

RED ROPE BULLETIN 33
AUTUMN 2017
www.redrope.org.uk



David thought his friend's use of extreme cosmetic surgery was almost certainly prompted by an excessive enthusiasm for wild swimming.



So who was Glen Brittle?

"So who was Glen Brittle?" I wondered, sitting in the car on the way up the M74. Many huts are dedicated to great figures such as George Starkey, Don Whillans, Alex MacIntyre... but who was Glen and what had he achieved? I felt stupid when I realised it was just the name of the location – an anglicised spelling of Gleann Bhreatail. But it was quite inspiring to see who the hut is in fact dedicated to: "those who found strength in the hills to sustain them even unto death." A lovely memorial to many kindred spirits who have gone before us.

A group of 20 spent a very comfortable week there in May, and enjoyed walks, climbs, scrambles, car trips, an amazing variety of meals and interesting discussions too many to describe. Highlights included a bold attempt at the whole Cuillin ridge by Malcolm and Pete, who set off on the first day with a bag of sandwiches the size of a small child. They didn't get all the way, unfortunately, but the ridge will be there another day. Retrieving their bivvy later in the week was a further adventure, with the Inn Pin (inaccessible pinnacle) looming up out of the mist just seconds after one of our party had said "I haven't got a clue where we are".

Others walked up one or more of the many Coires, Bealachs and Sgùrrs, and several Munros were bagged. The views from the tops, and even half-way up, really do take your breath away. So many times I heard people say "I love this place". The only casualty was Damien, who sprained his ankle on the way down from Sgùrr an Eag, but made a brave descent without a complaint (well, with only one or two). The local rock, gabbro, offers a fantastic grip for your boots and hands, but has a well-deserved reputation for shredding your gloves, clothes and fingers. This was true even on an easy scramble over the rocks that lie in a jumble over much of the mountain.

A low-level walk along the sea cliffs to the west of the hut was rewarded with the magnificent view of a family of white-tailed sea eagles. The trudge back across tussocky moors and midge-infested bog revealed why the walk was given a 5 (difficult) for terrain in the guide book!

Thank you, Sherry, for advising us to take midge nets to put over our heads. They aren't elegant, but they do work!

Out of seven days, we had four clear ones, which people said was "good, for Skye". These included some long spells of beautiful sunshine. Sunbathing at 2700ft! But the days with low cloud provided an excuse to explore a bit more, whether to catch the ferry to Raasay island, or drive to the town of Portree, or to the north of the island. Here a group of us visited a remarkable bothy called "The Lookout". The hut has such a wonderful, homely feeling and magnificent views. It seems to make everyone reluctant to leave. It was restored a few years ago thanks to a legacy from Dave Brown, a Red Rope member, so our club has a special relationship with this beautiful place.

Further excitement was provided by the presence of the local Labour candidate, in the week before the general election. He came with his dog for a meal, and gave us posters and leaflets to display. During the week, people were saying "Have you heard? The Tory lead is down to 3%"; and later, "It's neck and neck"(although this might have been the local news). It was great to feel the elation, which continued to build until results day.

Around the hillsides is evidence of the Clearances: the ruins of small, square huts where crofters were re-located, but later had to again move on; and the stripey lines left by the "lazy beds" where food was grown by a method that sounds anything but lazy. Unless your idea of a lazy day off is digging all the soil from both sides of a long strip of poor hillside land, and piling it into the middle; then lugging cartloads of seaweed from the shore to the hill as fertilizer, in the hope that the stony soil will produce something edible.

There was one thing that puzzled me, and I would be grateful for any help with this. In a cafe in Portree, there was a notice in the toilets warning that the water can be very hot. As a linguist, I was interested to see how many languages it was translated into. I saw Portuguese, Japanese, I think Swedish... but one language I couldn't work out. It said "Das fecken roasten". Any ideas?

Jon Marsden

If Scotland was abroad...

There is an old climbers joke that *'if Scotland was abroad, the English would flock there.'* I booked onto my first Red Rope National trip at the Alex MacIntyre Hut, Onich, near Glencoe, as it fell outside term time. I decided to make the most of the opportunity by booking a few extra days before the main RR group arrived, to acclimatise to the area and increase my chances of fine weather.

Tuesday 11 April 2017

My journey started on the 0621 train from Barnt Green, south Birmingham, arriving in Fort William after 1700. Arriving at the hut at last, I received a warm welcome from the warden and residents.

Wednesday 12 April 2017

Due to a slow start on a wet morning I searched my pre-planned routes for a local, wet weather walk. The Inchree waterfalls can be easily reached from the hut by walking along the busy A82 pavement for about an hour, then taking the path sign posted on the right. The car park is home to the Red Squirrel Station and I did indeed see red squirrels. The waterfalls were almost as good!

