

*Summer 2015*

**From the Chairman, John Bird**

June already and we still seem to be having cold winds to contend with, still a cooling breeze on any walk is always a good idea!

The **programme** is progressing well; we are seeing good numbers out enjoying the walks and a lot more to come in the year. We are indeed fortunate that we can enjoy a wide variety of locations and routes. Don't forget to have a look at the scrapbook section of the website; this has various photographs and a "WWW" i.e. Where We Went which shows the route on a detailed map. The Ramblers website is a good source of much background information, not only for finding walks but as regards current issues, volunteers and campaigns along with others. Worth a look at from time to time as much communication is via the internet. Don't forget to consult the group's website as well; updates regarding walks will be there together with other relevant information, many thanks to the "web masters" for doing this for us.

The **coach trip** this year is to Keswick on Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> July, the week after the barbeque. If you are thinking of coming please do book early so that we can gauge demand and organise accordingly: contact Richard on 01833 660780, email [bcramblers@gmail.com](mailto:bcramblers@gmail.com). Friends of members are also welcome on the coach to Keswick to enjoy a day out.

Three of us attended an interesting **Area AGM** at Northallerton with the attendance of the Ramblers Chief Executive, Benedict Southworth. He gave an overview of the current issues and opportunities facing the Ramblers and walkers in general. He answered questions and certainly seems "on the ball" and very much involved in taking the Ramblers forward in a positive and constructive way to meet the many challenges ahead!

Members are reminded that, on production of membership cards, **discount** is given by 54 Degrees in Galgate, 10%, and Cotswold Great Outdoors, nearest store in Durham, 15%.

A **Volunteers Development Day** is to be held in Darlington on Saturday 19<sup>th</sup> September, for current and aspiring volunteers, see [ramblers.org.uk](http://ramblers.org.uk) and follow the links via the volunteer section for full details of sessions on offer and to book.

Plans are progressing for several events next year for our **50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary**.

**"Donate- a-Gate" - John, Joan and Jo**

As many will know, the Friends of the North Pennines have been inviting people to Donate-a-Gate to replace a stile within the North Pennines AONB. The cost of each gate is paid for by the person donating it. The group is donating two, which will be in Upper Teesdale, and it has been agreed that one will be installed near Hanging Shaw before the end of July. We hope to have a short "opening ceremony" in due course, with some publicity and photographs in the Teesdale Mercury.

The Heart of Teesdale Landscape Partnership (see Guest Contributor, below), in conjunction with the Friends of the North Pennines, is also using the scheme, and two more gates are being donated by members for installation on the Teesdale Way, just east of Cooper House on the edge of Cotherstone. One is in memory of Ken Ashworth and the other in memory of Bill Harwood who was a founder member of Barnard Castle Group of the Ramblers. It is hoped that these two gates will be in place sometime this summer.

The idea for "Donate a Gate" schemes was conceived by Isle of Wight Ramblers.

### **Alnmouth Holiday, 19<sup>th</sup>-23<sup>rd</sup> October 2015 - Judith**

Thanks to the 17 members who have already booked for this trip: I'm sure we'll have a good time. If anyone else would like to make a booking, please contact me (by phone 01642-700062 or email [j.baker574@btinternet.com](mailto:j.baker574@btinternet.com)) as soon as possible, and I'll see what I can do. It will depend on HF.

All single rooms in the house are already taken and I'm keeping a waiting list.

### **Walk Leaders' Training - Jenny**

We intend to have an afternoon course on leading walks. This will be led by Steve Owers of North-Pennines-Navigation.

Preliminary ideas cover the following areas:

- Planning your walk
- Identifying and dealing with hazards
- Party Management
- Actions in case of accident

A short practical session involving some of the above

Steve delivers excellent courses, highly enjoyable and practical. The course will be free to members of Barnard Castle Ramblers and we will end with a hot meal together, also without charge.

The course is intended to appeal to anyone who wants to know more about leading walks. You don't need to be a walk leader already, and you don't even need to intend to lead walks in the near future. No-one will put pressure on you. You will certainly gain skills which will increase your awareness of walking on the hills with groups and you may find an opportunity to apply the leadership part in the future.

One of the issues which can stop people volunteering to lead walks is a lack of knowledge of local paths. If this is you, be encouraged that the Group has a huge resource of possible routes which folks will be happy to share with you. Experienced leaders will also be happy to come on recce's with you and share expertise and support on the day. We don't expect leaders to drop ready-made from heaven. It's a learning process and there's lots of help out there. You might start by dipping a toe in the water and coming to the Training Session. Proposed dates are a mid-week afternoon around the end of September or beginning of October. More details later. Meantime, please **let me know if you are interested.** [jennygordon69@gmail.com](mailto:jennygordon69@gmail.com) 01833-908089

### **Want to feel more confident finding your way on your own in the countryside?**

Durham County Council is running a 'Beginners Guide to Map and Compass' on 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> September. Day 1 will be Theory and Practice, and Day 2 a 6 mile practical in Weardale, running from 10am – 3pm each day. The cost will be £30.00. To book a place ring 03000 264 589 during office hours.

