

CHAIRMAN'S CHAT – Christmas 2016

Phil Guest

I am writing this following our very successful AGM held at the 'Ministry of Yoga' in Crewe - a location well worth visiting not only for the fascinating engineering but also for the yoga and pilates lessons available there.

At the AGM all of our current committee agreed to continue in their roles and we have been able to replace earlier leavers with members who are new to our committee and who, I am sure, will make a significant contribution. I am always most grateful to our committee members who do sterling work for the group but rarely get a thank you - so here is mine!

We were fortunate in obtaining an excellent speaker from the Cheshire Search and Rescue who told us about how they started their organisation, their training, professionalism and the fact that they receive only voluntary financial support. (See a more detailed report later in this newsletter.) He went away with a generous donation from our 'whip round' and I have since received a big thank you from them for our support on the night. AGM's are worth attending!

The year has seen so much change. On the world stage there's been the Brexit decision and all the resulting political upheaval followed a short time later by an unexpected choice for the next President of the United States. Closer to home, for our group the introduction of the 'taster' walks has significantly increased our exposure to the public and shown people the delights of walking and in particular with a group. I have thanked Eileen before for her initiative and will do so again now. Next year we will be including the 'tasters' unchanged in format into our group programme, as alternative short walks to complement our regular weekend walks. I hope that as a consequence the people who came on the 'tasters' will realise that it is a Ramblers Group who are providing their recreation and will choose to invest in membership.

We now provide over two hundred led walks each year - at weekends, mid week, and monthly lunch and summer evening pub walks. These need LEADERS and because we have for differing reasons recently lost some of our stalwarts, we must find their replacements. Leading walks is neither difficult nor frightening but some members need to be confident that they know how and what is required to provide a 'led' walk. To that end, we have arranged to gather at Barthomley Village Hall on Saturday 14th January when I hope that members who want to know more about leading, and our current group of leaders who can provide mentoring and guidance, will meet to achieve the aim of MORE LEADERS.

I wish you all a Happy Christmas and New Year and I look forward to seeing both old and new faces on Saturday 14th January next year - put it in your diary NOW.

Committee

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In the June Newsletter, we said Au Revoir to the Smiths. Carole also pays tribute to them and their contribution to the Group:

The last six months have seen us lose the services of a few walk leaders, not least those of David and Margaret Smith who moved to Surrey to be closer to family. David and Margaret must have led hundreds of walks over the years and their departure is a big loss to the group. Several of us gathered at the Bear's Paw in Warmingham to pay tribute to them. It was one those occasions when only an ode would do - and they liked it, so here it is!

David and Margaret Smith.
An Ode.

You've led us on some terrific walks in Cheshire and beyond
Some long, some short, some middlin' through forest and by pond(s)
Up hill, down dale you took us in good weather and in bad
And with the kind of forward planning that makes all walkers glad.

For years you have been stalwarts of this ever changing group
And way back you rescued it from disappearing in the gloom
You've stood up for what was right and spoken in its cause
And kept at bay the forces which might have broken down the doors.

You've organised holidays and served on committees too
Always with good humour though you had so much to do
And now we are wondering quite how we're going to cope
Without your walks and knowledge - we may just have to mope.

But the one thing you can be sure of in these uncertain times
Is that every single one of us who've enjoyed your walks and climbs
Wishes you all the very best in your relocation to Surrey
And that you'll walk the fields and paths without every having to hurry.

We hope the sun will shine upon you and whatever rain is light
And your boots are like winged chariots as you enjoy each new found site
We shall all miss you greatly and more than you'll ever know
But we wish you good health and great happiness as on your way you go.

Carole Bentley

FROM YOUR COMMITTEE

Cheshire Search and Rescue Carole Bentley

Members who attended the AGM in November gave an enthusiastic response to a presentation by a member of Cheshire Search and Rescue (CSAR), a group of volunteers whose motto is 'Professional in all but pay'. Anthony Horrigan is one of about 65 members of CSAR who are on call 24 hours a day, 365 days a year and are called out by the police when their specialist rescue help is required. Their main role is searching for missing or vulnerable people across Cheshire but they are also called on to help with major incidents, crime scene preservation, the recovery of bodies and to assist neighbouring mountain rescue teams.

