



West Wiltshire Ramblers

Committee Meeting

23 June 2025 @ 11:00

at Jen and Dave Yearsley's House

Present:	Frank Martinelli	Maurice Eveleigh	Peter Mundy	Ann Finch
Jen Yearsley	Dave Yearsley	Angela Womersley	Stella Jales	Sally Pearce

	Agenda Item	Action/Notes
1.	Welcome.	
2.	Apologies for absence.	Rob Coles
3.	Minutes of last meeting.	The Minutes of the last meeting were accepted.
4.	Matters arising.	None.
5.	Reports:	
a.	Chairman (Frank)	See report below. Frank clarified that the qualifying criteria for walk leaders having to have led twelve walks in the last three years related to walks for Ramblers and affiliated organisations only, not other walk organisations. We do not know how Ramblers intends to check whether twelve walks have been led in the period. A recent walk from Holt led to a complaint to Ramblers HQ because a car park had been used without permission. Frank reiterated that, unless a car park is marked as for public use, it should only be used with the permission of the owning organisation. We agreed that we would produce a promotional flyer similar to the one produced by South Wilts Group. Peter and Sally will work to produce a draft. There was some discussion about where leaflets could be distributed. It may be that a poster would be more acceptable in some situations, e.g. notice boards and waiting rooms at surgeries.

	b.	Secretary (Maurice)	See report below.
	c.	Treasurer (Peter)	The Statement of our current Financial Position is appended below in Reports. The Coach trip was successful with 49 riders booked and a surplus of £283. The charge was based on a target of 36 riders. The surplus will be there to fund refreshments at the AGM and maybe subsidise the Skittles Evening. We have received £80 commission from Ramblers' Holiday and the third quota payment from Area. The accounts are being inspected by Tony Parsons. He has had them since shortly after the Bank Holiday. Peter has not heard from him yet. Lastly a fairly long commentary about Financial Procedures can be found below in Reports. I would be grateful if you could read it and form an opinion for a brief discussion on Monday. We agreed that the two unrefunded payments for the cancelled coach trip to Bridport last year would be taken as donations to the Group, and that the hire cost of Broughton Gifford village hall for our skittles evening would be met from the profit on this year's coach trip to Bridport. Peter reminded us that Cumberwell Park golf course has been booked for our Christmas meal on 17 December. We discussed the operation of our bank account and agreed that any online payments up to £500 could be authorised by Peter alone. Any higher amounts would require two authorisers and Ann and Frank would be added to the mandate and as electronic signatories.
	d.	Membership (Ann)	As at 22nd June 2025 our membership total is as follows: 278 members 3 affiliated members and 30 non-West Wilts walkers that receive details of our walks programme 311 This is a net gain of 3 members since our last committee meeting in March. So we continue to bob along at around 300 members. Ann clarified that when Central Office notifies details of a new Ramblers, Area or Group member, she sends a welcome pack. She also checks if lapsed members had intended to leave. She does not contact people who have resigned, as they have made a conscious decision to leave by cancelling their direct debit.
	e.	Footpath Officer (Dave)	Dave advised that the walks data kept by Mike Watts is easy to maintain in a spreadsheet. The number of walkers attending each walk should now be sent to Jen. Liz Hill has not yet decided on the wording or format for the plaque for Dave Hill's kissing gate. Charlie, the contractor who used to work with our work party, has now

			left to take up more reliable agricultural contracting work.
	f.	Walks (Jen)	Jen reported that four new walk leaders have recently come forward and new walks continue to be submitted. Jen has yet to send invoices to Peter to be reimbursed for flowers sent to Barbara O and Diane T following the deaths of their husbands. She also has the invoice for the purchase of the hi-viz gilets.
7.		Business Continuity	Following Mike and Peter's deaths, we should consider steps to ensure that the Group can continue to access essential documents etc. following the incapacity or death of an Officer. Our accounts are probably the most critical documents. Also, what would happen to power tools if a work party member died and they were stored in their shed? Are they identified as WWR property? Peter advised that his data is backed up to a separate drive and Dave advised that he could not conceive of a problem where work party tools would be lost. Nobody took up the offer of a WWR USB drive to hold documents away from laptops or tablets. Maurice has two spares.
8.		Budget for FY 25-26	Nobody requested any funding for the next financial year. Peter will have to complete a budget for Area before the next meeting.
9.		Any other business:	
	a.	E Mail	After the latest incident where many of the weekly update emails were rejected as spam and resulted in our email account being disabled again, Maurice advised that the current system was untenable. After some discussion it was agreed that weekly updates were excessive and we would switch to monthly updates from August. The August update will be sent out in mid July and monthly thereafter. Booking for walks will be strongly encouraged and then walkers can be contacted easily in the event of a change. It was also agreed that we would start to encourage walk leaders to add their walks to Walks Manager themselves; these then have to be approved by Jen. Maurice will research the pros and cons of using a commercial email solution such as MailChimp and find out the likely costs. He also suggested that walk programmes could be uploaded in pdf format to our website, as is the practice with most groups who produce three or four month programmes. Members could then download this and save it.
	b.		We agreed a provisional date for our AGM: 15 November at Broughton Gifford Village Hall.
10.		Dates of next meetings:	
	a.	3 September 2025	4pm via Zoom. AGM Preparation

