

Gwrych: closure of woods and paths

FOR over half a century people have been able to walk freely through the woodlands near Gwrych Castle. But now Gwrych Castle Preservation Trust ('GCPT') is pursuing a policy of denying the public access to the beautiful woodlands on the hillside around the castle.

In 2018 GCPT received over £500,000 of public money, and in 2019 it received a further £135,000 pounds via Lottery Heritage funding. This public money was given to GCPT for the laudable purpose of preserving the ancient castle building and its gardens. It was certainly not given so that GCPT could stop general public access to local woodlands. Nor was it given so that GCPT could block footpaths that the public have been using for years.

The woodlands surrounding the area have been used for recreation for over 50 years by the communities of Abergele, Llanddulas and Rhyd y Foel. GCPT have stated publicly that their vision is for this area to be enjoyed only as part of their visitor experience requiring an entry fee. GCPT is also seeking to close all the public footpaths that similarly have been used by the communities. It has already gone as far as erecting security fencing to block these paths.

The area of woodland that GCPT want to close off is not small: it's over 200 acres! It is an area of land with many footpaths running through it connecting the communities of Rhyd y Foel and Abergele. The paths also provide access to the beach and connect with other footpaths to Betws Yn Rhos. Furthermore GCPT is seeking to prevent the public from walking in the adjoining woodland currently leased to Natural Resources Wales ('NRW')!

There has of course been local outcry at this misuse of public funds. In response, as well as an application for adding the footpaths to the definitive map there is also an application underway to register the woodlands as a Town or Village Green ('TAVG') under the

Commons Act 2006. The Ramblers is fully supportive of both these applications. If successful, registration as a Village Green and the recording of the Rights of Way will secure the area for everyone's enjoyment and benefit now and in the future.

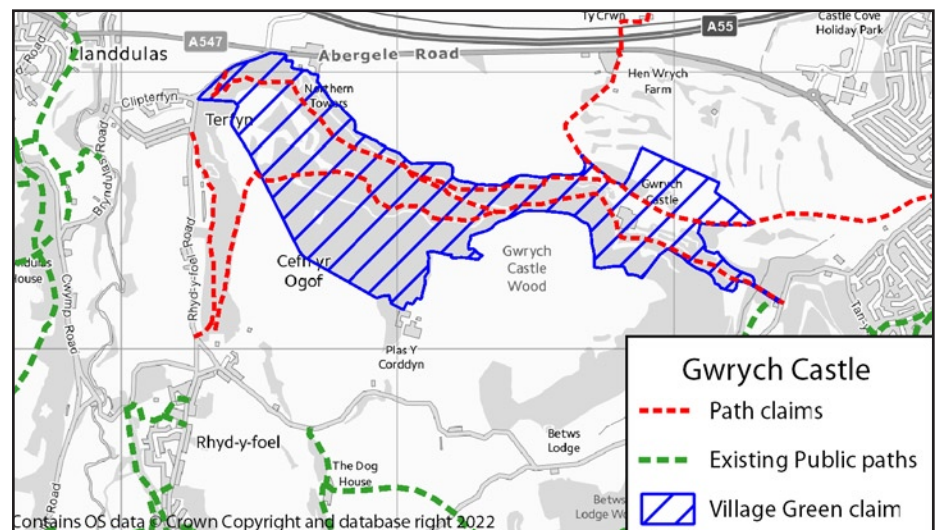
The whole woodland area is very popular, well used and enjoyed by both visitors to the area and residents. The application for Village Green status has been welcomed by local residents, young and old alike. The population loves the calm which the wooded area provides. There is no doubt that experiencing the wonderful natural landscape and using the many tracks and paths throughout the area supports and enhances the mental and physical well-being of all who can currently access them. They are used by walkers and runners, horse riders, cyclists, climbers and cavers. Many local children enjoy these woods as part of nature's playground to which every child should have access.

This is not a worked or managed woodland, nor is it a viable commercial area for either GCPT or NRW. It is recreational amenity woodland for the area, and should remain as such.

Please help us:

- Visit the Friends' Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/groups/friendsofcefnyrogof>
- Sign the on-line petition <https://chng.it/cMgKpQ8P>
- Send to Councillor Andrew Wood** any photos you have of visiting the area in the last 20-40 years plus any other information you can give him to support the Public Footpaths and TAVG claims.
** andrewwood@woodsmotorcycles.co.uk

John Buckley
County Sec for Conwy



Map showing the approximate extent of the claim for Village Green status and the paths being claimed as public.