Thursday 13 April 2017

Three years ago I walked the West Highland Way and I promised myself I would return and visit Grey Mare's Tail. Outside the hut I caught the 09.07 bus to Kinlochleven (£5.30 return) taking in the waterfall and Loch Eilde and retraced my steps to Mamore Lodge hotel, formerly a favourite with Red Rope members but now a sad sight boarded up. While waiting for the bus I investigated Kinlochleven, which once had a population of 3,000 and was the first town to have electricity installed in their houses. I read about the famous Pelton wheel, an impulse type water turbine invented by Lester Allan Pelton in the 1870s.

Friday 14 April 2017

The weather dictated a low-level walk or a tourist day so I caught the Corran Ferry (passengers free) to Ardgour and was delighted to see nine oyster catchers. On impulse, I called in at Marine Harvest salmon farm and found three men studiously watching a bank of computer screens.

Standards are high, said the men. They no longer use chemicals to treat the lice but a heat method and there is a minimum space per salmon in the pen, so they have plenty of room.

"The fish are collected in refrigerated lorries and stored in slurry." "Slurry?" I asked disbelievingly, "Yeah, slurry." OK!

Once off the return ferry, having missed my bus, I called at the impressive Corran Bar, looking out onto Loch Linnhe through wall to ceiling windows.

Saturday 15 April

Walking up the Pap of Glencoe was a slog, the final ascent steep and the weather extremely changeable, so I turned back after two thirds of the way. However, the views of surrounding snow topped hills were stunning. Typically, as soon as I descended, the weather settled into a beautiful sunny day. Glencoe Folk Museum was interesting and to finish the day I strolled around the Glencoe Hospital grounds, previously home of the Earl of Strathcona. I walked the blue trail which was steep in places but with good views from the top looking over Loch Leven, Beinn a' Bheithir and the Pap.

Easter Sunday 16 April

A stunning day, and no bus. My walk took me over North Ballachulish Bridge along the old railway/cycle track and Loch Linnhe to Hollytree Hotel which has its own tiny pier and picnic benches, and beer at London prices. The banks of the cycle track were carpeted with wild garlic and I picked leaves to insert into my sandwiches and later on, the meal. Disappointingly, after sitting for hours on the loch side I hadn't spotted otters. Meanwhile fellow resident Brian, a marathon runner, ran over Ben Nevis **and** the Mamores!

Monday 17 April

Today the Red Rope group were due to arrive and I was on cooking duty but, having wasted a beautiful day yesterday, I was determined to walk up high. Another RRer had already arrived and was interested so we took the bus to Kinlochleven and started walking back, following the W.H.W. and branching off over the ridge at Beinn Na Caillich (764m) and then on to the trig point on Mam na Gualainn (796m). The sun reflected in flecks of gold in the mica stone and as we ascended each summit we discovered yet another summit to climb with panoramic views and the lochs glistening, again reflecting the sun. However, we were constantly checking our watches due to kitchen duties and quickly realised we had grossly under-estimated times. The terrain was easy underfoot until we left the final trig point, where the descent was steep and saturated peat. My muddy trousers were a tell-tale sign of my falls.

We were very late so hitchhiked to the junction, then argued about the safety of stopping a car on the A82! At that moment Pravin, RRer and

volunteer Alex Mac warden, appeared as if by magic, to give us a lift home to feed the gang. The food had been prepared according to the instructions I had left and it wasn't long before a meal was on the table. I rated this walk 10/10.

Tuesday 18 April

I needed a gentle walk so declined joining Victor's group's ascent of Buachaille Etive Mor. I walked from the A82 below the Kings House hotel to Kinlochleven, along the river, and visited the new library to check out bus times, arriving at the hut in time to help pack away the Tesco delivery.

Wednesday 19 April

Humphrey led five of us up Garbh Bheinn (865m) in excellent visibility and high winds. A mini-scramble was fun and with panoramic views we could see the impressive ridge we had walked along on Monday. Strong winds forced a descent to eat lunch, and again the pressure of imminent kitchen duty kept the pace sharp!

Thursday 20 April

Three of us walked to Onich Post Office and enjoyed a cappuccino while waiting for the bus to the Corran ferry. Once at Ardgour one walker in the cabin was so engrossed in his 'phone I almost left him to return to Corran, but practicality kicked in - I called him and he leapt off the boat just in time. We aborted our attempt to walk up saturated hills and leisurely walked around Loch Linnhe, watching herons and oyster catchers. Back at the hut we ate yet another delicious meal and I packed for an early departure in the morning.

