



# The Disabled Rambler

The Newsletter of the Disabled Ramblers

April 2007

A charitable company : Registered Charity No. 1103508

## Challenge Ramble in Cornwall

Our final ramble in Cornwall was held on a National Trust property, the Levant Mine at Trewellard, near Pendeen and St Just. A select band of us, Robin Helby, Carol Felton, Stephanie Westbrook and her dear father, our loyal friend John Birmingham, John and I met in the remote car park overlooking the Atlantic and were greeted by our Ramble Leaders, two wonderful local NT representatives and Mark Owens from the South West Coastal Path.



Our first view of the mine buildings

We began by following the path down towards the Levant Mine and its tiny engine house perched on the cliff edge. Here a group of informed and enthusiastic NT volunteers showed us the winding and pumping shafts and the electric winding engine. Thanks to support from the NT, these men and volunteers like them, the Beam Engine has been brought back into steam again after lying idle for 60 years. It was sobering to be given details on the historical background to the mine and on the hardships of the daily routine for miners and their families. Wives and children worked above ground, whilst the men and ponies went down below. After descending to the bottom of the mine, not an easy task in itself, they then had to walk a further mile and a half out underneath the sea to the actual area to be mined and work there in the gloom for their shift of 12 hours before making the return journey. Maximum male life expectancy was 40 years.

The setting of the Levant mine on its cliff edge is both peaceful and beautiful. The power and surges of the Atlantic constantly buffeting the precipitous land, silently convey the insignificance of man's efforts in com-

parison to Nature's overwhelming forces. It speaks volumes for the courageous and tenacious character of the Cornish miners that they were able to wrest a living from these surroundings.

Reluctantly tearing ourselves away, we followed the path with the sea on our right, to the lunch stop at the Botallack Count House, also owned by the NT. In olden days the mine owners would gather here to sort out financial matters and then repair to the first floor, with its superb views, for dinner. We contented ourselves by taking our lunch outside in the brilliant sunshine!

Afterwards following a mixture of farm tracks and grass paths we descended a nearby valley to a point where we could overlook the lighthouse at Cape Cornwall. Returning back to the path we began to retrace our steps before descending another steepish grass track to view the nearby Botallack Mine. Like the Levant Mine, Botallack is beautiful and clings onto the land with grim determination. Slowly ascending once more we returned to the Coastal path. At this point two brave souls chose a more challenging route back to see how their vehicles would fare - with some manhandling from our helpers all eventually got back to the main drag!



What a view !

Passing by the quarry created by the Levant Mine and its several outbuildings we finally reached the car park and the end of our journey. We had a superb day in Cornwall, with outstanding views of both NT properties and the countryside, accessible paths, illuminating discussions on the Cornish industrial past and all rounded off by the warm welcome and support we received from our Ramble Leaders. We can't thank them enough.

Rosie Norris

## **Letter from Mike Bruton, Chairman of the Disabled Ramblers**

Dear Friends,

The year is advancing and we are at that time when seasonal changes come increasingly rapidly. One of the most noticeable differences is the rapidly lengthening hours of daylight. Minutes of extra daylight seem to be added on each day, which I find to be very good for my morale. By the time you read this, we shall be past the Equinox and the summertime clock change will have occurred, bringing us lovely light evenings. What a joy that will be!

We have now firmly fixed our summer rambles programme, and I can proudly say we are visiting some new areas as well as exploring new routes in familiar places. Full details of the programme as well as procedures for making bookings to come on particular rambles and, where needed, to reserve a loan scooter, will have been sent to all who have renewed their membership. Also, a copy of the full program and booking procedures can be viewed on our web-site: [www.disabledramblers.co.uk](http://www.disabledramblers.co.uk)

