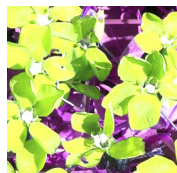
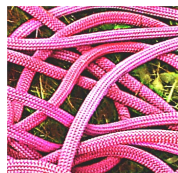
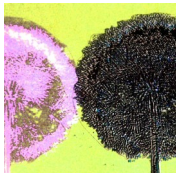


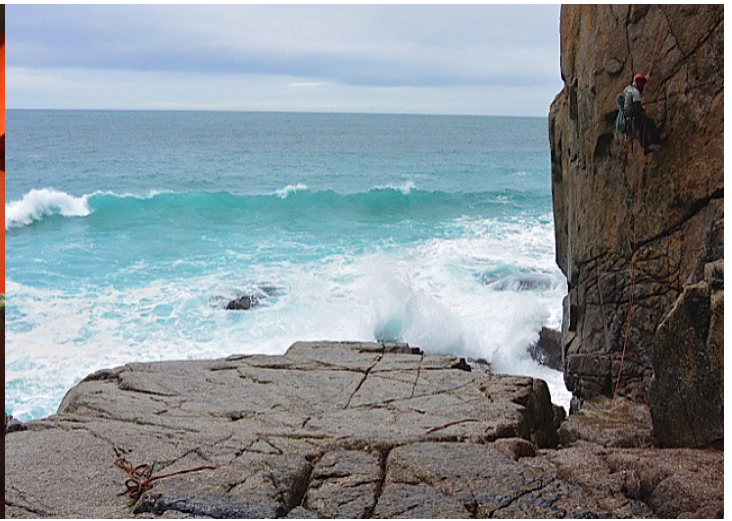


## red rope bulletin 28 *spring 2015*



*Oh the summer time is coming and the trees are sweetly blooming,  
with the wild mountain thyme all around the blooming heather.  
Will ye go lassie, go? And we'll all go together, to pull wild mountain  
thyme from around the blooming heather. Will ye go lassie, go?*

Painting, Tracy Levine/ Text, Robert Burns/ Dandelion print, Anne Percival



## ...a day on the golden granite of bosigran

Well OK, maybe 'golden' is taking it a bit far, particularly on a breezy, grey October Sunday but nonetheless it felt good to be back at Bosigran after what was probably a 25 year absence. Nothing had changed. The same hard crystalline granite, the same grey green lichen, the same guano from the sea birds and below us the same seas crashing onto the rock ledges far below. The only signs of human activity were the faint tracks running through the gorse and heather to the cliff tops, and the slight polished areas on the rock where all those climbers had been before.

Dave Fisher and I had nipped off after breakfast to see if we could climb Variety Show, a route I had done over 25 years before. I love the communality of Red Rope, meeting old friends, the shared meals and the evening chat around the table but I also love getting away from all the noise and clamour of the hut, the painful morning meetings when we try to decide who's doing what for the day, and the trip treasurer, so often with their head in their hands!

So it always feels exciting to be out the door when that's over and the day's adventure can begin. Today's involved a quick ten minutes down to the coast path then a tricky approach contouring across the hillside to cross Commando Ridge, then a couple of short abseils firstly down a broken gully then another down an eighty foot rock face onto a large ledge that at high tide would be several feet under water. Big turquoise rollers were hitting the cliff below, and the pools of water on the ledge and the tang of seaweed reminded us that our time was finite. As we pulled the ropes down we knew that the only way home was to climb back up the cliff. There was an easier option if Variety Show proved too taxing, and for now we had about 4 hours before the sea returned.

I think I must have been about 30 when I last climbed this route. I had vague memories of moving effortlessly up the steep wall, split with a perfect crack line, holds appearing just when I needed them, protection slotting in just when

required and arriving on the ledge exhilarated and with energy to spare. This time it was a slightly different story. My body seemed heavy, my arms tired after only 30 feet of climbing, with another sixty five feet above before the belay ledge. This time it would be an exercise in energy conservation! I'm glad it was only Dave watching.

After much struggling and cursing, and with arms numb from too much lactic acid, I eventually crawled onto the ledge. There was some exhilaration but more a sense of relief that it was over and quiet satisfaction that I hadn't fallen off. I could now relax while Dave followed up behind me. As the minutes went by, and with Dave's quiet expletives and groans rising towards me, I thought back on the many times I'd been in this situation over the years, on some ledge, on a cliff, in the sun or the rain, far from my daily preoccupations; for me there's almost nothing better.

Dave arrived grinning wildly. 'Thanks Tim, I think that's the hardest route I've ever done!'. I could see that he had 'enjoyed' himself as much as I had. By the time we finished the second pitch the day was gone and so we quickly packed up and headed back to the hut to meet the walkers and prepare for the long drive home. **TB**

*Tim's two photos are opposite top left and middle row right. The others are from the 2013 SW trip to Bosigran, which was shared with a Danish group.*



# climbers: risk management and responsibilities

Bristol/SW Red Rope has the biggest concentration of climbers in the club, with about 50% of regional members being climbers, and a fifteen year tradition of organising climbing activities.

