

Red socialist rope walking climbing



Autumn 2019
Bulletin 37

...now with added rumpti-tumpti mountain men!



www.redrope.org.uk

RR AGM 2019: Hathersage Rocks!



Hathersage is a pleasant village in the northern Peak District about 10 miles west of Sheffield with gear shops and lots fabulous walking and climbing options including Burbage Rocks, Higger Tor, Stanage Edge, the Toad's Mouth and wonderful views of the distant peaks of the Upper Derwent Valley, dominated by Win Hill - you can't lose!

The National Red Rope Weekend will run from **Friday 27 to Sunday 29 September**. As you can see, the St. Michael's Centre has a smart, bright interior which should suit us very well. The dorms have strong, modern bunks sleeping 38 people, which means that we might actually be quorate! Anyone suffering from dormitory-phobia could get themselves a B&B or stay at the Youth Hostel, but where's the fun in that?

Our membership was 315 at the last count. We need 10% of those for the meeting to be quorate. We'll be fairly close to Liverpool, Manchester and Sheffield, so it would be quite easy for members in those regions, and possibly further afield, to come for the day. If you have never been to an AGM why not give it a go? It should be possible to book on-line this year, as well as by post.

St Michaels Environmental
and Education Centre, Main Rd,
Hathersage, Hope Valley
S32 1BB, UK

The actual AGM will be on the Saturday from 4-6pm, meaning there will be plenty of time to get into the countryside on both days. It will be followed by the big meal and a quiz.

There will be a bar with real ale, fruit juice and wine at cost price, so there is no need to bring your own drink. There will also be an orienteering game, treasure hunt, and the possibility of climbing and caving instruction, depending on demand. Be there or miss out!

David Symonds, National Secretary



This is mostly from the Centre's website:

You'll find us at the heart of the bustling Peak District village of Hathersage in the Hope Valley. With limitless walking from the door, it is close to the popular Derwent Valley reservoirs, the gritstone edges, Chatsworth estate and the caverns of Castleton. The Hope Valley train line and a good network of bus routes pass through the village making it possible to explore the area without a car. We provide top quality, warm and welcoming accommodation in a variety of dorms.

You will find a well equipped self-catering kitchen, a dining room and lounge area with TV/DVD and **Wi-Fi**, a classroom, showers, toilets, drying room and secure parking for up to 12 cars. Shops, pubs, cafés, rail station, bus route, tennis court and **an open air heated swimming pool** are all a few steps away. The Hope Valley line has regular trains from Manchester and Sheffield. There are also buses daily to Sheffield, Hope, Castleton, Eyam and (not Joan) Bakewell.



Photo and sketch on this page by RRer Jean Luce. See more of her work at <https://www.jeanluceartist.com>



Cairngorms in Winter? (Muir Cottage, April 2019)

Well, April, almost/still winter in the Cairngorms, or so the warnings tell us. Ice axes protruded above the tops of rucksacks bulging with goggles, gloves, belay jackets and crampons "as a precaution". The vista of white capped peaks towering ahead as the winding single track road turns West from Braemar hugging the River Dee, up into the Caledonian forests of Deeside and on to Muir with the heart of the Cairngorms beyond. Towards Scotland's own not-so-little bit of the Arctic, the excitement of being back in the hills again, and the momentary nervousness at the reputation of unforgiving weather these mountains are famed for. Then Muir Cottage itself, almost a pastiche of the "but and ben", a small clearing in the forest, the cottage off the road and the River Dee flowing at the end of the back garden.

Nothing is ever as expected. Over the week ice axes were discarded, possession of crampons became an embarrassment and for seven days the sun was overhead from morning to night. You had to climb, and climb and climb, to find the snowfields, and even up there the famed 170mph winds refused to blow, the blizzards refused to blizzard, the sun refused to stop shining (and the midges refused to appear). Snow trousers gave way to shorts, balaclavas to sun hats and every day was perfect. Long (and short) walks were walked, mountains were climbed (or not climbed) and for those so inclined, Munros were bagged. You can almost hear the surprise in the comment: *"Cycled, in shorts, in April, in Scotland!"*