	b.	15 November	Provisional date for AGM at Broughton Gifford Village Hall.
	c.	January	
	d.	March 2026	Motions to General Council
11.	Close		Meeting closed at 13:30 for lunch.
Maurice Eveleigh Secretary, West Wiltshire Ramblers. 26 June 2025			

REPORTS

5a. Chair

Following the death of Mike Watts, we have managed to continue our week to week running of the club, and thanks go to all the committee for handling things appropriately. I think that our memorial walk was a lovely thing to do, and seemed an appropriate way of celebrating our friend and colleague.

I am very happy that we have two new members of the committee, Sally and Rob. I am sure their input will be valuable.

My concerns about the club centre on the fact that not enough people have been putting themselves forward to help run the club, notably with walk leading. My comments on the last newsletter have had some effect, and several people have now put themselves forward, including, to my surprise, the Bougeards.

I attended a webinar on the new head Office proposals to 'simplify' the system, and was rather horrified by the negative attitude of many of the groups. Personally, I do not think it is asking too much for people to go through a fairly short amount of training before they start to lead, or return to leading after a break. The quality of the training is not brilliant, but at least it can get people thinking about the various things that have to be born in mind.

To summarise, you will be able to lead walks if:

- a. You have done the three modules of training
- b. You have led 12 walks or more in the past three years, and that can include health walks or walks for other organisations.
- c. You have a walk leader qualification such as ML, Lowland leader or Hill and Moorland leader or similar.

I have a copy of the presentation, which I am happy to try to share with you, although the above statements are pretty much all you need.

In terms of 'events', we had a very successful trip to Dunster, and hopefully will have had a similar successful trip to the Peak District by the time of the meeting. We have a very large number of people for the trip to IoW, more than any other trip that I have been involved in, which goes to show that the format is still popular. I have filled the hotel for Lake Como 2025, and will have to let a couple of people down.

We had a very interesting Sunday recently, which matched up a 12 mile walk for me and a much shorter one for Nigel. We had 39 people over the two walks, nearly evenly spread. With two walks, we can really get boots on feet!

Nigel followed this up with some Facebook comments, about travelling further for short walks, and starting later. There is definitely a range of opinions on all these things that we should perhaps discuss. (Personally, I think we should start earlier in the summer, but then I am a very early riser!) Whatever we decide, we still need the leaders.

Finally, I was walking with some South Wilts folk recently, and one gave me a copy of a leaflet that they have produced and use for advertising the club. Attached is the front side. Should we try to produce something similar? We are missing a publicity officer, but I am sure collectively we could do this.



5b. Secretary

The Area Council met on 2 June; it is in an even more parlous state than our Group has been recently. The Membership Secretary is also acting as Chair and Secretary. He doesn't seem suited to either role but nobody else volunteered. I suspect that the only "Minutes" we will see from the meeting are the notes produced by the Zoom AI tool, which was scarily accurate! As I was "voluntold" that I was the West Wilts Group representative, I make sure to sit on my hands throughout each meeting to prevent me from taking on anything more in a moment of either weakness or enthusiasm. The new Area Treasurer, Sarah Bailey, was "voluntold" to stand at the AGM but she has yet to receive any training or handover from the previous incumbent, so she has wisely done nothing.

The Area Treasurer's handover was due to take place on 7 June, so the budget paperwork may have been sent to Peter by the time of our meeting. In any event we should all agree at this meeting what money we will need for normal business or any plans for the 2025/26 financial year, which starts on 1 October, otherwise Peter will be making the figures up on the back of an envelope.