We've been using the same approach to running our climbing for quite a while, and for several reasons we decided that we should have a review of good practice. After all, risk and the management of risk is at the heart of climbing, and so taking a fresh look at things every few years should be a given.

Most of the region's most active climbers were present when Tim Bray presented a series of proposals covering all areas of current climbing practice.

A major change is that we are asking those who want to join the club to demonstrate that they have the relevant skills and equipment. This brings us into line with other clubs. We expect that this attention to safety will be welcomed by those who are serious about going climbing.

Many of us started in the days when a novice had a long apprenticeship climbing slippery V Diffs in mountain areas. Things have changed vastly since then and our guidelines reflect the changes in climbing practice and society's attitude to risk.

We'd like these guidelines to be used by the club across the country, and we would want them emblazoned across our website and to have them incorporated into our publicity.

At that meeting a bigger question was asked which we couldn't answer: 'Why would a climber want to join Red Rope anyway? What are the club's unique selling points that might attract them?' Answers to [BristolAndSouthWest@redrope.org.uk](mailto:BristolAndSouthWest@redrope.org.uk) please!

**Colin Knowles**

The BMC Participation Statement states that:

*"The BMC recognises that climbing and mountaineering are activities with a danger of personal injury or death. Participants in these activities should be aware of and accept these risks and be responsible for their own actions"*

Having said that, experienced leaders in the club who take out novices also have a duty of care to those novices. (See 'Risk', BMC Club Guidelines.) Anyone taking out a novice climber must ensure that the route they choose is not only well within their own capability but within the physical and mental capacity of the novice. Leaders need to bear this principle in mind when selecting routes.

In an effort to raise standards amongst climbers, particularly when it comes to taking responsibility for novices, RR Bristol & SW require the following:

1. We want new members to develop the skills and confidence to lead climbs as quickly as possible. Red Rope can provide you with guidance regarding suitable equipment and appropriate training.
2. Red Rope can help you when starting your climbing 'career' by providing companionship and support, initially on indoor climbing walls, but we cannot provide formal training or instruction. When making the transition from indoor climbing walls to outdoor climbing we will require novices/new members to attend a course with a recognised provider. The Plas y Brenin two day course 'Get started rock climbing', or equivalent, would be a good starting point. RR can give advice about training and any available funding. Alternatively, a novice can be accepted into the group if a senior member can vouch for their level of experience.
3. Novice members must have appropriate equipment. RR will give advice about gear.
4. Experienced climbers wishing to join RR will be asked to provide a list of routes they have led in the last three years and any training they have attended. This will be reviewed by the Climbing Co-ordinator(s) and others.
5. If novices, new members or any other member has concerns about the competence or safe practice of any leader RR strongly encourages them to raise those concerns. Any leader who is concerned about the suitability of novices/new members should raise that with the novice in the first instance, or with the Climbing Co-ordinator if that is not possible or appropriate.
6. All leaders in the club, if they have not done so in the last five years, are strongly encouraged to attend a one day training course to reflect on their rope work and safety skills. The co-ordinator will maintain a log of climbers' training experience.
7. RR Bristol & SW will maintain an incident log to record problems that caused concern to members on meets. Any member can log an incident and it will be the duty of the Climbing Co-ordinator to review the incident report, discuss its contents with those involved, attempt to draw lessons from the report and mention all these occurrences to the officers' meeting. (These guide lines could be reviewed annually.)

**Tim Bray**

*This is an edited version of the statement. To see the original go to [www.redrope.org.uk](http://www.redrope.org.uk)*

## LMC huts update

**Cae Ysgubor Hut in Beddgelert, Snowdonia**  
Lancashire Mountaineering Club's new hut is built! (photos right) The hut had its grand opening on 4th October, 2014. I was there as RR Hut Liaison Officer, and can report that it was a grand day and the sun shone. Eric Jones (legendary local climber) and Lord Dafydd Elis-Thomas (Plaid Cymru, Welsh Assembly M.P.) cut the ribbon.

The exterior is now magnificently finished in local stone, with about £140,000 having been spent on materials and external contractors - not forgetting thousands of hours of volunteer labour from LMC club members. An impressive amount of external work has been completed to provide paved pathways, steps and ramps. However, work is still required to erect fencing, provide gates, surface the parking areas and provide an outside storage/utility facility. One of the downstairs bedrooms is still being used as a tool store and LMC still only have planning permission for 12 beds, though an application is in to increase this to 20.

The internal works are largely finished and the hut is usable. Unfortunately, as of Feb 2015, getting all the necessary Building Control certificates (without which the insurance is invalid) is preventing LMC from being able to let it for hire. Urgent efforts are being made by LMC to resolve these issues.

**The Loft Hut by Blea Tarn, Little Langdale**  
LMC obtained planning permission for the Byre (i.e. the lower storey) some two years ago but the National Trust are still discussing the renewal of lease and the rent. (N.B. LMC do have security of tenure.) They have, nonetheless, decided to continue with some improvements of the existing Loft, including a new water heater and a new door assembly, complete with a modern electronic lock, as at Cae Ysgubor.

