



BIGGAR RAMBLERS

Walking in Clydesdale

www.biggarramblers.co.uk

NEWSLETTER February 2017

The View from the Chair

First of all let me wish you all a Happy New Year. I have met some of you on a walk since the start of 2017 but I hope to meet many more as we set out on another year of interesting and enjoyable walks. Included in the next programme is our Away Weekend on Arran. Kathy and I are looking forward to it as she will be returning to her childhood home and to places she knows well – thanks are due to Pam for all the arrangements. No doubt, if the weather is good, there will be enjoyable walks on the island, as there will be in our programme which could not be completed without the dedicated walk leaders amongst us. I received a Christmas card from Ramblers Scotland which recognised all our volunteers, and I echo this gratitude. **Brian**

Thought for the day: “All walking is discovery. On foot we take time to see things whole”
Hal Borland - author and journalist (1900 - 1978)

The Sunny Spring Prog.

The days are getting longer, Santa's Grotto is closed, the Biggar Bonfire failed yet again to burn the town down and haggises are being cooked ready for the 25th. All this can only mean one thing. Yes, our new Spring Walking Programme is here (hooray). John and his pals have scoured the map for places which are not yet buried under turbines and have come up with their usual excellent selection of sensible strolls, reasonable rambles and horrible hikes. Good work, John. In December, as an experiment on one walk, we used a private mini-bus to take walkers from the cars to a point far distant from where we walked back to the start. The bus was paid for from our surplus reserves and it was judged a success. We would like to do this again, reserves allowing, so if you have any ideas for a linear walk of up to 8 miles, or a place where we could travel to by bus and then do several grades of walks, then we would like to hear from you. Contact John or Brian.

The 2016 AGM

This was held as usual in the Elph. in Biggar on 14th November – doesn't that seem a long time ago? Tea and coffee and shortbread were provided free in order to attract the crowds. And, indeed we had a fairly good turn-out of 18 people. But, given our membership of about 70, could do better. **Brian** reported that the use of attendance sheets on walks has been well received (although one leader persists in forgetting to bring his), There was a Ramblers Walking Festival during the summer for which we provided two walks, but only attracted one visitor. He thanked Lesley for organising and distributing good quality clothing with the Ramblers logo. We provided a walk for Jess Dolan, from Ramblers Scotland, to take with Aileen Campbell to discuss access matters. **Isobel** reported that membership is generally steady at 70 and some non-walkers still continue to pay their subscription. She referred to a reported path blockage at Braidwood which she will query with Andy Nelson of Scotways. She had received information about the Festival of Winter Walks, with suggestions on how to make our walks more attractive to new walkers and encourage new members. **Lynn** reported that both General and Social accounts were in a healthy condition with main expenditure having been the new website. We no longer receive SLC grants for the Away Weekend and Christmas Dinner. We can report that no red ink was used in the production of the accounts. **John** said that there are now about 20 leaders doing several walks each, so the Group is doing well. There is a good mix of grades and locations, and the provision of leaders' mobile phone numbers is useful. Ramblers HQ had asked for a list of all leaders' e-mail addresses but he had refused to comply. Also an offer of walk leader training had been declined. (*you can't teach old dogs new tricks!* - Ed) **Pam** reported that the 2015 Xmas Dinner and the weekend at Ballater had both been successful and popular, although the walks at Ballater did suffer some changes due to the severe weather. Bookings for the 2016 dinner at New Lanark Hotel were well advanced, and the 2017 Away Weekend will be on Arran. **Jan** reported that full walk reports are appearing in the local papers, some with photos. It is important that reports are received by Jan asap after the walk. We were recently congratulated by another group on our press coverage. **Michael** attends meetings of the Clydesdale to Solway Area Council as Rep. from the Group. They are holding their AGM in Dumfries on 28th

January. (*Lesley sent out details of this popular annual event by e-mail on 3rd Jan. – Ed.*) Michael also attends the South Lanarkshire Access Forum on behalf of the Ramblers. **Lesley** said that the website is now running well and is easy to use and edit. The enquiry link has brought in new members. Lesley will take orders for T-shirts, hats, fleeces etc twice a year in Spring and Autumn. And she now holds the Group map library. **Brian** thanked the Committee for their hard work over the year. John and Lynn agreed to continue in post, but at the 2017 AGM several members will be standing down after long service so would people please think **very hard** about volunteering for the Committee in order to keep our Group running successfully.

The Christmas Dinner

Once again, 19 revellers enjoyed an evening of carols, good food and excellent company at the New Lanark Hotel in December, preceded by the usual muddy walk up the Clyde gorge. We were well entertained by the Strathaven Choral Society, and several people stayed overnight and enjoyed a full Scottish breakfast before visiting the shop in search of interesting (but expensive) yuletide gifts. This is now a popular event, and Pam has already made a provisional booking for next December.

Our People

Many of you will know that Jan has been quite unwell recently and was in Monklands Hospital for an operation. The great news is that she was able to return home in time for Christmas and is recovering well. She was at the Committee meeting on 9th Jan. and asked that we record her thanks for all the kind thoughts and gifts which she has received over the past few weeks. She is determined to be back walking with us as soon as possible, and indeed had texted Brian from her hospital bed to wish us good walking. As we know, Jan makes sure that we always have a coffee stop at 11.00 sharp, and this is much appreciated as some leaders are very reminiscent of ancient Egyptian slave-drivers, and need reminding of the rules! So we wish you well, Jan, and come back **soon**.

We were sorry to say goodbye, before Christmas, to one of our long-standing members, Jo Cox. Jo has emigrated to the Sunny South – Spalding actually (*that's in England – Ed.*) She has already joined the local rambling group but is still searching for a hill to walk up. Jo has kindly promised to let us have a short account of the local walking scene for our next Newsletter.

Those of us who were around a number of years ago will remember Gail and Sonia Wakeland and will be delighted to know that they have returned. We look forward to welcoming them back walking with us again, even though our usual view of Sonia was a small figure in the far distance.

Scottish Borders Walking Festival

This annual event is returning to Peebles in September. Biggar Ramblers will be involved again and we are looking for experienced walk leaders and middle and back markers for three walks. These are The John Buchan Way (13½ miles) and Stobo Circular (5¼ miles), both on 4th Sept., and Romannobridge to Peebles (10 miles) on 8th Sept. The Stobo walk is “easier” grade, the others are “harder” grade. If you would like to participate in any way, please contact Brian or John.

March of the Monsters

We have heard from Leadhills Community Council of proposals for 54 turbines (for the present) in the Wanlockhead, Leadhills area. These wonderful wild hills are in one of the few beautiful areas in Clydesdale which have not yet been desecrated by these monstrosities, and the proposed turbines will loom over some of our favourite walking routes. And this is in addition to smaller developments planned for the Abington area. Of course they're a nice little earner for the land-owners, with plenty of subsidy for the developers, a few crumbs for the towns to keep them quiet, and the Scottish Government can say they're stopping global warming - so what's not to like? We will certainly be offering our support to Leadhills Council in opposing this menace.

Enjoy a Date with Lesley

Well, those who bought Lesley's excellent Biggar Ramblers calendar will enjoy numerous dates with her and other motley characters, amid some striking scenery, for the whole year. Our calendars are adorning living-room walls around the globe, and Lesley says thanks to everyone who bought one and she will be donating the £30 profit to Moffat Mountain Rescue. We look forward to 2018.