

RAMBLERS' ASSOCIATION BARNARD CASTLE GROUP NEWSLETTER –Winter 2011

Group Annual Lunch and Walk (followed by AGM).

As we said in the last newsletter, instead of our usual Christmas lunch which had to be cancelled last year because of the early onset of winter, this year's lunch will be held on **SATURDAY 19th NOVEMBER** at 1.00 p.m. at the Moorcock, Eggleston, following a short morning walk (details in the Walk's Programme).

Menu choices:

First course: Roast Topside of Beef with Yorkshire Pudding
or: Pan Fried Chicken in White Wine Sauce
or: Luxury Homemade Seafood Pie
or: Mixed Vegetable Fajitas on a Bed of Salad

all above served with potatoes and fresh vegetables

Second course: Homemade Sticky Toffee Pudding
or: Apple Pie and Custard
or: Sherry Trifle Chantilly
or: Cheese Board with Biscuits

Cost £11.25. Menu choices with deposit of £6 to Frances (tel. 01833 631361, email frances.walker@btopenworld.com)

Deadline for booking: Saturday 12th November.

Group AGM 2011

Following the Annual Lunch, the 2011 AGM will be held at the Moorcock, Eggleston at **3.00 p.m. on SATURDAY 19th NOVEMBER.**

Tea and coffee will be served (cost £1). We look forward to seeing you there even if you are not able to come to the lunch.

Joan's Titbits

I would like to thank all the leaders who now write reports about their walks for the Mercury. Part of the citation for our Media Award was the fact that I have encouraged leaders to write reports for the Mercury. You are all doing a good job and it's nice to have a different style of writing here and there. It's all good publicity for the group and it's amazing how many people read the reports.

54 Degrees North

A reminder to our "older" members and to let our "new" members know that as RA members, you can get 10% discount on purchases at 54 Degrees North. You have to ask for it and they may ask to see your membership card. Joan.

Successful Litter Pick

A small group of us took part in 'Litter Free Durham's Big Spring Clean' in April, when lots of litter was cleared from Barnard Castle Footpath No 10, probably better known as the path running north between Teesdale School and its playing fields, and continuing as far as the old rail bridge. Many thanks to those who took part. Sadly the path is again a litter eyesore, but our efforts were appreciated by DCC, and gave the Ramblers publicity for an effort benefitting the wider community. (Apologies for the omission of this item from the Summer Newsletter).

Better news from DCC

News, recently received, that DCC's Rights of Way Section is retaining Mike Ogden as manager after all, is great news, but there have still been some cuts and amalgamation of posts, as threatened (and reported) in the summer. It is so important that the network is properly maintained when walking is being promoted for health, and is an essential part of tourism and the local economy, and for the enjoyment of all who walk. However, we may still be better off than North Yorks, where path problems can remain unresolved for far too long. An example was my reporting two rusty disintegrating farm gates, off their hinges and held together with binder twine, just

over the county boundary in Newsham parish, on a popular route from Barningham. The gates are extremely difficult to open and unsafe to climb. First I was told they were being recorded as 'low priority', then that one had been upgraded to 'medium priority' on account of the popularity of the route, so that it should be "repaired within a year or two"! I had already said that the gates were beyond repair, that new ones would be needed, and queried whether some contribution should be forthcoming from the occupier of the land. I am awaiting a response on this.

Footpath Surveys

No further surveys have taken place, due to other commitments (where did the summer go?), but DCC have already carried out work on problems in the Boldron area, reported in the spring, and will be renewing worn way marks as well. They have been most appreciative of our efforts. I'm hoping to arrange some further surveys in the coming months, in Startforth parish and perhaps further afield, so anyone who would like to join these walks and see how it's done (and get some of the satisfaction and enjoyment we had on our walks) please get in touch, and I'll circulate possible dates and venues for people to sign up to. Anyone with suggestions for paths that might need attention, also let me know. Contact me on 01833-637756 or jobird9@tiscali.co.uk if you want to find out more or give it a try.

Heart of Teesdale Landscape Partnership

As reported in the local press, the second stage Heritage Lottery Fund bid has been successful, and there will be a public launch sometime this autumn. An exhibition will show what projects have been submitted from various parts of the community, and how more people can become involved. Many projects will be of benefit to walkers and all who enjoy the countryside, so watch out for details.