Friday 21 April

The bus stop was a kilometre away and the rain was sheeting down. Victor kindly rose early to give me a lift to catch my bus at 8 a.m. On the train I had plenty of time to reflect on the trip. Preparation of walking routes, buses and allowing time between trains to appreciate the splendid architecture in Glasgow had enhanced the experience. I met some interesting people, shared some excellent walking and vowed to practice my culinary skills after having some truly delicious meals. Thank you Red Rope for a great trip.

Janey Hewitt

There were usually at least two groups walking each day. Victor, top photo, on the right at the back, led the B.E.M. walk with great skill. He did Bidean nam Bian on another day on his own in what seemed an almost indecently fast time! Pravin and Mark managed the Aonach Eagach, possibly with Victor. So, there was lots to choose from - most people alternated between demanding and easy days. DS Photos by Barbara Segal



Above and below: Buachaille Etive Mor



Below: the far side of Loch Linnhe from the hut.



Below: a stroll along Loch Linnhe from the Corran ferry.



Two National Committee posts will be going begging at the AGM in September, Training Officer and MIS Editor. Please give some thought as to whether you would like to take up one of these positions. Neither are very onerous and both could be job-shared. Each is essential to the smooth running of the club. The RR website has more info. However, each job tends to be shaped by the individual currently in post, so you could contact the current post-holders initially by email.

Mark: MIS@redrope.org.uk

or Dermot: training@redrope.org.uk

Dermot says, 'The purpose of this role is to promote training within the club. I have done this in a number of ways:

by publicising mountaineering courses run by the BMC in the MIS;

by working with the NC to develop a training policy. Every member, regardless of income, will qualify for a subsidy to undertake a BMC training course. In return club members are required to share their newly acquired skills with other club members;

by running outdoor courses myself and encouraging regions to do so as well;

by organising winter skills training for the RR February trip this year;

by organising free navigation training for this year's annual gathering. This will hopefully encourage more club members to attend.

This work needs to continue. Our training policy needs to be reviewed in the light of possible cuts to the courses run by the BMC. I would like to see the club give extra support to club members to undertake first aid training and see the club carry out a training needs survey. The review should look at ways of making sure that the training budget is spent effectively.'

In some ways Mark's role is even more fundamental. The MIS editor provides essential information to all members. Dermot and Mark will be hard acts to follow but the club can't function without volunteers, so be brave! You might even find you enjoy it!

Adrian Jones, National Secretary

National trips for 2018. Organisers needed. Contact Becky for now but check MIS for more up to date info.

There tends to be a particular set of people who go on these trips. However, as you can see from the previous two articles, they are generally very enjoyable, so it's a shame more members don't try them. Janey's piece in particular shows that there are usually some less demanding alternatives to ascending eye watering, knee cracking, vertigo inducing wuthering, and withering, heights!

May 26th for 7 nights

Inver Croft House

Jacobite MC hut close to Torridon

14 places

June 2nd for 7 nights

Ronnan Cottage, Gairloch

Newish hut on northwest coast

8 places

June 30th for 2 nights

Don Whillans, Roaches

To include NC meeting

12 places

September 2nd for 7 nights

Neptune House, Cornwall

Sea still warm, coastal walks

8 places

October 14th for 7 nights

Robertson Lamb, Langdale

Good hut, beautiful valley/hill walks

12 places

Becky Bates

The Oast House

Upton Wood

Shepherdswell

Dover

CT15 7LE

07731992067

rebekah.bates@yahoo.co.uk



Friday, 29th September – Sunday 1st October, Mankinholes YH, Todmorden, Lancs, OL14 6HR. OS map 103, Grid Ref SD960235. <http://www.yha.org.uk/hostel/mankinholes>

Booking forms are on the RR website under 'Members'.

This is the same venue as last year. We liked it so much we booked it again! The hostel is a former 16th century manor house located in a quiet hamlet and is rated 4 star by Visit England. It has a lounge with a log burning stove, 10 space car parking and drying room. More details are given on the website above. Note that **bedding is provided** but you'll need a towel.

Directions: Follow the road signed to Lumbutts village. The hostel is 0.25 miles east of the 'Top Brink' public house & 2.5 miles east of Todmorden.

Trains – Todmorden is the nearest station. There is a frequent train service from Manchester Victoria and Leeds.

Buses – There is a reasonable service, including Sundays, from opposite Todmorden train station.

When? Arrive Friday evening (sort your own food out, as per normal).

Saturday: there will be a full day navigation training course, provided by Lupine (numbers limited to 8, so book early to avoid disappointment) walks and climbing. 7.30 pm: Evening meal, leaving plenty of time for socializing afterwards. This is usually a very enjoyable day - why not give it a go!?

Sunday: AGM at 9.30 am; Lunch 12.30-1.30pm. Afternoon: tidying up the hostel, and a short walk for anyone interested.

Drinks – A supply of real ale, wine and soft drinks will be available at cost price (ish), so there's no need to bring your own.

