



# The Disabled Rambler

The Newsletter of the Disabled Ramblers

October 2006

A charitable company : Registered Charity No. 1103508

## Lancashire Rambles



### Loan Scooters in Abundance !

A large group of Disabled Ramblers descended on the Forest of Bowland in North Lancashire, for a very enjoyable ramble through an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty on the first of three warm and balmy days in mid-July. Parts of the route were quite challenging, and took us through a variety of terrains overlooking the nearby Stocks Reservoir and its attractive surrounds, a sanctuary for birds. We were ably supported by Rangers from Lancashire County Council, who provided us with expositions on the reclamation of such features as an old stone quarry, an earlier lime kiln, and the reservoir banks. I was grateful for the loan of a Trampler buggy, provided via the Disabled Ramblers Mobile Support Unit and driven to the site by Robin Helby.

The second day took us on a longer route around the Arnside and Silverdale A.O.N.B., close to Morecambe Bay. We passed through Gait Barrows National Nature reserve, and were supported by English Nature and Lancashire C.C., who also lent out Trampers. We went through reed beds which were a haven for wildlife, then limestone pavements surrounded by trees, and later over open grassland and a dam wall, to our starting point. We were treated to an extensive buffet at the Nature Reserve Centre, which was sufficiently surrounded by trees to give most of us a break from the mid-day sun, and this lunch, and the tea and cakes at the end of the Ramble, were also very much appreciated!

We met at Roddlesworth Visitors' Centre at Tockholes, near Blackburn, for the Challenge Day. My face fell when I heard that Robin with Mobile Support Unit had broken down on the previous evening and therefore could not attend. But Lancashire C.C. have six Trampers available for loan, and their help and support resulted in the ramble going ahead exactly as planned. After some challenging ascents and descents through woodland and beside a reservoir, we reached a pleasant stream by a Visitors' Centre for the lunch stop. In the afternoon we made a long ascent to a local monument built to celebrate Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee, from which there were views

in all directions, including North Pennine peaks and (apparently) Blackpool Tower ! The descent to the starting point proved quite challenging.

The success of these three days was helped by the good weather, and the usual support. But tremendous thanks must go to Lancashire County Council's Support Team for the loan of Trampers, for the considerable amount of work which had gone into researching and preparing these routes, and for the time and effort which their helpers put in over the week-end to make these rambles so very enjoyable.

Jim Robinson



The six loan scooters unload from the Lancashire CC Trailer at the start of the Ramble

**Chairman's Note:** The Lancashire County Council and the Darwen and Blackburn Council are to be very warmly commended for their initiative in making available Trampler buggies to lend out for events like these. When added to our own Mobile Support Unit, with its two loan Trampers, a total of eight machines were available for these three days: this was doubly fortunate because of the breakdown of Robin Helby's car at the end of the second day, effectively removing our own machines from use on the third day. We are glad to say, Robin's car is now repaired, and we were able to offer our loan service through the remaining rambles of this year's season! Very many thanks to Robin!

Mike Bruton

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

Dear Friends,

I am writing this following the completion of the 2006 Programme of organised rambles, and now is a good time to reflect on the overall programme and its 'pluses and minuses'. During the season we laid on a total of 17 events, which covered 25 actual ramble days. The events were held in many parts of England and Wales (members will know that Scotland and Northern Ireland have their own separate Disabled Rambler groups with their own ramble programmes). We organised 8 events in the South of England, 3 in Wales, 3 in the Midlands and 3 in the North. All followed a similar format, with a morning start, an afternoon finish and an average distance covered of around eight miles. Rambles were categorised as 'Easy', 'Moderate' or 'Challenging'.

An innovation this year was a loan buggy service, with 2 or 3 machines available on loan at each event. These were delivered using our mobile support trailer, which also has a portaloos on board, providing much needed relief when no public toilet was available. We are deeply indebted to our Vice-chairman, Robin Helby for providing and supporting this new venture, and Robin attended every ramble throughout the season with this provision.

