



BIGGAR RAMBLERS

Walking in Clydesdale

www.biggarramblers.co.uk

NEWSLETTER June 2015

From the Chairman

I start this with mixed feelings. We have just had a marvellous weekend away staying at Crianlarich, walking the West Highland Way and venturing well above the snow line in Glencoe. But then we heard of the passing of our good friend and colleague, Robert Ross, who many will remember as a regular keen walker with us. In the short time I knew Robert, I welcomed his friendship, as so many of us did. We send our condolences to Ann and her family, and it was so nice that a good number of Robert's fellow ramblers managed to attend his Service of Celebration at Biggar Kirk.

We look forward to the Summer now with our own walking programme which has a range of walks to suit all tastes. I very much hope that the weather will be kind to us and, whilst I personally look forward to the big hills, I recognise that Rosemary's village and town walks are appreciated by many, so here is another selection for you to enjoy. A big thank-you to John for co-ordinating the programme and to the many leaders who make it all possible. I have browsed other Groups' websites and am surprised by the number of times I see the statement: "remember, no leaders means no walks". In my 5 years with Biggar Ramblers I have not seen this as any sort of problem with us. A personal Thank-You.

As well as our own programme, this is the season of walking festivals. Innerleithen have a weekend of walks from 12th to 14th June, Hawick is in July and the Scottish Borders Walking Festival is based in Galashiels this year from 6th to 12th September. Wherever you walk, enjoy it.

Brian

The Crianlarich Gathering

In early April, our Away-weekend was held at Crianlarich and a cheerful crowd of 23 ramblers, including Patricia from Shropshire (*that's in England - Ed*), headed for the Crianlarich Hotel, at Crianlarich, determined to enjoy the great walking and lovely scenery around Crianlarich. On Friday 10th, on the way there, a group of 19 set out from the Drovers Inn, north of Ardlui, to trace the route of the West Highland Way across the River Falloch and round the head of Loch Lomond to the Beinglas waterfall which, sadly, was disappointingly sparse. The party walked on a short way in the sunshine to a grassy knoll, to enjoy a rest and a chat and look forward to the rest of the weekend.

On Saturday, almost the whole party descended on the railway station and, luckily avoiding the part that went to Oban, boarded the train to Bridge of Orchy. Alighting here, we joined the West Highland Way for the 8 mile trek back to Tyndrum. We were surrounded by wild Highland scenery with plenty of snow on the tops, but John was much more excited by the remains of an old Morris Minor beside the track. The weather was mostly fine and dry as we headed past the bulk of Beinn Dorain, then the impressive railway horseshoe viaduct over Allt Kinglass and finally Beinn Odhar before descending into Tyndrum and the "Green Welly". After spending much time and money in the cafe and outdoor shop, the party trundled off to Tyndrum Upper station and the train back to Crianlarich. A very enjoyable day.

On Sunday, cars were used to ferry a 13 strong group to Tyndrum for the 7 mile walk back to Crianlarich. Heavy snow was falling as the party set off but this quickly changed to give a beautiful day through the forest, past a lead smelting area, the site of the battle of Dalrigh with the loch and the hidden sword, to the lunch stop opposite St Fillan's Priory and the old cemetery. From there the walk was on undulating forest paths past burns and rivers with snow still lying in places and then the final descent into Crianlarich. An excellent day's walking.

Meanwhile, 8 optimistic hikers headed by car to Glencoe, the drivers having to contend with blizzard conditions as we skirted Rannoch Moor. Luckily the weather cleared as we parked the cars but there was a lot of snow lying on the hills. The party set off to tackle Stob Coire Raineach, a 3052ft. Munro. As we slowly ascended the steep indistinct path, we encountered deep drifts, snow bridges, crevasses and increasing winds. Lunch was taken on the bealach at 2500ft overlooking a wonderful alpine panorama of snow capped peaks. The party set off to ascend the north summit towering 500ft. above us, but the weather conditions and rocky slippery terrain forced a decision to turn back. During the hazardous descent one of the party disappeared up to his waist into a drift. Luckily he wasn't one of the drivers so we would not have been stranded.