### **Ramblers Worldwide Holidays Offer - Reminder - Judith**

If booking a holiday please mention that you are a member of Barnard Castle Group so that the company can make us a donation of between £10 and £30 according to where the holiday is taken, and we can use the funds to promote walking in our area.

### **Slideshows - Judith**

There are two slideshows left this year: the first will be on 5<sup>th</sup> August when Joan and Ian will talk about their travels in Peru, Bolivia and Venezuela.

On 7<sup>th</sup> October, I'll be talking about my travels in the Far East, particularly Cambodia, Vietnam and Myanmar.

Both shows will be held at 7.30 on Wednesday evenings in the Methodist Church Hall, Barnard Castle (use side door on Scar Top). The charge of £3 includes light refreshments. The scones, kindly made by Maureen Raw, are a great hit with everyone and worth turning up for in their own right! I hope to see you there.

### **County Durham Big Spring Clean - Pauline**

On Sunday, 12th April five intrepid Ramblers (Kathleen Howcroft, June Peters, Allan Rayner, Frances Walker and myself) plus two members of the public (George and Dorothy Jameson) carried out a Litter Pick under the auspices of LitterFree Durham's, "Big Spring Clean" with equipment being provided by Durham County Council.

The event took place in spite of the dreadful cold and wet weather conditions and an amazing job was done of clearing the lane between Kalafat and Bartlemere plus the Playing Field and Football field.

*[Well done and many thanks to all for taking this on this year! - Jo]*

### **Pennine Way 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary - Jo**

The Pennine Way was launched as the first long distance path in Britain in 1965, after long years of planning, due to the inspiration of Tom Stephenson, the first paid employee of the Ramblers. After that other long distance paths, now re-named national trails, were created, and many regional trails as well. They have been of huge benefit to walkers both from this country and abroad, and as well as providing much enjoyment they are a great boost to the national economy.

Our programme usually contains walks that use stretches of the Pennine Way, and the NP Walking Festival has the Pennine Way as its theme this year, with opportunities to walk sections within the AONB territory, including several linear walks with transport laid on.

Full details available shortly: 07935 – 337210 or [www.northpennineswalkingfestival.org.uk](http://www.northpennineswalkingfestival.org.uk)

### **Footpaths, Access and Countryside - Allan and Jo**

**Wind turbines.** The planning application for four giant wind turbines at Windy Bank near Woodland, to which we had objected, has at last been considered. Officers recommended refusal, and councillors agreed by voting against the proposal, but it was a close vote. The huge turbines would have been a blot on the landscape for many miles around. The applicants are considering appealing against the decision, pending investigations on the council's reasons for refusal.

A proposal for two wind turbines near Hutton Magna a couple of years ago, to which we objected, has just been renewed, but for one larger turbine. The whole application needs to be studied, but it seems likely that the impact of one turbine will be just as detrimental to the enjoyment of the countryside as two smaller ones. It would have an impact on the Teesdale Way and local paths, including a bridleway which forms a link in a local circular walk from Hutton Magna, which would become the access track for construction and subsequent maintenance.

The local press has reported a possible application for wind turbines at Ponders Gill near Cross Lanes, but a formal application has yet to be made.

**New access** has become available along a shooting track in Lunedale, shown on the map as Rake Gill. This followed a review by Natural England in consultation with the Ramblers, of designated of open country having access restrictions. Restrictions remain on the land

to either side of the track which runs between the Pennine Way and Brown Dod in Lunedale. Some people may previously have used this track, but anyone on foot may now use it legitimately!

Allan has been involved with removal of Invasive Non-Native Species on the banks of the Tees, along with two more volunteers following the talk on this subject at our last AGM. This Heart of Teesdale Landscape Partnership project is one of many that benefit the countryside and users of it. Allan reports that "Rhododendrons along the south side of the river between Cotherstone and Romalldkirk were first tackled nearly two years ago. Work was only allowed when the birds weren't nesting, ie over winter. Initially they were cut down and left in piles, but due to the vast amount involved they were later injected in order to kill off the roots. The second winter was taken up by cutting down the dead bushes and burning the branches. Unfortunately lots of shoots have come up from the original ones cut down, so part of this summer will be spent pulling up these shoots and any roots remaining.

"Himalayan Balsam was first tackled by pulling it out by hand in the summer of 2013, at The Hagg, Cotherstone and further downstream. In 2014, when there was much less than 2013, removal was repeated, along with removal near the Silver Bridge and The Demesnes at Barnard Castle. Sadly in 2014 more was found near Eggleston Bridge and where the river Lune meets the Tees. As seeds are propagated downstream it is obviously important that these are tackled as soon as possible. This is about to start and it is hoped that the large quantity on very steep gully sides in Lance Wood, Cotherstone will be sprayed."

