



WALKERS ARE WELCOME CIC

Towns and villages with something special to offer all walkers

www.walkersarewelcome.org.uk secretary@walkersarewelcome.org.uk

Newsletter April 2017



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We don't seem to have experienced many typical April showers yet this year but when we do, how lovely it is to see breaks in the dark clouds and a rainbow shining through.

Last year in April we were celebrating the Queen's 90th Birthday and what a different place the world seems this year. We bring a rainbow of hope for our family of Walkers are Welcome towns and villages.

If you would like to re-read some old newsletters or refer to that article that caught your eye, we keep them for about a year on the [website](#).



If you go down to the woods

When many of us were children, we played in the countryside and woods not afraid of the dangers of strangers and not far from home to run back in time for tea. The stuff that Swallows and Amazons and Enid Blyton stories were made of. Today, parents are usually far more aware of what might happen and worried about letting their offspring wander with computer games often taking over young minds. *pic. Handmade nest*

Lucy Purdy asks in Positive News, 'Could a natural history GCSE reconnect young people with nature?' 'Experts agree that children have far too little contact with the natural world. Could lessons about flora and fauna – a natural history GCSE – be the answer?' writes Lucy. Read her [article](#).

Probably since even before the introduction of Dr. Maria Montessori's revolutionary methods, there have been alternative schools and education ideas. Waldkindergarten – Forest Kindergarten's have flourished in Germany and in the UK woodland schools, nurseries and playgroups are popping up. Children from young ages are learning through play in the woods which offer a degree of shelter and lots of exciting natural materials. Above photograph of one of the nests made by very young children at a [Stomping Ground](#) session. These children may well be the environmentalists, conservationist and ecologists, etc. of the future. In any event their imagination and appreciation of nature will be explored. Do you have an under-used woodland area suitable for supervised and safe children's play?

Have you thought about specialist family and children's walks? There is a 'Designing Children's Walks' fact sheet downloadable from the website [fact sheet page](#). There will also be a useful 'Children's Walks' workshop available at the [Annual Get-together](#) in October.

Economic development in your town

It is rarely the full story but most towns have joined Walkers are Welcome to benefit their town's economy. Welcoming walkers to visit your town of course reaps benefits for accommodation, cafes, pubs, grocers and gift shops. There have been many surveys done to provide evidence that walkers generally spend as much, if not more, than other types of visitors. Your Annual Returns tell use about many of the benefits that you have seen.

A one night stay on a long distance footpath brings accommodation, dinner and a packed lunch at the very least. It might even be a trip to the Holistic Centre, launderette, outdoor shop or chemist. Persuade the walkers to have a day's rest and they will venture to local attractions, lots of shops and cafes to experience the wider town. Spread the word along the trail.

There will always be moans about the walkers that arrive by coach to your free car park, have a lengthy

walk and enjoy their packed lunch with businesses recognising that they bring little economic benefit. But did they go home noticing some of what your town has to offer, tell their friends and family or make a more leisurely return visit? One tweet from a satisfied walker can multiply round the world.

Is your town attracting the child-free weekenders that love your spa hotel, enjoying the facilities after experiencing a few of your well signposted walks or attractive countryside. Buys some individual gifts, art or local foods in your independent shops. Enjoys a few pub lunches and restaurant dinners. Then recognises the quality of the hotel and area's charms on Tripadvisor.

How many different categories of walking visitors can you attract to your town? How do you reach them and what picture do you paint? This takes a little thought and imagination.

Walkers are Welcome

- WAW Otley has helped to generate a significant amount of business since beginning in 2008, and has recently updated the full page on their website that lists the seventy names, addresses and contact details of the local businesses that have WALKERS ARE WELCOME HERE stickers in their windows



Randal Metzger advises, "One of the central aims of Walkers are Welcome Otley is to boost the local economy by encouraging residents and visitors to enjoy using any of the eleven, fully waymarked, self-guided walks that we have developed and published since 2008. All begin and/or end in Otley and walk descriptions are available for purchase from local retailers Just Books, Chevin Trek, The CORE, Mounsey's, Browse Time, and Otley Library, or from our website.