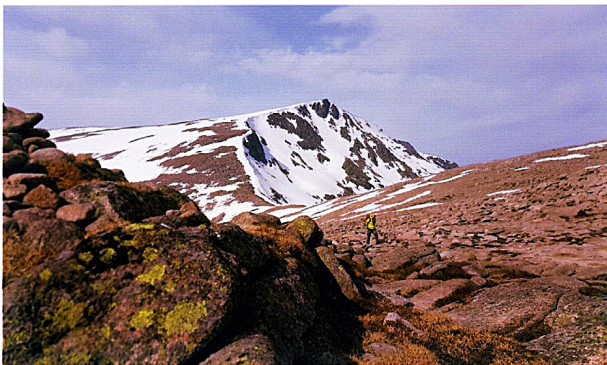


Muir Cottage itself, far removed from the two room but and ben heritage with five (or was it six?) bedrooms hidden to the rear: larger on the inside than the outside. The Dee really did flow fifty metres behind the back wall, and red squirrels gave regular squirrel performances amongst the trees to the side. Warmed with seemingly infinite supplies of wood, this had been the base of the Cairngorms Club since the 1950s, whose mainly Aberdonian members have been climbing over these mountains since 1887. Just being there brings back snatches of Nan Shepherd's writing, photographs on the wall from the 1930s and 40s, coinciding with her years in the mountains. All the associated paraphernalia of

the oldest climbing and walking club in Scotland. Cosy, warm, spacious. Early evenings outside watching the sun set against a backdrop of forest and mountains, later evenings inside with good company and good food. Aberdonian roots alluded to in the carefully labelled kitchen. "Cutlery" "Orra Cutlery". (Say it as if you came from Aberdeen.)



The walks? Ranging from as far South as Meall Gorm, East to Lochnagar, West to the Cairn Toul – Braeriach ridge and North to the Pools of Dee. Some covered by many, others by only an intrepid few; as the mood took. Special credit to the solo one day (or day and night?) effort by John to cover the latter two extremities in one marathon walk.



"And so starts the spectacular Cairn Toul-Braeriach Traverse, one of the best walks I've ever done. After a few hiccups, errors and adventures it took me nineteen unrelenting hours (guidebook suggests twelve). The contrast between the picture postcard location of Muir Cottage nestled beside the Dee and those hidden rocky masses of the Plateau only adds to the romance and excitement to return."

The highlight for many didn't require quite so much ranging far from home: the magical waterfalls and rapids next to the Glen Lui salmon ladder, only a kilometre from the cottage as the crow flies. I don't think any salmon climbed the ladder, or even leapt, but the sun shone, the water sparkled and gurgled, the trees rustled and everybody agreed it was magic. Water, Air, Light and Being. All in one day. *"what I imagine a fairy glen to look like".*

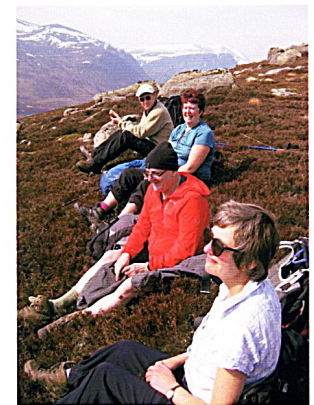


And the mountains, for those adding to their Munro list (Rebekah scoring her century!), or those just seeking the sheer exhilaration and thrill at the beauty of these wild high places? Cloud-free summits were taken for granted and the lack of rain or mist made every day of the seven a possible summit day. The fast-melting snow fields turned even the smallest burns into spectacular torrents and the parched brown of the recently blanketed slopes were visibly greening as the week progressed. The mountains were on their best behaviour, breezy ridges and summits only adding to the isolation and wildness. Bikes made even the more distant peaks

accessible, reducing the commute to Derry Lodge from a three mile trudge West along the stalkers track into a pleasant, if bumpy, twenty minute cycle. From the Lodge stretches Glenn Derry to the West and Glean Laoigh Bheag to the North, the local gateways into the heart of the Cairngorms; Derry Cairngorm, Ben



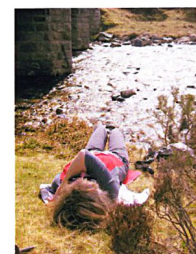
Macdui, Cairn Toul and the Lairig Ghru an easy day-walk distance with Braeriach and the Pools of Dee beyond. All were walked over and round during the week, including intermediate ridges and summits too numerous to remember. Further afield, to the East, Carn Beag and the peaks around the stunning Lochnagar, with even some mild scrambling up the Stuic, following in



Byron's footsteps. To the South, Sgor Mor and the the two ridges from Carn an Tuiric to Tolmount and from Glas Maol to Creag Leacach. Even the much maligned Carn Gheodidh, courtesy of the Glenshee Ski Lift. Cheating? Maybe, but an opportunity for even the injured and convalescent to experience the wildness and savageness of these mountains.



We didn't really do rest days away from the mountains and the walks. However tired or aching, sitting in the cottage with a book for any part of such a glorious week would just seem wrong. Maybe sitting watching the sun set in the evening counts as the requisite lazy time, or the gentle cycle tours around the Linn of Dee and on to the deserted (and muddy) tracks leading along the North bank and back to Braemar. Or one morning at the Braemar Gather ground; watching in bemusement as a self-important US film crew made heavy weather of filming "The Worlds Four Strongest Men versus The Braemar Tug of War Team". Definitely heading for daytime viewing on some obscure midwest



cable channel. Worth it, if just for the sight of the incongruously kilt clad leviathans struggling to remember their one-sentence spoken lines for more than 10 seconds. The locals (and the hardest of us) stuck it out to the bitter end. The less hardy fled back to the hills.



