

Lords – and Ladies – of the ring

By Mark Adler

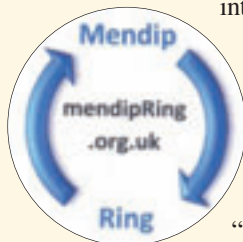
MENDIP ramblers have completed one of the most ambitious projects in their history – to identify a circular walk around the Mendip district council boundary.

The long-distance Mendip Ring – 117 miles in total – uses mostly existing footpaths and rights of way and follows the boundary as closely as possible.

Unlike other long-distance paths such as the West Mendip Way, the Mendip Ring has no official designation but the ramblers hope people will still be attracted to it for walking holidays and short breaks.

The idea of creating the circular walk was first discussed seven years ago but it has only been in the last six months that work to research the route and to waymark it was carried out in detail. The ring has been divided into nine separate sections and, as well as waymarking the correct route, the ramblers have also put up stickers warning walkers if they are heading on the wrong path.

The ramblers are not content to stop at creating the ring – they hope that one day it will resemble a series of interlocking chains offering a series of circular routes connected to each other. They also hope the walk will inspire people in individual communities to “adopt” a section of the route and help to maintain it.



Look out for The Mendip Ring logo

Bob Barry, from the Mendip group, said: “The route offers walkers a chance to see Mendip in all its various guises, from the Levels to the Mendip Hills.”

The Mendip Ring has its own website and features a timeline of the area’s history, compiled by historian and keen archaeologist Margaret Nuth, from Frome. Margaret said: “Part of the appeal is that you are always walking over or past so much history.”

All in a day’s work



The ramblers prepare for a morning’s work in Butleigh

MUCH of the work to identify and waymark the Mendip Ring was carried out by members of the group’s regular work party. These photos were taken at Butleigh where they were replacing stiles with gates.

The work has been welcomed by Butleigh Parish Council. Its chairman, Alan Carr, is keen to see more use of the footpaths around the village and organised a series of walks for people to explore the area.

For more information, visit: www.mendipring.org.uk

MENDIP WEATHER SCENE

The American jet stream



with DAVID MAINE

PEOPLE do say that whatever happens in the United States, we’ll get next – whether that’s rock and roll or the weather!

That may go some way to

explaining the plight of people affected by the floods on the Somerset Levels and Moors.

The five-day forecasts for North American cities have been making quite interesting reading recently. New York, for example, might have had a forecast of 11° degrees Celsius one day with rain, then -2°C the next day with heavy snow and much the same went for Boston.

Chicago, being inland, was even more dramatic: +1°C one day and then -19°C the next. Even in the far south I

think I saw -21°C for Dallas one day then +8°C the next with a sharp frost at -6°C overnight! It must be a fascinating place to live if you’re interested in meteorology, but not for the faint-hearted!

The reason for these big temperature fluctuations from one day to the next was that there was a very large temperature contrast (we call it a temperature gradient) between the warm south and the more northern states and Canada (you will have read in the press about the unusually intense polar vortex affecting much of the North American continent).

This is where we come in, because it was this big temperature contrast that caused a very powerful jet stream to develop (with winds aloft in excess of 200mph) and move out into the Atlantic. This spawned a succession of very deep lows to develop and move



The River Brue below Glastonbury Tor shortly before it broke its banks

across the Atlantic to the UK and give us the very stormy period from before Christmas into the New year and on into January – no crumb of comfort for those people living on the Somerset Levels having to cope with all the floods.

As I said at the start, people often say that what they get in America comes over here three weeks later but, with more than 2,000 miles of Atlantic between us, any affect we might have from them is usually in the form of rain.