A word from the Chair

The 24th of April 2022 marked the ninetieth anniversary of the mass trespass on Kinder Scout that is the highest point in the Peak District. The moorland in the area was owned by the Duke of Devonshire and used exclusively for grouse shooting with gamekeepers preventing walkers from following the paths. The trespass was not organised by the Ramblers Association but by the British Workers' Sports Federation who advertised the event and passed on information by word of mouth. There was no social media in those days! When they got back the police were waiting for them with five arrested and sentenced to

between two and six months in prison for their part in the "riotous assembly."

Since then we have had the establishment of the National Parks under landmark legislation passed in 1949 and 'open access' under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act (CROW) 2000. However there is still a great deal of work to be done in establishing access to the countryside, with the Ramblers Association playing a key part. Often there is very little open access land around towns and cities with many woodlands, rivers and lakesides excluding walkers. The lockdown showed the need for better access to the countryside with popular

beauty spots overwhelmed like the car park at Pen-y-Pass. In North Wales we are still trying to establish the coastal path through the Penrhyn Estate and access to the foreshore and coast path at Deganwy, amongst others.

There was an interesting article on the BBC website about the mass trespass on Kinder Scout and is worth a read to see the importance of protest and mass action in our society today:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-derbyshire-61008955>

J Elwyn Williams

Secretary's report

There are a number of changes taking place at Ramblers London headquarters. Ross Maloney has been appointed new chief executive of The Ramblers. He will take over in July 2022 from Tanya Curry who has served as interim chief executive since February 2020. Ross is currently deputy chief executive and chief operating officer at the Scouts.

We have had the new branding launched and the new website is partly up with more to follow and a new walks system- Walk Manager instead of GWEM and Walkfinder coming very soon.

Wales Coast Path

This year is the 10th anniversary of the Wales Coast Path. There have already been some local events but watch out for more later in the year.

Combined Walk Programme

We have agreed to have a Summer to Winter 2022 combined walks programme (CWP) which is included in this mailing. Not all leaders want to submit their walks long in advance and this has to be their choice, however many members still like a paper booklet. Also AGM notices need to go out so we need to mail all our members.

The next CWP will be discussed again by Area Council and the decision may depend on how many walks are submitted. **Details of where to find walks submitted after the programme is printed are also in the CWP.**

We have changed the grade titles for this programme. Leisurely and Strenuous are used to describe a different level of walk in the UK grade descriptions. The new title avoids confusion.

E grade title 'Leisurely' has become 'Easy' / 'Hamddenol' instead of 'Hawdd'

A grade title has gone from 'Strenuous' to 'Demanding'.

Welsh Council

This was a fairly short event on Zoom. The evening meeting started with a video of highlights of the last year. The successful start of the two year Paths to Wellbeing project was the main talking point with thirteen members of staff being recruited on two year contracts.

Area Annual General Meeting

This took place in January and we had to switch to Zoom due to uncertainties with the Covid Omicron variant.

Most officers were re-elected although Margaret Fernley has stepped down as representative for affiliated organisations. Dave Collins took over from Neville Fernley as membership secretary during last year and was elected to continue this role.

Many thanks to Margaret and Neville for their hard work in these roles and previous roles over the years, to Dave Collins for stepping in in short notice as membership secretary and also to Simon Longman who stepped down as Vice Chair.

There are currently vacancies for: Publicity & Promoting Walking Secretary; Representative of affiliated organisations and Vice Chair.

A motion was passed for General Council about removing the requirement for written risk assessments. See the General Council report for more about this.

Paths to Wellbeing project

The plans for each community joining the project were approved early this year and local community events have started to take place.

- Penmaenmawr
- Penrhyndeudraeth
- Holyhead/ Holy Island
- Clywedog Valley & Caia Park
- Pwll Glas & Graig Fechan
- Llanfynydd

Events, including some footpath improvement work, are mostly advertised locally via posters and by the The Wildlife Trust and the Clywedog Valley Partnership. There is a website which includes news for Penmaenmawr**

Max Henderson(North West) and Heather Martin (North East) can be contacted via:

pathstowellbeing@ramblers.org.uk

Joanna Slattery, Area secretary

** www.theeyepenmaenmawr.org

Wild Wales

Carreg Gwalch have published a paperback edition of George Borrow's classic tale of his wanderings through Wales in the mid 1800s. Borrow was a self taught scholar of the Welsh language and I'm not sure what native speakers make of his recounted conversations with locals, but I found it a cracking read when I came across it many years ago. Borrow certainly covered a lot of miles in a day. If you haven't yet read it, get yourself a copy!

