

**Red** socialist  
**rope** walking climbing



**bulletin 38**

**spring 2020**

# SNOWDONIA

## 5 DAYS IN OCTOBER

TREKS BROCKEN SPECTRES SCRAMBLES

**Cae Ysgubor, Beddgelert: 12th-17th October 2019**

by Alice Lyons and John Aldous



The Rhyd Ddu gate on the lower slopes of Snowdon (photo by Alice)

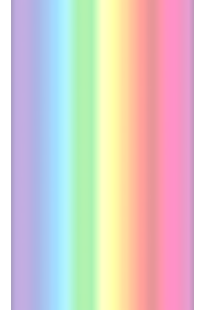
Eleven Red Ropers from the East Anglia, Leicester, London and Merseyside groups met at the well-appointed Cae Ysgubor hut for five days walking, centred around Beddgelert in the Snowdonia National Park. The trip was organised by John Aldous, Brian Greer was the treasurer and David Symonds ordered the plentiful provisions. The weather forecast was very poor – there had been a prediction of continuous heavy rain, so we were delighted when this turned out not to be the case, meaning we could make the most of every day. The group comfortably self-selected into two or three sub-groups, so a wide range of activities and routes were undertaken with everyone making it to the top of Snowdon at some point during the week. Highlights of the group activities are presented below.

*Sunday 13th October* Sunday was the wettest day but undeterred most of the group set out together for a 10km warm-up walk. We started from the hut, no cars required, and after a short climb walked down through the Llyn Dinas pass with tantalising glimpses of the coast beyond the low grey cloud. We walked past the remains of the old copper mine workings of Sygun and Cwm Bychan, before returning to the hut beside the lively Glaslyn river.



Monday 14th October

Linda, Dermot (front), Alice , Nigel , Becky and Sarah / Linda scrambling/ Peter the trainer leading the gang.



Six Red Ropers took part in some formal scrambling training on the rocky slopes of Tryfan provided by Lupine Adventure Co-operative (<https://www.lupineadventure.co.uk>). We learnt how to rope-up, belay and abseil (without harness) with the aim of giving us the skills to look after ourselves and each other in difficult terrain. After a morning of training we set off up Tryfan to put our new skills into action - a challenging and enjoyable afternoon!

For those who didn't take part in the training a 15km walk over varied terrain was enjoyed instead. John and Brian traversed the Nantlle Ridge from the west where they found a fairly chilly wind on the tops with good views in every direction, from the sea and Anglesey to the Snowdon range. Halfway as planned (it worked) they met up with Heather and Malcolm to exchange car keys and have lunch.

Tuesday 15th

A group of four (John, Sarah, Becky and Brian) spent eight hours on the hill ascending the South Ridge of Snowdon before descending via the Snowdon Ranger path. They had a tranquil walk up from Rhyd Ddu on a very still morning in bright glowing cloud and as the summit appeared a beautiful cloud inversion looking to the north and west was seen. On the summit a rare and spectacular **brocken spectre** appeared below the backdrop of Crib y Ddysgl - a truly mind-blowing sight. (photo by Sarah)



*Wikipedia says: 'A brocken spectre, also called brocken bow or mountain spectre, is the magnified, apparently enormous shadow of an observer cast upon clouds. The figure's head is often surrounded by halo-like rings of coloured light forming a 'glory', which appears when uniformly sized water droplets in clouds refract sunlight.*

*The phenomenon can appear on any misty mountainside or cloud bank, even when seen from an aeroplane, but the frequent fogs and low-altitude accessibility of the Brocken, a peak in the Harz Mountains in Germany, have created a local legend from which the phenomenon draws its name. The brocken spectre was observed and described in 1780, and has since been recorded often in literature about the region..*



