organisation with over 7,000 members whose website includes a searchable database of over 1,400 UK paths and trails covering more than 83,000 miles. Information includes maps, publications, and accommodation near the path.

Recently the LDWA have added all WaW towns and villages to their database so their members can find WaW member towns and villages near or on long distance trails.



- 1) Go to www.ldwa.org.uk homepage menu - **long distance paths** Search for Path
- 2) Type in a long distance path name and click on 'Show as List' box
- 3) Next page, click on hyperlinked path name
- 4) Next page, scroll down and to 'Show points of interest' and tick the Walkers are Welcome box. Nearby WaW members appear as a yellow v symbols on the map.
- 5) Click on the symbols for WaW Town name.



The LDWA also displays information on WaW towns and links to their website so check it out. If you wish to research some long distance routes next time you go on holiday you cannot do better than visit [this website](#) or maybe become a member.

Walking holiday Companies

Many walking holiday companies book accommodation for their customers along long distance trails or based in areas where they operate. It is worth contacting any already in your area to be helpful in giving advice or receiving their customers' reports and to promote local accommodation. These companies can also supply statistics about the number of people passing through on trails and so information about trends. They might be able to tell you, for instance, what type of accommodation their customers prefer as there appears to be a move to higher quality accommodation away from youth hostels or camping in many areas. Some self-guided trail sites also carry accommodation listings like the LDWA above.

Here's just a few walking holiday companies:

[Macs Adventure](#)

[Ramblers Worldwide Holidays](#)

[Bath and West Country Walks](#)

[Howell's Foot Trails](#)

[Mickledore Walking Holidays](#)

[HF Holidays](#)

[Hillwalk Tours](#)

[Self-guided Walking Holidays in UK](#)

[Contours walking holidays](#)

[Footpath Holidays](#)

2026 Countdown Begins

As Caroline Davies writing in The Guardian reminds us the 'Countdown begins to prevent loss of thousands of footpaths and alleyways' The 'Right-to-roam law means pre-1949 rights of ways that are not on official maps must be recorded in the next 10 years or will no longer be protected' See the [full article](#)

This is a reference to the current cut-off date of 2026 for adding historic paths to the definitive map. The Ramblers have written 'The path to 2026: Historic paths and definitive maps timeline' - See more on the [Ramblers page](#).

Members may wish to read our fact sheet '[Re-opening and Claiming Paths](#)' (forgotten the members area password, just ask. Perhaps a little word of advice; the Rights of Way authorities will be receiving many such applications and the process can be slow particularly if it is a path that they do not consider to be a priority. Ensure you give the fullest information and if possible the landowners approval (not necessary) and if it is a route that has a destination or links with other PROW's it will have higher precedence. Ensure that you receive an acknowledgement and considerable patience may well be necessary as there is patchy response throughout England and Wales. This is another area where a good relationship with the your highway authority is invaluable.

Getting Together in 2016

Dursley, Gloucester FREE Mini Get-Together Saturday 19th March

The purpose of this **FREE** day's event is to bring together WaW Towns and Villages in the Southern and Western parts of England and Wales for the purpose of networking and sharing best practice with a general topic of "Town meets Country".

There will be a choice of walks, lunch and a presentations by James Brockley on The Cotswold Way and National Trails plus members of the national committee. Full details are shown on our dedicated [website page](#) with a closing date for bookings on **29th February**.

2016 National WaW Get-Together Saturday/Sunday 15th & 16th October

This year's Annual Get-Together is to be held in three locations in the beautiful Lincolnshire Wolds on Saturday/Sunday 15th & 16th October. **FREE** transport will be available between venues. We are urged to visit their best kept secret with three towns for the price of one.

Here's a taster presentation on [You Tube](#)

SAVE THE DATE

Clean for the Queen

There is a new campaign named 'Clean for The Queen' to clear up Britain in time for Her Majesty the Queen's 90th birthday, which will be officially celebrated in June 2016.

The [campaign website](#) tells us that 'When she (that will be Queen Elizabeth II and I of Scotland) came to the throne litter was not the problem that it is today. Food packaging, plastic bottles, takeaway meals and cigarette butts have all contributed to a growing menace that affects our wildlife, streets, countryside and sense of pride. What better way could we show our gratitude to Her Majesty than to clean up our country?'

They are calling on individuals, volunteer groups, local councils, businesses and schools to do their bit. You can start now and also take part in the Clean for The Queen weekend on March 4th, 5th and 6th 2016. Please register your interest on the [website](#) and they will help you to Clean for The Queen with supplies and resources also available.

So what about Walkers are Welcome teams cleaning the countryside this March? Sign up and let us know that you will be taking part.

Membership News

Whitchurch is the first town to represent the North Hampshire Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and the beautiful Test River Valley. Whitchurch, Hampshire was awarded accreditation in October and had their official launch on 21st November where the Mayor Councillor Barry Jackman said, "On behalf of the town council I would like to thank all those townsfolk who really pulled together in what became a true community effort. **Whitchurch** also celebrated the arrival of 2016 with a New Year's Day walk along the *Mill Trail* to Freefolk see our [website news](#).



Glyn Evans contacted us; **Llandoverly** have had a programme of two guided walks each month and he says that he has a superb co-leader, Robin Barlow which “makes things much more manageable and enjoyable”. Llandoverly WaW’s final walk of the year in December 2015 was a walk which took them around the boundaries of their neighbouring parish of Myddfai, a little further east of Llandoverly in the foothills of the Brecon Beacons

Tackle The Turkey Trek 2015 (Taith Taclo’r Twrci/) the regular Boxing Day walk was held at **Tregaron** on 26th December. This 3-4 mile walk culminated with mulled wine and mince pies at the Talbot Hotel.

Horncastle issued an invitation for people to join them on their first walk of 2016 on Sunday 3rd January and “walk off all of those festive calories”. This walk led by group Chairman Gail Dymoke was scheduled to take in the almost lost churchyard at St Peter’s in Low Toyton. See the [Horncastle News report](#).

There were no programmed walks in **Kirkby Stephen** over the festive period so the time was used to catch up with a full survey for the Big Pathwatch. As it happened this led to tracking down and recording all the Desmond storm damage for reporting and issuing [notices](#) and press statements. It was also useful to note how infrastructure had coped with the excessive water for future reference like the inadequate bridge, pictured above after the worst of the weather, this bridge actually caused flooding to the road and paths and has been recommended for replacement.

Bingley have launched monthly Sunday [Guided Bird Walks](#) to St Ives Estate. Whilst the winter walks will be slightly shorter there will still be a chance to see some of their winter visitors; Siskin, Redpoll, Redwing and Fieldfare.



Sheila and Rob Talbot of **Winchcombe** led an 8 mile Cotswold Voluntary Wardens Walk on 3rd January in the rain. Five mad fools turned up and managed to raise £20 towards the Cumbria Flood Recovery Appeal. All donations received during January will go to the flood appeal.

Chairman’s Message

‘On behalf of the Directors and National Executive Committee, may I wish all our member towns a Very Happy New Year. I hope you all had a happy and peaceful Christmas and that Santa was very generous.

2015 was momentous in many ways; we changed our organisation to become a C.I.C. and we hope to reap the benefits soon.

January is Annual Return time and while many of us baulk at the prospect of filling in the AR form may I suggest that it’s a wonderful opportunity to reflect on what has been achieved and to make plans for the coming year. When I look at some of the achievements of our member towns I’m amazed at what can be done. So, please, keep it up and I wish you success and fun in 2016.’

Best wishes

Walkers are Welcome national committee