500 pages ISBN 978-1-84524-451-4 £15.

Ramblers General Council

This years General Council meeting was a one day event in Birmingham.

It was good to be back to meeting people face to face, more relaxing and more chance to meet new people and chat informally.

The review of the year was generally positive with membership rising and our finances seem healthy. Ramblers have also had positive coverage on a number of TV programmes. Senior members of staff discussed current changes many relating to IT and organisation (most are still underway so not possible to assess).

With just five hours of conference time it was quite rushed and some motions and questions did not get a chance to be discussed.

There had been four motions put to the conference about risk assessments and these were combined to make two. After a lively debate both were carried. It was stressed that everyone agreed about the importance of assessing risk and keeping safe. This is an ongoing process that walk leaders continue to do throughout their walks.

Our motion had been combined with another on the same topic and was second to be discussed:

Motion 1. 'Simplification of Risk Assessments'

This General Council believes that the imposed requirement for written risk assessments in the format prescribed is unnecessary, serves no useful purpose and notes it has led to walk leaders standing down.

Council urges the Board of Trustees to identify and implement a simpler and less burdensome approach to documented risk assessments for organised walks as a matter of priority.

This was carried by a large majority. It does not cancel out the

second resolution as the revised 'documented risk assessments' could (and now should) avoid compulsory written risk assessments for each individual walk.

The second included our motion to remove the requirement for written risk assessments of group walks. It covered other written records as well.

Motion 2. 'Walk Leadership Requirements'

This General Council is gravely concerned that perceptions of bureaucracy are deterring leaders and potential leaders of group walks from offering their services. Council calls upon the Board of Trustees to ensure that, except as required by any current legislation or in the event of an incident that seems likely to lead to an insurance claim, leaders are placed under no obligation to make or keep any written or electronic records relating to their walk, either before, during or after the event. Council therefore calls upon the board to remove the requirement for written risk assessments of group walks and, in doing so, to ensure that the absence of such records will not adversely affect the insurance cover provided for walk leaders.

I seconded this motion and it was carried but needed a counted vote.

I am hopeful this will lead to change but until a new insurance policy is secured, filling in and keeping the very brief Risk Assessment form provided by Ramblers is the best way to be sure that your walk is covered. The template is available on the National and Area websites.