I asked for two items to be added to the Area Agenda; Business Continuity and Walk Leader Training. As we have discovered, if an Officer or administrator of the Group dies unexpectedly without having made any provision for business continuity, the impact on the Group's activities can range from inconvenient and short term to disastrous. If a Treasurer were to die and nobody could then access the accounts, then somebody without the necessary knowledge or experience would have to try to replicate the figures from the bank statements. A backup copy of vital information needs to be held somewhere.

A recent missive that came out of the South West Cluster meeting has caused a lot of alarm. Central Office has discovered that hardly any existing walk leaders have completed the new online training module. What a surprise! We were never told we had to, and those who have done so report that there is a great deal wrong with it! One of the reasons this matters is that Ramblers cannot demonstrate that it's walk leaders are competent, which seems to be causing an issue when applying for grant funding. Central Office has proposed to remedy this by disqualifying any walk leader who has not led more than twelve walks over a three year period. I have no idea how they intend to measure this! On being told that they are no longer considered competent unless they complete the training, many experienced walk leaders who do not meet the criteria will simply stop leading walks. We cannot afford to lose them. The Acting Area Chair was tasked with drafting a letter of strong protest which will be sent to the SW Cluster representative to escalate to Central Office with a strong request to think again.

There is a distinct north – south split in the attitudes and opinions of the Area Board members; often our (my) views accord with those of South and Mid Wilts but not North West or Swindon and North East!

Central Office has been holding online sessions to consult on what the structure of Areas and Groups should look like in future. There is a feeling that the current county based structure is not fit for purpose and Groups based on old District Council boundaries, many of which have now gone, may also need to be restructured. The difficulty in getting volunteers to run the current organisation, and the need to cut costs and try to break even are also no doubt factors behind this initiative.

Following recent events I have added Business Continuity to our Agenda for our meeting. I still have two spare USB sticks if any officer would like one to backup IT documents.

I have also now added E Mail to AoB. Sending out our weekly walks update on 19/06/25 generated a large number of System Delivery Failure notices from members with BTInternet and BTOpenWorld email addresses. Gmail interpreted this as use that “violates Google's policies” and promptly disabled our email account! This has happened before and Peter Topp had to restore our account on several occasions. I have managed to restore the account again this time but at some point we will have accumulated too many strikes and I won't be able to restore it. We must consider an alternative solution; simply asking members to add our account to their “Safe Senders” list will not be sufficient. I sought counsel from Keith G, Area webmaster and his thoughts aligned with mine as follows:

- 1. Accounts such as Gmail, Hotmail and others are not setup for bulk mailing. Although I don't have one I would not be surprised to read that it is against the T&Cs.**
- 2. Use of 'Safe Senders' will do nothing once it is seen as Spam. Gmail will work hard to prevent this as it affects other mail from the gmail domain**

3. Should Gmail wish to enforce, I don't know what the repercussions would be. Certainly the account would be terminated.

4. While I can provide an email account from our domain; given the volume of emails I would decline as this would likely impact the credibility of our domain.

5. Bulk emails should be provided by dedicated providers such as MailChimp. But as you state there could be a cost.

6. As a group NE Wilts posts a monthly programme out via email, website & (I think) mail). We do a quarterly newsletter which is sent with the appropriate programme and is placed on the website.

Now for my view.

1. Weekly seems very excessive. How much does the programme change or are you catering for those who lose it within the week.

2. If they have email, they are likely to have a browser. Hate to say. Move with the times.

3. If a walk is changed, online is most likely where it will be updated.

4. If you don't want to use the website, then create a WhatsApp group to communicate changes instead (or use Facebook).

We cannot continue to kick this can down the road as we did last time and the time before. We need an alternative solution before we are permanently locked out of our email account.

5c. Treasurer

RAMBLERS PAYMENT AUTHORISATION - UNITY BANK

West Wilts Ramblers transferred its Bank Account to the Ramblers preferred Bank, Unity Bank in 2021.

As Treasurer, I could make online payments without a second user authorising the payment. This was the same condition with HSBC.

The second signature to the account was changed when Mike Watts became Acting Chairman in November 2024. Without notification, Unity required any online payment to be made should be second authorised. I can still write cheques for millions if I so wished without referral to another

After Mike's death, I made enquiries with Unity. After several phone calls discovered this was Ramblers Policy.

I have made representations to Ramblers on the following grounds

The merits of online payments are many.