**Pete Kos**

## bulletin@redrope.org.uk

Many thanks once again to all contributors, particularly award-winning landscape artist Tracy Levine who very kindly allowed us to use her beautiful 'Purple Heaven' on the front cover. You can see more of her work at [www.tracylevine.co.uk](http://www.tracylevine.co.uk) It's also been good to be able to feature more articles to do with climbing.

The deadline for the next bulletin is the end of June. It is helpful if material is sent comfortably before-hand, hint, hint!

**Happy trails, David Symonds**



## north yorks august 2015

Over the years I have often been asked why there isn't a regular summer national trip. We book Scottish huts outside of the summer midge season and I've always thought that people can be busy in July and August with family holidays, festivals, allotments and relaxing. However, last summer I saw a bunkhouse in the quiet village of Rosedale Abbey and decided to book a trip for the same time the next year, when the heather is in flower and the air still warm. We have booked 3 nights over the August bank holiday weekend.

There are great walks on the moors and at the coast. Some walks brought back memories of Coast to Coasting and I was delighted to be able to re-order my celebration pub meal in Robin Hood's Bay - veggie sausage, chips, peas and gravy in a giant Yorkshire pudding! It's also a great cycling area, with miles of scenic tracks.

The bunkhouse is an outdoor education centre owned by North Yorks County Council. It is well equipped & comfortable with a modern kitchen, electric showers, small bedrooms for 2 and 3 and dormitories for 6 and 8. Further details can be found at [Yorkshirebunkhouse.co.uk](http://Yorkshirebunkhouse.co.uk)

**Becky Bates National Trips Secretary**

“Young Turks are needed to boost club numbers!” That was the conclusion of a presentation about membership at September’s AGM. Our club is not shrinking at present, but it’s hardly expanding in leaps and bounds either!

Some recruitment variables are beyond our control; consider the upsurge in cycling due to the post-Olympic “Bradley Wiggins Effect”. Others however, are not and it’s up to us to address them, lest Red Rope fizzles away to nothing. Some changes could be made to increase membership and/or trip occupancy with virtually no outlay.

People looking for a club or activity are most likely to go to the web first, *especially* if they’re young. An easy-to-find, well-designed website with good-quality, structured, content and meta-data should be the priority to ensure high ranking in search engine listings. Good quality photos of members in action will show others what they are missing!

- \* The two obvious groups for a socialist walking club to recruit from are socialists and outdoor enthusiasts! Articles in left-leaning publications (e.g. New Statesman) will reach a small but sympathetic audience; posters and leaflets will be of limited impact if you’re unfortunate enough to live in a Tory heartland!
- \* Trips to places like Norfolk have been over-subscribed, which was unexpected given the county’s highest point, Beacon Hill, is a whopping 103m above sea level - you can attain almost the same altitude on a Norwich Cathedral tower tour! Norfolk proved popular because it was somewhere *new* and our bunkhouse was more comfortable than the usual BMC hut. Easy terrain appealed to members who for reasons of health/age/fitness etc. are not able to do the big peaks they once did. Why stop with Norfolk? What about Dartmoor? Yorkshire? Northumberland?
- \* Red Rope’s origins as a climbing and walking club shouldn’t prevent it evolving into something more. Shifting emphasis towards more general outdoor pursuits could broaden our appeal. Many members already enjoy interests such as canoeing and cycling and trips could be built around such alternate activities.
- \* There is perhaps a case for making contact with expanding outdoor groups and asking how they are doing it!

- \* Once we have a new member on a trip, we need to be more proactive in making them feel welcome. It’s always great to catch up with old friends but it can be even better to make new ones.
- \* Identifying change is just half the job; we then have to make required adjustments in an efficient manner and perhaps look at whether the “committee” approach is always the best.
- \* If we do not follow up on lapsed members to determine why they don’t renew their subscription then maybe it’s time to start. Without hard data the debate will be merely speculative and it will be difficult to engage in informed change.

Whether Red Rope flies or fizzles in future is down to us. As for those Young Turks, Red Rope should do its best to recruit them before UKIP sweep to power in May and send them all back! **SS**

## website latest

The new website is well underway. Janet Saunders and Bronwen Reid from Coventry and Warwickshire region have stepped in to complete this and a starter site was shown at the November National Committee meeting. The site that was developed last year using Drupal has now been dropped due to numerous problems. The new site is now being created using Wordpress, a blogging tool that some members may be familiar with, which is relatively easy to use and cheaper to run.

The basic site is ready and content is steadily being added from the existing site, plus new content, so that hopefully the site will go live this spring. Each region will have their own basic page on the site, and regional authors will be able to add content and photos to their own page. There will, of course, be some help provided with this when the site is released. There are plans to include a members’ section and later an online joining method. If anyone would like further information please contact Janet on

[publicity@redrope.org.uk](mailto:publicity@redrope.org.uk)

## woodcraft folk

Woodcraft Folk, the national co-operative children and young people’s movement celebrates its 90<sup>th</sup> birthday this year. To become involved or make a donation visit <https://woodcraft.org.uk>. Red Rope held two successful AGMs at their Lockerbrook Centre in the Peak District a few years ago.