*Joanna Slattery
Delegate/ Council member
from North Wales*

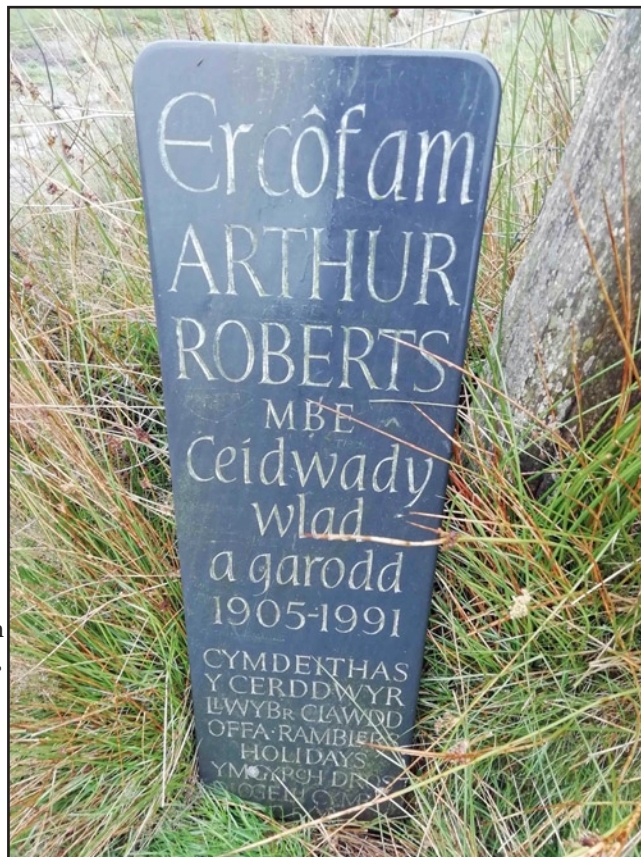
Cofgolofn Arthur Roberts

Aelod hir sefydlog o gymdeithas y Cerddwyr oedd Arthur Roberts a fu farw yn 1991. Roedd yn byw yn y Cilgwri (Wirral) tan 1970 cyn symud i fyw i Landyrnog. Ar y pryd, nid oedd yna grŵp gogledd Cymru o'r Cerddwyr, roedd yr aelodau yn perthyn i grŵp Lerpwl. Sylweddolodd Arthur fod hyn yn creu problem o hunaniaeth i ogledd Cymru a phenderfynodd sefydlu grŵp Clwyd o'r Cerddwyr. Am y tro cyntaf roedd yna enw a grŵp cerddwyr ar gyfer gogledd Cymru, ac mewn amser sefydlwyd Ardal Gogledd Cymru. Yn dilyn hyn, sefydlwyd Adran ar wahân i Gymru gyfan. Mae hyn wedi bod yn bwysig i gael mwy o adnoddau ar gyfer datblygu cerdded yn Gymru.

Roedd Arthur yn frwdfrydig iawn dros gynnal llwybrau cerdded yn y wlad a chyfrannodd hefyd i sefydlu llwybr poblogaidd Clawdd Offa ar hyd Cymru. Dathlwyd hanner can mlwyddiant y llwybr yn ystod haf 2021. Yn dilyn ei farwolaeth, penderfynodd cymdeithas y Cerddwyr ac eraill godi cofgolofn i Arthur a osodwyd ar waelod Pen y Cloddiau.

Yn anffodus oherwydd tywydd garw ac o bosib fandaliaeth, torrwyd y gofgolofn yn ystod 2021. Ond mae yna newyddion da oherwydd mae yna nifer wedi hel digon o arian i gael un newydd a bydd hwn yn cael ei osod yn y dyfodol agos. Pan yr ydych yn cerdded yn ar ardal, edrychwch allan am y gofgolofn o'r dyn pwysig yma yn hanes cerdded gogledd Cymru.

(This article is about the repair of the memorial to Arthur Roberts who played a very important part in establishing the North Wales Ramblers. Our thanks go to Ron Williams who worked very hard in raising money to repair the memorial)



Footpath News

Verbal harassment and abuse

I receive the Pathwatch complaints for the whole of North Wales. Many of the issues are simple and straightforward. Some are easily sorted by the use of a pair of secateurs. There has though been an increase in reports of harassment and abuse by occupiers. This started across the area at the beginning of the first Covid lockdown when councils were prepared to close footpaths at the request of occupiers. Reports have varied from minor hostility to 'Get off my Land' and 'There is no footpath here'. If you are on a legal right of way this is unacceptable. So what can you do?

If you are certain you are on a right of way as indicated on the OS Map then you have a right to be there. Also if you are on land that is marked as Open Access on the maps you also have a right to be there. I would most certainly point this out to the occupier.

If you are upset with the situation then you can take action. Harassment on a Public Highway is a criminal offence. A public right of way is a Public Highway. You can therefore report it to the police. In so doing you will get an Incident Number. The police should then follow up your complaint by visiting and talking to the occupier. You should then get feedback from the police. If not after a couple of weeks you can quote the Incident Number and request an update.

The next step - and this is just as important - is that the matter should also be reported to the County Council quoting the police Incident Number. These two actions usually have the desired, if reluctant, effect.

Ron Williams

Lixwm case

This case should have concluded when the inspector's first decision was issued in July 2020, but there were further objections and so the matter had to be reconsidered by the inspector. As we suspected the 'new' objections did not raise any new issues that had not been aired at the public inquiry, and the inspector's final decision issued in January 2022 confirms public footpath status.

It is hoped that the route will be available for public use by the time you read this

Deganwy update

The Tywyn level crossing saga has been covered extensively in previous newsletters.

Having lost at all previous stages (public inquiry, high court, appeal court) Network Rail ('NR') had applied to Conwy Council under s.118A HA 1980 for an order extinguishing the public right of way over the crossing. Various parties including Ramblers objected.

The application came before Conwy's General Licensing Committee on 20 January 2022, a previously scheduled hearing having been postponed. Ramblers and others had made additional representations to the committee and the (virtual) meeting was addressed to good effect by Robin Millar MP and Coun. Mike Priestley.

The Committee members decided to **refuse** the Network Rail application *'in order to protect the interest and rights of highway users under the S130 of the Highways Act'*. They were not convinced that all avenues had been explored to make available a crossing safe for the public to use, either in its current historic location or somewhere nearby. If the path was extinguished there would be no going back.