Magical place, magical week, spoilt only by its inevitable ending after seven days. The last walk on the last day, standing on the slopes of Meall An Lundain looking expectantly North East with the many peaks of Ben Avon and the Cairngorm plateau tantalisingly close. *"We haven't even been anywhere near that part yet!"*

Next time: there has to be a next time.

WHOSE LAND?

A REVIEW OF "OUR PLACE" BY MARK COCKER
(ISBN 9780224102292, Jonathan Cape)

The "State of Nature" report on Britain was published in 2013. Over 3400 species were studied and it was found 60 per cent had declined in the last half century, with 31 percent declining badly. 600 were threatened with extinction. While some species have since recovered the overall trend is for further decline.

Mark Cocker wrote "Our Place" to seek to identify the causes of this environmental disaster and look at solutions. He does not avoid making all of us responsible for this. However he points the finger particularly at the capitalist and aristocratic interests that wield power over the land. In 1072, at the drawing up of the Domesday Book, 4.9 percent of England's population owned 99 percent of land. Today only 25000 landowners own half of England (Guardian 17/4/19). Conservation charities own 2 percent. Scotland is even more polarised: in 2012 half the country was in the hands of 963 owners (Cocker p274). Thousands of Enclosure Acts and the Highland clearances have privatised land and dispossessed virtually the entire British population. Reasonable access to some upland and uncultivated land for recreation has only been regained with the CROW Act (2000).

This concentration of land wealth has allowed the development of agribusiness. 10 percent of farms account for half of Britain's agricultural production (Cocker p 192). Production has been intensified and specialised so that farms produce just two or three commodities, backed up by pesticides and nitrogen fertilisers. Aided and abetted by state and EU subsidies, the variety of habitats in the countryside are reduced to monoculture. Half the ancient woodland, nearly three quarters of heathland, three quarters of ponds and almost all flower-rich meadows have gone (Cocker p211). The class interests of these owners backed by the National Farmers Union ensure that big agriculture is nicely profitable. The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food remains enmeshed with this powerful lobby.

That lobby too has helped the massive growth in conifer forests. Tax breaks and subsidies have made this a nice little earner. This has particularly affected Scotland, with rare and vulnerable habitats being destroyed to make way for conifers. These forests are constructed to maximise profit and as a result do not provide a sustainable environment for many species.

Despite these damaging changes, conservation is popular. The National Trust (NT) has 5 million members, RSPB 1.2 million, and Wildlife Trusts 800,000. Cocker points to environmental battles that these organisations have taken on with varying degrees of success. But he describes the two biggest organisations as "conservative and cautious" (P42).

He is particularly scathing about the National Trust. In the 1930s a tax loophole was created for owners of big country houses whereby they could pass their properties over to NT in return for not having to pay death duties and being able to live rent free in the property. In effect NT has since been run by this class and it has serviced their properties. It is hardly surprising that there is little radical environmentalism to be found at the head of such an organisation. Environmentalist Mark Avery described the NT as "a very good part of the entertainment industry".

The weakness in "Our Place" lies in Mark Cocker's solutions. He argues for solidarity among environmental organisations to provide more effective lobbying, and for proportional representation so that green radical groups can be heard in Parliament. But to challenge the vested interests requires more than that.

The big conservation organisations were created by upper class people who loved nature, and had the wealth and time to do something about it.

But the land has always been an issue for the rural poor and city working class too, right from Kett's rebellion and the Diggers, up to the Kinder mass trespass and anti-fracking campaigns. Land is vital to house the population in affordable homes. It requires a rational plan to grow the food and raw materials that nature can provide without the environmental damage.

To achieve that requires the public ownership of big agribusiness and the land of the 25000 who own half of England, and the 963 who own half of Scotland. Half of the land in Wales is technically unregistered so ownership is difficult to prove, but the pattern and the solution would be the same. A public debate to consider how to build enough decent affordable housing, maintain efficiency in agricultural production, while providing the environment for the variety of nature to flourish should be part of that process.

Democratic control of our land is vital. John McDonnell has argued for common ownership of land (13/11/18). It is something we must support.

Pete Watson

THE LAND IS OURS

WWW.TLIO.ORG.UK

The Land is Ours is a radical land rights group set up by George Monbiot and others. It opposes the big business interests of large landowners and advocates access and use of land that benefits the majority. It supports some nationalisation. It advertises land rights campaigns and produces useful educational material.