# rr agm gives clegg collywobbles! nigel green



Nick Clegg, key conspirator of this hated Con/Dem government could not believe the headlines of his favourite newspaper, the Daily Turncoat, on the morning of Monday 29<sup>th</sup> September 2014. He choked on his cornflakes as he saw that Red Rope, the Socialist Walking and Climbing Club, despite being formally inoperative had held yet another successful AGM the very weekend just gone, this time at the top notch Brecon Bunkhouse, South Wales, in wonderful walking country.

Clegg read that around 24 Red Ropers had arrived on the Friday evening. On Saturday evening they had a very good meal indeed – and plenty of drink – prepared by Tony and the Bristol group, which was followed by a talk from Carey Davies, Hill Walking Development Officer of the British Mountaineering Council. The BMC does not just exist for ‘proper’ climbers and Carey’s talk was impressive. One highlight was when he mentioned his trip to the West Bank of occupied Palestine, where he walked with the only Palestinian rambling club. They had a nasty encounter with Israeli settlers, but managed to survive.

On the Sunday morning Red Rope held its business AGM. It was clear that Secretary Adrian and other officers were working hard with no paid help. Those present heard Red Rope has 284 members. The meeting received excellent reports from a variety of diligent officers. Understandably though, the Membership, Campaigns Officer and National Treasurer would like to step down at the next AGM and replacements must be found!

The hut in Beddgelert, run by the Lancashire Mountaineering Club, which Red Rope has access to, is virtually ready, the main issue being Building Regulations which still have to be signed off before the hut can be used.

Motions on banding calculations, whether off-spring should be considered dependents up to 21 and another calling for more flexibility when giving refunds to members who drop out of trips led to lively debate, but basically it was agreed the National Committee will consider the matter in more detail and where appropriate bring proposals to the next AGM. The whole banding system is being reviewed by the NC with the intention of reducing the number of bands from 8 to 5, with proposals to be voted on at the next the AGM.

It was stressed that Red Rope members need to get more involved in access campaigns, as rights of access always remain under threat. Training Officer Dermot frequently circulates info about BMC courses which can be partially subsidized by the club. Outdoor qualifications can also be undertaken and Dermot has found a good group of mountain trainers for Red Rope in the form of Lupine Outdoor Adventure, a workers’ cooperative. It is hoped that the website will be significantly revamped early in 2015, and Red Rope now has publicity ‘business cards’, leaflets and posters.

Nick Clegg sobbed even more at the disclosure that there had been a full day’s walking on the Saturday. Many Red Ropers had walked up to the breath-taking summit of the 2,260 foot Twmpa (Lord Hereford’s Knob) close to the eastern end of the Black Mountains, followed by the stepped ascent and superb views of the Dragon’s Back. Afterwards, there were well earned pints at the Dragon’s Back pub and on Sunday afternoon there was even some more walking.

This appeared too much for Clegg who shouted at his butler, “Oi! What were they doing up those mountains anyway?” “Probably looking for a suitable place to throw you off, sir. After all, Humphrey, who chaired the AGM so well, is widely believed to think that the Liberal Party should never be forgiven for what happened to Norman Scott’s dog. Now there’s a man who really knows his Monros from his Corbetts!” At this, Clegg started wailing again and ran from the room to make an urgent appointment with his clairvoyant.

So, the moral of this tale is that Red Rope AGMs are a wonderful experience. Don’t live a life without purpose like ministers from this Con/Dem rabble! Come to the Sept. 25-27, 2015 AGM instead. Meanwhile, above all *recruit* and give our membership a much needed boost. **NG**

The club has recently adopted a formal training policy with a current budget of £1000. The documents can be viewed on the current website in the resources section on the left hand side of the first page above food and recipes. The main elements of the policy are:

1. To provide a subsidy for any club members who attend a training course run either by the BMC ([www.thebmc.co.uk/club-training-courses-2015](http://www.thebmc.co.uk/club-training-courses-2015)) or the MCOFS ([www.mcofs.org.uk/events.asp](http://www.mcofs.org.uk/events.asp)). Any grant is paid after you have done the course and is subject to funds being available in the budget.

Bands A & B will receive a contribution of 50%.  
For Bands C & D the contribution will be 40%.  
For Band E the contribution will be 30%.  
For Bands F & G the contribution will be 20%.  
For Band H the contribution will be 10%.

2. To run subsidized training courses for members with varying levels of experience.

3. To provide information for club members on relevant outdoor courses and available grants such as the Future Leaders fund ([www.pyb.co.uk/future-leaders-fund.php](http://www.pyb.co.uk/future-leaders-fund.php)). Two club members have received grants of 75% towards the cost of the Summer Mountain Leadership and single pitch climbing courses at Plas y Brenin, (PYB) the mountaineering center in Snowdonia. Glenmore Lodge in Scotland has the Grainger fund to provide similar financial help. The club can help with any required references.