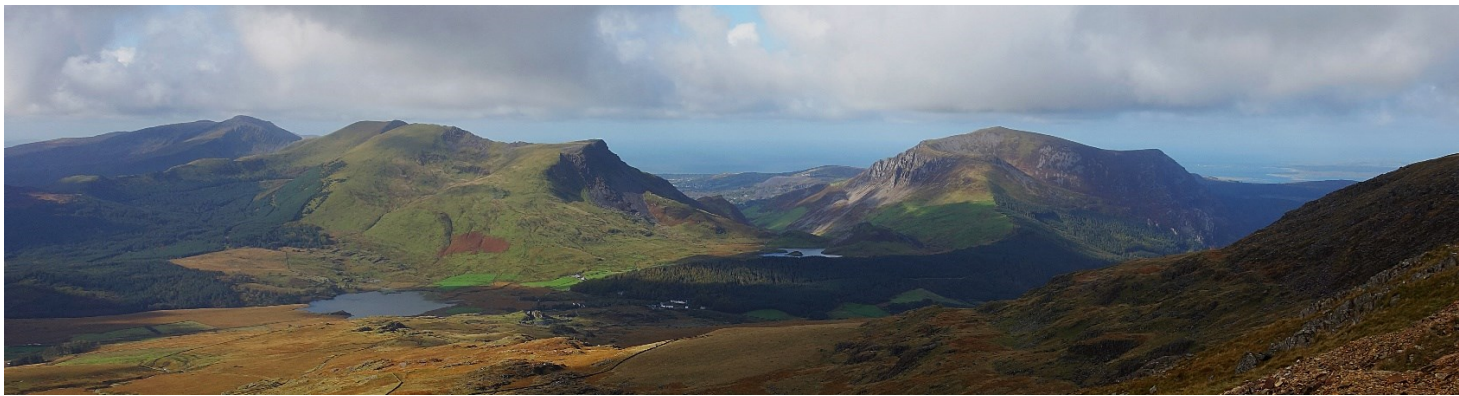


Alice, Nigel, David, Linda and Dermot also walked from Rhyd Ddu but stayed on the lower slopes of Snowdon eventually walking past Gladstone Rock and beautiful waterfalls before joining the Watkin path and returning to base. The evening meal was particularly adventurous as the lights went off in the hut and while it was getting sorted out we attempted to eat in an atmospheric, if chaotic, setting lit by head-torches!

An emergency mobile phone number was called and Dave Sudell, of the Lancashire Mountaineering Club, who happened to be on a climbing holiday in Greece (\*!?) gave some invaluable advice, leading to the restoration of all mod cons and the consumption of a very tasty veggie roast, courtesy of Malcolm. (Photo by Alice.)

### *Wednesday 16<sup>th</sup>*

On the last full day, the majority of the group (Linda, Malcolm, Alice, Nigel, Dermot, Heather and David) took their turn to climb Snowdon by hiking up the South Ridge and down the Rhyd Ddu path. Sadly, no more broken spectres were sighted but the views were still astounding.



Nantlle Ridge and Mynydd Mawr from Snowdon (David)      Below: Brian and John scrambling on Tryfan (Sarah)

The remainder of the group (Sarah, Becky, Brian and John) went for a scrambling adventure on Tryfan. Sarah, Brian and John took the North Ridge, a Grade 1 scramble and a great way to get hands on rock. The rock was dry and the last third of the climb was warmed by the sun as the shattered top was reached. Lunch was under the gaze of the two summit monoliths known as Adam and Eve before the steep and sometimes confusing descent back to Milestone Buttress.

Sadly, the planned lunch rendezvous with Becky, who had approached Tryfan from the east, was missed as she went faster than anticipated and had to drop down out of the wind - an otherwise fab afternoon!

### *Thursday 17th*

Everybody pitched in to tidy the hut and we were ready to leave by late morning – a really great trip. Walkers in alphabetical order: John Aldous, Becky Bates, Sarah Bates, Malcolm Donne, Linda Goss, Nigel Green, Brian Greer, Alice Lyons, Dermot McKibbin, Heather Morris and David Symonds.



Cover photo of Linda by David, logo and spectrum design by John.

