

Autumn 2015

John Bird

Most of you will know already of the tragic and untimely death of our Chairman, John. Our deepest sympathy and our thoughts are with Linda at this time.

John was such an "involved" character, using his skills and his time generously to benefit many organisations here in Teesdale. We think he had belonged to Ramblers here for around 35 years and, at an emergency Committee meeting, we were reflecting on his many and varied contributions over that time. We talked about the many coach trips he had organised, remembering Glen Ridding, and the time the mist came down on Helvelyn, and Mallerstang Edge and many more. Then there were great local day walks. "Remember Mickle Fell? That was another exciting one." John was also responsible for initiating the Potter and Pint evenings, a great idea. In later years he was the Footpath Secretary and, for the last 2 years, has been our Chairman. He has been our liaison for the sponsored gates, a role which has involved much patient chasing up of various people and departments. And recently he has been closely involved with the preparations for our 50th anniversary, including negotiating with Bowlees for a celebratory exhibition. It's a cliché to say he will be greatly missed but it's so true. We were meeting to make sure we were in a position to catch all the balls he had so expertly in mid-air and we will work hard to do so. A treasured memory for all of us is the annual Bar-B-Q where John and Linda would work their socks off to produce a truly splendid meal for us in delightful surroundings. The event just sums up John's generosity and willingness to go the extra mile to knit us all together in a cohesive group of friends with a shared passion for Ramblers and all that represents. John, we salute you and we thank you.

Below you can read John's last Newsletter contribution to us, penned earlier in the month. It's a good summary of everything he was immediately involved in. The Committee felt it would be appropriate to meet to hold a small ceremony at our new Commemoration Gate on the Pennine Way near Hanging Shaw near the school at Forest in Teesdale. We will meet to officially open the gate and to remember John on November 15th. Please feel free to join us at Hanging Shaw Car Park at 10 am on Sunday 15th November. We will have our ceremony and then, for those who wish, there will be a short walk in John's memory.

Jenny Selley, Vice-chairman
On behalf of the Committee

From the Chairman, John Bird

Autumn already and we have had a good season of walks to date. The **new programme** looks like an interesting and varied selection and we hope that you will be able to take advantage of them. We are still on the lookout for new walks leaders so if you do feel you would like to have a go please get in touch.

We know that the walks reports featured in the Mercury are popular and leaders are encouraged to write a report for submission (editor@teesdalemercury.co.uk). If this is not something you feel comfortable with, you could perhaps ask someone who is on the walk if they would like to do this for you: it is good publicity and is certainly appreciated by many.

2016 sees the 50th anniversary of the founding of the group and several events are being planned. These are: a celebratory event with founder members at our donated gate as part of the 'Donate a Gate' scheme, Sunday 15th November (see programme); an anniversary walk and tea (see below); publication of a walks book; a slide show about the first 50 years of the group; an exhibition at Bowlees Visitor Centre to run from June to September; a dinner and social evening; a booklet about the first 50 years of the group; and last but not least, walking the entire length of the Teesdale Way in 12 stages, starting in April. What a feast!

A major event will be **walking the Teesdale Way**. Members may know a non-member who might be interested in this, but to walk more than two stages would mean they would need to join the Ramblers. Please consider who you could invite along, and advise them of the details in due course. We offer our **thanks** to Ian, Joan, Judith and Donna who have spent considerable time and effort so far on this project.

The Group AGM, normally held in November, will be on Saturday 9th January at 2pm in the United Reformed Church Hall, off Queen Street, Barnard Castle. Please send nominations for officers and committee members to the secretary, Pauline at bcramblers@gmail.com or ring her on 07794-810893.

As usual there will be a walk in the morning, to be led by Joan and Ian (01833-637825, 07745-451198 on the day). Meet outside the Age UK shop in Galgate in time to catch the 9.55 bus to Romaldkirk. The 6 mile linear walk back follows the Teesdale Way via the Hagg and Cooper House. There will be a coffee stop, and the walk will return at approximately 1pm in time for lunch at the hall.

Provisional dates for next year's diary:

Coach trips to Whitby for the Robin Hood's Bay section of the Cleveland Way, on Saturday 14th May, and Saturday 17th September, location still to be decided.