4. To encourage a debate within the club about skills levels and to provide guidance for members on the annual Scottish winter walking trip.

5. To encourage regions to run training courses at a local level. In London, 2 navigation courses have been run in Richmond Park for the past 2 years.

6. To encourage club members who wish to undertake a formal outdoor qualification.

7. To encourage attendance at the annual BMC training novice's seminar held at PYB, in Snowdonia every May. The next seminar has provisionally been fixed for 15 May 2015.

8. To apply to the BMC for grants to run courses for club members.

9. Any club member who attends a training course or receives a training grant has to sign a written undertaking to share their skills and knowledge with other club members.

The BMC has been helpful in providing financial support for training courses. I will be approaching the BMC for a grant to support the Mountain Skills course in May 2015 and for other training. This is dependent on members volunteering to organize such courses. I am hoping to hear about the training needs of climbers.

The course for experienced club members to be held in March 2015 appears to be quite popular. I would be interested to hear from others to see if there is sufficient demand to provide navigation courses.

The club has a training policy so that accidents can be prevented. All members are encouraged to develop their outdoor skills. I would hope that we can have a debate about training — the national committee are thinking of running a training needs survey. The policy is due to be renewed in June, so please send me any comments or suggestions: [training@redrope.org.uk](mailto:training@redrope.org.uk)

## The New Mountain Skills Course, May 2015

1. Lupine Outdoor Adventure has been asked by Red Rope to provide a female trainer to run the new Mountain Skills Course for the week-end of 8-10 May 2015 (3 nights). Lupine are a workers' co-operative who have already provided the club with quality training.

2. This course is aimed at walkers with a reasonable level of fitness who are interested in applying their countryside walking skills to the mountain environment. It is *not* for experienced mountain walkers but could be suitable for those members who would like to refresh their outdoor knowledge.

### 3. What does the course cover?

Skills in map and compass.  
Mountain weather forecasting.  
Movement on steep ground.  
Planning and preparation.  
Emergency procedures.  
Seasonal effects.  
Mountain environment.

4. The course has 19 hours of contact spread over two days with an evening session. It will be run as a national trip and places will be limited to 8.

5. Remember that you can cancel up to one month before the course and have your accommodation charges returned. If you give less notice you will lose your accommodation and training charges. You would need to have at least six months' RR membership to go on this course and not twelve months as stated in the training policy document on the club website.

6. The course costs the usual bed price per night for a week-end trip plus £20 to cover the training element. The BMC charges £85 for this course without the cost of food. Our charge is therefore great VFM!

7. For this year only the club will cover the £20 cost of registering with Mountain Training. Once registered you can register without charge to do other courses. You also receive a free book on mountain safety.

8. The club has booked the comfortable Ceunant Club hut in Nant Peris, Snowdonia for this event, which is next door to the Vaynol Arms! It is a similar course, at the same venue, as was described glowingly on page 11 of the last bulletin. Any enquires as above:

# walking the gorges of sw crete      pravin patel



We arrived late at night in Hania so it was a good job that Sherry had booked us a room close to the bus station as next morning we had an early bus out to Imbros and our first gorge. We travelled through olive groves to our destination where we were greeted by a wild, howling wind. However, once we had entered the gorge the wind dissipated and the weather got better as we lost altitude on our tramp towards the coast. We then opted to walk the coast road to Hora. The enclave was very welcome with its shaded seafront restaurants. Rather than walk the road section in the afternoon sun to Sweetwater beach we decided to take the local boat to Loutro. It was packed with people and their luggage, making it feel like a floating airport.

Loutro was idyllic - a haven in the surrounding heat. We managed to get a room overlooking the bay and stayed for 2 nights. Early next morning we set off for the dramatic Aradena Gorge, an excellent circuit trek via shepherds' villages and the plateau, with afternoon shade coming down the gorge. At the end of the day, rather than walk back, we got the water taxi to Loutro, particularly as Sarah was suffering from heat stroke.

Next day we split into 2 groups, one taking the ferry to Ay Romeli, a pretty collection of tavernas accessible only by foot or boat. The other group walked along a sun-kissed shore line and cliff side path. The first part of the walk was like a desert with no protection from the hot Cretan sun but after a few hours we entered a pine forest, which gave us welcome shade and a taverna on a black sand beach!

From Ay Romeli we walked 16km up the Samaria gorge to the mountain village of Omalos. This was the longest trek of the trip. We were met by lots of people plodding down the gorge but it got quieter with each step. We were lucky as overnight the weather changed and the next day the gorge was closed and there was a very high wind. We abandoned our plans and took a taxi to the top of the Ay Irini gorge, the considerable drop in altitude making a big difference to the weather. It was a greener gorge and at the bottom there was a peaceful cafe full of cats. Next day we visited the ruins of Lissos where the gods decided to let rip with torrential rain, thunder and lightning. It doesn't rain like this in Scotland! We kept going till the weather improved and finally arrived in Paleochora.

On our last day back in the picturesque port of Hania we splashed out (60 euros for four!) on a room in a Venetian house with a balcony overlooking the port and visited museums, markets and the old town. In the evening another wonderful veggie meal was a fitting finale to a memorable week.

