



WALKERS ARE WELCOME

Towns and villages with something special to offer all walkers
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Newsletter March 2016

Spring is in the air for our footpath special

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What's new?



Dursley Get-Together with Chris Cherry shopping



Market House



Historical walk

Chairman

Dursley Southern Get-Together

The good people of Dursley did a brilliant job of hosting representatives from 12 different WaW towns on Saturday 19th March. The informal gathering started with a choice of two local walks and lunch. Tess Jackson from Natural England gave a talk on National Trails and Sam Phillips with Sheila Talbot explained the work of the national committee and future initiatives. As always at these events, delegates found that the chance to network with people from other towns was invaluable. New friendships were formed and new ideas were shared.

If you get a chance to attend a mini Get-Together in your area, we recommend you give it a go. Or maybe you would like to host one!

Boroughbridge Northern Get-Together

Boroughbridge have risen to the challenge and are organising a Northern Get-Together for Monday 16 May. Please **SAVE THE DATE**, full details and invitations to follow.

Member Awards

One of the initiatives within the national committee's new [Action Plan 2015/16](#) is awards for best practice. It has been decided to have a bit of a competition for the best member website, please send in your nominations with a note saying why you think the particular website excels and how it is successful in your aims. You may nominate your own.

So that everyone has a chance of competing and there are still some members that do not have their own website, please post your nominations for good publicity material to the Secretary. We would welcome any leaflets, flyers and postcards, they just have to have the WaW logo included. These will all be displayed at the Lincolnshire Get-Together in October for judging. The array might also inspire your next leaflet and design.

Closing date for both entries 30 September.

WaW website analytics

Periodically the national committee look at Google Analytics for the website's performance. Latest figures are 13,773 users of which 75% were new and 25% returning. The most popular pages were WaW towns and the map of members with Walking Festivals second which is a brilliant indication that the website is promoting member destinations as hoped. There were a staggering 1,700 visits to the Join Us information.

We are working on a new WaW areas promotion and hope to announce the details shortly.

Forging Links with Japan

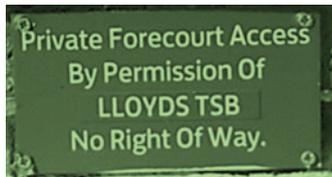
As mentioned in the January Newsletter, a group from the Footpath Association of Japan visited Britain again in February 2016, to continue talks on how our two organisations can work together. After a meeting in Winchcombe they went on a lightening tour of the South West visiting WaW towns and villages unannounced.

They have members from all over Japan who are keen to visit different WaW towns in all parts of Britain. They want to learn more about our access laws and how WaW members are improving their local economy. They are also keen to share ideas and form friendships that could lead to exchange visits in the future.

If your town would like to find out more about hosting a visit from like-minded Japanese walkers, please email Sheila.talbot@tiscali.co.uk. Some guidance on hosting Japanese visitors will be available shortly, based on the experience of the visits that have already taken place.

Introduction to PROW

Pic. An interesting sign recently seen in Dursley



Newer members may be learning that in England and Wales there is a system of legally protected Public Rights of Way (PROW) which are managed by the Rights of Way Authority. This is generally within the Highway Authority run by the Unitary or County Council Countryside Access Department.

This authority is required to maintain a definitive map of all PROW's which is then used by Ordnance Survey to update or revise their maps. Each Highway Authority in England and Wales (other than Transport for London, the City of London and Inner London boroughs) was also required to produce a Rights of Way Improvement Plan under sections 60 to 62 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 by 21 November 2007. Whilst there should be a review at least every ten years, most such plans have become less defined and watered down.

However, this system can be complicated when other organisations legally or choose to take on this or part of this role. These may be National Parks, National Trails, local organisations or Parish Councils that act in different areas particularly regarding maintenance of PROW's.