An undoubted 'plus' this year was the generally fabulous weather, with rain only a problem on very few occasions. Even then, blood curdling weather forecasts proved very pessimistic and we were able to enjoy days in North Yorkshire and at the Avon Gorge when the weather turned out better than expected. Currently we have a 'minus' because of the difficulty obtaining volunteer helpers to take responsibility for the Mobile Support Unit. As reported, this resulted in Robin attending every ramble during the season. We cannot expect such a heroic commitment next year and we need to find other volunteers to share out this all-important task.

The rambles themselves were organised in conjunction with many individuals and bodies. Thanks are due to National Park authorities, local groups of the Ramblers Association, voluntary bodies like the Sensory Trust, Rights of Way teams, the Forestry Commission and many individual members of our organisation. As Rambles co-ordinator, I realise that without all these individual efforts our programme could not be carried out.

Now is your turn: tell us your views, your likes and

dislikes, problems you have encountered and criticisms of our programme and general organisation.

We have enclosed a form with this Newsletter, do complete it and return it to us. If you prefer an electronic version, we hope this will be available on the web-site. You can then send it back by e-mail.

My own personal experience this summer showed the value of fine weather! This was particularly marked in South Wales, both for the Brecon and Pembrokeshire rambles, where the fabulous scenery really came to life! I also particularly enjoyed the Peak District days when we basked in wonderful sunshine, and also I enjoyed the Thames Valley ramble days.

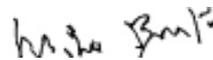
But – do tell us your views! Remember: our web-site can be viewed at :

([www.disabledramblers.co.uk](http://www.disabledramblers.co.uk))

We very much want to hear from YOU, members and friends. As well as sending us views about the Rambles programme, please write or email us with articles for publication, your views and queries. Do include photographs whenever possible. These ventures are for you, and we need your 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.

Signed



Mike Bruton  
Chairman,  
The Disabled Ramblers  
Charity no: 1103508

Web-site: [www.disabledramblers.co.uk](http://www.disabledramblers.co.uk)



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## **Retirement of Maria Davies**

Please read the Chairman's tribute to Maria on page 8

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## A Day out with the Disabled Ramblers

The Disabled Ramblers summer programme has 25 outings. Being a national organisation, their rambles take place in diverse locations right across the country. Arthur and I were privileged to attend a day ramble in the Brecon Beacons.

The going was described as moderate. 14 buggies and 15 helpers (including 3 park staff) met at Talybont. Officially, the walk starts at 10:30. However, they confided that they never get away on time! The Disabled Ramblers have 2 buggies which can be rented by members. The buggy trailer includes a disabled toilet, which is an enormous benefit.



The Support Trailer was towed to our lunch-break location by a Brecon Beacons National Park 4x4 vehicle

The route took us up the hill past the reservoir where we had lunch. The park rangers towed the disabled toilet to our viewpoint. Fortunately, it was a clear day so we had good views although it was a bit windy! After lunch, we descended back to Talybont along the Brinore tram road. The descent illustrated the additional difficulties the Disabled Ramblers face. Near the end of the tram road, a tree had fallen across the path. It was easy to step over. However, we had to get 14 buggies past. It was impossible to lift aside. A variety of saws and axes appeared. We soon had the tree in half and were able to continue the walk. The alternative, reverse the buggies several miles along the tram road (there were several places we may have been able to turn them around). Everyone had an enjoyable day.

The Disabled Ramblers were very appreciative of the support from everyone involved. Fortunately, the only crisis was a bit of woodworking to remove a fallen tree from the track !



You never know when a machete might come in handy !

The next day they were taking part in another ramble from the National Park Mountain Centre near Brecon. Then on the weekend, they were off to Pembrokeshire. The Monday walk was advertised as challenging !!