It is understood that that NR has now applied to Welsh Ministers for a similar extinguishment order under s.118A, as is its legal right when the council declines to make the order. At some point there will be a public consultation about this, but there is no news currently. And still the crossing remains closed.

PB

Ysceiflog 13 open at last?

This footpath runs from behind the Afonwen Craft Centre at SJ 1301 7137. There have been problems with this path since the 1930's. It has for the last 30 years or so been obstructed by a locked gate and barbed wire. It was one of the first issues of the former Clwyd County Footpath Committee. No progress had been made when this ceased and was succeeded by the Flintshire Committee.

The Flintshire Committee had pursued this matter without success from its inception in 1996. The reason always given by the Council was that there was an issue with the Definitive Map. A couple of years ago the Rights of Way team at Flintshire was re-organised.

As part of this re-organisation the committee again began a campaign to get the path opened. This coincided with a change of owner and tenant occupier. It was pointed out to the new officers that they had a duty to find a solution to the problem rather than hide behind the Definitive Map issue.

Last December without any notice a County Council stile appeared alongside the gate. The official line of the path is still obstructed elsewhere. This though can be mitigated by crossing over some hurdles. There is no footpath sign and it is not clear what if anything is going to happen next.

Ron Williams

Mawddach Crescent

This case concerns the route across the seaward side of Mawddach Crescent on the Mawddach estuary, not far from the Barmouth bridge. There is an established public path (Arthog 13) around the back of the properties but the route on the estuary side was claimed by Huw Roberts in 2014 on the basis on long public use.

The application was initially opposed by Gwynedd officers, but when the matter went to committee in 2018 the members decided to approve the application. The Order was made in 2019 and included a further length of path along the embankment leading to Barmouth railway bridge.

After a lengthy delay for Covid reasons, the preliminary stages of the public inquiry process are now underway. No date has yet been set for the inquiry but it is expected to happen later this year.

Penrhyn coast path

A year ago in this newsletter we reported that Gwynedd Council had made an order to create a new section of the Wales coast path which actually follows the coast between Bangor and Aber Ogwen.

Unfortunately we can't tell you that the path is now open and ready to use, but it appears that Gwynedd is negotiating with the owners to get an agreed solution, as opposed to forcing the issue at a public inquiry.

Gwynedd Council applied in March for planning consent to put two new gates into the estate walls - which are part of the "listed building". Consent was granted on 5 May, so we remain hopeful.

Being a Rusty Walk Leader

It had been a while since I had led a walk. I thought I had covered the basics in preparing interested walkers with what to expect -

- * Toilets (none) and refreshments (bring your own)
- * Obstructions (I'd cleared brambles away from a small footbridge and hammered a bit of barbed wire into the fence post by a stile following a memory of someone impaling a finger on it).
- * I'd checked tide tables and the weather forecast.
- * The recce found no threatening livestock; a couple of noisy geese were just that.
- * I warned about the likelihood of long wet grass and the many stiles.
- * I gave bus times.

In retrospect, I should have mentioned the length of difficult walking on the beach cobbles after the coastal path leaves the sand dunes. There was a complaint made on behalf of others! There was a strong on-shore wind which could have caused something of headwind on a small stretch of between Trwyn Maen Dylan and Pontllyfni. This caused me to alter the direction of my usual anti-clockwise route.

This lack of familiarity resulted in me overshooting the appropriate place to leave the sand dunes and descend to the beach. I was faced with a steep and muddy descent. Almost immediately I found myself diving into bushes. No harm done, except to my dignity. It was a strong signal for others to retreat to a



A well deserved rest on Pont y Cim, built in 1612 to provide a safe crossing of the Afon Desach.
Photo: Mieko Yamaguchi

better way down.

The other unexpected obstacle was finding a farmer on a JCB at work on creating a channel for water from a drainage ditch, which had previously fanned out into trickles over the sand. Crossing this brand new obstacle resulted in several of us getting a wet foot.

The last change since my recce was a field which now held three Welsh ponies. One of these clearly thought that titbits should be provided and nudged several of us. Fortunately no-one seemed bothered by this.

Margaret Lowe, Eryri Ramblers

PINS / PEDW?

Those of you who have had to get involved with disputed footpath cases will have come across the Planning Inspectorate, usually known as "PINS" for some reason. Well, they are now called PEDW - Planning and Environment Decisions Wales. A rose by any other name!

The other change, long overdue, is that rights of way casework papers are now being published on the Wales Gov't website. New cases anyway.