1) The Bank Statement shows clearly the names of the recipients of payments and the payee of receipts to the accounts.

2) I am in control of the accounts, that the Group's Financial Position is up to date. I do not have to muck about with uncleared cheque payments or reconciliations.

3) The second signatory could be away on holiday or unavailable and this will and does delay payments to creditors.

4) Most businesses do not want payment by cheque. Their systems are set up to apply income via the bank against their debtors file.

5) Almost all requests from Creditors for payments are sent to my email address. I will have to forward that email to the second authoriser for the reason for the payment and then receive some acknowledgement that payment is complete.

6) A preponderance of the transactions relate to payments made for Coach Outings, Christmas Dinners and other social activities which are all categorised as Social.

My last correspondence received from Ramblers enclosed a document FIN08 which included the following paragraphs.

Signatories Areas and Groups often make payments by cheque. One signatory may be sufficient for cheques under a specified amount (recommended as no more than £100). For larger amounts, two signatories should be required, and bank mandates should be set up to this effect. Groups are encouraged to select at least three people (usually committee members but certainly Ramblers members) to act as signatories to enable cheques to be signed easily at committee meetings.

Areas and Groups wishing to use the internet banking service should complete an 'Internet Banking Application Form' – available on the Unity Trust website.

For new accounts the internet banking service can be requested on the new accounts' application form.

When applying for internet banking, it is important that appropriate controls are put in place to minimise the risk of misappropriation of funds.

***We recommend the following:** For 'internal payments' (i.e. transfers between accounts that you hold with Unity) it is appropriate to allow one individual to both set up and approve payments. This is referred to as 'single'. For 'external payments' (i.e. any other payments to Unity or non-Unity accounts), separate individuals should be required to set up and to approve payments. This is referred to as 'dual'.*

Recommendation appears to mean Will

I feel strongly that the Ramblers Rules do not recognise the efforts by volunteers who offer their talents in the best way to help run the Group efficiently.

Over the years, I have inspected accounts for several other voluntary organisations and clubs. This dual approval has never been required.

We have 3 choices.

1) Heed The Ramblers rules and appoint more than 1 other signatory to the account.

2) Withdraw from use of the Unity Bank and find another Bank. This will increase charges.

3) Formally agree and notify that the Group approve only one person, the Treasurer to certify/authorise online payments.

WEST WILTS RAMBLERS
Receipts and Payments Account
as at 17th June 2025

2024/25

Balance Sheet Brought Forward 01 October 2024

Bank: as per statement 30/09/2024	2,047.87
Cheques/ banked in hand	-
	2,047.87

Transactions October-17th June 2025

b/f 1 October 2024		2,047.87
Receipts		
Christmas lunch		1,328.00
Ramblers Holidays		150.00
Coach Walk Sep 2024 Refunds	180.00	
Coach Walk May 2025	795.00	1,078.00
Don't Lose Your Way		62.50
Donation Arn Hill Seat	500.00	
Ramblers Quota		750.00
Donation Dave Hill Memorial		20.00
Payments		
AGM refreshments	116.35	
AGM Printing	25.80	
Postage	13.60	
Don't Lose your Way	18.27	
Christmas Lunch	1,178.00	
Working Party Tools	79.89	
Working Party Protective Wear	59.94	
Unity Bank- Cheque Handling	2.40	
Total Expenditure	2,969.25	
Total Income		3,388.50
Balance 17/June 2025		2,467.12
Balance		
Unity Bank Statement 17/06/2025		2,467.12
Cash and Cheques in hand		-
Creditors - Coach Trip Refunds not made before 17/06/25	-	40.00
		2,427.12
Represented By		
Dave Hill Memorial		290.50
Bradford Randonneurs		65.81
West Wilts Ramblers Funds		2,070.81
		2,427.12

5e. Footpath Officer

Walks Data (Mike Watts)

Jen and I are still bickering about the way forward. I have collated all of Mike Watt's Data into a spreadsheet called RamblersWalksData and a copy is in [our shared folder - zWalksData](#). It is missing the details of Mike's last walk and Karel's first walk.

Mike used www.easymapmaker.com and shared his maps (some are still available – [WWR walk locations 2022](#); [WW Ramblers 2021 Walks](#)). There is a limit of 250 in the Free version so we cannot throw all data since 2021 into it. A link is [West Wilts Ramblers 2024/2025](#). I assume the convention is yearly data starting on the 1st of October.

