



# BIGGAR RAMBLERS

## *Walking in Clydesdale*

www.biggarramblers.co.uk

## NEWSLETTER June 2017

### **The Chairman Starts Us Off**

Welcome to our Summer programme of walking and, thanks to John and of course our faithful band of willing walk leaders, we have another set of walks for all of you to enjoy. I am writing this just after our weekend on Arran, and didn't we have a lovely time? Kathy and I were delighted to show everyone the lovely area around Lochranza and, from all accounts, everybody enjoyed the Sunday spent there. On Saturday, the Goat Fell walkers weren't so lucky as this was the busiest place on Arran! But others walked to Brodick and on to the Castle gardens (but the castle was shut). However we must record our thanks to Pam for organising it all – including the weather. The sting in the tail was that our car had to be towed from Ardrossan back to Peebles.

Brian

### **The Hot Summer Prog.**

Time to cast off the thermal underwear, hang up the snowshoes and pack away the ice-axes. We must now be prepared for spiny cactuses, dust storms, tumbleweed and all the other hazards of Summer hiking in Scotland. Our Walks Wizard, John, has once more conjured up an interesting and varied programme to take full advantage of the sweltering Summer weather (this year scheduled for the last week in August). On a serious note, we understand that Kim Jong-un, the Dear Leader of the Pyongyang Ramblers, and Mr. D Trump, an Ayrshire golf club owner, are planning to hold World War Three at some point during the Summer. The Committee do not expect this to interfere with our programme but, if any walk has to be cancelled or postponed due to a nuclear winter or radioactive fallout, Lesley will send round an e-mail. (*right that's enough politics – Ed*)

But seriously, folks, John is finding it less easy these days to get walks leaders. Many of our regulars have been leading walks since Cameron McNeish was knee-high to a haggis and some have been falling by the wayside (not literally) for various reasons. We are looking for new leaders with new ideas, and former leaders who have tended to drop off to come and join our select band. Remember, if you are unhappy about a gap in the programme with no walk, then that is where **YOUR** walk could have been. Planning and leading walks is challenging and good fun and you will receive complete support from your fellow ramblers.

### **Keep those Ticks away**

The National Access Forum recently heard a presentation by the University of the Highlands and Islands describing recent research and planned campaigns on raising awareness of the risks of ticks and Lyme disease. This problem seems to be increasing and the campaign will include advisory information on how to prevent and deal with ticks, and risk maps and smartphone apps. Now that summer is approaching, we need to be aware of this problem. "Google" it in to get all the lowdown.

### **Our Great Spring Weekend on Arran**

The Committee decided to go overseas for our Away Weekend this year and, after considering Timbuktu (too hot), Greenland (too cold) and Syria (too noisy), they decided on Arran. The Altachorvie Island Retreat at Lamlash was our centre and our group of 23 happy campers stayed mostly in individual little huts separated from the main building by somewhat precipitous steps. The food was excellent, the owners very friendly and helpful, there was a small but well-stocked bar and a really comfortable lounge where one could sit and discuss the day's events and put the World to rights. Arran is a beautiful island with a wide range of scenery and our programme of walks fully reflected this. On the Friday afternoon, John led a walk starting from Whiting Bay through the picturesque wooded Glenashdale Glen to the spectacular falls which cascade over a vertical wall of rock at the head of the valley. There is an excellent viewpoint here. The nineteen walkers returned via the 'Giants Grave' – actually the impressive remains of a 5000 year old chambered cairn. This pleasant four mile walk with some steep inclines provided a fitting warm-up for the rest of the weekend. On Saturday, some hard people decided to wander up Goat Fell (2866 ft). Nine walkers, led by Brian, set out from Cladach and took the wide well worn track through the grounds of Brodick Castle and up through the forest, accompanied by the sound of a distant cuckoo. To start with there was a trickle of other people heading up the mountain but as the day progressed this became a continuous stream with Goat Fell being the busiest place on Arran. High winds assailed the party as they ascended to Corrie Cairn, the meeting of two ascent routes, and a final very steep rocky climb brought them to the top - where it was standing room only!. Surprisingly the wind dropped at the summit and the successful mountaineers enjoyed great views over Kintyre and the rugged Arran hills and to the Ayrshire coast. Meanwhile the sensible people, led by Isobel, took a lovely walk from Lamlash through