You will find among the articles in this Newsletter, information on a range of topics, including how to find accommodation to suit your needs and your pockets. Early reservation at places to stay is recommended, as suitable accommodation is still in short supply in many places. The Disability Discrimination Act requires suppliers of services of all kinds to make alterations to remove physical barriers to access. In practice, this means that much improved facilities are now the rule in larger hotels, particularly if new or refurbished. At the same time the rapid growth of modestly priced new and purpose built lodge type accommodations has also resulted in many more accessible rooms becoming available, often, though, near motorways or in industrial towns. Last year my wife and I enjoyed staying in a brand new Travel Lodge at Pembroke Dock. The accommodation standard was very good, if a little basic. e.g breakfast was packaged and purchased the previous night! There also seem to be a lot more adapted self-catering places to choose from, but, usually, these are for stays of at least a week, which is not always suitable for our needs. The biggest lack still seems to be in the provision of adapted, good quality, traditional B and B accommodation. This is still very sparse in most places.

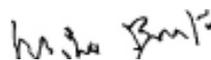
On a different subject, we are still seeking some clarification of intent from the Government on possible future regulation of pavement scooters, wheelchairs and

buggies. Following the sudden realisation from the DVLA that they should be registering all Class 3 mobility vehicles stimulated by the unhelpful articles in the 'Mail on Sunday', we expected some statement to be issued from high up in the Government explaining what is going on – only to be greeted so far with a deafening silence! I am hoping to get this issue clarified via a parliamentary question submitted to Douglas Alexander MP, the Secretary of State for Transport by my MP – here's hoping!

Finally, friends, we have fixed our AGM for Friday, April 27<sup>th</sup>, in Maidenhead. We have our old friend, Tom Bindoff, coming down as guest speaker: Tom is the top UK expert on accessible gates and barriers. We await with interest to hear what he will be saying to us on that day.

I wish you all well and look forward to meeting many of you during yet another season of disabled rambles!

Yours sincerely,



Mike Bruton

PS We very much want to hear from YOU, members and friends. Please write or email us with articles of interest for publication, with your views and queries. Do include photographs whenever possible. This Newsletter is for you, and we need your input and contributions!

Please email to: [chairman@disabledramblers.co.uk](mailto:chairman@disabledramblers.co.uk) or write to: The Disabled Ramblers, 14 Belmont Park Road, Maidenhead, Berks SL6 6HT.

You can also phone Mike Bruton on: 01628 621414.

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### **Editor's Note**

I am grateful to the group of regular contributors to the newsletter, but I would welcome articles from more of our members if the newsletter is to continue in its current eight page format. Fortunately, on this occasion, I have more articles than I can accommodate in this issue, and these will appear in the next newsletter.

Thanks particularly go to our new contributors : Carol Felton, David Livermore and Marian Martin ( Marian's article will appear in the July newsletter, together with another one from Carol).

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## **Disabled Rambling Yes ! But where to stay ?**

Over the years, the Disabled Ramblers have organized supported rambling events very widely across England and Wales, from Keilder Forest on the Scottish Border in Northumberland down to Truro in Cornwall, and from the Castlemartin Military range in Pembrokeshire across to Wells next the Sea in Norfolk! We have visited over 100 places and covered around 1200 miles – mainly off-road. A key need for participants has been to find suitable accommodation, bearing in mind the wide range of aspirations and ability to pay within our membership. Unfortunately there is no single guide which presents a comprehensive list to accessible accommodation. Instead reference to a number of publications may be needed.

Some years ago, a Charity called 'The Holiday Care Service' led pioneering work first into producing a classification of levels of access available in holiday premises. Three categories were defined:

Category 1 defined as suitable for a wheelchair user traveling alone

Category 2 defined as suitable for a wheelchair user with some assistance (eg climbing one step) and

Category 3, defined as suitable for an ambulant person, but with very limited stair climbing ability

Based upon these concepts, the Charity set out to find and inspect properties falling within these categories. The Holiday Care Service has now been transformed into 'Tourism for All' and an article dealing with their up to date services is also published in this Newsletter. Their latest publication lists around 400 properties, all inspected and approved to the published standard.