Bookings by Saturday 9th September to: Sherry Macliver, Garden Flat, 9 North Villas, London NW1 9BJ treasurer@redrope.org.uk

Don't forget to include a cheque to Red Rope to cover your full weekend charge. (You should also contact Sherry if you want to camp or take a camper-van.)

This year there are several motions to consider and vote on. There will be reports from Officers and discussions about changes to trip charge rates and a proposed online payment method for the annual membership fee.

Adrian Jones

When's your renewal date? Don't know? Don't worry - there is a motion coming up at the AGM that affects everyone – we are proposing that in future we would all renew in January.

Why do we need to do this?

Over this year, Sherry (treasurer), Linda (Membership Sec), Steve (ex Mem Sec), and myself have investigated all matters membership.

We found the following:

We need to line up with the way the BMC works with clubs – they use an annual membership model for club insurance and there is always a discrepancy between the numbers we are covered for, and the numbers we actually have, which actually costs us money.

Membership renewals Chasing a trickle of renewals all year is a big job, and it would be an easier job if renewals were done in bulk, with only new joiners added in the year.

New Software We need to change our membership software and simplify it. The existing membership database software was written for us a long time ago. It was wonderful in its day, but is now creaking and difficult to maintain. We have identified an online 'off the shelf' system which will make it easier to run as a job-share, and we can customise to our needs.

Online payment! Many people are giving up their cheque books and a new membership system would give us methods for online renewals, so you could click through from your renewal email to an online renewal platform. We will still take cheques of course.

The whole thing has been costed - we estimate it would only cost around £1 per member a year.

But what about the year we change over - will I lose any money?

No – we plan to refund people in the transition year. Check the motion for details.

Well that's the bare bones of the proposal to get your attention – more detail is in the AGM Motion document. The editor said 350 words so that's all!*

Janet Saunders

*Mooooo!



Kinder Trespass Anniversary

B. W. S. F. RAMBLER'S RALLY.

The Rally will take place on Sunday April 24th. at 2 o'clock on Hayfield Recreation Ground. From the Red we proceed on a LEGAL TRESPASS onto Kinder Scout. This is being organised by the British Workers Sports Federation, who fight for Ramblers:-

"Against the finest stretches of Moorlands being closed to us.

"For Cheap fares. For cheap catering facilities.

"Against any war preparations in rambling organisations.

"Against petty restrictions such as singing etc.

Now: young workers of Eccles, to all, whether you've been rambling before or not, we extend a hearty welcome.

If you've not been rambling before, start now, you don't know what you've missed. Roll up at Eccles at 8-15. on Sunday Morning. and come with us for the best day out that you have ever had.

FARE 1/6 Return. TEASER extra, Eccles Cross 8-15 a.m.

On April 24, 1932 400 young men and women met at Bowden Bridge quarry in Hayfield, Derbyshire and walked up William Clough valley. At a pre-arranged spot a whistle was blown twice, and the trespass towards Sandy Heys and Kinder Scout began. Red Ropers from Sheffield, Nottingham and Leicester commemorated the 85th anniversary of this event by following the route of the trespassers all those years ago. As always, being in the "vanguard", we decided to do it on April 23!

The 1932 protests were organised by the British Workers Sports Federation, which was influenced by the Communist Party.

The Ramblers Association takes the credit for the outcome of the trespass in 1932, but the Manchester Ramblers Federation condemned the action on that day and declared that it would set back the cause of access for years. The young workers of the BWSF, however, had had enough of waiting for legal changes. There had been talk in parliament about an Access to Mountains Act for 50 years, without success. The closure acts of the 19th century had seized what was common land and handed it to the grouse shooting aristocracy.

We followed the track up William Clough towards Kinder Scout. About two thirds of the way up William Clough we found the place where the protesters left the legal route and scaled the steep banks up towards Kinder itself. About thirty gamekeepers with sticks confronted the trespassers and a brief conflict took place.

We looked in vain for game keepers! We did, however, have the challenge of trying to avoid a 300 strong fell race coming up William Clough. We had lunch near the spot of the victory rally and followed the route of the Sheffield trespassers.



In 1932 five trespassers were imprisoned for several months for "riotous assembly". The rich and powerful showed their hatred of workers and socialism in court. One trespasser got an extra month because he was selling the Daily Worker. The jury was stacked with army top brass and establishment men. He defendants were even thrown into jail overnight because they were ten minutes late on one occasion.