Coastal Access

Staff from Natural England are currently 'walking the course' of the Durham stretch of coast that is one of five pilot coastal access areas. This involves meeting with landowners likely to be affected to work out what land can be included, because this is to be much more than just a footpath. They are also working with DCC, Sunderland City Council and Hartlepool Borough Council, towards conducting a public consultation which will run for 12 weeks, and is expected to start later this year. This will be interesting as the stretch, though relatively short, includes heavily built-up areas. For further information:

www.naturalengland.org.uk/ourworking/enjoying/places/coastalaccess/durham/default.aspx. There is no definite news yet for rolling out the project to further areas once the pilot areas are completed. It remains a concern that the government should not 'go cold' on this.

"A Walk in the Woods" Week, 3rd – 9th October

We held two walks for this national Ramblers event with the aim of highlighting the special attractions of woodlands for walking, and the Ramblers' campaign to 'Save Our Woodland Walks'. This was launched following the threat of Forestry Commission sales of their woodlands. The government's Panel set up to look into the future of forestry is due to report shortly, and one of its members is Tom Franklin, Ramblers CEO. There is more about this campaign, and lots more besides, on the Ramblers' website: www.ramblers.org.uk. Joan and Ian's special walk in Hamsterley Forest was more successful regarding numbers, but Helen Goodman MP's attendance at Thorsgill Wood gave us an opportunity to discuss access issues in general as well as enjoying the subtle autumn colours and delicious woodland smells! The walk confirmed a long-held belief that walking on a grey damp day is far preferable to looking at it through a window! We were also successful in getting some useful publicity for the campaign in the local press.

Bus Services and Bridges

As we go to print, there has been the shocking news that the bus service from Barnard Castle to Middleton in Teesdale and villages between, is to be cut completely next year. This would reduce walking opportunities considerably for walkers, local and visitors alike, as well as being disastrous to many sections of the community. DCC is hoping to meet with Arriva to try to save at least some of the service.

There is also an announcement of a public exhibition for the previously much talked of 'rope bridge'. Do we really need this bridge, the fourth within a stretch of a couple of miles, when there is no bridge at all between Winston and Piercebridge, isolating communities on the south side of the Tees? Restoration of a bridge at Gainford would benefit walkers as well as a great many other people. It is reported that many respondents to the feasibility study this spring, including ourselves, have concerns about damage to the unique riverbank environment, especially during construction of the bridge, and I for one would not wish to see suburbanisation of this lovely rural stretch of riverside that lies, uniquely, so close to the town.

Jo Bird
Access and Walking Environment Officer

Photographs for Joan's scrapbook

Please remember to send Joan copies of any photographs from walks for entry into the Scrapbooks. Hard copies would be much appreciated, where possible, or email to: ijmar8@tiscali.co.uk .

Thank you

Ian and I would just like to thank everyone for making our Golden Wedding celebrations so wonderful. Even the weather played ball. We had 63 people on the walk and 78 for the meal. The donations of food made a fantastic spread (better than any five star hotel).

We have had a huge amount of cards which will eventually go in a scrap book. The donations in lei of a present totals over £300 and we have promise of more to come. This will then be shared between the local Fell Rescue and Arthritis Research.

Several people couldn't "make it", for various reasons but it was nice to have friends back among us after various operations. Also it was nice to see friends who had made the effort to travel long distances.

Thanks must also go to those who helped with the tables and chairs and general clearing up, not to mention the pile of glasses and pots to wash up.

Everyone was wonderful and it felt more like a grand reunion than just our Golden Wedding. So once again, many thanks to everyone involved.

Joan.

Forthcoming events

➤ **BBQ** for Group members - Saturday 30th June, 2012 in Cotherstone (John and Linda). Price £7

➤ **Area AGM**

The Area AGM will be held on 24th March 2012 at Dawson Street Methodist Church, CROOK (near the cricket ground). It has been booked from 1pm and Jeff Foster will lead a 5 mile walk from this church at 10 30am.

Crook and Weardale will provide refreshments at the break. The Hall will be open and available for everyone from 1pm.

www.barnardcastleramblers.org.uk

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