The group came together in 2004 following the disappearance of a teenage girl in Warrington and at the start had nothing more in the way of equipment than torches and high visibility jackets. Today the team is extremely well trained and equipped with, among other things, a control vehicle, two ambulances and three sniffer dogs.

The members come from all walks of life - medical, police, commerce, military, music etc - and they receive regular specialist training. Their instructors are qualified professionals from other Search and Rescue and Mountain Rescue members, Cheshire Police, Cheshire Fire and Rescue, and healthcare providers. They train every Tuesday evening and also attend day and weekend courses throughout the year. All new members must attend regular training sessions after which they must pass a Search Technician course and Basic Trauma and Critical Care course before being added to the call out register. Because of the large numbers of rivers, canals and lakes in Cheshire they will also have specialist training in water rescues.

CSAR is a charity and receives no government funding, so the very dedicated volunteers also get involved in fundraising activities as well as paying a £10 a month membership fee.

Who could fail to be impressed?

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Treasurer - Philip Lund

The Group had a small surplus of £66 in the year to 30 September, finishing the year with a balance of £1,295. However this gives rather more cover over expenditure than Ramblers HQ expects and so, for the coming year, our funding from HQ is to be the basic amount based on our membership. Thus there is almost certain to be a deficit this year, leading to a more normal level of reserves by year end.

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Membership Secretary - Hazel Wallis

We started the year (from November 2015 to October 2016) with 198 members with 4 payment pending. At the end of this period we have 202 members with 3 payment pending.

This may seem as though there has been little movement, but we have had 26 new people join the group. Some of these new members joining due to the hard work of Eileen who organised and ran a taster programme for this year. Not only has this resulted in new members it also raised awareness of The Ramblers organisation.

Many thanks also to Helen, for submitting details of the walks to local papers. 'The Link has been particularly successful.

It is inevitable that we will lose members due to age, health or changes in peoples' circumstances, so to maintain our membership is definitely a success story.

Annual Dinner

As you will, by now, know the Annual Dinner is to be held on Friday 20th January at the Crewe Golf Club, Haslington.

Please let me have your meal choices (Starter and Main Course) and payment by mid December. Cheques made payable to South Cheshire Ramblers.

You will find a [link to the menu](#) on the SCR website – Home Page, Diary section.

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**Publicity -
Helen Lea**

Publicity works well. I submit the walks for each month to the Link Magazine and most people find this a useful point for information about the walks programme. The Chronicle also includes a note on the forthcoming walks.

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**Footpaths Secretary -
Alan Edwards**

DEREGULATION ACT 2015

Mike Taylor, Rights of Way Manager for Cheshire East, gave an update on the Deregulation Act 2015 at the Cheshire East Rights Of Way Consultative Group which I attended in October.

Mike reported that he would be attending an Institute of Public Rights of Way Officers meeting next week and hopefully would have more details on the Act after this. It was thought that the legislation would become into force next year.

The new Act would have resource implications for the Public Rights of Way team and It was reported that the proposed way of dealing with Definitive Map Modification Orders and Path Order would have an impact on the work of the Public Rights of Way Team. **The Act proposed that Public Path Orders would become a duty rather than being discretionary, as at present, and they would have to be determined within a 4 month timescale. There would also be a presumption in favour of the application and therefore clear definitions of circumstances and grounds for approving and refusing applications would be required.** This would have an effect on how applications were managed.

Timescales were also to be introduced for dealing with Definitive Map Modification Orders, with an initial assessment having to be completed within 3 months of receipt of the application. Review of those applications based on historical evidence could take longer than this. The applicant would have the right to go the Magistrates Court for determination of their application.

**Website Editor
Jim Eckersley**

The website is our primary way of communicating our activities and walks programme to members and people interested in walking.

If you have anything you would like to add to the site or suggestions, please let me know.

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They were looking at the cost and charges for dealing with diversions, especially those associated with planning applications. Alternative ways of working were being explored, such as the use of consultants/agents for Path Orders.'

Recently Cheshire East rights of way officers trialled allowing Qualified Agents to carry out most of the work involving 4 footpath diversion orders. Three worked well with some problems with the diversion of Goostrey 12 footpath.