There was outrage at the treatment of the walkers. A rally of 10,000 took place at Winnats Pass soon after the trial. Further trespasses took place at Abbey Brook and Longshaw in the Dark Peak. Mounted police and foot patrols stopped a protest at Stanage Edge. Pressure was put on and in 1949 the Labour government passed an Act allowing access to the countryside. And as a legacy of the trespassers, the first National Park was created in the Peak District. Red Rope, I hope, stands alongside those 1932 trespassers who were prepared to challenge the rich and powerful for the right to access and land ownership. I am proposing that we make a donation to the Kinder Trespass Group who seek to keep alive the inspiring story of the 1932 protest.

Pete Watson

www.kindertrespass.com; " The Battle for Kinder Scout" Benny Rothman, Willow Publishing, 2012



Walking in Difficult Terrain

When members book on trips we sign up to the following:

I recognise that hillwalking, climbing and mountaineering are activities which carry a risk of personal injury or death. I accept responsibility for my own actions and involvement in these activities.

Red Rope Trip Booking form

We will all have fond memories of walks along well worn paths with someone on hand who knew the area, chatting to friends, old and new, and occasionally taking in the view. Sometimes this was on day walks, sometimes on trips to Wales or the Lakes. Happy days. Walking like this remains one of my great pleasures in life.

After doing this for over 25 years I was confident that I was an 'experienced mountaineer'. Then a couple of incidents in difficult conditions led me to wonder if experience didn't necessarily lead to competence. So I took myself off to do a basic navigation course and this led to more training and eventually to the Mountain Leadership programme and finally a week long Winter Walking in Scotland course.

While I am by no means the most competent mountaineer around I did learn what it means *'to take responsibility for my own actions'* when walking in difficult terrain (say above 500m and particularly in winter conditions).

For example, to take responsibility for oneself when planning to go on a trip in difficult terrain means researching the area. What does the local mountain rescue team have to say about safety and other issues, such as avalanche warnings? Don't just rely on a guide book to plan, or what a mate tells you, but get the map out and see what a route may involve – distance, ascent and duration etc. Check the weather (MWIS website) and likely conditions. Assess your level of fitness.

As one member, with considerable expertise and experience, said to me: 'Turning up in the car park to do a walk in some of the most hostile terrain in the UK without a map, a compass, no idea of the route except for the name of the summit we were heading for, with an assumption someone would be on hand to lead them is **!x!*#!#!x%**'. That word rhymed with 'write' but I'll translate it as 'not taking responsibility for yourself'. What could I say except 'Mea culpa'. After all I thought that was the way we always did things.

I now think that the confusion about what taking responsibility for oneself means in practice is partly due to a lack of clarity in the club about people's responsibilities and roles. For example, there is no definition of the 'leadership' role. Some would say there are no 'leaders' in the club.... as they head off following the person with the map who knows the route.

At one end of the spectrum of leadership styles is that of a professional mountain guide who will take total responsibility for their clients, who will expect no less. Emphasis here is on control. The guide will avoid involving the clients in decision making or allowing any challenge to their authority.

Perhaps some see this as the model Red Rope should, or already does, adopt. But in the context of our club it is wrong to suggest (by word or deed) that people do not need not take responsibility for themselves because someone else will do it for them. This would risk incurring legal liabilities for themselves and the club. Also people led in this manner will never develop the capacity to look out for themselves in difficult terrain. This, surely, is not what the club is about.

At the other end of the spectrum is the laissez faire leadership approach where someone suggests a route (the word 'offer' is sometimes used) and then heads off with people following. The assumption here often seems to be that we are all friends who are experienced mountaineers, so there is no need for briefings or formal discussion of any sort. This informal style looks good at first glance but it is so vague that it is not robust enough to withstand the demands of walking in difficult and dangerous terrain. Especially where a group, who may not know each other very well, encounter the *'risk of personal injury or death.'* Even in 'easier' walking conditions this approach does little to allow members to learn new skills or apply those they have may have learnt on training courses.

Another model of 'leadership' which has developed in recent years is that of the 'leader' as 'facilitator'. Here the role would be to assist members 'accept responsibility for our own actions and involvement' through techniques such as:

- briefing members prior to a trip/walk as to the proposed route and the different roles and responsibilities etc.
- engaging in a dialogue about issues such as the size and composition of the group

- offering advice on ways participants can take responsibility for themselves
- leading by example e.g. using a map

I believe this is the way forward for the group. It provides a structure within which participants can engage in meaningful, rational decision making, it allows skills sharing and so improves the capacity of participants to look after themselves.

Applied on day walks in more benign terrain in summer the 'facilitation' approach would allow members the opportunity to develop skills which are crucial when heading off to higher, more difficult and dangerous terrain. The role of 'facilitator' is not 'rocket science'. It can be learnt - many members already have most of the relevant skills. It will allow interested members to develop these skills further. A group of members interested in developing a 'facilitation' role in the club could quite quickly assemble a model (and produce relevant resources) which could then be trialled.