Nigel adds: Monday 14<sup>th</sup> October 2019 saw me dangling over a cliff edge. It was not raining but cold, with rocks very wet and slippery from previous downpours. I was up on the north ridge of Tryfan on a scrambling course organised by Red Rope's favourite trainers - no, not Nike, but Lupine Co-operative! We were led by Peter the trainer, (not be confused with legendary East London anarchist Peter the Painter, but let's not go down that dark, murky alley). For the first time ever I was properly roped up, and with so much of it I could have easily been mistaken for the last public executioner Albert Pierrepoint. My shins got badly bruised in the process. However, no one else suffered any bruising, which might say more about me than the others. There were about half a dozen of us and everyone was good, but Linda and Alice were especially helpful to me. Nevertheless, I would recommend this one day course. When we got back down at 6pm Pete explained weather conditions made our day tougher and longer than normal.

We were part of a group of around a dozen on a five day national trip to Beddgelert, staying at the Lancashire Mountaineering Club hut, which Red Rope has a stake in, just outside town. The hut is very modern with lots of comfortable bunk beds, and a very spacious kitchen. My trip mates, and especially our intrepid Nat. Sec., Dave Symonds, mistook the hut for a five star hotel and was amazed at having to pay so little. "Do you think we will get away with it?" whispered an anxious Dave in my ear, "It's all mod cons at this gaffe isn't it?" Obviously, I knew all along that we were in a mere mountain hut, but didn't let on.

If, however, you did not fancy such a five star status staying outside was an option, and our good friend, comrade and trip organiser John Aldous did just that. He pitched his tent directly outside the kitchen window and cheerfully waved to us at every breakfast!

The hut was only a 15 minutes stroll from the Prince Llewelyn pub in the heart of Beddgelert, famous for once being struck by a meteorite. Thirsty Red Ropers, after a long hard walk, could easily sink a good pint in the bar whilst excitingly discussing the day's events.

Every night we had ample meals. Unfortunately, my culinary skills being what they are, I did not contribute to the food preparation as much as everyone else would have liked and, furthermore, ate much more than my allotted portion. The other reason why nobody liked me was because I kept saying to anyone who would listen (and there weren't many) that the UK needs to pull out of that crazy Common Market right here, right now, Dermot especially. I knew he wanted to whack me with that big walking pole he was carrying. Heather meanwhile boldly announced she was going to join a forthcoming "I love the Common Market" march through central London - whether I approved of her attendance or not. Outrageous!

Wednesday, our last full day, with reasonable weather most of the time, was the big one and we tackled Snowdon by the South Ridge. The lower section was largely well constructed paths and the upper section involved a moderate scramble and then a short narrow part. We finally made it to the café at the summit, eventually descending by the Rhyd Ddu path - a fantastic day out. So a great trip, a great hut, a wonderful little village, and Alice kindly bought us all a badge...



# XR, wrinklies and the future of Red Rope!

I sent a request to regional contacts in October:

*The Red Rope National Committee, which consists of regional reps and members with national roles, e.g. publicity officer, have decided to hold an extra N.C. meeting in London on November 9. One of the main topics for discussion will be the future of the club. It will be helpful if you could complete the following survey to give the meeting a clearer idea of how things are looking in the regions.*

*Thanks for your time, David Symonds.*

*It is hard to summarise the responses but they were generally quite encouraging. I asked the regional contacts to pass the collected responses on via their email lists. I've selected a few comments below to share in print.*

## **Heather Morris, Leicester**

E. How do you see Red Rope generally developing over the next 5 to 10 years? Do you think it will be expanding, stable, diminishing or closing down? Give reasons. What could be done to enliven the club?

Stable to diminishing: a large number of retirements has given the club a lease of life with a lot of people keen to spend time on holidaying and outdoor activities but this is likely to taper off when the bulk of members reach their 70s and beyond. Activities will need to reflect the lessening likelihood of people wanting to take part in very strenuous events.