the woods towards Brodick, enjoying carpets of wild flowers and particularly bluebells. The party admired some standing stones and held a photo opportunity with the wonderful background of Goat Fell before descending to the Fairy Glen and on into Brodick. Here there was a short lunch stop before continuing the last mile by the Fishermans Walk alongside the golf course, the sea shore and salt marsh to finish at the Cladach shops and brewery. Here there was the opportunity to visit the Castle gardens, the craft shops or Arran Aromatics or relax in the sun with a drink before returning to Lamlash on the bus. On the Sunday the whole group proceeded to Lochranza and split into 2 parties. After Kathy pointed out the place where she had lived in her youth (only a few years ago), the high-level party took the hill path between Torr Meadhonach and Fionn Bhealach and then down to the coast at Laggan. As they made their way along the Arran coastal Way, B and K talked about the Arran clearances and the salt extraction works, pointed out the footprints of an ancient Arthropleurid and invited us into Ossian's cave to view the inscriptions. On the way back to Lochranza the party successfully negotiated the An Scrioidan boulders and viewed the original Hutton's Unconformity. Altogether a most interesting walk. The other party, led by Jason, enjoyed a leisurely amble along the coast to Hutton's thingy which Jason, who is an expert geologist, was able to explain the significance of. Then on to the Fairy Dell and a return to Lochranza via the Whins for ice-cream refreshment. This short walk was rich in fauna, red deer by the car park, rabbits, red squirrels, swallows and in the sea - cormorants on the rocks and grey seals "porpoising" and generally showing off. Also a pair of red-breasted mergansers and a great northern diver doing a bit of diving.

The weekend was blessed with good sunny weather and Arran looked at its best. Even the two crossings were calm, to the relief of any poor sailors. All the participants agreed that it had been most enjoyable, and grateful thanks are due to Pam for organising it and John, Brian, Kathy, Isobel and Jason for leading the walks.

### **Where have the Core Paths gone?**

As you know, the core path network was created as part of the 2003 Access legislation to help people to get out and enjoy the newly created legal access to the countryside. Keen readers of this rag will recall that information on how to find the core paths was given in the February 2016 edition. However the paths have now migrated to another location, viz. [www.spatialhub.scot/maps-2/](http://www.spatialhub.scot/maps-2/) On the map, click the little icon at the top right and then click on "core paths". You can zoom right in, and they're very useful for planning walks.

### **Walking in Lincolnshire (from our Southern Correspondent)**

Fantastic huge skies, with no hills to absorb the noise of low-flying jets. At ground level all is flat and calm - pretty villages with well kept gardens, lovely churches, paths meandering through the countryside, big fields growing a variety of crops, very sticky mud, the sound of crows in the trees and peasants on the ground (*surely that should be pheasants - Ed*) all accompanied by the chatter of happy walkers. Walks start at the pub, a meal is ordered, and end with contented walkers enjoying a well-earned lunch.

*(That sounds jolly nice, but what happens after lunch? - Ed)*

Our thanks to Jo for this cameo of another part of our great world of rambling. It was good to see Jo again in Arran and we hope she'll continue to keep in touch.

### **The Borders Walking Festival 2017**

This is a great opportunity to do some walking/exploring in the beautiful Border country we are lucky enough to have on our doorstep. It runs from Sunday 3<sup>rd</sup> to Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> September this year, and three of the walks are being led by people from Biggar Ramblers. It's always interesting to meet other walkers, not only from this country but often from abroad. You will need to reserve a place in advance, so "Google in" Borders Walking Festival to get the list of walks and other info. You know it makes sense.

### **Ramblers Job Opportunities**

Our local Clydesdale to Solway Area of the Ramblers which includes Biggar as well as Dumfries, Moffat, Clydesdale and the 'SLOW' Group, is looking for a Treasurer - part-time, unpaid, some degree of numeracy an advantage. Also required; an additional delegate to the Area Council - meets about 4 times a year, tea/coffee/biscuits provided, no experience necessary. Competition for these posts is likely to be fierce so get your application in quickly, to Michael or any Committee member.

### **Will the Polis be Knocking on your Door?**

Yes, it's official - ramblers are now the biggest group of elderly criminals since the Hatton Garden mob in 2015. You will probably remember the lady who was dragged off to the Sheriff's office by the President of the United States for getting caught short in a public place (his golf course in Aberdeen). She was only saved from 10 years in Alcatraz by a legal technicality (the Fiscal threw it out). Assuming that most walls, bushes, trees, boulders and hollows are public places within the meaning of the Act, then we are ALL guilty as charged m'Lud. Can we all look forward to a spell at Her Majesty's Pleasure? *(Yes - Ed)*