Brian M, Brian S and Duncan B

Brian M, Brian S and Duncan have raised the issue of badly maintained Rights of Way with various Councillors and hopefully the newly elected Council will focus on ensuring the Countryside Access Team is more effective. Brian Micklam, for example, had a 90-minute chat with Cllr Nigel White and both Brians had lobbied MP, Brian Matthew. The MP confirmed that 'there was a lack of coordination between Wilts Council footpath officers and the local ramblers' association'.

Tim Lewis (Area Footpath Officer and Chair of Wiltshire and Swindon Access Forum) and Brian Flynn of Mid Wilts Ramblers organised a short walk with Brian Mathew, MP on the 28th May. The MP mentioned the walk in his Liberal Newsletter: "I enjoyed a five-mile walk with the Wiltshire Ramblers starting in Melksham as we discussed the Access to Nature Bill as well as the current poor state of many of Wiltshire's footpaths and rights of way."

There was also a mention in Melksham News – <https://melkshamnews.com/ramblers-call-for-enhanced-rights-of-way-protection/>

Dave Hill

Memorial Kissing Gate finally erected after two years. Unfortunately, not the exact location that Liz Hill/Argent wanted and the wrong parts were delivered by the Council. Liz has agreed to get a brass plaque that we can embed in a nearby post.

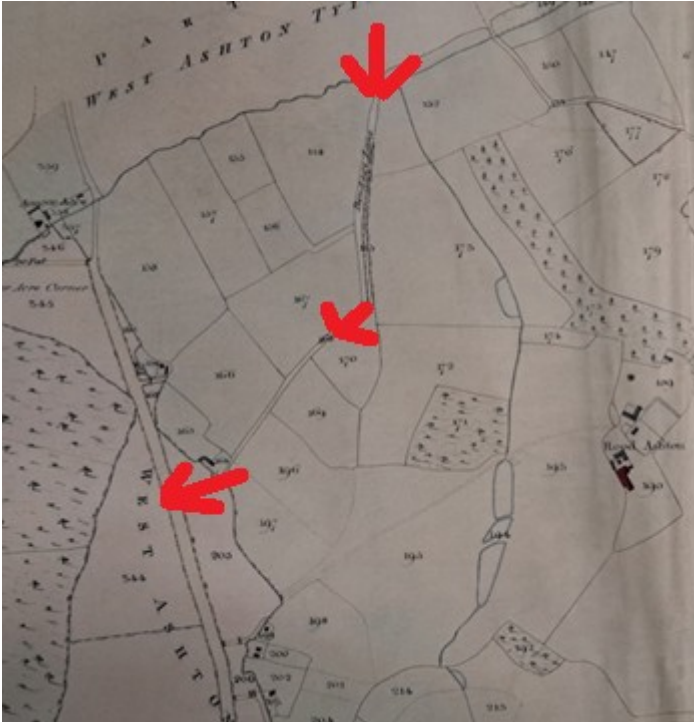


Liz and Barbara Osborne might organise a memorial walk.

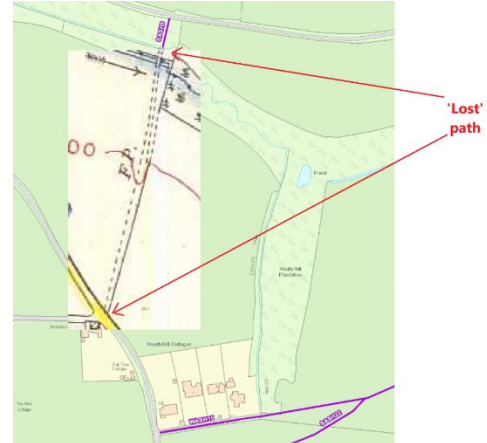
Lost Paths

I am yet to raise a DMMO (Definitive Map Modification Order) for Bendage Lane/Road (Home Farm) and the West Ashton end of Steeple Ashton Path (SASH3). I have tried to contact East Town Farm, two letters and a knock on their door – no success. I had hoped we could negotiate a better route around field or perhaps through woodland.