The club will eventually fold as people age. However, if it was possible to establish a core of younger people in an area this might lead to some regeneration. Would it be possible to start that with a small number of young members who would act as 'outreach' workers? It might be possible to advertise in colleges, possibly through organisations such as XR and to offer free membership to under 30s, maybe for a year or two? Buddying and mentoring might work for climbers. Also, offering free places on walking trips, and reserving (and indeed actively 'selling')

a number of places for under 30s might be an idea. As the organisation is already full of 'oldies' why not also target retirement magazines and other publications that appeal to wrinklies?

F. Is your region in a generally healthy state, a reasonable state or languishing?

Languishing. There is little contact between the two towns, Leicester and Nottingham, and the number of regular participants in events is limited to the usual suspects. They are pretty keen, however.

We made some effort to establish a walks programme, as potential new members inquired about this. However, the old members are not very keen to go on local walks (far too busy doing retirement) and our programme doesn't compare very well with other, buoyant, local walking clubs.

G. Do any of your members go on RR national trips? Lots – the hard core of about 15 people.

H. What do you do to attract new members? Do you rely on 'word of mouth' or publicise the club in other ways? Word of mouth, mainly. I think the climbers enlist people at the climbing wall but there's not much cross-over to membership.

J. Do you think there would be a demand for either first aid or navigation training? I would appreciate further navigation training. Not sure if others would respond. This is something that might pull in younger members if free places were offered, although D of E activities tend to cover that base.

Any other comments: Most prospective members seem to want local activities as most people are nervous of going on activities where they won't know anyone. However, I think the beauty of the club is the way it has offered opportunities to go on non-local activities which involve national members. Is there a way we could highlight that?

**Jennifer Mirdamadi, Merseyside**

A. How often do you hold walks?

Twice per month

B. How often do you hold weekend or longer trips? 3-4 times per year

C. What is the approximate percentage of your members who at least fairly frequently participate in your events?

71% attend day walks or trips regularly. 22% attend day walks or trips no more than about twice in a year.

D. Do you have a programme of events extending over at least a few months? Yes. 6 months walks and trips planned at a time.

E. How do you see Red Rope developing over the next 5 to 10 years?

Current trend on Merseyside is for gradual increase in numbers, though also gradual increase in average age. I think this will continue over the next 5 years at least. However, I guess that within 5-10 years we will start to decrease unless we get more young members. Could we have recruitment drive among students (socialist student societies)? Among refugees (often young single people with time on their hands who would like to get out of the city)? Among younger friends and family of current members?

F. Is your region in a generally healthy state, a reasonable state or languishing?

Generally healthy state. 7 of our members joined in last 2 years. Another 8 non-members have walked with us in last year, 5 more than once, and I expect those 5 to join.

H. What do you do to attract new members?

We have a regional webpage and Facebook Group, but people join mainly by word of mouth. Of those who have shown interest during 2019 some had found us via a web search but most of those actually also knew someone in the group who gave them the idea.

Any other comments:

Best recruitment tool is to have a regular programme of walks/trips, advertised well in advance, with clear descriptions/instructions about what the activities entail, how they are organised, how new walkers should be equipped, how transport is organised etc. Potential recruits can then see we are a serious club.