Arthur and I hope to get out with the Group again. It was a day with a difference and it was wonderful to see the Disabled Ramblers enjoying our beautiful countryside.

Arthur Lee and Phil Long - The Ramblers

**Editor's Note** : Arthur and Phil were very supportive on the day, and provided able-bodied assistance throughout the ramble. Thanks must also go to John Jones of the Brinore Tramroad Conservation Forum who made the first day's ramble so interesting with his local knowledge. We are also indebted to a local landowner for granting us access across his privately-owned land near Talybont. Finally, without the support of Nick Toulson and his team of staff from the Brecon Beacons National Park the two days of rambling would not have been so enjoyable.

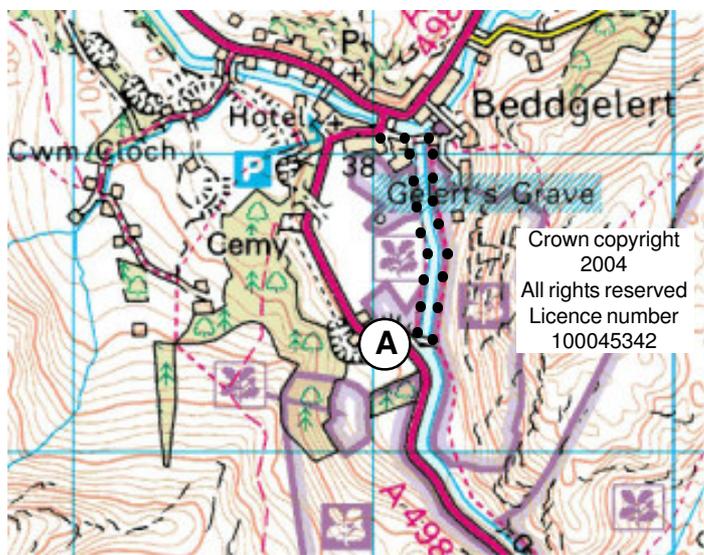


Nick Toulson points out the route to the hill fort at Twyn y Gaer on day two of the Brecon Beacons Ramble

## Good News about Improving Access to the Countryside in North Wales

June and July 2006 saw interesting developments in improved access to the countryside in North Wales.

I was invited to make a presentation to the Annual Conference of the Snowdonia Society at Plas y Brenin on June 10th on behalf of The Disabled Ramblers. I received a warm welcome, and was able to explain to the many delegates the problems that we encounter when trying to access the beautiful countryside in their part of the world. Apart from the usual issue of man-made barriers, I was also able to explain the associated problems of adequate car-parking, disabled toilet facilities and, of course, the major problem of finding accessible overnight accommodation !



••••• Route of circular trail

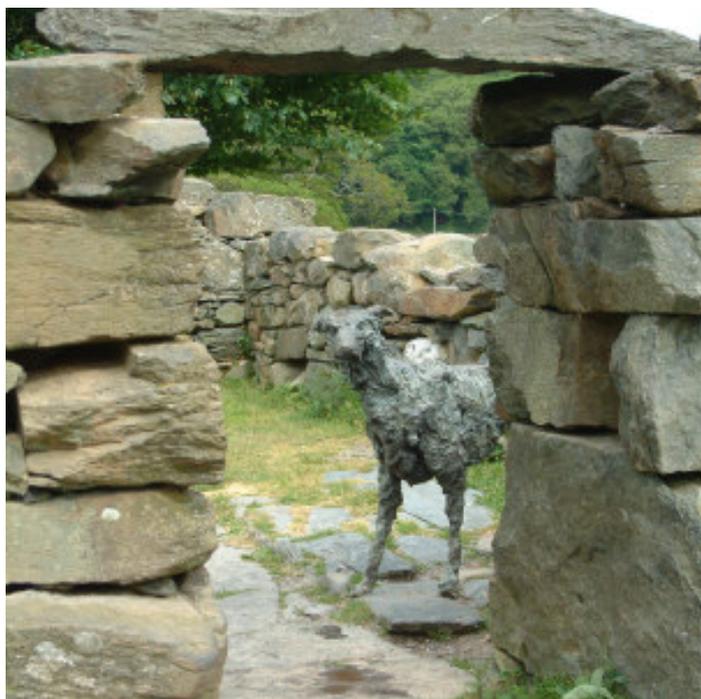
On the day after the conference, a ramble had been organised along a riverside path at Beddgelert, and I was invited to take part. Although Beddgelert is a tourist 'honeypot', I was able to park my car and trailer without too much of a problem. The ramble started from the centre of the town, and passed a good disabled toilet facility near the footbridge over the river.