Public Rights of Way are divided into different types of routes. Footpaths for walking, Bridleways for walking, horses and cyclists, Restricted Byway not for the use of mechanically propelled vehicles and B.O.A.T., Byway open to all traffic. A Permissive Path is a route where the owner gives permission for use, these may be official and marked as such on an OS map or unofficial. Don't take it for granted that the ROW Authority is accountable for the perceived problem when very often it is the landowner's responsibility. In the past ROW Authorities have taken on improvement work because they had the funds to do so but in today's political climate they are more likely to only be able to meet their statutory duty and things may have to change drastically in the years ahead.

You can expect waymarking from the highway and obstructions to be cleared by the landowner through contact with the ROW Authority, at the very least. That said it is very important that problems are reported

and monitored to see the true picture out in our countryside. You may wish to order the [Rights of Way: A Guide to Law and Practice 4th edition 'Blue Book'](#) from the Open Spaces Society.

The Ramblers Association's Big Pathwatch data will be useful in giving a picture of the state of PROW's in England and Wales.

So you may be thinking of undertaking some improvements yourselves. It is imperative that you partner with the ROW Authority or your alternative organisation who may have identified contractors and very strict criteria in an even thicker book of standards that need to be met. They may be willing to survey the work, arrange for quotes, obtain landowners' permissions, manage the scheme and match fund or authorise some work to be carried out by volunteers as appropriate.

To further complicate this introduction we also have Open Access land as defined under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000. This is usually upland and uncultivated land and commons, essentially mountain, moor, heath and down. A similar bill was enacted in Scotland by the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 which formalised the Scottish tradition of unhindered access to open countryside, provided that care is taken not to cause damage or interfere with activities including farming and game stalking.

The law in England and Wales differs from that in Scotland in that rights of way only exist where they are so designated (or are able to be designated if not already) whereas in Scotland any route that meets certain conditions is defined as a right of way, and in addition, there is a general presumption of access to the countryside. Private rights of way or easements also exist.

It will take a while to learn all the ins and outs of PROW's, what you should expect and how your group's activities can improve your local network and facilities.

Partnership Working

We see increasingly aware, from conversations at events, through mentors, e-mails and members' Annual Returns, that partnership working is the best way to improve footpaths and facilities.

For example: **Aylsham** work with Norfolk Trails (Norfolk County Council), **Brampton** with Cumbria County Council, **Beverley** with East Riding Council, Ramblers' Association, North York Moors National Park and Streetscene Team, **Bollington** their town council footpath committee, local footpath action group, Footpath Projects Group of East Cheshire Ramblers and Cheshire Council PROW, **Bradfield** with North Yorkshire County Council, Bradfield Council 'Adopt a Path' and Sheffield Local Access Forum and so on.

There is some fantastic footpath work partnerships and achievements going on in WaW towns and villages that we are all so proud of.



Kington's pioneer path-scheme comes to an end

For the past 25 years many of the paths around **Kington** in Herefordshire were kept in good order by the pioneering Kington Footpath Scheme. This was invented and run by Peter Newman, trustee and north-west Herefordshire local correspondent of the Open Spaces Society, with Herefordshire Council and the Hereford Probation Service.

Offenders on Community Payback worked with Peter and the Council across 16 parishes to install about 800 stiles and gates, waymarks and fingerposts, and many notice-boards and footbridges.

Sadly, the scheme has come to an end as Peter has moved to Powys.

Says our patron, Kate Ashbrook: 'The scheme has done massive good for this rural area. By opening up paths and making them easy to find and use, the offenders have also helped the local economy. Thanks to these efforts the paths round about are in good condition and really do welcome walkers and riders.'

Other towns might like to consider teaming up with the local probation service to see whether there is a taskforce to work on the paths.

Pic: Peter Newman (left) and Maurice Clothier, supervisor of the probation workers (right) with the notice-board they erected on their last day, 31 January 2016.

Discovering lost ways

It is now only ten years until 2026, when the definitive maps of public paths will be closed to claims based purely on historical evidence. We recommend that towns obtain a copy of the excellent book [Rights of Way Restoring the Record](#) by Phil Wadey and Sarah Bucks, which describes a step-by-step approach to researching unrecorded ways. There is also a [downloadable](#) fact sheet Re-opening and claiming paths.