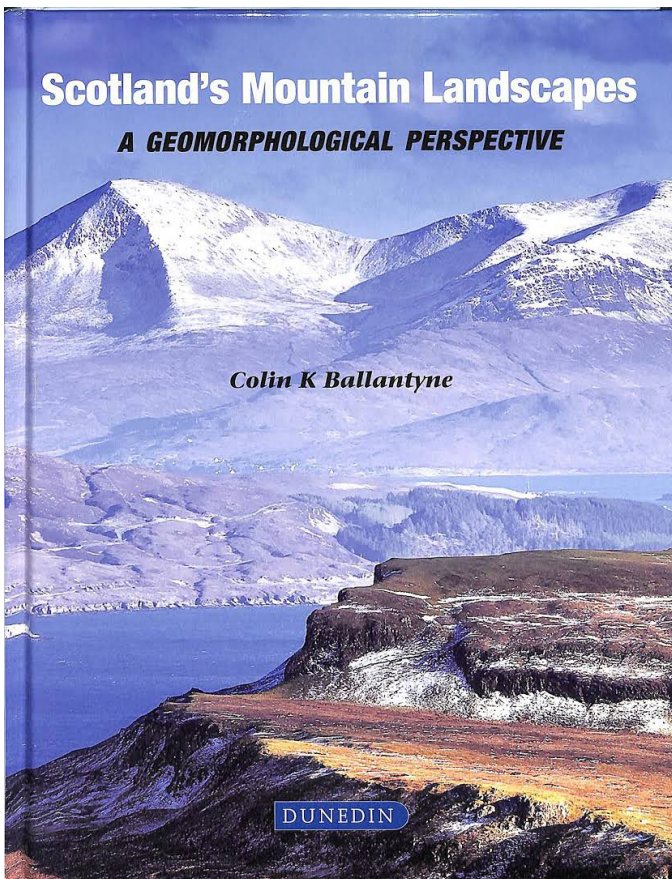
If we could persuade a few youngsters who are already friends to come out with us together I think we would have more chance in retaining their interest.

**David Barnes, Cumbria:** How do you see Red Rope developing over the next 5 to 10 years? Firstly, we should celebrate that Red Rope has been an outstanding small club providing walks, climbs, and a social grouping for many who want to enjoy the outdoors, especially at the lowest cost possible for those on low incomes. RR is not alone, like many long-standing clubs, it is facing a downturn in membership; times change. \*

How do you address this? One of my other clubs, the cycle touring club, realised it could no longer rely for its future on cycling enthusiasts who go out riding every Sunday. It made the change by becoming a charity and widening its scope to address all cycling, supporting cycling as a form of leisure and transport for young, old or minorities. It has not rejected the long-standing members just understood that that they can only be part of its future.

I think the way ahead is not easy, but starting a debate is important. Perhaps we can't come up with answers immediately but if a discussion is started it would give members time to think and then make suggestions at the next AGM. There are many questions which spring to mind, for instance, maybe other clubs of Red Rope's size are having similar issues - could we swap ideas to help find a way forward?

*\* RR membership increased to 340 in 2019, but rates of participation may have declined. Ed.*



**“Scotland’s Mountain Landscapes –  
A Geomorphological Perspective”  
by Colin. K. Ballantyne, pub. Dunedin**

“Nothing is static, nothing endures and nothing is eternal.” (page 138)

I can’t claim to be an impartial reviewer of this book, having been so keen to get it that I bypassed protocol and wrote directly to the publisher for a draft copy.

An explanatory book on the landscape we share, this hardcover book is aimed at those who have a passion for the Scottish hills but no grounding in physical geography. Many trained geologists are mountain-lovers, but for a mountain-lover who is a novice in geology, most texts are too technical and advanced to be readable.

Ballantyne, an Emeritus Professor and geomorphologist of 40 years, takes the reader on a journey through time, starting with the continental plates in diverse positions around the globe when Scotland was scattered in fragments. This voyage passes through huge shifts, uplifts, consolidations; creation of seas and oceans when many rocks were starting to form through volcanic activities, metamorphosis and glaciation. The evidence of wind and weather that we see today on the landscape, as well as river drainage,

is examined in later chapters. Ballantyne concludes with the effect that human activities have had, from new vehicle tracks across ancient beds of deep peat, to the effects of climate instability on fragile soils and exposed rock. Nor does he shy away from mentioning the walker’s responsibility for damage caused by foot-path erosion to sensitive mountain habitats.

The geological timescales involved are bafflingly enormous. Is it not fitting that those who enjoy being in the hills of Torridon and Assynt should know about their origins?

Ballantyne effectively teaches the reader to interpret the landscape for glacial, fluvial and geomorphological activity. There is an abundance of familiar photo-scapes to accompany the text, however this book does not pretend to be a collection of beautiful glossy photographs. These images have been chosen for their specific lighting or angle, to illustrate particular shapes, colours and textures of landscape features. This offers new discoveries to the walker who may have visited during flat grey light, and missed the tell-tale forms and signs of geological activities that were concealed in the shadows. The diagrams also provide effective explanations.