Part of the circular trail at Beddgelert showing an easy access gate

The path of this 2 kilometre circular ramble is wide and level along its entire length, and the surface is made of a mixture of slate and concrete. When we reached the bridge at Point A on the map, we could see the work being carried out to re-instate the railway line that originally ran from Caernarfon to Porthmadog. Although this must be good news for steam railway enthusiasts, it means that the tunnels on the approach to the Pass of Aberglaslyn can no longer be used by ramblers. This means that the footpath must now follow the route of the old 'Fisherman's Path' - thus preventing any further access by wheelchair and powered scooter users. However, by crossing the river at Point A I was able to return to Beddgelert with a local member of the National Trust - who explained their plans for future improvements to access in that area. On the way back we passed the burial place of 'Gelert' - the dog immortalised in a local legend.

Alan Edwards



A bronze statue of the legendary 'Gelert'

## North Wales Wheelchair Users head for the Aber Falls

On Saturday 10 June 2006 an event to help wheelchair users enjoy the breath-taking views of Aber Falls in the Snowdonia National Park was organised by the Countryside Council for Wales and the Snowdonia National Park.

I joined 14 wheelchairs users, their families, friends, representatives from the N.T. C.C.W., an archaeologist and other Park Wardens at the entrance to the reserve

in Abergwyngregyn. We followed National Park Warden Alan Pritchard along the path in the Coedydd Aber National Nature Reserve to the Falls and back to the car park. The weather was perfect, sun and lovely views all round. There was lots of chat and laughter. Some of the batteries on the buggies became seriously low as the users went over rough and steep ground. But help was at hand. Now normally ramblers wouldn't think that this path was steep, but this outing put a whole new prospective on the problems which wheelchair users can face. There was one kissing gate along the track which caused a problem. When this was first put in the gate was large enough. Now buggies are bigger. But the Park Wardens promised that the gate would be made larger so a buggy could reverse in and out. The joy experienced by all when they reached the Falls was tremendous. What a great day out!

Val Walker Jones - The Ramblers (North Wales Area)

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## **A new trail is opened around the Alwen Reservoir in North Wales**

In February 2006, The Disabled Ramblers were consulted about access issues on a new trail that was being created around the Alwen Reservoir in North Wales, and we were delighted to be invited to the official opening of the trail on July 21st.

The project, which was partly funded by European Union 'Objective 1 money, was a partnership between Denbighshire County Council, Conwy County Borough Council, Countryside Council for Wales, Forestry Commission Wales and Dwr Cymru/ Welsh Water.

The trail provides a seven and a half mile accessible route around the Alwen Reservoir near Cerrigydrudion on the border of Conwy & Denbighshire. The way-marked circular trail follows forestry tracks and paths along the water's edge and then up onto the moorland at Mynydd Hiraethog using a short linking section of path that was created across the Voelas Estate. Links have also been created to the nearby Brenig Trail, providing over 20 miles of continuous walking & cycling.

July 21st saw the culmination of many months of very hard work on the part of Forestry Commission Wales, other project partners and local contractor JD Jones. The opening ceremony was carried out by Alun Pugh, The Minister for Culture, Welsh Language and Sport. The new trail is one of a number of initiatives to encourage more visitors to the Hiraethog area and put this

little known part of North Wales on the tourism map.