Brexit Air

Good evening and welcome to this Brexit Airlines flight out of the EU. Our flight time is... actually, I haven't got a clue. We welcome all 100 of our passengers tonight - to the 48 who didn't want to fly, we apologise, you were right. The others are reminded - **no smirking on this plane** - that does include you Farage, you won't be told again! Please keep your seat belt fastened — we're in for a bumpy ride. The right wing is playing up and we're weak on the other side.

So we'll remind you of the safety rules, roger, over and over, even though we're heading for the bright white cliffs of Dover! In the event of an emergency you'll hear the warning, 'brace, brace', and somewhere near your arse-hole is where to hide place your face. If you hear, 'Boris Boris', then I don't wish to be rude but you can do what the fuck you like - we're all basically screwed. We do have a stop-off in Dublin, there are fags in the airport shop, although some of you seem unhappy with the Irish baccy stop!

We've replaced our offer of Rioja, croissants and stinky brie, and will shortly serve some stale pork pies and luke-warm cups of tea. I'm afraid the captain left in tears a very short time ago, So if anyone can fly this thing then please do let us know. We've been 3 years on the runway and we're still not in the sky - apparently we can't agree on which direction we should fly. We don't know where we're headed or how might get there But please, sit back, relax... and thanks for flying Brexit Air!

Bogsey Thanks to Bogsey and Comrade O for sending this poem.

Conchiglie nei colore della bandiera

Shell pasta in the colours of the Italian flag - an easy, trip-friendly main course. Serves 10.

<i>Pasta Conchiglie</i>	<i>1Kg</i>
<i>Spinach</i>	<i>3 x 250g bags</i>
<i>Soft mild goat's cheese</i>	<i>4 x 150g "logs" (rindless)</i>
<i>Cherry vine tomatoes</i>	<i>70 fruit</i>
<i>Balsamic vinegar</i>	<i>4 tablespoons</i>
<i>Olive oil</i>	<i>4 tablespoons</i>

- Boil pasta as per package instructions, 10 mins?
- Wash and wilt spinach without adding any additional water 5 mins - serve on top of pasta.
- Warm tomatoes in oil. This is best done in a wide pan so that they just cover the bottom, or at most are two deep. When they start to split, add Balsamic vinegar, swish round, and serve on top of spinach, 5 mins
- Cut goat's cheese into small pieces and serve on top of the whole thing.
- Grated nutmeg and/or black pepper can be added.

Buon appetito! **John Marsden**



I represented Red Rope at the Ramblers' General Council, held in Manchester in April. Red Rope is now the only national affiliate run on a purely voluntary basis. It was a friendly, well-organised event, though I felt that too much time was taken up with presentations from the staff and trustees, together with a panel session on values, leaving only 3 hours for motions & trustee hustings. Most of the motions were non-controversial but there were a couple of more interesting ones - on GDPR and the gender balance of those attending.

The GDPR motion was a response to a feeling that the Ramblers' interpretation of the regulations was making it difficult for local areas to communicate effectively with members; for example, I discovered that I had stopped receiving the local newsletter because it's sponsored by Cotswold and I'd opted out of marketing. Despite good arguments in support of the motion it was defeated, but the Bristol delegation quoted an extract from the regulations which I thought might be useful to Red Rope members when opposing overly strict interpretations of the rules in other organisations in which you are involved. In summary, this stated that data can be legitimately processed without explicit consent for the 'legitimate business interests' of the organisation and if the recipients 'would not be surprised or likely to object to what you are doing'. The relevant advice is at: <https://ico.org.uk/for-organisations/marketing>.

The debate around gender representation was quite shocking. Apparently more than 50% of Ramblers' members are women, but 68% of those attending the conference were men. The very mild motion, simply a request that attendance be monitored for diversity in future, and that local areas be asked to take this into account, was the last to be heard. The proposer pointed out that all the previous motions had been proposed by men, and the speakers from the floor had been nearly all men, effectively making her case. But there was nevertheless a lot of opposition, predominantly from male delegates. I don't have room to relate details here, but much of it was the sort of thing I'd not heard for decades! This general perception is backed up by the fact that only 5 out of 14 trustees and 4 out of 17 vice-presidents are women. The motion was passed, but not by a very large majority. The Ramblers currently have around 101,000 members, though this is down from a high of around 142,000, with a loss of 1,000 in the past year. However, their finances have improved markedly due to a

A. Stait!



Q. Which tiny village, home to two huts and an activity centre, is marked by a red dot on the 3D map above? Don't look too hard!

partnership with the People's Postcode Lottery, whereby they have now become a licensed society lottery operator which means that they get 32% of the proceeds from a certain number of draws, amounting to £2.5 million p.a.