One of my favourite features of the book is the chapter “Key Sites” where renowned areas for hill-walking, such as Glen Coe, the Cairngorms and the Cuillin are matched with the geomorphological processes and features explained in greater detail than in earlier stages of the book. This provides the walker with a great read before a visit to these areas, pointing out things to look out for during your day in the hills. Of course, not every hill or mountain in Scotland deserves a mention, but there is an index of all those that do, as well as an index of the other locations referenced in the book, so that these can be accessed easily.

A useful addition to the appendices would have been a glossary to refer to – if one were dipping into the book. The general index does not provide an easy access to quick definitions.

Apart from this one disappointment, I have found this publication a very worthwhile read, enhancing my understanding and enjoyment of the Scottish uplands.

**Liz Murdoch, Scotland East**

## Experimenting with online booking for RR trips

Everyone probably knows that Red Rope is now using WebCollect online payments for membership. This article reports back on recent experiments with using WebCollect for trip bookings. I would really appreciate your comments, preferably by our next meeting on February 15th.

Up to now, booking on trips meant posting a booking form plus payment to the organiser. Payments can be cash or a postal order, but most members send cheques. However, fewer people, especially younger people, are using cheques. UK Finance report that cheques used in the UK dropped from 1.3 billion in 2008, to 342 million in 2018. Age UK found in 2011 that half of people aged 65 and over sometimes used them occasionally or often, compared to around one-fifth of those aged 18 to 24. Both percentages will have dropped substantially since 2011, and in 2018 NatWest reported that only 5 per cent of new customers were using cheques.

Nobody, not even the banks, is now proposing we *ban* paying by cheque, but by pretty much *requiring* members to pay by cheque, we are excluding most of our potential members from booking on trips, and especially younger ones. Red Rope has already responded to this shift by introducing online subscriptions via WebCollect, but this means that we welcome people without chequebooks as members, but make it very hard for them to book onto trips.

Many of us now exchange money by direct online bank transfers, and Red Rope has been asked to accept payments the same way. The two big problems with this are that it is very hard to keep track of all the many different payments coming into the Red Rope accounts unless they are ALL clearly labelled, and that this completely separates the booking form, sent to the trip organiser, from the payment, which only the treasurer gets to know about.

Instead, we are experimenting with extending our use of WebCollect: the first experiment was with the 2019 AGM and National Weekend. Of 25 people booking for the weekend, 16 used WebCollect. We then used WebCollect when we asked for contributions to the Blea Tarn Hut appeal. Most recently, the first conventional trip to use online booking is the Easter 2020 National Trip to Clapham.

These were all experiments, and no final policy has been set. These are some of the issues:

Online booking works, and arguably makes life simpler for members, who can do everything via the web, and for trip organisers, who get an email notification each time someone books, and can download a spreadsheet containing all the booking form info.

The system virtually eliminates administration when members book online and go on the trip, but handling postal bookings, cancellations, refunds and adding people from the waiting list would probably need to be managed more centrally. Trip treasurers would be mainly dealing with travel charges.