*Photo: Elaine Reynolds - Conwy County Borough Council*



**Alun Pugh AM officially opens the new Alwen Trail**

Rosie Norris and Alan Edwards represented the Disabled Ramblers, and were pleased to be able to complete the entire length of the trail following the official opening. We were joined by many able-bodied walkers who all enjoyed the fine weather and wonderful views of the forest and open moorland around the reservoir.



**The new trail rises from the forest across open moorland**

There is still some work to be carried out before the trail is completely finished and, as a consequence, the route should be regarded as a 'Challenging' ramble. Hopefully, when the ground works are finalised, the grading should become 'Moderate'. Six illustrated panels to be located around the route will describe the wildlife, culture and folk tales associated with the area.

Disabled Ramblers should note that there are five RADAR key operated gates along the trail - so, if you want to complete the whole route, don't forget to take your RADAR key !

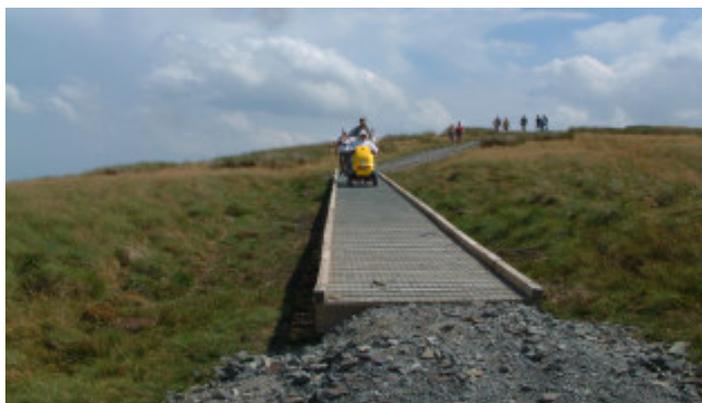
Using our Trampers, it took us just under three hours

to complete the ramble - with only very brief stops along the way to admire the scenery. The open moorland section of the trail is a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). This provided its own problems when the new track was created because a construction method had to be found that would not alter the drainage and water table as this would adversely affect the peat & mosses.



Rosie Norris negotiates one of the RADAR key-operated kissing gates

One particularly 'boggy' section of the route necessitated the construction of a metre-wide boardwalk - not only to ensure a firm surface for ramblers, but also to protect some of the diverse plant life found in the area.



A boardwalk was constructed to cross a 'boggy' area of the moorland

The trail then crosses back to the northern side of the Alwen Reservoir via a very long wooden bridge that is constructed entirely from Oak. A new path, which is only 850 mm (two feet, nine and a quarter inches) wide in places, then links up with an existing forestry track to take you back to the car park near the reservoir dam. Details of the route will shortly be available on the 'Routes' page of our website (see other article on page 8 about the 'new-look' Routes page).



A view of the bridge across the reservoir, with open moorland in the background

There is adequate car parking available at the start of the trail, which is reached along forestry tracks from the B4501 road - about four kilometres (two and a half miles) north of the town of Cerrigydrudion. There are no toilet facilities available at the site, but there are toilet facilities (including disabled) just 2 miles north along the B4501 at the Brenig Visitor Centre (which is open from Easter to October) - or in the nearby town of Cerrigydrudion. The nearest accessible accommodation that could be found was in Betwys y Coed - about 18 kilometres (11 miles) away.

The Alwen Trail will make an ideal day out for one of the rambles in our future summer programme of events.

Alan Edwards

Since writing this article, I have received information about accessible accommodation within 20 miles of the Alwen Trail which offers wheelchair users and their families a fully equipped ground floor bedroom. The address is 'Wern Bach', Llangernyw, Abergele, Conwy, North Wales, LL22 8RR OS Map Ref: SH 888 667  
Phone : 01745 860348  
Mobile : 077900 45640

[www.disabled-holidays-wales.co.uk](http://www.disabled-holidays-wales.co.uk)

If members use this accommodation and feel that they can recommend it to other members, please send a brief report to the Editor.