Allan adds that there is no giant hogweed in Teesdale, and Japanese knotweed by County Bridge has to be injected and is not a job for volunteers. Allan has also been involved with path repair and clearance at Brignall along the river Greta, and the Teesdale Way near Abbey Bridge. He is also preparing descriptions for two more circular walks leaflets for HoT. Allan attended **Durham County Council's Annual Liaison Meeting** in March, attended by Ramblers Footpath Officers from all over the county. It was reported that small cuts to the Rights of Way budget were being made this year, and staff jobs were safe. But with significant cuts being made across all services next year the outlook is not good, and further decisions are being made by DCC on prioritising work.

**The Ramblers Big Path Watch** will be launched in July and anyone, members and non-members, are invited to take part (see p40/41 in recent **walk** mag). Register your interest now at [www.ramblers.org.uk/bigpathwatch](http://www.ramblers.org.uk/bigpathwatch).

### **Guest Contributor – Alex Sijpesteijn, Project Manager for Heart of Teesdale Landscape Partnership (HoT)**

The Heart of Teesdale Landscape Partnership, funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund, is delivering over 70 landscape conservation projects covering all aspects of landscapes. A significant part of our work is focused on improving access, led by our Paths-for-All Officer, Emma Ashton-Wickett. In the last two years she has worked with Marwood Estate to restore four bridges across Percy Beck in Flatts Wood and replace another. The drainage has been improved to dry out the muddy patches and all the old skeuomorphic benches have been restored to their former glory. The main path through the woods has been designated a public right of way so public access to the woods is secured for all time. We have had lots of positive feedback from locals and visitors so this project has really enhanced a local gem. St John's footbridge, which is in a poor state of repair, is due to be replaced sympathetically later this year.

A significant element of the access programme has been the delivery of 'Paths for All', a project to improve access across the area. Scoping work has been completed on the Teesdale Way from Gainford to Egglestone to improve the signage and replace stiles with gates to allow more people to enjoy the route. Work on the paths has already started (you might have noticed at The Hagg in Cotherstone) and the gate and signage work should start around September. Meantime, if you have a special place on the Teesdale Way why not 'Donate a Gate'? This scheme is being run through the Friends of the North Pennines but led, in this area, by us. It allows any individual or group to donate a gate in memory of a loved one or just because a place is special. Contact Emma (see below).

Works have also been undertaken on the small section of railway path from Cotherstone towards Barnard Castle. The tree canopy has been thinned and the drainage cleared to dry out the path. Let's hope we have a good summer!

Works are also underway along Brignall Banks to improve the footpath along the north bank. There is on-going drainage works, path cutting, and some of the stiles have been improved. Works have been kept deliberately low key so as not to detract from the character of this beautiful and peaceful place, so there will not be significant changes.

Volunteers have played crucial and valued roles on Brignall Banks and the Teesdale Way; it's always good to have local people involved in local work so if you would like fresh air and exercise please contact us. We sometimes work with the Durham County Council Ranger Service and, once the Heart of Teesdale has finished, opportunities to volunteer will continue to be available through them. As a taster why not help us lay a boardwalk near the Fairy Cupboards in Romalldkirk in July? Please contact us to be added to our mailing list and find out the latest opportunities.

At the Heart of Teesdale we are very aware that not everyone is fully mobile and so as part of another project we are providing a series of phototrails, which can be seen on The Fieldfare Trust website ([www.fieldfare.org.uk](http://www.fieldfare.org.uk)). These will show how accessible these areas are and allow people to make informed decisions as to whether a route is right for them. Flatts Wood, the riverside path in Barnard Castle (Tees Aqueduct Bridge to below the Castle), the Millennium Green in Gainford and The Hagg in Cotherstone are the routes soon to be listed.

We are also starting work to establish Barnard Castle as a "**Walkers are Welcome**" (WaW) town ([walkersarewelcome.org.uk/](http://walkersarewelcome.org.uk/)). Accreditation will ensure that businesses are welcoming to walkers, and paths in this fantastic area are kept in good order, and both walkers and businesses will benefit. This is in early stages but if you feel that you might be able to assist please contact us.

I hope you agree that Teesdale is a great place to explore and that **Heart of Teesdale** is doing all it can to make it even better.

Contact details (all employed part-time):

Emma Ashton-Wickett (Paths for All People) 03000 260645; [emma.ashton@durham.gov.uk](mailto:emma.ashton@durham.gov.uk)

Karen Collins (Volunteering) 03000 260835; [karen.collins@durham.gov.uk](mailto:karen.collins@durham.gov.uk)

Sarah Smith (WaW) 03000 260843; [sarah.smith2@durham.gov.uk](mailto:sarah.smith2@durham.gov.uk)

Thank you to all who have sent contributions for this newsletter. Contributions for the next issue will be welcomed from any member by 27<sup>th</sup> September please, to [jobird9@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:jobird9@tiscali.co.uk) .