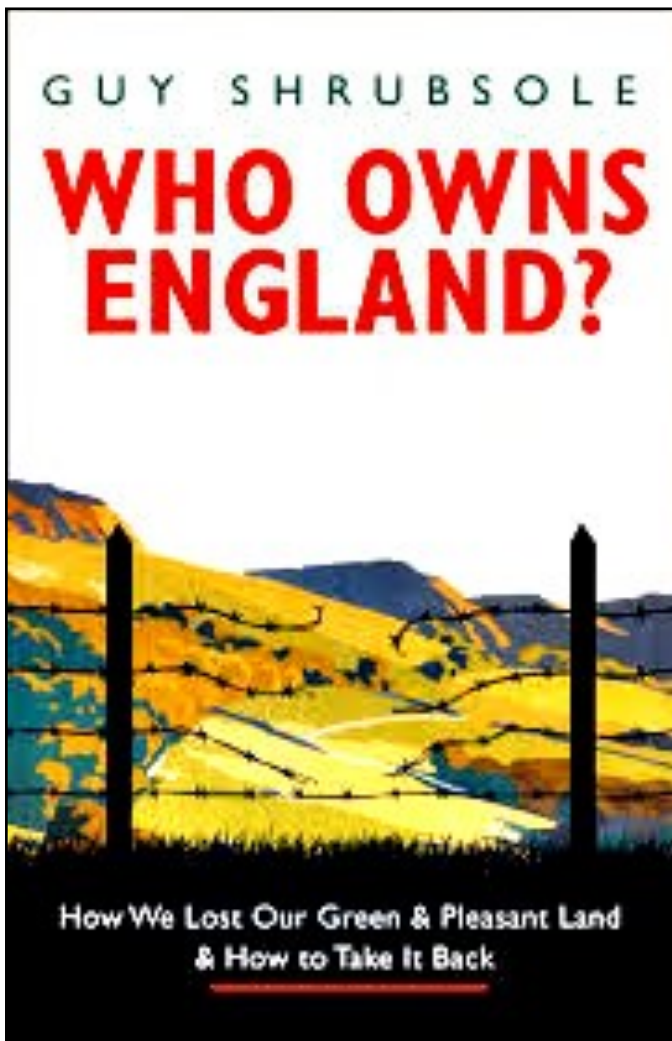
Using WebCollect is not free. The club pays a £200 annual subscription, whether or not we use the system for trips, then a transaction charge which roughly balances the cost of you posting a booking – but the club pays this charge.

WebCollect works via Direct Debit which some members distrust. However, (1) Red Rope uses it only for one-off payments, never for “auto-renewing” ones, so this is simply a way to ask your bank to make a payment – which is exactly what a cheque is; and (2) although some club officers can obviously see, for example, your address details that you have added to WebCollect when you subscribed, none of us can see any of the information about your bank account – not even the name of the bank.

The way we set up the AGM and Clapham trip meant the trip organiser had no control over who booked, as we wanted to make the system as simple as possible. There are ways to control it, but is this desirable?

The Clapham trip was announced on December 23<sup>rd</sup> via an all-members email, and was full by the 26<sup>th</sup>. This was unexpected, and obviously means it was full before booking forms could arrive by post. Nobody has really lost out, as this was a late addition to the trip programme partly justified as being a booking experiment. It is worth noting that every single Red Rope member has an email address on file. Are there actually any members with NO access to the web?

**Humphrey Southall** treasurer@redrope.org.uk



*pub. William Collins Books, £20, cheaper on internet*

This was published before the 2019 general election though some of his ideas appeared in the Labour Party Manifesto. The author has an excellent blog, [whoownsengland](http://whoownsengland)

The book contains an interesting account of the secrecy around land ownership in England. There are useful appendices on land owned by the public sector, by companies including the top 100 companies and land owned by Dukes and the subsidies they receive. Much of this information was obtained from the land registry office via Freedom of Information Act requests.

If you want to know how to use land registry data to explore land ownership near you, check out <https://anna.ps/blog/how-to-use-land-registry-data-to-explore-land-ownership-near-you>.

The author has a 10-point plan for land reform:

End Secrecy around land ownership so that the public are no longer ignorant of how much land the rich and powerful own. His blog

contains the most comprehensive map of land ownership that currently exists. Due to secrecy it is only possible to map about 10 percent of landowners. It is not surprising that the Tories have talked about privatising the Land registry so that the Freedom of Information Act would not apply.

Fix the housing crisis by stopping landowners hoarding land and leaving land empty. How can the country 'take control' of the housing crisis if 60,000 homes are left empty for more than two years?

Fix the farming system by stopping handouts to wealthy landowners simply for owning land. 24 Dukes, excluding Royal Dukes, owned 1,148,120 acres of land in 2001 and received £8,432,497 in farming subsidies in 2015.