My feeling is that the Ramblers has become too 'corporate'. But they are still doing important work, amongst which the 'Don't Lose Your Way' project should be of interest to RRers. You may be aware that public access to rights of way that are not recorded by 1 January 2026 may be lost, and the Ramblers' project is supporting volunteers to research an estimated 10,000 miles of such rights of way that may be at risk. If you are interested in helping with this, contact your local Ramblers group. Some may welcome your help even if you are not a member.

I know that many Red Rope members are also members of the Ramblers. If you are regularly involved in Ramblers activities it would be great if you could report back on anything interesting that comes up in your region - you could even write an article for the Bulletin!

Barbara Segal, Red Rope Ramblers rep.

Ramblers' Conference, April 2019

What happens if I drop out of a trip?

Anyone eagle-eyed may have noticed that the small print about 'exceptional circumstances' has been removed from the trip booking form recently. It referred to cancellations within 4 weeks of a trip starting and gave flexibility to the 'no refunds after this date' ruling. This has led to some inconsistencies in practice and concerns over fairness. The NC has now reviewed this policy. We are sorry to say that with a changing demographic our injuries, poor health and the loss of parents can no longer be seen as 'exceptional circumstances'. We also wish to confirm that payment for trips should not be viewed as a 'deposit' because covers the full payment, apart from travel costs.

The booking form now states:

'Cancellations: 100% refund if 12 weeks or more before start of trip, 50% if less than 12 but more than 4, no refund after that, plus no refund of public transport fares.'

Red Rope trips are quite tightly budgeted so there is not much slack in the finances. The average banding on trips is now 2.6 and our overnight charges are calculated to break even at Band 3. One month before a trip the huts have been paid for and bookings cannot be reduced, so trip organisers must apply this ruling or we risk losing money repeatedly, making so our trips programme unsustainable.

An appeals procedure is being set up for those affected by this ruling on future trips and who wish to challenge it on grounds of hardship. A group of 3 NC members will consider appeals.

We emphasise that appeals should not be made to trip organisers who do not have the authority to make decisions or the means to make payments.

We hope that members will understand the reasons for this ruling. It is in line with many other holiday bookings and members may wish to consider taking out insurance to cover a potential loss. Some people may have bank accounts which already provide a travel cancellation insurance that could be resorted to if you have to cancel a Red Rope trip, as with any other 'holiday'.

Trip organisers will be asked to remind those who have booked of the cancellation dates 6 weeks before the trip but they have a lot to do and may be unwell themselves so please help yourself by keeping a copy of your trip booking form and checking the rules if you are worried about the possibility of having to cancel.

We are doing this to introduce fairness and consistency in the way the rules are applied to add clarity for trip members and organisers.

Becky Bates, National Trips Secretary



SNOWDONIA
Cae Ysgubor, Beddgelert

Red Rope

National trip 12-17 October 2019

Contact: john_aldous@yahoo.com



A Sea of Troubles ?

Don Kinnibrugh

A popular rest-day activity for walkers on the Isle of Arran, when weather conditions or simple fatigue rule out another day on the hills, is to take the ferry across Lamlash Bay to Holy Island.

This has been owned since 1992 by a Tibetan Buddhist Trust, which runs a guest house and offers courses and residential retreats, as well as providing drinks and snacks to day-trippers. Visitors can also enjoy scrambles along the rocky ridge of the island, or easy walks along its shore, where carved rock paintings depict the Buddha and several Tibetan Buddhist icons.

What made this rest-day outing on the May 2019 national trip particularly memorable, however, was the voyage back across the mile-and-a-half-wide channel to Lamlash village. The ferry operators ('Tom' and 'Jim' according to the leaflet) transported passengers across to the island as a business, though it was not clear how they were linked to the Buddhist community. The ferry boat used that day was a very simple affair: it held about a dozen passengers (for whom it was open to the elements) and was powered by a petrol or diesel engine. Only the wheelhouse was partially enclosed, with a large windscreen through which the single-handed boatman viewed the sea ahead.

That day the weather conditions were not good, and we had been asked to leave the island early. There was not much wind, but a steady drizzle reduced visibility, and even from mid-channel it was hard to pick out the village on the other side.

Soon after setting off it was clear that the boatman was having difficulty navigating: the windscreen-wiper had stopped working and, in the rain, he could no longer see where he was aiming for. He periodically stopped the engine and clambered onto the bow to wipe the windscreen and get a better view. However, each time he did so, the rudder swung round to port and the boat moved in a circle, and we found ourselves facing the island we had just left! The boatman then returned to his wheelhouse and set us on the right course, until he could again see nothing

and the whole process was repeated. Thus we proceeded for most of the journey in a series of circles. At one stage we, the passengers, were asked to lean out and check our direction so he could remain at the wheel (though since we were not familiar with the coastline and were not sure where we should be heading, we were not much help!)