Barbecue - Joan

Linda has very kindly offered to host a barbecue next year on Saturday 2nd July, in memory of John.

Golden Jubilee Anniversary Walk and Tea, 21st May 2016 - Joan

The first meeting of Barnard Castle group was on May 16th 1966 and the first walk was on Saturday May 21st. By coincidence, May 21st 2016 also happens to be on a Saturday so on May 21st we will walk from Middleton in Teesdale to Barnard Castle, with a shorter option starting at Eggleston. These will be part of the group's Teesdale Way walks. We will then all end up at Trinity Church Hall for a meal provided by the members. More details will be in the next Newsletter. The most important thing is to try and keep **May 21st 2016** free if you want to take part in this important celebration.

Christmas Lunch, Saturday 5th December, at 1300 - Richard

This will be held at the Redwell Inn, Harmire Road, Barnard Castle. There will be a 6 mile walk in the morning, starting at 0930 from the Redwell, returning before 1230 to allow time to change out of walking clothes. Further details of the walk are in the programme.

Bookings for lunch please, with menu options, to Richard, before 29th November: tel: 01833-660780 or email: bcramblers@gmail.com . The cost will be £16.00 per head.

Main Course:

- Escalope of Turkey with Sage Stuffing, roast vegetables, fried sprouts, smoked bacon, and cranberry sauce
- Grilled Fillet of Sea Bream, new potatoes, leeks, cauliflower purée, capers, and shallots and sultanas
- Pork Loin Cutlet, sweet potato chips, Savoy cabbage, bacon, and apple gravy
- Chestnut and Cranberry Soufflé (suitable for vegetarians), fried sprouts, goats cheese fondue, and spiced cranberry sauce

Dessert

- Traditional Christmas Pudding with brandy cream
- White and Dark Chocolate Mousse with brownie chunks praline
- Sticky Toffee Pudding with butterscotch sauce and vanilla ice cream
- White Chocolate Crème Brulee with hazelnut cookies
- Banoffee Pie with cinder toffee and chocolate crumbs
- A selection of Ice Cream Sorbets

Tea and Coffee

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Memorial gates - Joan

At long last the two Memorial gates funded by donations from members have been put in place. They are in memory of two of our past members. One is in memory of Ken Ashworth donated by his widow Enid, and the other is in memory of Bill Harwood who was a founder member, donated by a friend who lives in York. Both gates are on the Teesdale Way near Cooper House east of Cotherstone, and both overlook the River Tees.

Ian and I will be leading the morning walk before the AGM, following this section of the Teesdale Way, and we will pause at both the gates for a moment of reflection.

Wednesday walks - Joan

Many of you already know that I get a lot of pain in my left foot after I have been walking for a while. This means that I sometimes have to stop for a minute or two. The people who have been walking with us on a Wednesday have been very tolerant. I had decided that it wasn't fair asking people to keep stopping and had decided I wouldn't lead any more walks. However, most people don't want us to give up and Ian says he would like to continue.

We have therefore decided to put on one short walk each month during the winter and see how things go. Maybe in the future if someone else wants to put on a slightly longer walk on a Wednesday it would be a good idea. (The Wednesday walks are always at a bit slower

pace, but we don't dawdle!!) A lot of people know that I am waiting for an injection in my foot. Whether this will do any good when I eventually get it, I will have to wait and see.

Walk Leaders Training - Jenny
Friday 12th February, Barnard Castle Methodist Church Hall
To be led by Steve Owers of North-Pennines-Navigation
9am to 1pm, followed by a lunch

For various reasons, this event did not take place as originally planned in September. Apologies to those of you who contacted me to express interest. We do now have a firm date and location. I know some of you would prefer a Saturday date but unfortunately Steve is not available at weekends due to other commitments.

This is designed to be a fun get-together, social with useful bits! We hope all current leaders will be able to attend and we'd love to encourage anyone who wants to know more about leading walks. You don't need to be a walk leader already; 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 opportunity to apply the leadership part in the future.

Details of the morning:

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.

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. Why not start by dipping a toe in the water and coming to the Training Session. Please let me know by 1st January if you are interested: jennygordon69@gmail.com
01833-908089.