Restore nature's abundance by ending unsustainable land uses like grouse shooting, and bring wilderness back to the uplands.

Abolish the last vestiges of feudalism in our system of land ownership such as the Duchies of Cornwall and Lancaster that the crown has owned since feudal times.

Curb the ways corporate capitalism uses land to avoid tax and abuses it for short-term profit.

Stop the sale of public sector land.

Give people a stake in the country and let communities take back control of local land. This would be done by copying Scotland's 'Community Right to Buy'.

Complete the unfinished business of opening access to England's green and pleasant land. There should be an expansion of the right to roam scheme as only 10% of England and Wales is covered by open-access rights.

Instigate a new land ethic so that land ownership comes with responsibilities as well as rights. The National Trust has made use of 'conservation covenants' for many decades, brokering agreements with landowners to restrict development on their land when they die and pass it on. Legislation should be introduced so that all landownership titles when sold contain a clause to ensure that the landowners leave the land in a better state than they found it. *continued...*

There is no recognition in the book that the English system of leasehold tenure is feudal in nature. This form of tenure has been abolished by most of the English-speaking world. There are over 4 million leaseholders in England who would benefit from converting their form of tenure to a system of commonhold. This is a form of tenure which ensures that all residents own the freehold jointly as is the case in Australia and America. The Duke of Westminster and volume builders such as Persimmons are freeholders. Land reformers need to appeal to leaseholders to support their programme of reform.


I would recommend this book to all Red Ropers!

**Dermot Mckibbin, London**

Bestie has kindly allowed us to use his cartoon from Private Eye 1509. A fan sent the following comment: 'There would indeed have been no right to roam over the Stour valley estate owned by Mr and Mrs Andrews in Gainsborough's portrait shown in Bestie's cartoon, but nor is there a right to roam generally nowadays. The right to roam applies to land shown as open country on a map, registered common land, land higher than 600m. and land 'dedicated' by owners or tenants for public access. There is no absolute right for the

public use of open access land; some will be shown as open land but remain private and can only be accessed by using dedicated public rights of way. As dog walkers like me know too well, finding places to walk can be very difficult in most country areas - less likelihood of being shot than in Gainsborough's time, but not a substantially better chance of being able to roam.' John Gaskin

**LAKE DISTRICT**  
**K FELLFARERS HUT 18-23**  
**SEATHWAITE** **OCTOBER**



**Red Rope**

CONTACT: [REBEKAH.BATES@YAHOO.CO.UK](mailto:REBEKAH.BATES@YAHOO.CO.UK)



**There was no 'right to roam' in Gainsborough's day**



As you can see the above is fully booked, but it's possible that Scottish members might like to pop in to say hello and even do a walk! National Trips are booking up quickly, so if you're interested be bold! Speaking of being organised, make sure you renew your membership. Regions can claim a £1 per member rebate from Humphrey, our treasurer, after Feb 29. Thanks to all contributors. Next deadline is 16 August.  
**David Symonds, [bulletin@redrope.org](mailto:bulletin@redrope.org)**

A DREAM OF MOUNTAINEERING  
written when he was seventy

At night, in my dream, I stoutly climbed a mountain,  
Going out alone with my staff of carved wood.  
A thousand crags, a hundred valleys -  
In my dream-journey none were unexplored.  
And all the while my feet never grew tired  
and my step was as strong as in my young days.  
Can it be that when the mind travels backward  
The body also returns to its old state?  
And can it be, as between body and soul,  
That the body may languish while the soul is still strong?  
Soul and body - both are vanities;  
Dreaming and waking - both alike unreal.  
In the day my feet are palsied and tottering;  
In the night my steps go striding over the hills.  
As day and night are divided in equal parts -  
Between the two, I gain as much as I lose.

PO CHU-I, c.820 A.D., translated by Arthur Waley,  
from 'Plucking the Rushes' edited by David Holbrook,  
pub. Heinemann, 1968

*'Spring', painting by Pete Watson, Nottingham*