Eventually, however, we reached the ferry station jetty in Lamlash, late and soaking wet, but enormously relieved to be able step off onto dry land again!

Grace Ogilvie adds, 'There was no sign of life jackets or life belts, which one would expect in an open boat. At one stage the pilot asked "Does anyone have good eyes?" He was struggling to see with spray and rain on his specs! Some of the passengers seemed to find this process amusing! However, I felt a strange affinity with Queen Victoria on this occasion – it doesn't happen often - and had a word at the ticket office on landing!'





Muir Cottage, Deeside
23-30 May



Ronnan Cottage, Aultbea
30 May-6 June



Thanks to Pete Clark for designing the montage above offering the possibility of a fortnight in sunny Scotland next year! See MIS for details. Thanks also to John Aldous, who is on the cover in a green jacket, for designing the Beddgelert and Spean Bridge ads, plus the cover logo. Other visuals like these, or Jean and Pete's paintings, would be very welcome. DS

bulletin@redrope.org.uk

Many thanks to all contributors to this XL, never mind XR, edition! Brian Greer wrote and designed the account on the Cairngorms trip. A full page of text equals about 750 words. Unless you're going to 'do a Brian' please send text and jpeg photos separately. The next deadline is Nov.11, which is when Membership Sec. Gill would like you to start renewing your membership, either by GoCardless or cheque.

The striking trip adverts like John Aldous' below are publicising events booked by long-standing National Trips Officer Becky Bates, who has put another great programme together for next year. These are generally very popular, so it makes sense to book in advance and benefit from the 10% discount for bookings made 3 months or more before a trip. It would be encouraging to see more people taking advantage of what's on offer. Becky is concerned to book particularly comfortable huts for the longer trips. You don't have to be Chris Bonington to enjoy them!



BMC member and long-standing volunteer Colin Knowles has been elected as Secretary General of the International Federation of Sport Climbing's European Council Board. He has already attended Plenary Assemblies held in Quebec, Innsbruck, Tokyo and more recently Vilnius.

Colin was one of Red Rope's founders in London in the mid-1970s and has had a variety of roles in the club. He pioneered the arrangement with LMC to give Red Rope special access to their two huts. We wish him well!

DS

SCOTLAND
Ivy Cottage, Spean Bridge
23 Feb - 1 Mar 2020



Contact: sj.bates@yahoo.co.uk

BMC AGM: Buxton March 2019

I attended the BMC AGM weekend in Buxton on Saturday 30 and Sunday 31 March 2019. There was a workshop for club's reps on the Saturday afternoon which was well run and stimulating. Another on the Sunday morning was attended by at least twice as many people and seemed less satisfactory. The AGM later rubber-stamped the BMC's proposed membership charge increase.

I wanted to find out more about the background to the hike in charges which are mainly linked to a big increase in the cost of insurance after what was described at the meeting as a 'catastrophic' accident on a climbing wall, leaving a young man with life-long disabilities.

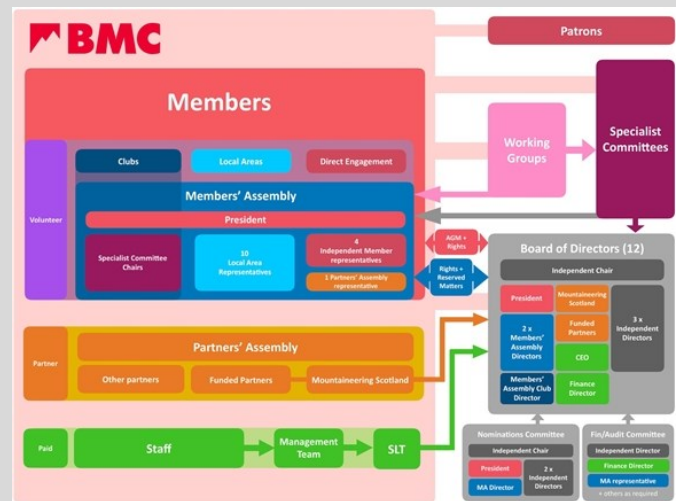
The insurance includes cover such as: accidental bodily injury to third parties and/or damage to third party property arising out of your insured activities... Protection for director, officers and senior managers against claims arising from their decisions or action taken.' The full extensive statement can be read on the BMC's website re. the AGM, under item 8.

The BMC stated, 'Past subscription increases and comparisons with other organisations show BMC subscriptions compare favourably with other similar UK based sporting organisations and overseas mountaineering associations. Over the last decade, the BMC has increased subscriptions on two occasions only: 2014 (£1.50 uplift for all membership categories) and 2018 (£2.50 uplift for individual members, £1.00 for club members).'