For a number of years now, I have been acquiring and using a RADAR publication: 'A Guide for Disabled People – HOLIDAYS IN BRITAIN AND IRELAND'. This is reissued each year, and currently costs £13.50 to purchase including post and packing. Contact RADAR at 12 City Forum, 250 City Road, LONDON EC1V 8AF, tel: 020 7250 3222, or view their web-site: [www.radar.org.uk](http://www.radar.org.uk)

The latest 2007 edition includes detailed information on around 1500 places to stay in all parts of the United Kingdom and Republic of Ireland. These include hotels, guest houses, self-catering cottages and flats, holiday parks, activity centres, campsites and centres where specialist service and care are provided.

The guide also gives information on advice services, voluntary and commercial organisations and transport.

The guide aims to give information that will be useful to people with as wide a range of disabilities as possible.

The guide quotes the level of accommodation available using the old and some new standards where the information is available. Additionally choosing holiday accommodation is made easier by individual listings stating, amongst other details, the size of entrance doors, ground floor bedrooms, lifts, whether there are specially designed bathroom facilities etc.

My experience using the RADAR guide has been fruitful over the years, and, very often the accommodation on offer also has its own web-site, useful for visualizing the property in some detail. However, in many parts of the Country accessible accommodation remains in pitiable short supply. Pembrokeshire, for example, is very short of accessible accommodation, but help is to hand through new Travelodge Accommodation in industrial Pembroke Dock! We stayed there last year Accommodation proved very comfortable, with an excellent roll-in shower to hand. Add on services are however very sparse – even breakfast was pre-packaged and purchased the previous night!



**Viewfield House Hotel in Portree, Skye**

Each summer, my wife, Jo, and I drive up to Scotland, and we were pleased to find both an excellent publication 'Accessible Scotland' available free of charge, and some really useful information easily accessible on the web-site [www.visitscotland.com](http://www.visitscotland.com) The publication can be ordered via the web-site or by telephone: 0845 22 55 121. Rather adventurously we have planned a tour down the Outer Hebrides chain of islands, and have made bookings so far on Skye (on the way there), on Harris – opposite Taransay (do you remember the TV series based on this deserted island made last year?), then on North Uist, before crossing over to Barra staying for a further three nights on this remote island.

I am sure other sources of information are available – do write and tell us! Happy Holidays!

**Mike Bruton**

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## **Walking with Wheels in Bedfordshire and Milton Keynes by Lynda Kynnersley**

Lynda Kynnersley has enjoyed walking in Bedfordshire and surrounding counties for more than twenty years and leads walks for her local Ramblers' Association group. She recently came to realise the difficulties faced by less able-bodied people visiting the countryside when a friend, also a keen walker, became dependent upon a mobility scooter for getting around. The book's sub title is "Walks Suitable for Wheelchairs and Pushchairs" but it could also be useful for those wishing to take up walking as a hobby or to get fit, and who would like to know about routes which are relatively straight forward and on good firm surfaces.

The book describes sixteen walks in Bedfordshire, including the RSPB Nature Reserve at Sandy, and eight walks in Milton Keynes, including one along the Grand Union Canal. Each varies in length from a mile and a half up to seven miles, with the possibility of extending three of them up to fourteen miles. Nine of them are less than two miles, seventeen between two and five miles and three are more than five miles. Some of these walks are in close physical proximity to each other and it is therefore possible to join one to another to extend the walking distance (and create more rambles-hence the apparently conflicting numbers of walks above). The circular three and a half mile walk around Furzton and Teardrop Lakes in Milton Keynes for example may be extended to a circular walk of around five and a half miles by linking Furzton Lake with Emerson Valley.

All the walks have been chosen for their ease of access with as much information as possible about the physical features of the routes, to enable people of limited mobility to decide for themselves whether a particular walk is within their capability. Some walks are on trails that have been specially adapted to make them more accessible but others are on country paths, which have reasonably flat, smooth and hard surfaces. Each one has been graded from one wheel (easy access - hard, flat surfaces which are all level or with only very slight inclines) to five wheels (most difficult - all types of surface and inclines may be fairly steep or long).