Many in the club may not aspire to go walking in difficult terrain and won't want to take responsibility for themselves beyond turning up for a walk in the

countryside with the right clothes, boots and their lunch. That is fine as long as they don't then decide this experience alone provides them with the skills required to take responsibility for themselves in harsh, difficult and often dangerous conditions.

Interested in developing your facilitation skills?
Contact me on: mikehargaden@btinternet.com

Essential skills for difficult terrain:

There is a lot to know and no-one knows it all but it can be great fun learning it.

Preparing for a walk/trip (see above)

Knowing where you are going - navigation

Identifying and responding to risks and emergencies

Underpinning all of this is the ability to collaborate with others in rational decision making.

Further Reading

Hill Walking - Steve Long

Winter Skills - Cunningham and Fyffe

How to Run a Great Workshop - Highmore Simms

Mike Hargaden

Special Telescope

I invented a special telescope
that could gently bend light
and make the air seem so clear
it could see right round the world.

I took my telescope
to the top of the nearest mountain
to try it out.

Beyond the mountains
I saw rivers, oceans, distant lands
with cities and towns,
then another ocean
and beyond it, in the far, far distance,
another mountain.

On top of the mountain,
tiny but clear, stood a man
with his back to me.

First published in Roger McGough (ed.),
Sensational! – Poems Inspired By The Five Senses
(Macmillan, 2004).

Falling Into The Air

In the bright yellow haze of the morning
a tiny field drops away below

and birdwise, I fall
into the air.

From *A Homage To Me*
(Driftwood Publications, 2003)

There Was A Young Pervert Called Boone...

There was a young pervert called Boone
Who exposed himself down in Rangoon.

Some men caught him flashing
And gave him a thrashing.

He's going again — very soon.

From *Curse Of The Killer Hedge*
(Iron Press, 1996).

All poems by **David Bateman** who is on the front cover, being very reasonable, on a Merseyside trip in June! David's latest collection, *Shtum* (Iron Press, 2016) reflects poignantly - and at times humorously - on his experiences as a stutterer. **DS**

More time for coffee, but can we afford it?

National trips are increasing in popularity and number but are running at a deficit. We have more retired members. Is there a link?

We now have a higher proportion of members at Band 2 and 3 on our national trips and can no longer depend on members on higher bands to balance the books: there aren't enough of them.

Trips are planned to break even at the Band 3 overnight charge of £16 which covers accommodation and food. This is still possible with huts charging under £10 and careful food planning. However, with the cost of huts creeping up to £12 and the impact of the 10% early booking discount we often lose £2 each day at Band 3 and more at Bands 1 and 2.

Average food costs on trips this year have ranged from £3 to £5 per person per day and this has a significant impact on funds: £168 over a week-long trip for 12. It is possible to cover food costs for under £5 but expectations are higher than in the past. Perhaps we should put aside our personal preferences, accept that we eat differently on trips and share responsibility for keeping costs down.

Gone are the days of limiting fruit/bars to one each per day and when a jar of instant coffee was acceptable. The recent Skye trip got through 20 packs of ground coffee and with many people in less of a hurry to get out on the hills early there is more time to enjoy it!

To ensure that we do break even at Band 3 NC has agreed to:

- maintain the Early Booking Discount

- apply a 'multiplier' for all national trips to huts charging above £12 pppn

- raise overnight charges by about 10% with effect from the next AGM

This will certainly help but unfortunately the commitment of trip organisers/members to keep costs down cannot ensure the survival of our trips programme. If we continue to have more members below Band 3 than above it on our national trips it will become unsustainable.

So I ask you to consider these questions:

Do you have wealth other than earnings?

Are you a mortgage-free home owner?

Do your holidays cost more than £16 a day?

Could you afford to join a higher band?

And when you make that extra cafetière to fill your flask before heading out of the hut remember: your club is footing the bill and can't afford it.

Becky Bates, Trips Secretary, following Arthur Howarth's frugal footsteps

*Come to the AGM to contribute to a discussion about whether our banding system can cope with increasing numbers of retired members, or email me at trips@redrope.org.uk

Update on the LMC Huts

Use our allocated bed nights!

Over 20 Red Rope Members now have key fobs to Cae Ysgubor, the LMC hut in Beddgelert. It's a great hut in a great location, and everyone who's stayed there is very enthusiastic about it, but we are still far from using our annual allocation of 200 bed nights.

For individual use you don't need to book – just check availability on the LMC website – and it only costs between £5 and £9 per night, depending on your band. So if you have a key, why not spend a few nights there over the summer? Keys are now being issued more quickly, so if you'd like one, get in touch with me.

'The Loft' at Blea Tarn is more basic, but cheaper, and in a great location. To stay there you currently need to get a key from me. For both huts payment should come to Red Rope, not LMC, and you need to let me know the number of nights you've used. For full information see the Red Rope website: www.redrope.org.uk, then quick link to club hut.