On the way home on Monday, 10 walkers followed the steep path up and round the 416m Cruach Tarbert hill between Arrochar and Tarbert with views through the trees to Loch Lomond. Everyone agreed that the weekend had been a great success. The accommodation and food and walking and, of course, the company were all excellent. Our thanks to Isobel and Pam for doing all the hard work. Well done, ladies.

Literary Corner

As we go around Clydesdale by car or on a ramble, we pass many interesting little settlements and are often curious to know more about their history etc. Well now we can, with the help of a fascinating little book written by our own Rosemary Turpie, with Ian Gilchrist. Called "Village Trails in Clydesdale and Tweeddale", it describes 10 short walks in places from Covington to Broughton to Tweedsmuir. Priced at £7.95 it is available from bookshops in Biggar and Peebles or from quothquantrails@aol.com. Thanks Rosemary.

In March, the local Probus Club, including some Ramblers members, enjoyed a most interesting talk and slide show given by Lynn Weir about trekking in Nepal. She described the beautiful scenery and lovely old buildings and monuments and the friendliness of all the people she met. It is so sad to think of what has now happened to the people and the places she visited in this beautiful country. Our sympathies go to Lynn.

Lowther Hills Improvement Scheme

"No, I can't be doing with hills. They are always in the way and they are so stupid, never moving and never doing anything useful." Well, if you agree with D.H. Lawrence, you will be delighted to learn that, according to the BBC, developers are planning a 140 turbine wind-farm for the Lowther Hills. Buccleuch and 2020 Renewables say the project will transform the area. (*that's true!* – Ed) Also a recent item in the national press reported that the number of wind turbines in Scotland has doubled in a year. Almost 5000 have been approved or built, and the Highlands will soon have more than in the whole of England. 27 large scale windfarms were built in Scotland last year, with 31 more planned for 2015. Yes, it's good to see the boring old hills earning their keep! We hear that the only Scottish hill "out of bounds" is Arthurs Seat, because the Politburo enjoy the view from their windows at Holyrood.

You have been warned

On a recent recce, one of our Group came across a "crow-trap" with a live crow inside designed to attract and trap raptors which are then disposed of. After a close look at the trap, he continued on his way but was soon approached by a chap on a quad-bike who warned him about interfering with traps and said he could be reported to the Constabulary who would haul him in front of the Sheriff to be sentenced to 100 lashes. But "a soft answer turneth away wrath" and after a full and frank exchange of views, the game-keeper departed in a cloud of mud and blue smoke. These nasty contraptions are used mainly on shooting estates to protect young grouse from raptors and, to be legal, they have to display an identifying number issued by the police. But the one number is issued to the land-owner and can be used for numerous traps. Also they should be inspected every 24 hours and "non-target" species released. But how well are these rules observed and how many illegal victims are caught and killed? In some countries, live bait is not allowed and each trap has to be licensed and mapped. So, the advice is, if you come across a trap, check that it is displaying a number but don't get too close otherwise you might have a close encounter of the unpleasant kind.

We want to take down your particulars

It is the practice with many Groups nowadays for the leader to make a list, before setting out, of all participants on a ramble together with a contact number in case of emergency. We have never done this because our walking groups tend to be fairly small and it is easy to keep track of everyone. However it is possible this may become the rule at some time, so your Committee have decided to trial it for a period starting with the new programme in June. So don't be surprised if your leader waves a clip-board in your face.

Also the suggestion was made that it could be useful for walkers to have the leader's mobile phone number in advance in case of lateness or difficulty in finding the start of a walk, or on the walk itself in case of people becoming separated. We are also trialling this with the new programme and a list of the mobile numbers of the leaders on the Summer prog. is enclosed with this mailing. Leaders' mobile numbers will **not** be published on the programme itself and will **not** be available to the public.

More pressure on hard-walking families

The Ramblers have imposed crippling increases in membership fees from this May. Annual individual membership rockets up from £33 to £34 and joint from £44 to £45. We have been asked to point out that concessionary rates (£20.50 ind. £27.50 joint) are only available to students, people on benefits and those reliant only on the state pension (you can't qualify just by being incredibly old).

Contributions, reports, information, scurrilous gossip etc. always welcome for the Newsletter.