Land owned by Home Farm



Land owned by East Town Farm

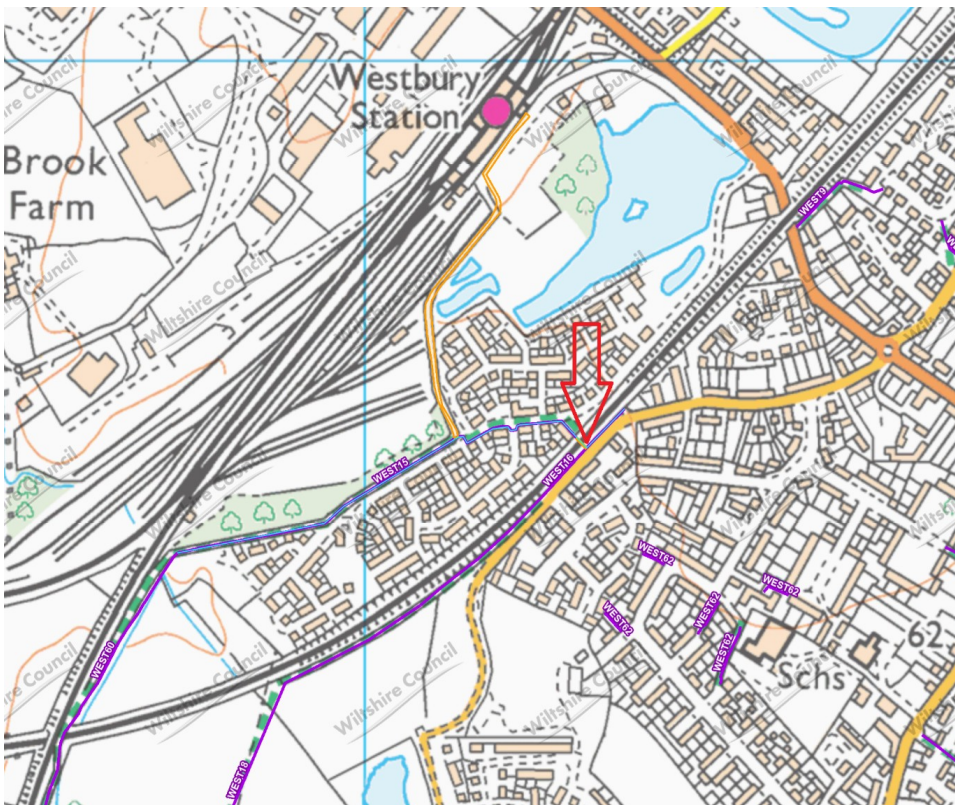


WINS16



Brian M and Maurice E have successfully chased the Council and Canal Authorities to get this path repaired and opened. It is not known whether the works done so far: steps; shoring the bank; and aggregate on path; are sufficient for the Countryside Access Team but WINS6 is not [listed](#) as closed. Much of the path is narrow and the 'walked' path – higher up the bank was recently still in use.

Railway Crossing – Westbury Path 15



We have objected to the removal of this crossing. Copies of objection already circulated to Committee.

Work Party

2025 to 10 June 2025

Person hours, excluding travel time, spent on:	Hours
March	
Waymarking	-
Surveying	-
Path Clearing/Improvement	139.50
Stiles	-
Kissing Gates	15.00
Gates	0.00
Bridges	0.00
Steps	-
Other (e.g. Finger Posts)	-
TOTAL HOURS	154.50

	Number
Metres of path waymarked	-
Length Surveyed(m)	-
Metres of Path Clearing/Improvement	3875
Number of Stiles	0
Number of Kissing Gates	1
Number of Gates	0
Number of Bridges	0
Steps	0
Other (e.g. Finger Posts)	0

No Council work in May or June. In April, after 2 years of lobbying and MP's involvement we erected Dave Hill's Memorial Kissing Gate (see above).

We had asked in January for MyWilts reports for Steeple Ashton and Edington we finally got them at end of May along with Semington (which we had not asked for).

HIAMS Asset Manager

The Council is hoping that they can utilise their HIAMS road management software for Rights of Way. It is not looking hopeful. A project to take pictures of Stiles, Kissing Gates, Bridges, etc., is underway. For my part I have recorded over 650 assets. As of 11th June – 2,342 items have been recorded across Wiltshire as shown on the bottom image.

Unlike Somerset (image below) assets are not tied or linked to Rights of Way. The Work Party has asked to be included in recording Assets and oddly this has not been taken up.

Issue: 2698 Bridge (Id: 632)

Bridge#632

PathNo: BW 23/31
Summary: 1 Assigned Issue



[Full size](#) (new window/tab)

Core Information Status Technical Information **Photos** Issues