BMC CEO Dave Turnbull mentioned, during his talk in support of the motion to approve the increase, that a cheaper form of membership might be available with restrictions e.g. that it would not involve 'Summit' magazine. Huw Jones, who was later elected as a Nominated Director (accounting and services) mentioned that there might be a reduced rate for membership by Direct Debit.

I sent a report to the NC about the AGM and copied Dave Turnbull in. I contacted him recently to ask about any developments. He said he would pass my enquiry to the Organisational Review Group. I have yet to hear from them. It may be that nothing will come of it - we'll see.

The other reason given for the increase was to fund the ORG's recommendations for improvements in the running of the BMC. The flow-chart above is an example of what we were shown regarding reorganisation. I wouldn't want



to be overly critical but I had a suspicion that with so much time being spent producing sophisticated plans not enough time or energy might remain to put them into practice!

There was much criticism of the BMC website, both in terms of accessing information and being able to know what was available. My feeling was that it would be useful to prioritise what was most used and make it as user-friendly as possible - as with the general planning, the bells and whistles could come later.

Attendees were treated to a meal and prize-giving event on the Saturday night. I sat next to a guide who had done Everest twice and had a wealth of great anecdotes. (I later learnt that his nick-name was 'Rocket Ronnie'!) Another chap across the table was built like the proverbial brick outhouse and was going to do Mont Blanc in the summer. So, nothing intimidating there! It was an enjoyable event and good to see several young climbers given awards for voluntary work. One fact I came across was that the average age of BMC members was about 37. I imagine Red Rope's is about 57!

I thought the weekend was well worth attending, partly just to get an overview of how the BMC worked. It was also interesting to meet other clubs' reps. One current expression when discussing conclusions is, 'What was the take-away?' (This does not refer to chow mein!) My conclusion was that it is important to plan sensibly but not make a rod for your own back in the process!

The RR National Committee have decided to subsidise 2020 membership fee increase from club funds. You can see NC minutes via 'Quick Links' on the club website.

David Symonds, Nat. Sec

!REBELS ON THE ROAD!

ANDREW'S WALK TO LONDON FOR THE XR ACTION IN APRIL

I walked as a pilgrimage from Stroud over 9 days to London where I joined with 20 other people from the Forest of Dean at various times over the following fortnight's action.

I had previously walked for a day with Barbara Segal and a few others from Chepstow to Patchway, near Filton, in North Bristol as part of the walk from West Wales to London. This was perhaps the hardest days walking as it was all on roads, albeit some of them very minor.

There was a great send off from Stroud, a few days later, with a jazz band, the Lord Mayor, the MP, newspaper reporters and many supporters. 20 of us set off, but many walked for the day, or part of it, and at the end of it, there were about 6 of us, most of whom walked to London as well. The Stroud crew were fantastic, full of energy and commitment – we even managed to give leaflets to people in moving cars, and there was often a song or a chant, especially at the end of the day to keep us going and energise us.

The first days walk was largely by an extinct, but becoming renewed, canal. At the end of it was our only nights camping on the walk, near Cirencester, after a good meal brought to us from Stroud. Thankfully we had a support car all the way to London to carry our heavy gear. Just after getting up the next morning, as we greeted the sunlight, two red kites came over a nearby woodland, and then straight over us, before flying off. I took it as a strong indication we were approved of, and were doing the right thing, at the right time, in the right place. There were several other occasions over the next few days when red kites circled over us, and each one was an invigorating thrill of approval.

We walked with banners, signs, and a tabard by canals, on part of the Ridgeway and country lanes, talking to people we met and campaigning in towns, where few had heard of Extinction Rebellion. But saying we were walking to London was a great conversation starter, and many were supportive, some even saying they would join us in London on the action, even though they had known nothing of it beforehand.

At night, we stayed in people's houses – often Quakers or members of Extinction Rebellion – or in church halls. Many hosts were very hospitable and sometimes local groups provided a meal for all of us, often with musical accompaniment.

We arrived in Oxford on good form. After tea with the Oxford Grannies, we walked down the roadway, to the consternation of the police, to a meeting with the Sherriff in the centre. We left the next day in much larger numbers, many boat, although most of the Stroud crew walked the towpath as they wanted to walk most of the way.

We spent one night at Grow Heathrow, a small temporary community opposing the extension of Heathrow. The next morning some of us went with some of them to the roundabout, with a plane on it, at the entrance to Heathrow. We stood there with our banners for half an hour and were rapidly accompanied by armed police. They allowed us to stay there for the half hour and then stopped the traffic for us to leave the roundabout and continue on the way to London. However, there had been a miscalculation of the number of days it would take to get to London, so at the end of one day we jumped on a train to get an extra day's walking under our belts!