These include our two leaflets - Otley FOUR Walks and Otley FOUR MORE Walks, and the guidebooks for the 38-mile 'Six Dales Trail' and our most recent 28-mile 'Welcome Way'. Over 9,500 of these publications have been sold to date, and this has benefited Otley's economy as walkers wander into the cafes, pubs and shops, and utilise the bed and breakfast accommodation on offer.

Our website www.waw-otley.org.uk has a dedicated page that lists all of the names, addresses and contact details of the seventy businesses that display WALKERS ARE WELCOME stickers in their windows.



Walkers are Welcome Otley feature in the [Otley Economic Bulletin](#) March produced by their Chamber of Trade where businesses are encouraged to display Walkers are Welcome window stickers.

Otley also feature in an article 'Self-guided Walks from Otley' in [Otley Matters March edition](#) produced by their town Council.

Council Elections in Wales

'The Open Spaces Society has urged its members in Wales to contact their council candidates for the local-government elections on 4 May and ask for their support for public paths, open spaces, common land and village greens.

The society refers to the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and its seven goals. The Act requires there to be a Public Services Board in every local authority area; it must produce a local Well-being Plan to deliver these goals. Public paths, open spaces and public access are highly relevant to their delivery. The local authority is represented on the Public Services Board, and therefore councillors can have a direct input.

The society suggests that its members put questions such as the following to their candidates:

If elected, will you ensure that the protection and promotion of public paths and open spaces feature in the council's forthcoming Well-being Plan as important contributors to the achievement of its well-being goals?

If elected, will you urge the council:

- to ensure that there is adequate funding to maintain the public-path network in accordance with its statutory duties?*
- to take action against unlawful works on common land in accordance with its powers?*
- voluntarily to dedicate land as town or village green, and to press other landowners to do so, in particular when new development is proposed? (This will protect the land in perpetuity and give local people rights of recreation there.)*

Says Kate Ashbrook, general secretary of the society and our Patron, 'These are all issues which councillors can influence. It will be good to know which candidates pledge their support for these propositions which will benefit their constituents enormously.'

Members in England might speak to their prospective County Council and Unitary Authority councillors regarding similar concerns for Countryside Access Departments and maintenance of Public Rights of Way going forward.

[Members News](#) see also website [News](#)





Top left

Whitchurch, Shropshire stand at a spring fair.

Bottom left

TLC for **Winchcombe's** riverside path from the Cotswold Voluntary Wardens just before the Walking for Health group passed by.

Top right

Thank you to Kelly from J&A for the generous donation of the jackets. **Spilsby & Hundleby**.

Bottom right

Two working parties were out in **Melborne**, Jane C. and Chris K.refurbishing a kissing gate.

Landscape: **Stocksbridge** provide a walk for 42 for the Abbey Brook Anniversary 18 September 2016 as shown on their Annual Return

New [website page](#) for Dog Walks & Dog Friendly Places in **Bingley**. Welcome woofers?

Birds

Many of us enjoy or have become experts in the birds we find along our walks be that moorland, sea shore, field or in our gardens. You may be interested in:

RSPB Big Garden Watch [results](#) showing the winners and looses from your gardens

The State of the UK Birds 2016 [report](#)

RSBP also take an interest in other wildlife in their Nature's Home Magazine [April's best wildlife sights - and how to see them](#) with 10 spectacular sightings to enjoy.

And here's a [Curlew call](#), so familiar to moorland lovers, now sadly on the Red List.



[Looking for rainbows.](#)

Secretary@walkersarewelcome.org.uk



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Our mailing address is:

26 Birkbeck Gardens, Kirkby Stephen CA17 4TH

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