Improvements to the Blea Tarn hut

An electronic entry system will shortly be installed at The Loft, so that the same key fob can be used for both huts. LMC are also beginning major work on the hut, which will have an additional room as well as a shower. LMC have put in a colossal amount of work at Cae Ysgubor and they would really welcome some Red Rope input to the work on the Loft, regardless of whether you have the relevant skills. LMC members are great company, and helping with the work should be enjoyable, as well as gaining respect for Red Rope! If you might be able to put in a day or so, let me know and I'll put you in touch with the relevant LMC member.

Barbara Segal bednight@redrope.org.uk

11 Red Ropers from all over met up in Ullapool on June 3 ready to start an 8 day adventure in the wilderness of the West Highlands. After introducing ourselves we set off to the Naismith Hut in Elphin, a small village 15 miles north of Ullapool.

Owned by the Scottish Mountaineering Club, the hut is strategically sited with superb views towards the iconic Suilven. It sleeps 10 in 2 dormitories on alpine platforms. Even though Pravin slept in his camper van, the dorms were a bit cramped. We had to be careful when we turned around not to slap the person next to us, though this built up a big bond of friendship amongst us! We organized ourselves democratically, with Peter Clark, who did the logistics for the trip, as our guiding light.

On Sunday 5 of us set off for Glass Bheinn, where the highest waterfall in the UK can be seen in the distance, although in the summer it is not in full flow. The other 6 walkers climbed the whale back of Suilven, possibly one of the finest mountains in Scotland. That first day helped work up a healthy appetite for dinner. We later enjoyed taking in a spectacular sunset.

The next two days we had to improvise a plan B, due to bad weather. On Monday some went to explore the globally important geological site of Knockan Crag. Others just chilled out, touring through Ullapool and the surroundings. Terry, using his excellent navigation skills, was the only one who completed his original plan of ascending Canisp mountain. On Tuesday we went to Rhue, a few miles north of Ullapool, where we visited the house of an artist and took a short walk to the light-house. We then had a nice stroll along the River Canaird to Dun Canna, a pebbled beach where I had my first

cold dip. Back at the hut, we enjoyed watching a herd of deer on the hillside above the hut that, like us, were heading one by one to their beds.

On Wednesday 6 of us set off for Cul Beag. Again, the weather looked quite threatening. Seeing how low the clouds were, 3 of the party sensibly decided to go back. Shrouded in cloud and after a difficult ascent due to the poor visibility, the 3 of us who persevered reached the summit. Standing at the top the sky cleared and we were rewarded with a glorious view; an extensive vista of the lochs and lochans, as far as the coast, with a rich variety of blue, green and ochre colours.

The next day, before we all moved to Achiltibuie hostel, a converted croft on the coast overlooking the Summer Isles, Sarah and I played the Holmes & Watson role to discover where the recycling centre in Ullapool was. Afterwards we climbed Stac Pollaidh, ascending the Staircase to a point where there's a simple scramble to the summit. We met the others at the hostel and moved into the new accommodation, which had individual beds - a welcome touch of luxury!

On Friday we took a leisurely coastal walk starting at Achnahaird, an astonishing bay carpeted with pink flowers. Inspired by a group of seals Peter and I plunged into the freezing cold sea. On our last day we got to Reiff where the group spread out by Rubha Mor to do our farewells, wandering around this fabulous land of bogs and lochs. Peter and I did our private goodbye to the crystal clear waters of the Atlantic with a last cold dip, proving that Scousers, born or adopted, are super-tough! Altogether a fantastic, memorable trip.

Mario Gonzalez *who also took the photo*

An extensive vista of lochs and lochans, as far as the coast, with a rich variety of blue, green and ochre colours.



BMC v Climb Britain Revisited

The British Mountaineering Council announced in late July 2016 that it was changing its name to Climb Britain. Several RR NC members expressed their concern about this and Barbara Segal wrote to the BMC's CEO, Dave Turnbull, to say that she felt the new name failed to convey the broad remit of the BMC. She was especially concerned that this had come after several years when it had made serious efforts to attract walkers, as opposed to mainly concentrating on climbing. She also expressed surprise that the decision had been made without consultation with members or clubs.

She was not alone! There was a massive outcry which led to the BMC eventually reversing the decision. What follows is an edited version of the report which appeared in the BMC's electronic newsletter of May 17, 2017 of an 'Open Forum' session held immediately prior to the BMC's AGM on Saturday 22 April, 2017 at 9.30 a.m. This was attended by about 100 members:

"The sun beat down on the Welsh mountains, yet it was standing room only in the large lecture room at Plas y Brenin. The promise of a BMC AGM does not normally draw in the crowds – especially on a bluebird day – but this was no normal year.