The book contains a short section on its Accessibility Grading System and the section also lists the accessibility grading of all the walks. Minimum path width is 750mm (30in) and any gates have an opening wider than 750mm. RADAR keys may be required. I would have liked additional specific measurements here ie rather than inclines described as "very slight" or "fairly steep". More specific detail on path difficulties would also have been

welcome, rather than for example, the general direction "Do not go round the semicircular path, as there is a large raised metal cover half way round". Kissing gates are mentioned and again some measurement indication of the opening aperture would have been useful – we all know kissing gate dimensions can vary from the acceptable to the impossible!

Each walk uses a standard format: Accessibility Grading, Distance, Directions and Parking, Refreshments and Facilities, Points of Interest (ranging from physical artefacts to local wildlife) and finally, description of the walk. This last includes black and white photos of selected features of the area in question, accompanied by a simple black and white hand drawn map of the route. Where the walk follows a public footpath the relevant Ordnance Survey map number is shown in the Introduction. Some walks are paths in Country Parks and a map of the area may be obtained from the Visitors' Centre.

I think this book will be helpful for people who may have recently become wheelchair or mobility vehicle dependent and who want to start somewhere but don't want their initial experience to put them off walking for life. As many of the routes described are short, it is also suitable for mobility limited people who regularly go for longer rambles, but who prefer on some occasions to spend only a few hours instead of all day in the fresh air.

There are very few books to my knowledge which have as their subject accessible countryside paths for the mobility limited. (If you are aware of any dear reader, do please let the Editor know and we will try to review them). More books covering accessible paths in different areas of the country would I'm sure be of great interest to many, not just members of the Disabled Ramblers, but those yet to join! and not forgetting those all important countryside managers. I think this book is a very welcome addition to our knowledge of accessible paths and the author is particularly to be congratulated on the comprehensive amount of detail she has provided for each route.

The book costs £7.99 and the ISBN numbers are:

1 903747 69 4 and 978 1 903747 69 8. Alternatively it may be bought from the Book Castle, telephone number: 01582 605670, email: [bc@book-castle.co.uk](mailto:bc@book-castle.co.uk), website: [www.book-castle.co.uk](http://www.book-castle.co.uk) If ordered by post a 20% charge will be added for packing and postage.

Rosie Norris

"It is good to see that information on disabled walks is being made available: we need much, much, more"

Chairman

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## Tyneham Ramble

The village of Tyneham sits in the middle of a military range, so at all times you need to keep to paths and obey warning signs. The area is open at weekends and all of August, except for six weekends a year. The rest of the time it is closed for military training. In common with many military sites, because the area is little used it is a haven for wildlife and wild flowers.

You can park at Whiteways car park at Porington viewpoint on the Ridgway, on the road between Corfe Castle and East Lulworth, or at the Tyneham village car park. From the Whiteways car park there are spectacular views of the coast.

In November 1943, the MOD gave the villagers of Tyneham 28 days notice to leave their homes, as the area was needed for firing practice. On 17<sup>th</sup> December 1943 the villagers left their houses, expecting to be able to return soon. They pinned a notice to the church door saying "Please treat the church and houses with care, we have given up our homes, where many of us have lived for generations to help with the war, and keep man free. We shall return one day and thank you for treating the village kindly".

One can only imagine how they felt about leaving their homes, especially just a week before Christmas. The only compensation they received was for the produce in their gardens because the houses were all rented. Now, all that remains of the village of Tyneham are the ruins of the 19<sup>th</sup> century cottages and a village pond. The church has been restored and now houses a museum where you can read about the people of Tyneham and imagine their lives as fishermen and agricultural laborers in their picturesque valley. The school has also been restored. The pond is a haven for dragon flies and damsel flies under the expert care of the Chief Range Warden and his team.



Lulworth Castle

We parked in the Tyneham village car park which has a picnic area and an accessible toilet. There is a linear

walk from the village to the sea at Worbarrow Bay and back to the car park. Heading north from the car park there is a steep chalk path up to the Ridgeway. There is a vehicle gate that the Range Warden unlocked for us. This path is about 1 in 5 but my Trampler did it with no trouble and we were well rewarded with the views. We were followed up the hill by the Chief Range Warden in his Land Rover just in case.