Andy Wilson

Conwy Valley Ramblers has lost one of its hardest working members. Andy died at St Davids Hospice on Tuesday 29th March. Our thoughts and condolences go to Jean and her family.

Andy and Jean moved to Llandudno from Barmouth where they had been long standing and very active members in the both the Meirionnydd Ramblers and their local Mountain rescue.

A regular walk leader (along with Jean) for our group, they also organised most of our recent holidays both in the UK and abroad. Andy always sprinkled humour and anecdotes into his walks such as leading us onto Ilkley Moor to sing 'Ilkla Moor bah t' 'at! Andy's caring side came through as he always made

time to welcome everyone and make sure they were looked after on walks.

Andy was a regular member of Conwy Valley Footpath maintenance group. Anything involving power tools and construction was immediately Andy's domain - starting with how to switch things on in the first place! Andy also took most of the walk and work-party photos, building up a large archive which remains available for all to see on the Conwy Valley website.

He was our Walk Programme secretary and always keen to encourage and support new walk leaders. Last Autumn he handed over the Walk Programme role - not to retire but to become our group secretary.

He leaves a gap that will be hard to fill but we know he would want us out enjoying the wonderful North Wales landscapes that he loved so much.

Kevin Slattery

Meirionnydd Group are sad to hear the news about Andy. He was a much respected member of the group for many years and was an active committee member. He was our Walks Secretary for several years and also an active Walks Leader. He also organised many weekend breaks in Derbyshire, Yorkshire and a holiday in Switzerland. He will be well remembered.

D Rowley

Helping more people get walking

We all know we need to try to make everyone feel welcome on our walks. We know running a varied walks programme and including some walks of different types to appeal to a wide range of walkers is important. Those walks may be child-friendly, dog-friendly, pushchair-friendly, themed walks etc. in order to meet local needs and local considerations. New walk leaders often bring new walks so if you haven't led a walk why not have a go? Our Area and groups aim to have a programme that fits the interests of our members and attracts new walkers.

Dog-friendly walks

We would like as many people as possible to come on walks and experience all the benefits and enjoyment that walking brings. The decision on whether or not dogs (other than registered assistance dogs) are permitted on a Ramblers walk has been devolved to areas, then to groups and then to individual walk leaders themselves. At our last meeting Ramblers North Wales reviewed our wording on dogs, we have modified our wording so that walkers wishing to bring a dog on a walk can contact the leader to find out if it is suitable for dogs.

We hope to be able to offer some walks that welcome dogs and their owners. However some walks won't be suitable for dogs, for example when the route covers a particular type of terrain or young farm animals or ground nesting birds are present. In some cases, dogs may be banned from certain areas that people use, or there may be restrictions, byelaws or control orders limiting where they can go. The ultimate decision on whether to allow dogs on any walk lies with the walk leader. Where a walk states 'Dogs Welcome' or 'Dog friendly walk', the Walk Leader has agreed that a walker can walk with their dog on a short lead. See note 1 about assistance dogs

Anyone wishing to bring their dog on a walk must contact the Walk Leader, in advance, for permission and to check suitability for their dog- the leader's decision is final. Dog owners should note that they (not the leader) are at all time responsible

for the dogs' welfare and behaviour. See note 2 about responsibilities

NOTE 1: In accordance with the 2010 Equality Act registered assistance dogs are permitted on group walks. However, in some circumstances the walk may not be suitable and it would not be safe for a walker with an assistance dog. This is why we ask anyone using an assistance dog to get in touch with the walk leader in advance to discuss the nature of the walk.

For legal reasons if groups or walk leaders do not wish to have dogs on their walks they must state 'Registered Assistance Dogs Only' rather than 'No Dogs'. Our 'Dogs' note (Walk note 1.) asks walkers with assistance dogs to get in touch in advance to discuss the walk.

NOTE 2: On Ramblers walks owners are responsible for making sure that: -

- their dog is on a short lead at all times and walked near the back of the group.
- they pick up and carry dog mess (which can be hazardous to other animals).
- if livestock is encountered, the owner should keep the dog separate from the rest of the group and wait until the group have passed through before proceeding.
- if livestock becomes unsettled by the presence of a dog and give chase it may be safer to let the dog off the lead. The dog will be much safer if it is allowed to run away from a farm animal in these circumstances, and the attention will be directed away.