Ramblers Worldwide Holidays - Judith

Thank you to those members who have given the group's name when booking holidays this year. The group will receive the cash due at the end of October. This can be spent on anything additional which encourages or assists walking.

Please continue to give the group's name when booking with Ramblers Holidays.

Kath Mair - Judith

Some members will remember Kath, who used to lead some walks for the group. She's now married and living in Wales but likes to walk the northern hills when she can. Donna and I bumped into her on Lady Anne's Way recently and she sends her best wishes to all who knew her.

Slideshows - Judith

There will be the usual programme of slideshows next year. These raise some useful additional cash for the group, which finances things such as the new gate. If any member would like to give one, please contact me out walking or at j.baker574@btinternet.com .

Heart of Teesdale Landscape Partnership - Jo

This project is now in its final year, and more paths in Flatts Wood are to be improved this autumn, and several gates installed on the Teesdale Way to replace stiles. The project has enabled many people to get out walking in the locality, and to be involved in all sorts of countryside activities. Consideration is being given to finding ways of ensuring that the valuable contribution made by many volunteers is continued once the project funding and organisation is concluded. To find out more, why not attend the **Annual Forum** at the Witham Hall on Wednesday 11th November, from 6.30 – 8.30pm. Entry in free.

The Partnership is playing a big part in establishing Barnard Castle as a "**Walkers are Welcome**" town, with another steering group meeting taking place later in October.

Allan has again been involved with **practical work**. He says: "Himalayan Balsam is still being tackled along the upper Tees - at its meeting with the river Lune, Eggleston Bridge, The Hagg and Lance Wood at Cotherstone, and from the bandstand to the Demesnes in Barney. At the beginning of the year it was felt that the situation was under control, however a proliferation of Himalayan balsam has shown that chemical spraying is going to be needed next year. Fortunately a colleague and I have attended a chemical spraying course this year, and have been supplied with the necessary equipment to do this, thanks to the River Tees Trust.

"Rhododendron bashing continues between Cotherstone and Romalldkirk. Small shoots started springing up from the area previously cleared and these have been sprayed, along with a few that were missed during last year's spraying. Work is to commence soon on cutting down and burning what is still a large area of dead rhododendron. Bonfires are often used to bake potatoes and toast marshmallows, if anyone wants to come and help!" [Contact Allan on 07833-921334 to find out more!]

Wind turbines – Jo

Sadly the wind turbine near Hutton Magna which we opposed, has been granted planning permission. We have objected to two industrial turbines proposed at Ponder Gill, near Cross Lanes which would be a blot on the landscape for walkers on local public paths. They would also be a traffic hazard as they would easily distract the attention of drivers at a point where there are 3 side roads with traffic often having to cross both lanes. Also eastbound traffic on the dual carriageway here is often reluctant to slow down as requested, in the hope of overtaking slower vehicles before the imminent single lane stretch of the A66 ahead. There has been considerable objection to these turbines. An application for a large turbine at Hulands Quarry, barely two miles west, a few years back, was turned down at appeal stage because it was considered its proximity to the A66 would be a distraction to drivers. But it's best not to have too high expectations!

The Ramblers Big Path Watch - Jo

Members and non-members can participate in this important project, the results of which will be used by staff at Central Office to highlight the state of the country's paths and

promote their importance: and many thanks to those already surveying. It involves walking all paths in a grid square of the map and submitting comments in accordance with notes provided. If you have a mobile phone there is an app you can use (it has been improved since the July launch), or you can submit your findings via the website. Find out the procedure, including how to register the squares of your choice, and see the responses to frequently asked questions at www.ramblers.org.uk/bigpathwatch . Anyone can have a go, member or non-member. Contact Richard to find out which squares have not been surveyed: tel: 01833-660780 or email: bcramblers@gmail.com .

New footpath at Westwick - Jo

A new path has recently been added to DCC's definitive map, running from the north end of Abbey Bridge, eastwards through the woods to join the existing footpath that runs along the outer edge of the wood and on towards Whorlton. It will mean walkers can avoid the stile directly from the road near Mains House, opposite Egglestone Abbey, which can be something of a traffic hazard, although it is a lovely old stone stile set in the bank.