**When to go?** Late October. The summer SW coast can be blisteringly hot and busy. Spring could also be good as there would be some snow on the high mountains and water at springs.

**Transport?** Cheap flights to Hania – Easyjet. Buses to Hora, Sougia and Paleochora. Boats between Hora and Paleochora stopping at Loutro, Ay Romeuli and Sougia. (They can be cancelled due to bad weather.)

**Where to stay?** We pre-booked our first night which was good since we arrived late and it was near the bus station. Then when we arrived in villages we either asked for 'rooms to rent' or folks asked us. The small town of Paleochora was our only challenge because by then we had got fussy.

**What gear do I need?** Normal summer trekking gear. Managed to fit everything into day packs so no hold luggage - in and out of airport pretty quickly. Rooms come with sheets/blankets and towels.

**Food** This was definitely one of the highlights of the trip. We always found tavernas where there was great Cretan food available using lots of local ingredients from local bread, honey, yogurt, local cheeses, olive oil and to an array of fresh vegetables - tomatoes don't quite taste the same now! It was easy to get vegetarian dishes including tzatziki, local salads, giant beans and boureki (a type of vegetable pie).

**Guide books/ info** 'Western Crete' by Alan Hall, pub. Cicerone. Everywhere we stayed had excellent wi-fi, so we could keep up with weather forecasts.      **PP**



# from freezing to fun: new year in the dales

London's New Year trip to the Yorkshire Dales included Red Ropers from Devon, Wiltshire, Essex, Herts, Nottingham, Sheffield and Newcastle, thirteen in all, coming by car, train and bus.

On arrival the bunk house was below freezing and we had to attend our first supper in full outdoor gear - thermals, hats, scarves and gloves. But as usual our resilience and generally good humour, and numerous £1 coins, won through. (Luckily Grace had thought to ask about the heating and discovered that we'd need £1 coins to feed the meter and the radiators.) At this point Trudi found she had left her rucksack of mountain gear at home. Luckily she had spare gardening clothes in her car boot and managed without complaint. She also found a pink hyacinth in her car which took centre stage on the dining table and provided an alternative focus to a roaring fire. Vibrations from our early shivers had enough force to move its petals.

Having survived the first night we set out to walk over to Arkengarthdale. The sky was clear blue and the paths were icy, with snow on the tops. The sharp winter sunshine emphasized the beauty of the stone walls. The squeeze styles, tiny wooden gates and stone field barns, so typical of the area, enhanced the walk. Vertically challenged Pam got stuck in them though because her bum and rucksack are in the wrong place, whereas tall Andrea sailed through with ease. Still waiting for the National Park to address this issue...

Olya arrived on the second day and joined us on the walk to Gunnerside Gill. Again we enjoyed spectacular weather. The ruined remains of the old lead mining buildings and smelting works, with extensive spoil heaps, were a reminder of the hard lives of the Swaledale lead miners and smelters. This gave rise to much thought and reflection. The route home was muddy and first Pam, then Damien, slipped over, then Pam did it again, closely followed by Damien - was this some form of heroine worship?

After an invigorating day we had another fun evening of games, quizzes, charades - and Dave D. reading us 'The Shooting of Dan McGrew' and 'The Cremation of Sam McGee' - two famous sagas by Robert Service. All this took us up to 11pm so we decided to celebrate the arrival of the new year on French time - and by sharing Olya's Cava. It rained heavily on New Year's day but this did not deter the group from walking along the swelling



*Pam and Damien practising their navigation skills*

Swale. We discovered afterwards that it was Britain's fastest rising river, and could rise 3 metres in 20 minutes! A notice board had frightening photographs of an older bridge destroyed by the rising river. There was a firework display in Reeth village that night but none of us felt like stirring outdoors again. The fireworks were viewed through the mist and rain at a distance - we could not have got there as we were cut off by flood-water at that point, so our neighbours told us.

On our final day most of the group walked to Surrender Bridge and along Old Gang Beck by the route the lead miners would have taken. At Old Gang Smelting Mills we saw amongst the rusty remains a large machine labelled 'simple vibrator' which caused some merriment and made us wonder whether the lead miners had had some compensation for their hard lives after all. We then took a path across the Moors where the bright sunny weather was interrupted by a sudden blizzard leaving us no choice but to relax and thaw out in the local pub.

Pat had made a massive food list but had to use Sainsbury to deliver as the Coop would not take advance orders or deliver and the local shop never

answered its phone. Her efforts meant we didn't have to do much other shopping. We ate well, ending with Trudi cooking up some leftovers in peanut sauce. The kitchen must have had the world's worst, most ineffective tin opener though. Thanks too to Don for doing the boring accounts!

We made good use of the local community bus service which was run by a mix of paid drivers and volunteers and links the villages, from Reeth through Gunnerside and Muker to Keld. It's a crucial service for the valley and helped us in increasing the range of available walks and enabling the train travellers to reach the hut. The drivers and locals on the bus were very chatty and friendly. This could easily have been a car free trip. One downside is a possible large loss because we were 13 in a hut with space for 24 - comfortable for us but unnecessarily expensive.