The Ramblers has worked alongside Natural Resources Wales, Natural England, the Kennel Club, National Farmers' Union and others to create a new Dog Walking Code:

<https://www.ramblers.org.uk/advice/safety/dog-walkers.aspx>

<https://naturalresources.wales/days-out/the-countryside-codes/the-dog-walking-code/?lang=en>

Problems with dogs

Ido a lot of walking on my own, not that I am unsocial, but walking involves activities such as bird watching, and studying other things in the countryside, and I need to concentrate on what I am observing. However, I am finding that my access to the countryside is becoming restricted. This is because I have to be careful where I walk, avoiding areas near to villages, nature reserves, National Trust properties, canal tow paths; increasingly I find I am walking on lanes and roads.

Why? Because of the increasing numbers of people with dogs, and especially ones who cannot control their dogs.

Here are five examples (I could give a lot more), from the past three years, of anti-social behaviour by dog owners that I have encountered:

Someone asked if I would look at

a footpath problem. On my way back I encountered two women with six dogs. The women were sitting down smoking, and as I passed by, I was attacked by the dogs; at first, the dog owners made no attempt to control the animals and when they saw me with a torn shirt and dripping blood they just walked away. I reported the matter to the police, who were sympathetic, but it was so much hassle getting them to court I gave up. I now have permanent damage to my right arm, and suffer flashbacks.

I was approaching the top of one of the (not so popular) Welsh mountains, and some way off could see a group of people on the summit. When I was close, I could see there was a group, maybe having a picnic, and they had three aggressive dogs. It was obvious that no one had any control over these

dogs, and I deemed it safer to go around this summit that day, and so was denied access.

On a Nature Reserve, with a large shallow pool, I came across two people with two large dogs, the bloke (middle aged and overweight), was encouraging the dogs to chase water fowl while the woman filmed it on her phone. Politely I told him that it was a nature reserve and also pointed to signs warning of blue-green algae. The bloke then threatened violence, and came after me; fortunately, he was so unfit, and unused to muddy paths, I outpaced him without having to break into a run.

A farmer, where a stile had been replaced recently, phoned and said his sheep had got out because someone had sawn off the rails (presumably to make it easier to get a large dog through). I made

Dogs and walking

I read with interest the article, "Dogs on Walks" in the latest edition of North Wales Rambler. However, I do feel that it is time to be far more ambitious in offering plenty of opportunities for dog owners to take their dogs on Ramblers' group walks.

When I joined Holywell Ramblers, an affiliated walking group, they did not allow dogs on walks. We were planning on getting a new dog, and were keen to take her on some walks with the group. I brought the matter up at our AGM in 2013 and pointed out that even back then it was clear policy to allow dogs on at least some walks. We agreed that dogs would be allowed on walks at the discretion of individual leaders and that they should be kept on a short lead. Furthermore it was made clear that responsibility for any dog coming on a walk was the responsibility of the owner, not the leader.

During this time we have gradually had more and more dog walks, the reality being that in truth there are very few walks in North Wales that are unsuitable for dogs. Dogs have been up Bryn Alyn, Moel Famau, along the Nantlle ridge and countless other walks without incident in what is now almost a decade of dog walks.

It is often emphasised that North Wales is predominately a livestock farm-



ing area, with the implication that the whole region is therefore unsuitable for dog walks! However, most of Wales is a farming area, and across the UK, many areas are full of sheep and cattle. This is not a reason to proscribe dogs on walks, and our experience has shown that it is perfectly possible to walk with dogs safely.

Indeed problems with dogs are often more imagined than real, if owners are responsible and keep their dogs on a

lead. They must of course also pick up any dog poo, as this can be dangerous for livestock due to the Neospora parasite and again groups just need to make this clear. Many of our members now seem to enjoy seeing the dogs that come on walks and are very affectionate towards them.

It really is time to implement Ramblers' policy and encourage dog owners and their dogs!

Peter Stevenson

Problems with dogs (cont'd from p6)

... and installed a dog gate (big enough for a Labrador), but three days later the gate had been removed and broken.

While replacing a stile on a footpath that led through a (private) wood, I noticed that the path looked unused and overgrown, yet I could see people walking through the wood. A dog walker spoke with us, saying that he lived 7 miles away and came here twice a day to walk his dog. He asked what we were doing. He then told us that his dog did not like this path so he had come along with tools and made 'much better' paths through the wood.

Added to this it is common to be greeted by aggressive barking when meeting a dog walker.

I would like The Ramblers to carry out a survey of members (non-dog owners) to see how widespread and serious is the problem of dog owners adversely affecting others and the

countryside. Perhaps I have been unlucky recently. If it is, as I fear, a serious and growing problem then we need to consider doing something about it.