Funding footpath improvements

You may be fortunate and have accumulated funding from your activities or donations or need to fund an identified improvement project. Consider how the project would benefit your community or visitors and try to wrap it in a wider scheme that will be more attractive for funding. A nature trail, industrial heritage or perhaps improved access through a wood are all examples of where it is easy to identify residents' enjoyment and a new tourist attraction rather than just footpath improvements. You might wish to include funding for imaginative waymarking, brochures or an app. Be sure of who owns the land and permissions and public support before embarking on project funding.

Some funders are reluctant to fund improvements on land that you don't own so they may be more approachable for some leaflet funding particularly if you can charge for the completed leaflets to make reprints sustainable raising money for maintenance in the future.

HF Holidays Pathways Fund contribute to this type of work in areas where they operate. There is a Ramblers' Holidays Charitable Trust Small Grant Application Form for up to £5,000, send us an e-mail for the application form. The Paths for All, Community Paths Grant Fund 2016 is accepting applications from Scottish groups that seek funding to improve and promote their local paths up to £1,500.

A newer idea for funding community projects is Crowdfunding, whereby residents buy into the scheme either for future profit, benefits or enjoyment, see the new scheme near Kirkby Stephen [#BogStandard](#)

We were interested to learn from the Annual Returns of some very successful fundraising. One town raised £1000's with a walks and cake festival, a raffle and a Country and Western evening. We have [downloadable](#) Fact sheets Steps to successful funding – an overview and Fundraising and generating income.

Members' News

Melbourne keep their followers up for date with their footpath improvements on [Facebook](#) and include before and after photographs.

In response to our February newsletter mentioning Town Trails, **Snaith** tell us that they have a Heritage Trail which is presented on an A4 folded laminated card and is part of a collection of 15 Heritage Walks in The Vale of Snaith. Free packs are available in Snaith or you can [download](#) a copy.

We noticed some innovation on **Cromer's** [website](#). The WaW logo is used as the 'o' in Cromer.

Liskeard celebrated the 2nd year of the Caradon Trail with an [Anniversary Walk](#) on 5 March.



Thirty **Bingley** ladies visited **Kirkby Stephen** on Thursday 17 March which turned out to be the most beautiful day of the year so far.

Wiveliscombe are organising '[The Wivey Way in one day!](#)' sponsored walk on Saturday 2nd April in aid of the Multiple Sclerosis Trust.

Baldon and **Bingley** are having a joint Canal Heritage Walk on Saturday 16 April from Saltaire to Bingley see [details](#).

Unst our most northerly member in the Shetland Islands has been on BBC's An Island Parish so if you fancy seeing what it is like to live and work on Unst have a look on [i-player](#). Chas Hollis has assured us that he spent the filming visit hiding from the camera.

What's new?

In February the South Downs National Park Authority encouraged everyone to get into the happy and courteous spirit of sharing their paths with a smile. This project suggests that when walkers pass each other in the great outdoors, it is the perfect opportunity to give them, and you, a warm glow by sharing a simple hello! You can also see the George & Dean, Britain's Friendliest Walkers, [video](#). Cheers.

Ride+Stride (not to be confused with the ride2stride Walking Festival) is a sponsored bike ride or walk between churches on 10th September, 2016. The money they raise will help to save historic churches, chapels and meeting houses for future generations by funding urgent repairs and the installation of modern facilities. Fancy taking part or being involved see their [website](#).

This year's British Food Fortnight is 17th September - 2nd October 2016. Have you thought of a "foody" walk that celebrates locally produced food in your area? Love British Food [website](#).

The Bat Conservation Trust are seeking volunteers to sign up for the National Bat Monitoring Survey. [Find out more](#). If you know where there are summer roosting bats in your area, why not have a dusk bat walk.

Fifteen National Trails of England and Wales are having "the google effect" with videos recorded using the Google Trekker camera, an off-road version of the Street View equipment. The [North Downs Way](#) is completed and next will be the Cleveland Way.

Well that's more than enough for one month especially as you need more time to getting out and about in the finer weather.

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p.s. Forgotten the website password, give us a shout.