We had a really good time thanks to excellent walks in great locations, good conversation (no TV nor any phone coverage) and a lot of fun games. A great advertisement for Red Rope trips!

This article was a collective enterprise (!) by **dave, damien, don, geoff, grace, andrea, mary, pat, pam, sara, trudi, steve and olya.**

## 2015 AGM: back to gradbach!

Red Rope's AGM, Sept. 25-27, returns to Gradbach Scout Camp on the western edge of the Peak District. The converted farmhouse nestles on the valley side above the Black Brook river and offers both heated indoor accommodation, with three dormitories, and ample facilities for eating and meeting, plus excellent camping. The site is 2 miles from Flash on the A53 (the highest village in the Peak District according to its pub's website) between Buxton and Leek, with a limited bus service from both towns on Friday afternoons.

For climbers, the Roaches can be reached by path direct from the campsite (c. 2 miles). There are also plenty of memorable walks in lovely limestone countryside straight from the house and the map shows a good sprinkling of rural pubs within day-walking distance.

Among its other wildlife resources, this area has become famous for a small colony of wallabies, believed to have been released into the wild in the 1930s. Somehow they have survived the Peak District winters. The most recent sighting was in 2014. So, if you find yourself face to face with an antipodean marsupial while out walking, it wasn't the effect of the beer from the Traveller's Rest – just a local resident! **Don Kinnibrugh**

Cartoon by Trudi Warner



My first experience of climbing Snowdon was absolutely delightful. We arrived at the Tan Yr Wyddfa hut on the outskirts of the village of Rhyd Ddu on a Friday evening in mid-October, 2014. Clear sky and a beautiful moon above the hut seemed to welcome us, which was a promising start for the weekend. This hut is owned by the Oread Mountaineering Club, and its name means 'at the base of Snowdon' for very good reasons!

There were 12 people on this Merseyside Red Rope trip. We distributed ourselves and took possession of our accommodation, which was fully comfortable with 4 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms, a large and well equipped kitchen and dining-room, and a cosy living-room. (The Oread Club charge £9 pppn, which is very good value, particularly as charges generally have increased noticeably over the last few years.)

Early(ish!) next morning we started up the famous Rhyd Ddu path, which almost starts at the hut. We went all the way up to the summit, enjoying quite a sunny, warm day, which allowed us to take in the spectacular views towards the coastline.

In spite of some intermittent clouds, the visibility was good. The path was not difficult to follow, except for the last section of the ascent, where it becomes very narrow, rocky and steep. A thick mist gave an eerie atmosphere to this last part of the climb.

Once at the summit the temperature dropped. I was impressed by the number of people in the visitor centre and cafe. 'It's really popular up there!'. We had a well deserved rest and picnic, courted by some seagulls looking for leftovers, before descending back down by the Snowdon Ranger path, after following the railway for a few hundred yards. At this point the route starts to zig-zag steeply down and it's loose underfoot.

Half-way down the cloud had cleared completely and we were bathed in strong sunlight. The path then became gradual, with some marshy sections, until reaching the road to Rhyd Ddu.

After walking about 3km along the road at a steady pace, we arrived at the hut and bit by bit everyone got ready for the evening meal and the quiz. I was the main chef, cooking a vegetarian paella. Kindly, some of the walkers helped in peeling and cutting all the ingredients.

In order to make the task more pleasant I tried to teach the kitchen assistants a Catalán song, but I'm afraid that I'm a better cook than a singing

teacher. Anyway, we had fun and most importantly, the paella was edible, although Alan in particular had expressed his concern at its distinctly continental serving time!

On the Sunday the sun shone splendidly and it was as hot as the middle of summer. Half of the group did an 8 km walk which looped around the hut. The others walked to Beddgelert and back using a fairly recently upgraded low level route through a coniferous forest, which we shared with some cyclists.

In Beddgelert we had tea and cake at the terrace of a café beside the river and on our way back we couldn't resist the temptation to have a delicious local ice-cream, which we relished whilst watching a couple of sparrows taking a bath in a puddle in the street. In conclusion, this was an absolutely wonderful weekend in the heart of Snowdonia National Park with gorgeous weather. **MG**

*Photos to the right are by Mario, the lower one showing the party nearing the summit of Snowdon - photos below are by David Symonds. The top one gives a good impression of the Rhyd Ddu route, which mainly follows the ridge in front of the horizon before cutting off to the left and the summit.*





I am sometimes asked why and how I came to be a Mountain Leader. My love of hill walking first began in the late 1980's with a coach tour from Liverpool to The Austrian Alps. For many, the 80's were a time of high unemployment, particularly for school-leavers. When I left school, I tried various Youth Training Schemes which promised (but failed to deliver!) lucrative careers in various industries. While working on these apprenticeships, I would save what spare cash I had all year for a week-long walking holiday in The Alps.