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### **Comprehensive Information for Disabled People about Parking, Accommodation, Toilets and Petrol Stations in the UK**

It is not the policy of the Disabled Ramblers to promote any particular product or service, but these two books contain so much useful information that they justify an exception - particularly if you are regularly travelling long distances in the UK.

The first book is a definitive UK road atlas customised for Blue Badge holders. This motoring guide includes 65 major UK cities, showing every Blue Badge parking location, as well as local variations in parking regulations and concessions.

Comprehensively researched, with additional information from councils, tourist boards and disability organisations, the atlas has extensive lists of accessible accommodation, beaches, public toilets and petrol stations, including those with servicecall.

The second book is a customised map for London featuring fully indexed mapping, as well as complete clarification of all parking regulations across the 33 London boroughs.

You can buy online at [www.parkingforbluebadges.com](http://www.parkingforbluebadges.com) or call 0870 444 5435

Gowrings Mobility UK Road Atlas £12.99 + £3.55 postage = £16.54 each

London Blue Badge Parking Guide £4.50 + £0.60 postage = £5.10 each

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## The Cinema Exhibitors' Association Card

Members may be interested to know about the Cinema Exhibitors' Association Card. This card entitles the holder to one free ticket for a person accompanying them to the cinema. To apply, a person will need to meet one of the following criteria-

1. Be in receipt of Disability Living Allowance (or Attendance Allowance) at any rate
2. Be a registered blind person
3. Be a holder of a disabled person's railcard (national scheme not a local travel permit)

Cards are valid for 3 years and a £5 processing fee applies. 90 % of UK cinemas are supporting, from large chains like Odeon, Vue, Showcase, UCI, UGC, Cineworld and independents also.

Application forms may be collected from cinemas or printed off from the website [www.ceacard.co.uk](http://www.ceacard.co.uk). There is no age restriction on the cardholder, and cards are valid for all screenings.

The Cinema Exhibitors' Association are the trade body for UK cinemas and launched this scheme to provide a consistent approach to the provision of concessionary tickets for carers, as in the past this was done on a site

by site basis with some cinemas offering discounts while others did not. The card is intended to remove the need to enquire about concessions at cinemas, carry other paperwork or documents, or disclose personal details to box office cinema staff.

The CEA card does not remove a cinemas responsibility to make reasonable adjustments for its guests, but aims to offer consistency across the industry. It is not intended to replace any existing arrangements a customer has made with a specific cinema, which remain at the discretion of cinema managers.

The Card Network are the company engaged by the cinema association to print and issue the cards. All information is handled in accordance with Data Protection regulations and all bureau production staff are CRB vetted. All copy documents are securely shredded and disposed of and no copy documents are held.

Hopefully, this information may be of interest. Further information is available from:



The Card Network, The Technology Centre  
Inward Way, Rossmore Business Park  
Ellesmere Port, Cheshire CH65 3EN

Tel: 0845 123 1295  
Fax: 0845 123 1296  
Minicom: 0845 123 1297

Email [info@thecardnetwork.co.uk](mailto:info@thecardnetwork.co.uk)

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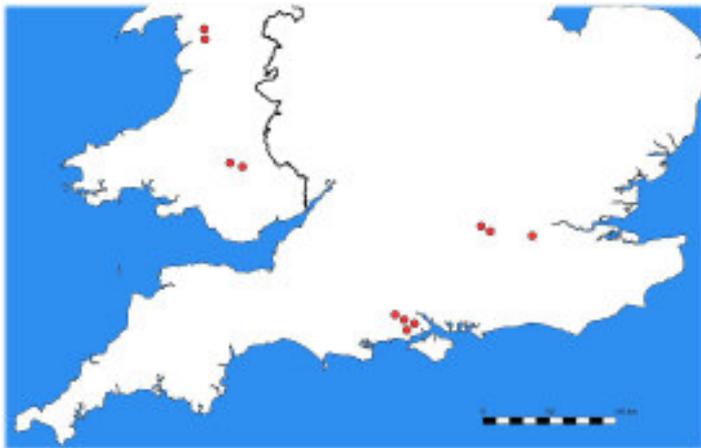
## Changes to the Website 'Routes' Page