Lessons learnt and better communication should prevent problems in the future. This should help to reduce the backlog that currently exists. In my opinion the more footpaths that can be diverted away from farmyards/industrial sites the better as they could be closed on health and safety concerns in the future if no suitable diversion is available

PATHWATCH

Here is some information from Ramblers HQ

The launch

"We want to give the next phase of Pathwatch a great launch. We are planning a media launch stunt during the week of 14 – 20 November to bring attention to the [report](#)*, encourage people to download the new Pathwatch app, and get people signed up to our new campaign. The stunt will involve some of our path maintenance teams tackling path problems on Offa's Dyke, showcasing the wonderful work Ramblers do to protect our path network – work we want to build on across England and Wales."

* follow the link: <http://www.ramblers.org.uk/get-involved/the-big-pathwatch/the-state-of-our-paths-report.aspx>

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TASTER WALKS – WHAT’S NEXT ?

Eileen Dorman

Taster Walks – Just Turn Up on the first Sunday of the month at 2.00pm, meeting in a local area and join a short led walk of not more than 4 miles.

I was very pleased to report back to the Committee in October on the success of the 1-year try out of Taster Walks.

Walkers continue to Turn Up for a variety of reasons on a Sunday afternoon and enjoy the opportunities of walking and exploring the local areas safely with knowledgeable, friendly Leaders and group members. Numbers have been in excess of 20 for most of the Taster Walks and more than 15 on some of the others.

The walks have been typical of any Ramblers walk; footpaths, fields, stiles, woods, mud, sunshine, rain and ended at cafes, pubs and church (actually tea and cakes in church – and all of us too polite to take some extra cake home!). Once again a BIG thank you to the Leaders, these walks wouldn't have happened without you.



Several people signed up to Ramblers as full members and are already joining longer, more challenging walks. Some have been along to the easier Thursday evening pub and morning walks. Many continue with the short Sunday afternoon walks and appreciate the choice, particularly at the weekend.

My recommendation to the Committee was to continue the choice of a short afternoon walk, on the first Sunday of the month and include them in the regular programme.

And the Committee presented me with my next challenge!

Hereafter known as SHORT WALKS, they will be included in the regular programme – if I could find willing Leaders for the next 6 months – January to June 2017.

I can only say have a look at the next programme. Each month, as well as the longer weekend walks, there is also the option of a SHORT WALK on the first Sunday afternoon.

I thank the Leaders who have offered these walks (without too much persuasion) and **I pass on the challenge!** Would you offer to lead and continue the custom of Sunday afternoon walk?

Attend the training in January and find out more about Leading a Walk – start off small and take on a short walk. There will be dates on the programme for July to December 2017. I am sure the Programme Coordinators would welcome your contributions.

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CAFE WALK AND DRIVE

Brenda and David Roberts

Wow! A Thursday walk, not a pub walk, but a cafe walk! The whole group thought the food was excellent and we were so well looked after by the very attentive staff of Dearnford Lake Cafe.

The 16 of us started the walk at Brown Moss. Brown Moss with its marshes, pools, heathland and woodland supports a great variety of wildlife as it flourishes here. It includes great spotted woodpeckers, jays, and great crested newts. In the summer, large numbers of froglets can be seen making a mass exodus from the pools. Whilst dragonflies are glimpsed hunting around the ponds and woodland edges.



This 32 hectare site is one of Shropshire's most important places for plants, with over 200 species of native wildflowers, including the rare floating water plantain, possibly the rarest plant in Britain and a collection of other wetland plants found in few other sites in England. Because of its wildlife interest Brown Moss is designated as a Local Nature Reserve, Sight of Special Scientific interest and it is a Special Area of Conservation.

We started our walk from the Car Park at Brown Moss, eventually returning to our cars to take a short drive to Dearnford Lake.

The beautiful Lake and features at Dearnford began as a result of a new road - the Whitchurch Bypass.



The new road needed sand and gravel and the sight was identified to supply these, on land owned by the Bebbington family at Dearnford. The extraction work which began in 1991 created a gaping hole and this was seen by the Bebbington's as an opportunity to create a Lake. Extensive landscaping took place to create islands, shallows, deep bays and gently sloping banks, which were then planted with grass and wild flowers.

Following the success of our lunchtime experience Brenda and I decided to see what else we could create using Dearnford Lake as a base for another activity. We have planned a walking and driving Treasure Hunt which includes 4 local villages, to which you will drive and park and then on foot try to discover the answers to the clues. We return to Dearnford Lake for an optional lunch, where Brenda and I will see who scored the highest.