Social Pub Evenings - Richard

Social pub evenings were started in the summer and have been held on the first Tuesday of each month, with the venue for the next one being decided each time. Now venues are being planned in advance with details being included in the programme. Thanks to John Stephenson for starting this. Any queries about these evenings should be addressed to him on 01388-488420.

What does a Ramblers Countryside Secretary Do? - Jo

Members will probably know that Footpath Secretaries are concerned with path problems and proposed changes to the definitive map, and that Access Officers are concerned with access to open country, but may wonder about the role of Countryside Secretaries. It used to be summed up with the words that went with our former logo (the two green hills in a rectangle with 'The Ramblers' in the 'sky'), which were: "*The Ramblers' Association promotes rambling, protects rights of way, campaigns for access to open country and **defends the beauty of the countryside.***" The relevant words are in bold. It has also been described as 'protecting the view from the footpath', and these days, the views from open country.

Probably the most usual way this is done is by looking at the planning applications sent out by DCC in weekly lists, and submitting objections to the proposals that are considered to be likely to 'spoil the view' or spoil the enjoyment of walkers (and sometimes other people as well). There are also damaging activities that can be reported to the authorities such as ugly illegal advertisements on grass verges, or dumped furniture, so that these things can be removed.

Some members will know of the recent planning application for '**upgrading' of tracks on Barningham Moor** and construction of 2 car parks to accommodate up to 17 cars, way up on the moor. Although 'footpaths would be affected' in that surfaces would be aggregate raised approximately 18" above ground level, laid on an artificial membrane instead of the natural moorland surfaces we enjoy, there is nothing in footpath legislation that can be argued to prevent that. So if we don't want these changes we need to use planning regulations arguments to oppose and prevent the development, such as damage to the character of the landscape, which is what a number of individual members did, thereby supporting the Ramblers' official response.

Sometimes paths need to be diverted in order to allow a development to take place. This happened with the recent Green Lane housing application, and planning permission was granted, but only then was DCC's Rights of Way section involved. They consulted under section 257 of the Highways Act, but it was too late to prevent the path changes, and in this case the paths are to become re-routed as pavements. Only by defeating a planning application can the paths be retained as previously.

RoW law is relevant for diversions and extinguishment of paths applied for in the interests of occupiers (usually s.119), as with the case at Cooper House, Cotherstone a few years back. It is also relevant for issues concerning path maintenance or obstruction, none of which applies at Barningham. Although a path would be moved sideways a metre or two, this would not be enough to be able to be shown on the Definitive Map. If DCC's Statement accompanying its Definitive Map described precisely where the paths run there would be a consultation on the change, but DCC's says very little, ie start and finish points, existence of gates, stiles etc. But in any case if planning permission is granted it would be too late to prevent the change to the line of the path.

The only instance I'm aware of when RoW law overrides planning permission already granted, is when an Inspector decides after considering all arguments, that the path proposed for extinguishment to allow the development has been shown to be needed for public use. Then that part of the development cannot take place and the path is retained.

A big consideration in the Barningham Moor case is that the moor is **registered common land**, so special conditions apply. As well as needing DCC's planning permission some 'works' also need the permission of the Secretary of State for the Environment, under Section 38 of Common Land law. Such 'works' include digging of ditches and anything that restricts free access. Ditches are included in the plans for the Moor, and raised surfaces of paths and car parks could also be considered restrictions to free access. DCC's planning officers have confirmed that in the event that they grant planning permission they would inform the applicant of the need to apply for Section 38 permission before work commences. The procedure would be handled by the Planning Inspectorate, involving consultations from them, and if there are objections a decision would be made by an appointed Inspector, either by Written Representation, a Hearing (fairly informal, 'round the table'), or by the more formal procedure of a Public Inquiry, which is often the way decisions on diversions are made.

DCC's decision is awaited.

Would you like to help? If any member would like to help by writing a formal letter of objection, as an individual, to possible further consultations on the Barningham Moor case, or other applications of this kind to strengthen the Ramblers' formal objection, please let me know. You need to be aware that any submissions made would be posted on DCC's website under the relevant application, but email addresses and phone numbers are removed. By expressing an interest you are not committed to writing, so if you are interested please get in touch.

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| Thank you to all who have sent contributions for this newsletter. Contributions for the next issue will be welcomed from any member by 24 th January please, to jobird9@tiscali.co.uk |
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