Dave Turnbull welcomed everyone to the gathering, which this year had been billed as Question Time, to reflect the panel / Q&A format of the meeting. Clair Wilson asked how the Climb Britain re-brand and the subsequent reversal of the decision had come about. DT explained the rationale and process, including discussions with consultants about the BMC's brand identity and commercial potential, the thinking behind the rebrand, the timing of decisions and actions, and the eventual reversal of the decision following consultation with members and agreement by National Council...

Nick Kurth offered apologies on behalf of the Executive. In mitigation, he said feedback in advance of the announcement had been positive, and from the Executive's perspective, it had always been the intention to take the re-brand proposal to National Council. The reaction from members had been unexpected, hence the decision to consult and ultimately reverse the decision...

Rab Carrington queried whether it was unusual for area reps on National Council not to ask for broader consultation with members on important issues discussed at National Council. Phil Simister (Midlands area chair and National Council member)

said National Council had not been able to consult with the areas due to confidentiality issues concerning the trading-marking process...

Neil Hartley wondered whether the 'rolling ball' of the re-brand started with the funding provided by Sport England, and asked whether it was a case of the tail wagging the dog. BMC President Rehan Siddiqui replied that the re-brand was not imposed on the BMC, but came out of a wider commercial consultancy exercise as a recommendation...

Matt Cooper asked what assurances could be given that situations such as the re-brand, namely the lack of consultation, would not happen again. Rupert Davies responded, saying the independent review will undertake a complete top-down examination of the organisation's structures and decision-making processes. The review will be independent and at arm's length, so that the Executive is seen not to direct it. DT stated that lessons had definitely been learnt and it was very clear that members want to be consulted and involved with big organisational decisions...

John Simpson outlined the BMC's financial position, saying that bank deposits currently sit at £1.8m, with assets showing on the balance sheet at £1.4m, so the organisation has no immediate financial problems. Rehan Siddiqui added that Sport England funding for 2017-21 is in the balance, and that if funding were to be ended some BMC activities would be affected, but the organisation's future would not be in jeopardy...

Colin Knowles, of Red Rope, felt the BMC was spending too much time worrying about its relationship with Sport England and that many members would favour a move towards independence from such government funding; others in the room expressed their agreement with this point...

Jason Rawles suggested that rather than focusing on technological developments to improve communication and engagement, why not consider a change of attitude to hill walkers, who make up the biggest proportion of members and also the largest potential market for membership growth...

Rehan Siddiqui thanked everyone for their contributions to the discussion. The meeting finished at approximately 10.40am. He later resigned because of disillusionment caused by the no confidence motion and the demands of family and work." *Intro and edit by DS*

I took the top photo of the Coppermines Valley, Coniston, from the Old Man; Low Water is bottom left with Levers Water in the distance. Merseyside RR stayed at the excellent Barrow MC hut in late June and had a fantastic weekend of walking and swimming. Saturday saw us going over Hole Rake and onto Holme Fell with great views of Coniston and beyond. On the Sunday some of us climbed the Old Man with a dip in Low Water on the way. The views were almost as powerful as the wind speed on the tops! We continued along to Swirl How then Prison Band, returning via Levers Water for an invigorating final swim. A fab weekend! **Fiona Coyne**

I took the lower photo on Barra, to the south of the Outer Hebrides. I went there from Oban after the Alex Mac trip in April. The ferry takes over 5 hours. I stayed in the excellent Dunard independent hostel for 4 nights in Castlebay, home of the ferry terminal and the only village of any size on the island. There was a very strong wind blowing when I arrived which gradually abated by the third day. This allowed me to understand why the hostel was selling T shirts describing the island as 'Barradise'! You can hire bikes, there's a mini-bus service and ferries north to Eriskay and South Uist. I liked the quietness, quirkiness and space - recommended! **David Symonds**





Many thanks to all contributors. It was good to have had plenty enough material for 16 pages. I designed the front cover. A tour of the photos:

The hut top left is owned by Solihull MC. It's very near Dinas Mawddy, so it's handy for Cader Idris where the lower photo was taken. It's basic, characterful and in a great location but probably best used in the summer months. Try it if you're feeling adventurous! It is on the BMC hut list.

25 T shirts have been sold. Bryony, formerly of Bristol RR, is pictured in her native New Zealand. World domination awaits! A new batch in red and maroon will be on sale soon via the website and at the AGM.

The sheep can speak for themselves. Well, sort of... Mo is shown at a swim-in to celebrate the winter solstice, thus confirming Mario's assertion that Scousers are tough! Photo by Fee C. Next deadline 31 Jan, 2018.

Ba-aaah! **Dave/id Symonds**