For all those interested in joining us for this event please join us at Dearnford Lake at 9am on Thursday 16th February for a drink together or an optional breakfast, if you wish, followed by a briefing about the Treasure Hunt. If you would like more information, contact us 07812 893896. We do need to know in advance, if you are coming, as we will have to print the Treasure Hunt clues and maps ahead of the day.

Care of Walking Boots, Courtesy of Stone Ramblers, Jim Kinnibrugh

Leather boots

Leather has three enemies and in ascending order of threat they are Acid, Drying Out and The Owner! Much walking in this country is on wet upland acid soils so wash off all dirt at the end of each day.



The muddiest SCR walk of 2016. Who was the Leader ?

Leather is skin and your boots need to be treated in rather the same way that a woman looks after hers.

Walking through wet grass puts your boots through a continuous car-wash which is a very efficient way of removing the natural oils from leather. Cracking, shrinking, stiffening and greater porosity will follow and the adhesives employed to fix on the sole will fail in the end.

A saddlery shop will supply saddle soap, leather preservative like Hydrolan (a moisturiser) and rejuvenator like Gold Label. A very thorough wash with saddle soap about twice a year will neutralise the acids. Set about such a maintenance session when you know you will not need your boots for some days to come so as to get as much preservative into the leather as it will take. Remove the laces and clean the boots first then scrub with a stiff brush, saddle soap and water; rinse off and repeat with very little water so as to produce a thick soapy foam. Do not rinse but allow to dry naturally with the mildly alkaline soap residue remaining on the leather.

Once dry, brush off the dried soap thoroughly and soak the leather again to open its pores and allow the preservative to sink in rapidly putting back what the long distance path takes out. Be generous with this treatment using your fingers to rub it in and paying particular attention to the toe and to the part just at the bottom of the laced portion where the boot flexes most. You will see the preservative disappear quicker in these places so go back and put more on. Leave for a couple of days so that it soaks in - remarkably such materials will not waterproof leather so now comes the final treatment.

I have relied on Nikwax for thirty years. The original type, worked in with the fingers has exactly the tenacity to resist the "Car-Wash" effect for days on

end. Nikwax will soak in to a small degree and on a long trip is worth taking with you to sustain the protection on the toes, across the part which flexes and along the seams particularly where the gusseted, laced part is stitched to the upper.

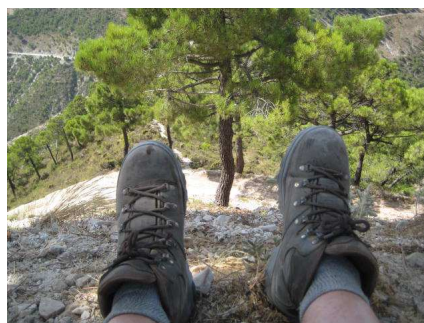
Leather/ fabric combination boots

Goretex and its imitators are sandwiches of an outer such as leather or woven nylon with a lining. Between these is a membrane of expanded Teflon which has pores so microscopically small that only water molecules can pass through. So the vapour from your hot feet will be driven through while the water droplets cannot penetrate from outside.

To ensure water continues to form beads on the outside you must proof the surface much as you would polish a car – this goes for many breathable jackets as well! A purpose made spray waterproofer by Nikwax or one of the outdoor proofing manufacturers will do the trick. Remember the car-wash effect and keep it proofed. Remember the Acid and keep it clean and the leather parts moisturised as well. If the effect of Hydrolan on suede or nubuck offends you go back to the Nikwax display and find the purpose made product for that application. Follow these regimes and your boot's principal enemy will be vanquished.

OK, so you didn't do any of this and your boots are showing signs of cracking, what to do? Now reach for the rejuvenator. Riders know that if leather cracks the reins can break or the girth strap give way. At a gallop that can cost you your life so the stuff they use is heavy duty indeed. I use Elico Gold Label Leather Rejuvenator. It looks like a cross between runny honey and axle grease (no, I haven't tasted it!) and it works miracles on dry, hard, cracked leather. Always, always clean the leather first with water and use the saddle soap treatment to make sure the acid is neutralised. This will also start the softening. Apply the rejuvenator according to the instructions on the tub. If necessary, repeat.

See also www.nikwax.co.uk and www.gore-tex.co.uk



Whose SCR boots are these ... ?