At this stage my exploration of the hills was mostly limited to easy trails on well-signposted footpaths. Around this time, I had a fortuitous encounter with a Red Rope member, Arthur Bowling. One day, while having a chat about hill walking, he handed me the latest Red Rope Bulletin and encouraged me to go on one of their organized trips. The cost of the trip was based on income and so for me this was a very affordable way to escape from the city to the hills. Before long, I was booked on my first weekend away with RR staying at a mountain hut near Capel Curig, North Wales. It seems incredible now but until this first trip I didn't really appreciate that the UK even had mountains!

That first trip was on a very wet weekend in October 1991. Had I been on my own, I probably wouldn't have ventured much further than the tea shops in the village. However, Dave Stewart and Mark Grunhill were keen to climb a summit or two regardless of the weather and so I tagged along, curious and green. At this point, I had never seen a compass and certainly couldn't read a map, so I just followed these guys up some hills, the names of which I can no longer recall. We got wet and cold but it didn't matter, it was great! A few such weekends later and I was completely hooked!

Over the subsequent months, I met loads of new people, had some wonderful days on the hills, and enjoyed great craic in the mountain huts. It was on a week-long RR winter trip staying at the Alex McIntyre Hut in Onich that I first climbed a Munro. It was the end of December and the snow was down to the glen, cold with blue skies. We got to the summit of Na Grugachan using an ice axe and got down with the help of some crampons. Until that moment, I hadn't even tried them on! It was 3pm, getting dark and somehow I got down the hill with these spiky things on my feet. I loved it!

My love of the Scottish Highlands began after a June RR trip to Torridon based at the Ling Hut. We were on Beinn Alligin and standing at the

start of The Horns, just where the scrambling begins. A few of us avoided the scrambling and traversed the easy path along the side.

In 1995, I moved to Torridon. I worked at the Youth Hostel and used every free day to do some scrambling on the classic Torridon ridges. By this time, I had scrambled along The Horns on Beinn Alligin many times. On one of these occasions, I met a young couple who were hesitant about the scrambling, so I gave them some encouragement and advice. When we were walking down off the hill, the woman turned to me and asked if I had ever thought about guiding folk on the hills for a living.

Fast-forward to 2015: I run my own mountain guiding company (Tarmachan Mountaineering) based in The Cairngorms of Scotland. I set up the company after I had obtained my Summer, Winter & International Mountain Leader Awards. Since then I've guided groups up and down mountains in The Highlands, led trekking tours in The Alps and in 2013 I guided a group on Mount Elbrus, Russia. Living and working in the mountains is part of me now.

I fondly remember my days with RR and I often think that it was here that my love of the hills and countryside was ignited. I learned a great deal from many of the members, had some great days on the hills and fun nights in the pub! It's nice to see that Dave James and Dave Symonds are still going strong in the club. It would be great to meet up and chat about old times. Thanks Red Rope!

**GH**

*Ben Nevis, 2011*



*Right: Digging snowholes, Ciste Corrie, Jan., 2011*

*Below: Gary, in blue, hard at work in the Alps!*



## *pretty near perfection: memories of skye 2007*

The first day it rained. We all walked to Sligachan past the fairy pools. Nice walking, fun company, amusing stream crossings. Late afternoon on the following day Andrew Worsley and I bivied near the ridge above Coir' a' Ghrunnda. We left our packs and walked south to Gars-bheinn, to begin the traverse. We found a good bivi spot just north of Sgurr nan Eag. I didn't sleep much. We started out the next morning around 5a.m. The day was still, clear - warm but not too warm. We made it to the bealach between Am Bhasteir and Sgurr nan Gillean. It was 9p.m. and I called a halt. Andrew concurred after a brief discussion. I anticipated little satisfaction from making the last steps to nan Gillean when we'd taken 16 hours to get this far. Too long! Perhaps I took a perverse satisfaction in going down just before completion, showing how little I valued the 'prize'. We'd done OK!

After a rest day I was refreshed. Andy Bateman and I headed for *Shangri La*, a well-named, imposing VS on the Sron na Ciche Eastern Buttress. I'd eyed it longingly in a previous year, from the ledges around the Cioch. We started up *Petronella*, a nice 55 m. mild VS up the lower Central Buttress. From the top we clambered up Eastern Gully to the base of our climb. Such a wonderful route!

The climbing flowed, the teamwork was perfect. Great weather, stunning views over the Cioch slab and upper buttress, the just-about-right length of the whole thing - we got back to the hut at 10 o'clock. Pretty near perfection!

There was a mark on the day. Andrew fell in Coire a' Mhadaidh on a route that I'd spotted and recommended that he and Dave Fisher try. He was OK - bruised, slightly concussed, hurt pride. Andrew asked me to see that Dave had a good day after this misfortune.

I did my best! Dave and I pitched our way up *Mallory's Slab and Groove* on the great Western Buttress of Sron na Ciche. Though the climbing was technically easier than the previous day's, the challenges were greater in terms of uncertain route finding and sheer length (300 metres). I'd been benighted on this cliff a decade before. Protection was sparse in places, though not where it mattered. A short alpine ridge completed a great and satisfying mountaineering route.

*Chris Drinkwater*

