

BARNARD CASTLE RAMBLERS

NEWSLETTER

DECEMBER 2020

Welcome to our second newsletter in times of Covid, starting with words from the Chair:

Winter Solstice

Despite the upheavals of the year surprisingly there is not a lot to say. I have summarised our year in the report I presented to the Annual General Meeting by Zoom on Tuesday November 24, which can be read in this newsletter.

I hope members have managed to cope with the blandness of life since the virus appeared. Certainly walking for Jenny and I has been a major release. It has been great to get out and just enjoy the country in all weather conditions and times of year, to take time to observe flowers and animals. They say walking is good for the soul and I hope many of you have found this to be true. We have had some excellent walks, such as the one from Orton in July, topped off with coffee and ice cream or around Aysgarth finished with afternoon tea at a cafe. We have managed also to put on at least once a month a social amble. I want to thank all our leaders who have led walks since lockdown – a small dedicated group who between them managed to put on a walk pretty well every Saturday between lockdown 1 and lockdown 2 and the Wednesday ones. Thanks too to those of you who came on the walks which I hope you have enjoyed.

With the virus about we didn't manage to have a walk and strawberry tea or BBQ nor any far away excursions. We do have a new addition [since February] to the website – a blog. It has been used by a few members to post memorable walks, photos - good weather, wry comments, etc. If you have something you wish to put on, please contact Maggie who will arrange for it to be posted. Take a look at it. It is a very good way for those of you who are creative and wish to write a report or comment on a walk.

With thoughts of Christmas, we are putting on **two walks on Saturday December 19** as a way of us meeting together before the holiday. One will start from Cockerton Green in Darlington and the other from Middleton-in-Teesdale. Details are on the walks programme on the website and hurry if you are interested as numbers are limited in accordance with government guidelines and our own. We are waiting to see what happens in the New Year concerning the virus and when we should start walks again. If there is another spike of infections after Christmas, organised walks could easily be delayed till late January or February. Please watch the website for news. In the meantime please remember there is nothing to prevent you from walking together in groups of up to 6 informally. Until the rules change!

A happy Christmas to all of you and best wishes for the New Year.

Gordon

As you know we held our **Annual General Meeting 2020** on Tuesday 24th November via Zoom, and seventeen members of the group were present. Gordon presented his report on the group's activities since the last AGM in November 2019. Here it is for those of you who were not able to be present.

Barnard Castle Ramblers 54th AGM

Chairman's Report

Well what a year this has proven to be! The year of the virus. As with many many other organisations our activities have been hugely affected by it. The effects have been fully felt for 9 months and are still ongoing as I write this and as members are well aware. Thanks to the efforts of a small group of members we have managed to keep the group functioning and arranged a full walks programme when we were permitted.

Obviously our social activities have been curtailed, particularly those we normally hold in the summer. Nevertheless we did have a successful Christmas 2019 lunch held again at the Langdon Beck hotel when approximately 20 members attended. We also managed to hold the Pancake Wednesday lunch shortly before lockdown at the Forresters hotel in Middleton. Thanks to Lynda for arranging these events.

We had a full programme of walks until lockdown in March. Obviously there were no walks during lockdown but we resumed as soon as restrictions were lifted at the end of June. We have had 21 walks since then, of which 6 were Wednesday walks and one a Bank Holiday. The walks have ranged over the usual areas – Teesdale in particular but also Weardale, Swaledale, Arkengarthdale and Wensleydale. After lockdown Ramblers allowed us initially to walk in groups of 6 which was subsequently changed to a maximum of 30. Your group decided to allow leaders of walks to decide for themselves what size of group they were comfortable to lead. In practice this has ranged between 6 and 10.

We did manage to hold the long delayed advanced navigation course in early January (reported in my previous report for 2019) with 5 participants. Thanks to Steven Owers for arranging this. Besides the footpath work carried out by Joan and Ian (reported separately) several of us have recce'd and reviewed a series of walks entitled the "Witham Walks". These are a series published in leaflet form several years ago and now reprinted by the Witham. The leaflets are available from the Witham in an attractive form with photos, and feature walks local to Barnard Castle. Thanks are due to those members who did the recce's and in some cases rewrote the instructions comprehensively for some of the walks. We have received an acknowledgement from the Witham for our input.