At the top there is a grassy path eastwards towards Whiteways car park with spectacular views towards Kimeridge and St Alban's Head. At the time of our visit there was a kissing gate that is just too small for a Trampler and a vehicle gate which the Range Warden unlocked for us. The access via the vehicle gate was quite rough but manageable by the Trampler. A smaller scooter would have an easier passage through the kissing gate.



The view towards Lulworth

If you go Westwards from the top of the path from Tyneham village you follow a level chalky track on which you eventually reach Flowers Barrow. There are many places along the path to stop and admire the spectacular views across the fields to Worbarrow Tout and Worbarrow Bay below. Flowers Barrow is an Iron Age hill fort on the cliff top, an ideal picnic spot, with views inland towards Lulworth Castle and the heathland used by the army. The most stunning views are west towards Lulworth Cove, where white chalk cliffs have been forced into deep folds. In the distance you can see the Isle of Portland.

All the routes described are linear and you have a number of choices depending on time available, the capabilities of your scooter, your confidence and the willingness of your walking companion to tackle the steep hill. If you park at Whiteways car park the going is level all the way to Flowers Barrow but be aware

there are no toilets or other facilities which are only available by the village. We found that going up the path to the ridgeway, east to Whiteways car park, then west to Flowers Barrow, returning to the Tyneham village car park was quite heavy on the batteries so make sure yours are in good condition and fully charged.

A ramble at the Lulworth Ranges is planned for Wednesday August 8th. OS Map OL15  
Whiteways car park 888 812 Tyneham Village 883 804

Distances:

Tyneham Village to Worbarrow Bay and back is a little less than 2 miles. Tyneham Village to Whiteways car park is 1 mile. Whiteways car park to Flowers Barrow is 1.5 miles. Flowers Barrow to Tyneham Village is 1.5 miles.

Apart from the steep path from Tyneham Village to the ridgeway, which is grade 3, the paths are grade 2.

If you want to visit the ranges with a scooter it is best to check with range control to check you can get through the gates on 01929 462721 ext 4701.

More pictures by Mark Owen, Path Development Officer, South West Coast Path Team can be found at:

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/challacombe/sets/72157594400745641/detail/>

More Information about the village of Tyneham and the range opening days can be found at :

<http://www.isleofpurbeck.com/tyneham.html>

David Livermore

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## A Grand Day Out on the Sea

Weymouth MS branch member Carol Felton joined up with a few fellow members for a day to remember!

A splendid sailing trip was organised by the Bournemouth Sports Forum for the Disabled in September, when the 'Knoticat' a stable converted 9-metre sailing catamaran offered us intrepid sailors a real 'hands on' experience.

The ramped entry ports from the car park to the boat made access no problem for us and enabled our hosts – Richard Monaghan and crew Ian and Adrian – to give us a perfectly hassle free day.

The sailors, comprising Graham, our chairman, his wife Megan, Anne, Pam and yours truly, Carol, were ready at Cobbs Quay Marina in Poole Harbour at noon, complete with nosebags and wet weather gear. Once settled aboard, we chugged off to catch the opening of the 'folding' bridge at 12.30.

Once out in Poole harbour proper we sailed around Brownsea Island and Graham, Ann and I got a chance to steer the boat with guidance from Ian, the skipper.



Happy Band of Sailors !

Conversation flowed and laughter was continuous. Eventually we crossed the ferry lines out of the harbour into Pool Bay and the sea towards Studland.

To our left, Southampton direction, six big Sunseeker craft were racing their way back home (we thought after the boat show). Two stayed in the bay awhile, delighting us with their speed and sleekness as they frolicked in the waves. Towards our right and the land, we sailed close to Old Harry Rocks and the chalk cliffs to observe the grandeur of our coastline from the sea. Not only the cliffs' incredible horizontal layers of sediment and their acutely compressed folding, but also the headland view covering heaths on clays and sands, chalk downs, clay lowlands and limestone hills.