It is interesting to see that the Disabled Ramblers website ( [www.disabledramblers.co.uk](http://www.disabledramblers.co.uk) ) has an increasing number of 'hits' month on month. To make the website even more worthwhile visiting, changes will be made to the 'Routes' page - hopefully, by November.

At the moment, there are only three routes available to download - and these have been somewhat of a test to

check the level of interest in the format of the information. Clearly, the page would get more difficult to use if we kept adding more and more maps in the current format.

To make it easier to locate an accessible route in a particular area of the the country, the new page will show a map of the United Kingdom, and available routes will be shown by a red marker dot. By selecting one of these marker dots, an OS map and route description will be downloaded into Acrobat Reader - this can then be saved or printed out as you wish.



Part of the screen display of the new-look 'Routes' page of the website

In time, it is also hoped to have a link from the downloaded ramble map to photographs of the ramble that appear on the 'Gallery' page of the website. At present there will only be eleven rambles available to download, but more will be added as the Editor receives information about 'tried and tested' rambles in all parts of the UK.

Members who have organised rambles for the summer programme of events, are asked to send details of any suitable rambles to the Editor at :

[editor@disabledramblers.co.uk](mailto:editor@disabledramblers.co.uk)

Please send the same amount of information for each ramble as currently appears on the website. Many thanks

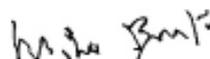
Alan Edwards

## Retirement of Maria Davies

Ever since the start up of the Disabled Ramblers and during the early evolutionary stages before becoming a Charitable Company, we have been greatly blessed by excellent control of our finances. First we had my old friend and colleague, Peter Field, who took part in an epic 40 mile trip along the Wessex Ridgeway Trail. He was using a heavy powerchair, which was not an ideal vehicle for very rugged going. Peter was Treasurer for many years, until he, very sadly, died in an accident at home in 2001. However, we were then delighted to welcome Maria Davies to take on this key role. Maria is one of a small select band of disabled ramblers who prefer to hand propel a manual wheelchair.

Over the years, she has achieved remarkable feats using this mode of transport. This included completing 9 or 10 mile trips in the New Forest and the Peak District, refusing all offers of help as she hand powered up 1 in 7 or 1 in 8 hills!

As Treasurer, she steered us through the process of becoming a Charitable Company (a company 'limited by guarantee' and a registered charity at the same time) and has managed our finances extremely efficiently over a long period up to the present. Regretfully, Maria has now retired from the job, due to house moving and many other commitments. Maria, many, many thanks for all you have done for us! We wish you fulfilment and happiness with your move and other ventures.



Mike Bruton  
Chairman, the Disabled Ramblers

PS The job of Treasurer is being taken on by Gill Kirkman – Gill, we welcome you into our Management Team. Many thanks for taking on this important job!

(Gill will initially be co-opted to the Management Team, but, hopefully, she will be elected to the post at our next AGM, scheduled for April 2007).

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## Disabled Ramblers' Contact Details

Chairman:	Mike Bruton	<a href="mailto:chairman@disabledramblers.co.uk">chairman@disabledramblers.co.uk</a>	Tel: 01628 621414
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Membership Secretary:	Rosie Norris	<a href="mailto:membership@disabledramblers.co.uk">membership@disabledramblers.co.uk</a>	Tel: 01372 272536

Website: [www.disabledramblers.co.uk](http://www.disabledramblers.co.uk)

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