Thanks are due to Maggie and Richard for setting up a Blog on the website. This AGM was announced on the blog for example and Maggie posted several blogs during the summer. Any member can post a blog if they wish by asking Maggie. Lynda is now responsible for posting walks on the website.

I am grateful to all the walk leaders who have led walks in this difficult year. It has been a great effort. We would welcome anybody who fancies leading a walk and help is available from friendly experienced leaders.

Sadly June has decided to leave the committee and we thank her for her contribution.

Finally I wish to thank the committee for their support and contributions.

Gordon Selley
Chair

The AGM proceeded with the Treasurer's report which was accepted by the meeting, followed by the Footpath Officer's report.

The following Officers and Committee were proposed, seconded and elected:

Chairman	Gordon Selley
Treasurer	Lynda Bares
Secretary	Pauline Fawcett
Membership Secretary	Christine Hughes
Footpaths Officer	Ian Martin
Webmaster	Maggie Donnelly
Minutes	Frances Walker

Other Committee Members: Joan Martin, Maureen Raw, Caroline Taukulis, Tom Vlaming

The meeting concluded with heartfelt thanks to Richard Hughes for all his work on the web site and the walks programme.

Catching up with how **Joan and Ian** have survived two lockdowns and all the restrictions in between, Joan writes:

Rumour has it that people like to read my reports in the Teesdale Mercury, so I have been tasked with writing a bit of nonsense for this Newsletter!! Well not really.

Anyway, here goes!! I guess like Ian and I you are all fed up with this invisible enemy. However, like everyone else we have just had to grin and bear it and hope that we don't all end up in the madhouse. During the first lockdown we did variations on the same old walks starting from home. Eventually we ventured a bit further afield in the summer to the wilds of Middleton or Bowes. As there was nothing coming from County Hall about Footpath Diversions we reported several footpath problems from our local walks.

We met Donna and Judith for a walk from Piercebridge and were pleased to see a nice gate had replaced a difficult stile near to Cliff Hall. When group walks started we did a few Wednesday walks for the group. We weren't sure whether anyone would be interested in a very short walk on the Steel road but we had a nice little group.

We had a few more when we climbed onto Knitsley Fell, and also on the Hamsterly Forest Walk. The largest group was when we did a strange circular walk around Middleton. What a pity we had to social distance and no tea and cake afterwards. Still it gave people a chance to see friends they hadn't seen for months.

I really should have had lots of spare time, but the months seem to have flown past. I have been doing a Newsletter for the GSK Retired Staff Club about every six weeks or so. I have kept them entertained with some of my mishaps, such as when I walked slap bang into a road sign in Cotherstone, ending up with a large bump on the forehead and a nice black eye. Then recently using our stairs as a Helter Skelter in the middle of the night which ended up with some very painful ribs. Ian has spent many hours sitting in the car while I have visited various hospitals and dentists, because of course he wasn't able to go in with me. I am not sure whether I have become more careless or accident prone since I got older. Years ago Dr. Robertson called me a "tough old stick", as I keep fighting to live another day.

. A date for your Diary

I know it's a long way off, but in mid October 2021, Ian and I will celebrate our Diamond Wedding. Hopefully by then we will be able to celebrate. I plan on organising a similar sort of thing as our Ruby Wedding and Golden Wedding celebrations. This will be an afternoon walk followed by a buffet meal. More details and invitations will go out at a later date, but I thought it was something for us all to look forward to in 2021. Therefore if you can, will you keep **Saturday October 16th 2021** free, so that we can have a great day together.

Anyway, Ian and I (and I am sure everyone else), look forward to getting back to something like normal in 2021. Best wishes everyone.

Joan and Ian

So, we have a choice of two walks to look forward to on **Saturday 19th December** - (don't forget to book with the leader – full details of both will be on the **Walks** page of the website).

And put **Saturday 16th October 2021** in your new diary too. It seems a long way off but with a bit of luck there may be the chance for a few more events between then and now.

Merry Christmas and a very Happy New Year.