Graham took over the controls for a large part of the afternoon and seemed in his element. On the way back we were passed overhead by a helicopter and at sea level by an RNLI boat and a svelte army speedboat. Once back in the sedate waters of Sandbanks we were all busily chatting - choosing a millionaires' house if we ever won the lottery...

Coming back under the bridge we passed the vast works of the Sunseeker operation and then chugged by various marinas and boat yards filled with stacked craft to arrive back at Cobbs Quay bang on time at 16.59.

Throughout the day our three 'professional crew' hosts had been gentle but firm about life on the boat, even mugs of tea and a tin of biscuits miraculously appeared. They gave us a unique experience of seeing the land - we love so well - from the sea. And we dodged the rain - just!

A big 'thank you' to our hosts for their time and for Richard's vision and tenacity in establishing this operation in the first place. And a big 'thank you' to Marine Developments Ltd who own Cobbs Quay Marina for their invaluable support and an excellent mooring.

Sailing trips for the disabled on board Knoticat - Richard Monaghan 01202 520249 [www.sportforum.org.uk](http://www.sportforum.org.uk)

Carol Felton

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## Small, Lightweight Scooters

What Mike Bruton said in the January issue is something I can emphasise. He mentioned various limitations they have; there is worse. A couple of years ago, with a strong desire to get a scooter which would fold up and go in the hold of an aircraft, I bought one. Unfortunately I thought only of its ability to go in a hold. I decided to go to Chichester to try it out for Chichester is dead flat and would pose no problems.

So I thought.

It only pitched me over four times in about two miles. Stability was something I had taken for granted; after all, the model had the Safety Kite Mark. I ought to have looked where its battery (a heavy object) was sited. Halfway up the steering column! What with the battery's weight plus mine, instability was just about certain.

I tried to get my money back from the manufacturer and then through Trading Standards but the fact that the machine had been given the safety kite mark (goodness knows how!) meant that I could not proceed with the case.

It was an expensive mistake but at least it made me very careful before any subsequent purchase.

John Smythson

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## Tourism for All UK

Tourism for All UK (previously know as Holiday Care) is a national registered charity formed in 1981. TfA provides information to people with disabilities and older people in relation to accessible accommodation and other tourism services in the UK and at selected overseas destinations. Every year they respond to thousands of people who may need help and support to enable them to take a break they may not have previously believed possible.

Tourism for All UK holds information about:

- accessible accommodation
- accessible visitor attractions
- accessible transport
- activity holidays for people with disabilities
- holidays for children with disabilities
- equipment hire
- places where care is available
- escorts & carer services
- sources of finance towards the cost of a holiday for people on low income

• VisitBritain and Tourism for All published a guide entitled: 'Britain's Accessible Places to Stay 2006' which features quality assessed hotels, B&B guest accommodation, self-catering holiday homes and camping and caravan parks participating in the National Accessible Scheme. Over 400 quality-rated places to stay, colour location maps, regional information and ideas for days out make it an indispensable traveller's guide. To place an order please click on the following link:

[http://www.tourismforall.org.uk/pages/special\\_offer2.htm](http://www.tourismforall.org.uk/pages/special_offer2.htm)

- Tourism for All UK operates a Friends scheme, which enables supporters to take advantage of special rates at the Copthorne Tara Hotel in London and Intercontinental Hotels worldwide (includes Holiday Inn, Express by Holiday Inn and Crowne Plaza hotels).

Tourism for All UK also provides expertise and support to the tourism and hospitality sector when they wish to improve access to their services.