From Oxford, our numbers were increased again, for the rest of the way. At one point a few of us, mainly the Stroud crew again, made a diversion, took off our boots, and walked up a grassy "tump", perhaps 300 feet high, again being circled by red kites. We found ourselves next to an ancient Celtic Fort, at the same level above the surrounding landscape, and with energy renewed eventually joined up with the others. We were walking around 14 miles a day although as we neared London, numbers grew and the distance lessened to around 8 miles on the last day.

We approached London by canals, and it was a great moment when we joined up with the walk that had come from the toe of Cornwall and South Wales. We saw them coming over a canal bridge with their banners, and cheered lustily. There were many hugs when they reached us. These other walks were more like relays, with no-one doing the full distance, but it was great to meet up with someone I had walked with from Chepstow to Patchway, and another great friend.

The last day, when many joined us, including my partner Mollie, we walked from Richmond, where we had had a luxurious night, including a hot bath, staying with an XR volunteer. After going through Richmond we became over a hundred strong, walking initially along the Thames, and then along the dual carriageways that are the usual route for cars from the South West into central London.

The police were pressurising us with their motorbikes, so twice we stopped to sit down and make a circle over the two lanes to share the reasons why we were there.

When we arrived at Hyde Park, we were led in by a samba band to near Speakers' Corner where we joined many thousand other rebels. There we were told by the head of the Park Police, who wouldn't sing one of his folk songs to us, that we could pitch our tents after dark near some washing facilities just for the night. The next morning we packed up our tents and left all our possessions in a small marquee – not knowing what was going to happen.

After taking up trees and plants onto the newly taken Waterloo Bridge, to make it the Garden Bridge, we returned in the evening to find we were camping on the Marble Arch roundabout which had been taken shortly after we had left in the morning. So we found grass to pitch our tent on, close to many others and the sound stage, to start the fortnight of action.

The atmosphere at our sites in London, for me especially Waterloo Bridge and Marble Arch, where I slept every night, was amazingly open, loving and freeing – even more so than on Red Rope trips. Extinction Rebellion develops a

regenerative culture and this was strongly expressed through the actions. We could talk to strangers about anything, were frequently exchanging hugs and there was a feeling of trust with everyone. The organisation was extraordinarily efficient, and even improved as the fortnight went on.

Over one thousand one hundred people were arrested over the fortnight, and there was no injury either to police or arrestees. I acted for part of the time as a Legal Observer, and mainly the police cooperated with us. Overall there was a very positive relationship between us. The myth went round that some police went home after duty, took off their uniforms and came back and joined us for the day.

It came home to me, during this period, that as a species we are facing the greatest crisis we have ever faced – even greater than the ice ages – and the work we were doing there is the most important thing there is to do.

It was an amazing start, but although Parliament and the Government have subsequently declared a Climate Emergency, there is a great deal of more difficult work to do before the essential actions show we are starting to take climate disaster and the other ecological crises seriously.

Andrew Worsley —appropriately in green!



!REBELS ON THE ROAD!

A WALK TO LONDON FOR THE XR ACTION IN APRIL 2019



The photo on the left shows RRs Nicola and Hugh protesting in London. Trudi was also there and says: 'We joined the last leg of the Extinction Rebellion Earth March, accompanying people from the South West who were going to occupy the Garden Bridge, Waterloo, as part of the International Rebellion. Some had walked from Land's End so we felt we wanted to show solidarity... helping with the banner on our Sunday walk was the least we could do. It was a colourful procession and there was a great atmosphere when we entered Hyde Park and joined with others from London Red Rope. There was a rally before the activists pitched tents, committing an act of civil disobedience by camping in a royal park. It was a bitterly cold night, so we were very fortunate to get home to warm beds...'

Rowland, of Bristol RR, took the photo with black banners. He says: 'I'm active with XR and joined the Earth Walk as it passed through the Bristol, Bath and Bradford-on-Avon area before Easter. I was so impressed by the core group of walkers that I took time out to join them again as they passed through Reading a week later.

My purpose was to link them up with the nearby nuclear bomb factory at Burghfield - a location I know rather well having helped with a successful blockade last October. After all, if we need to cut back on our carbon footprint, why not start with our WMD and release the whopping £200 billion price tag of Trident for decarbonisation and social justice? Despite being a tiny group of footsore walkers the MOD police deemed us to be a terrible threat and turned out in force to protect their gates. After an hour long "teach-in" on nuclear weapons we left them hopefully wiser and in peace to exercise their dogs and polish their machine-guns. A week later I met the walkers again in London as XR launched the amazing two-week-five-camp action over the Easter break. I'm so optimistic at the power of ordinary people to change history and hopefully make the world a safer and better place for everyone!'