Anon.

Editor's note.

The contribution entitled "Problems with dogs" is most likely not the experience which most walkers have when they encounter dogs and their owners in the countryside. Nonetheless it does point up issues which can be caused when thoughtless or irresponsible owners take their dogs out but exercise no control over them. This is a separate matter from members wanting to take their own dogs on a programmed Group walk. It is no doubt something which will feature again on the Area Council agenda.

Ed.

Meirionnydd Group AGM

We hope that after 2 years of remote meetings we shall once again be able to welcome our members to an AGM meeting at Llanelltyd Village Hall on Saturday 22nd October commencing at 10.00 am. If the weather is fair we shall hope to have arranged a short local walk in the afternoon. As always nominations to the various Committee posts are invited and if you are interested in knowing more about what is involved then please contact one of the existing Committee members either via the website; by phone or on a walk. Further information about the meeting will be made available nearer the time but meanwhile please reserve the date in your diary. We very much look forward to seeing many of our friends again.

www.meirionnyddramblers.org

Use them or Lose them!

COVID has had a devastating impact on Public Transport in North Wales. Many Rural and inter-town routes have either been severely cut back or have disappeared altogether. Connections between many services have also been affected. The last few months have though seen some welcome developments. These are around the **Transport for Wales 'T' Bus Services**. These are meant to help cover long distances within Wales. They also by and large connect with each other.

The key development is the **T10**. This was due to be launched in 2019 but was delayed for various, largely political, reasons. It finally started last year. This service runs seven days a week from Bangor to Corwen. At Corwen it connects with the T3 Wrexham to Bala Service. This makes the Dee Valley accessible from North West Wales and Snowdonia from the Wrexham and Dee Valley Area. It also makes linear walks following the tributaries of the Conwy possible. This includes the Afon Llugwy from the Ogwen Valley to Betws y Coed and the Afon Merddwr from Cerrigydrudion. The section of the Slate Trail from Conwy Falls to Bangor is also accessible from this service.

The T19 Service has also been created. This is the former 19 bus route between Llandudno and Blaenau Ffestiniog. During Covid this service was reduced



Walkers getting on the T10 bus in Betws y Coed.

(photo: Ron Williams)

considerably. The connections at Betws y Coed with the T10 are not perfect but are bearable. The Sherpa Buses also link in with this service at Betws y Coed.

As well as the T Services, Transport for Wales have launched their Fflecsi Services. These are Demand Services where you need to book in advance. They are currently operating in parts of Conwy, Denbigh, Flintshire and Llŷn in Gwynedd. Details are on the county websites and at :

<https://www.fflecsi.wales>

From my experiences of using these services, take up has been poor. They are a valuable asset to both visitors and local residents. For example it is now feasible to get from Pentrefoelas to Wrexham or even Chester for shopping.

So please **Use them or Lose Them!**

Ron Williams

Silver slashers on TV

I was contacted by Susan Ridd, the Series producer of "Coast and Country" ITV programme. She said she had found details about our footpath maintenance group from Facebook and asked if we would be willing to be one of their subjects for a forthcoming programme. I contacted Arwel Evans at ACC to see if he was happy with the idea and if he was able to arrange a session which would showcase our team's abilities with sufficient work for all who turned out.

The date and venue were agreed and interviewer Rob Shelley and cameraman Mark Doleman turned up at Llanddona on April 8th to film the team installing a wicket and kissing gate, strimming encroaching brambles, build a 6m boardwalk over a boggy area, build 4 steps, cut down a fallen tree and to waymark the path. Four of us were interviewed about our work, me, Richard Welsby the path maintenance organiser, Dave Melling our Chairman and Dewi Jones the

ACC technician. Mark also flew a drone over the work. It was great that they were not at all intrusive, allowing us to get on with the work with no interference, and we were told they were happy with what they had managed to get on film, being very impressed with what an aging group of workers could produce in a work session.

Our story was shown on ITV Wales, Coast & Country, Friday May 6th at 7pm.

*Andria Massey
Footpath Secretary and Access Officer
Ynys Mon Ramblers Group*

The programme can still be seen here - the item starts 16:09 in:
<https://www.itv.com/walesprogrammes/articles/coast-and-country-series-10-episode-8>

It should also be available via the ITV Hub catch up facility, but for reasons I don't understand I couldn't find it there. *Ed.*



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