All enquiries about possible holiday and tourism activities should be addressed to: Tourism for All UK, c/o Vitalise, Shap Road Industrial Estate, Shap Road, Kendal LA9 6NZ

Tel: 0845 124 9971

Fax: 01539 735567

(9-5 Mon-Fri)



E-mail: [info@tourismforall.org.uk](mailto:info@tourismforall.org.uk)

Website: [www.tourismforall.org.uk](http://www.tourismforall.org.uk)

## **'Illegal' : Britain's 250,000 Mobility Scooters**

The row over the apparent need to register Class 3 mobility vehicles with the DVLA in Swansea rumbles on, and many people are struggling to fill in complex and absurd forms designed purely to cope with registering motor cars involving a ridiculous waste of time and public money! Procedures and instructions are available from the DVLA web-site, but no proactive attempts have been made to contact the actual owners of these machines. The whole matter is being progressed in a half hearted and unconvincing way, really showing that the driving impetus comes from the Daily Mail and not from the Government. Since writing my article in the January issue of 'The Disabled Rambler' I have followed up the matters raised, and find an extreme complacency apparent in Government circles. I am convinced that there is a serious failure by Government to provide proper information, clear direction, and leadership in an area of concern to many disabled people. This is leading to confusion and much fear about future 'hidden agendas'! I am hoping to get the matter aired via a Parliamentary question, to be posed by my MP.

The facts are these.

1. Various Acts of parliament dating from 1988 and 1994 have resulted in an apparent need to register Class 3 vehicles with the DVLA. No payment is needed, number plates are not required, but a nil payment tax disc should be displayed. This is bureaucratic and serves no discernible purpose.
2. Accordingly, this requirement has, until now, not been enforced and very few registrations made.
3. A wide ranging study of Class 2 and 3 vehicle usage, commissioned by the Department for Transport (DfT) was published in February 2006 and listed a number of findings (including this apparent need for registration). The report suggests only a low priority need for follow up action, allowing time and space for developing ideas further and allowing for much consequent consultation. There was no suggestion of any urgent action needed by Class 3 vehicle owners to register their machines now.
4. A lobby has formed suggesting that disabled users of various pavement machines (Class 2 and 3) are a real hazard and involved in many accidents. This is all hearsay and is not supported by solid evidence: indeed the DfT report (3 above) suggests the opposite and does not point to any urgent action.
5. The Daily Mail heard of this lobby and published very negative articles – in effect criticising and condemning many individual disabled users of all electric scooters, including Class 3 machines.
6. This Press approach is very frightening for Disabled people, concerned that their freedom might be reduced

by a drip-feed of future legislation starting with this apparently unnecessary registration requirement..

7. The DVLA has woken up to a perceived problem and is insisting via its web-site that all class 3 vehicles must, after all, be registered with them. (due to the Daily Mail?)

8. Meanwhile the DfT has refused to get directly involved, and is leaving action to the DVLA who are apparently keeping all this very low key. No really definitive guidance has thus been issued.

9. At the same time the industry body, the BHTA, (British Healthcare Trades Association), on its web-site, has shown strong support for registration and goes further suggesting new legislation including tests for disabled users fitness to drive – possibly to be made compulsory!

10. The result? Confusion and worry among disabled people, fearful that this registration measure marks the start of a new regime of regulation and restriction.

11. We, the Disabled Ramblers, feel this is getting out of hand, and, at the very least, a clear statement is needed by Government explaining what is going on and stating their future intention over further studies and possible regulations to come

12. Finally - we would ask for a sense of proportion in this matter: if we are really concerned over accidents to road users, why not start by registering all bicycles and road testing their riders ??

Mike Bruton

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### **Some things never change**

Aylesbury Footpaths Secretary, Michael Roe, recently unearthed evidence that the great 'stiles debate' goes back at least 100 years.

Following a land sale in Wendover in 1901 fences and stiles were erected across the line of a footpath which had been used by the public for many years. At a parish council meeting on 11 June 1906 a resolution was passed instructing the parish clerk to write to the landowner telling him to remove the stiles within 7 days or the parish council would take 'whatever action they may consider necessary'. The 7 day deadline came and went so on 21 June 1906 the good folk of Wendover (over 2,000 according to one report) armed with saws and crowbars removed two offending stiles themselves accompanied by much cheering from the crowd.

Common sense prevailed and kissing gates eventually replaced the other stiles on the route and today the footpath is a well-used part of the Ridgeway National Trail. Old and young local ramblers celebrated this fact with a nostalgic walk from Wendover to Coombe Hill on 21 June 2006.

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