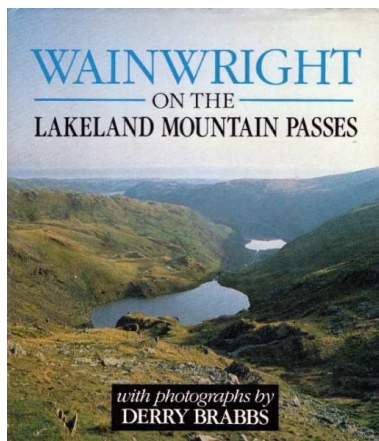
Lakeland Mountain Passes Philip Lund

In *Wainwright on the Lakeland Mountain Passes*, AW defined passes as 'skyline gaps or depressions that permit ease of crossing from one valley to another'. This definition is wider than most others, such as 'a narrow passage through mountains' in which more emphasis is placed on passing through a gap between higher ground. AW's looser definition is why his book describes no fewer than forty-nine Lakeland passes, far more than this recent reader of the book had ever imagined existed.

Indeed, for a long time my list of Lakeland passes would probably have been limited to the seven crossed by what AW called 'motor roads': Dunmail Raise and the Kirkstone Pass on A roads; the trio linking the Derwent valley to the Buttermere valley (Whinlatter Pass, Newlands Hause and Honister Pass) and the infamous two – Wrynose and Hardknott on the route between Little Langdale and Eskdale. My appreciation of others was raised when doing two long-distance walks crossing Lakeland – the Coast to Coast Walk (going over the Loft Beck crossing, Greenup Edge, Grisedale Hause and the Straits of Riggindale) and the Cumbrian Way (over Stake Pass and Skiddaw Forest).

These walks stimulated my interest in the subject of passes, with increasing age perhaps also playing a part. In the Introduction to his book, AW, after distinguishing between fellwalkers and 'visitors ... content to stroll along the lovely valleys and besides the lakes', identified an 'intermediate class of walkers'. They are ones 'who admire mountain scenery and favour the loneliness of the wild recesses, yet because of disability or lack of energy in their later years cannot aspire to the ultimate summits and dare not venture too far upwards'.

Well, anyone who crosses all the passes described in the book may not cross many summits but will certainly venture into high, remote and challenging places – for example Mickledore, at 2650ft, which AW described as 'a situation of awesome grandeur and amidst highly exciting rock scenery ... the most impressive place in Lakeland'. Also of note is Nan Bield, which AW ranks as amongst the finest of Lakeland passes – 'delicately sculptured, narrow at its crest and steeply descending on both sides'. Both of these are relatively high in Lakeland terms and almost a third of the listed passes attain a height of at least 2000 feet. One of these is the Straits of Riggindale: AW describes the problems of a direct descent into Riggindale and states that 'The Straits form only half a pass, and therefore are no pass at all.'



The book reveals something of AW's character and opinions – an expected disdain of motor roads and motorists, and criticisms of walkers who cut across zigzag paths and of those who introduce steps into paths ('incongruous, out of place') or build what he considers to be an unnecessary superfluity of cairns. A note after the Introduction includes an unsurprising aversion to metric measurements. He gives height in feet and distances in miles 'despite the current regrettable practice of quoting them in foreign metres and kilometres to which the author, a jingoistic Englishman, refuses to comply'. More surprising are some revelations in the Grisedale Hause chapter, notably 'an impossible ambition to be the first man to reach the top of the highest mountain in the world'.

Wainwright on the Lakeland Mountain Passes, was first published by Michael Joseph Ltd in 1989, one of AW's large-format books. It provides a description of the passes he identified as such, with guidance on crossing them but understandably, given the nature of the book, not in the detail for which his classic guides are renowned. Each of the forty-nine chapters includes a clear map of the route involved, but the book does not include an overall map showing the locations of the passes.

An excellent feature of the book are the splendid photographs taken by AW's collaborator on the book, Derry Brabbs, which accompany each of the chapters. There are 276 of these, over 50 full-page, spanning the relevant 222 numbered pages. I found the last of these, of Red Tarn, particularly evocative and not just because I was sad to reach the end of this fine guide to a perhaps somewhat overlooked feature of the Lakeland landscape.



Red Tarn *photograph by Derry Brabbs*

Although the book is out-of-print, second-hand copies may be obtained quite easily. If it is not already in your book collection, I recommend that you seek out a copy.

Philip Lund
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