



BIGGAR RAMBLERS

Walking in Clydesdale

www.biggarramblers.co.uk

NEWSLETTER October 2016

The Chairman's Bit

At each Committee meeting we sit and discuss all relevant topics from finance to the website, throw in some admin. and the highlight is the new Walks Programme. I find it interesting to hear news, ideas and thoughts that affect our Group, and the walks for the coming four months. A week or so later, Ed sends me the Newsletter to read through and comment upon if need be. So when the mailing from Isobel finally drops through the letterbox, I know 90% of what it contains. Nevertheless I always read every word. Between the Newsletter and the Walks Programme, I get inspiration for the walks that are coming up and what is happening in our Group. A lot of the enjoyment we get from the walks is walking with companions who have the same vision as ourselves, and we all appreciate each other in this regard. Charles Dickens said "Walk and be happy, walk and be healthy. The best way to lengthen out our days is to walk steadily and with a purpose."

Brian

(Dickens got it right about lengthening out our days - a day spent toiling over the hills in mud and drizzle and cold winds can indeed seem never-ending - Ed)

The Windswept Winter Prog.

In his new Winter programme, John Hart and his chums will be leading us over snow-capped mountains, through fearsome forests and across wild untracked wastes, to some of Earth's most remote and desolate locations, places which strike fear into the heart of the toughest traveller, places which have not felt a human foot-step since at least last Tuesday and some of which are over 20 miles from the nearest Tesco, places such as Wanlockhead, Rommano Bridge and Kirkfieldbank So come exploring with us - if you dare. Thanks John, another great programme.

Things to Look Forward To

Make a note in your diaries or magic devices or whatever that the Group AGM will be held at the Elphinstone in Biggar on Monday 14th November at 7.00pm. It will be in the upstairs room with tea, coffee and SHORTBREAD laid on. So come along to see what your Committee have been doing and what they propose to do, vote them all off if desired and get yourself elected to the Committee to get things running as they should be run. But seriously, folks, there will be one vacancy occurring this year and more at the 2017 AGM. Most of the existing members have served many years on the Committee and are ready for a break. Our Group can only function effectively with an active Committee with new members and fresh ideas. So do please think seriously about joining up. (Remember, there is always tea, coffee and CAKE at Committee meetings.)

Our regular "Carols by Candlelight" at New Lanark, preceded by muddy walk, is always a popular event. We shall be returning this year, and the cost is likely to be £25. And as we slip slowly towards the dark cold days of Winter, thoughts turn towards the next Spring Away Weekend. In 2017 we are planning to go to one of the wonderful islands off the west coast. But see Pam's letter for more details of these two events.

Congratulations

Are due to our friend and colleague Nan Agnew who's many years as a volunteer at Biggar's Gillespie Centre were recognised by an award from Voluntary Action South Lanarkshire (VASLan) at a ceremony in Hamilton back in the Summer. Nan was one of only 5 people chosen from out of 136 nominations, with the judges noting her active contribution to fundraising and campaigning as well as providing a warm welcome to the Centre's many visitors. Those of us who frequent the Gillespie can vouch for the latter! *(and they do a good bowl of soup - Ed)*. Very well done, Nan.

Congratulations also to Lynn Weir who had a lovely picture of "heather bells" featured in the recent edition of Walk Magazine (page 25). We really do have some very good photographers in the Group, as visitors to our website and face-book page will testify. And talking of photos.....

Calendar Girls.....and Boys.....and Hills

There has been a suggestion that the Group should produce our own calendar, featuring the best of our members' photos, for sale to members of Biggar Ramblers, with any profits going to a good cause. The Committee are very interested in pursuing this idea and are hopeful of getting one ready for 2017, but certainly for 2018. An ideal little Christmas gift for friends and relatives. More information on this at the AGM.

Last Orders Please

Lesley Glidden begs leave to remind everyone that the last chance to order your designer Ramblers clobber from her catalogue will be at the AGM in November. Lesley is sorry her catalogue was out of circulation recently but apparently Kate Moss and Victoria Beckham asked to borrow it. (*who are they - Ed*)

The Gold that Got Away

As you know, now that the Olympics are over, it is impossible to walk down the street without pushing your way through thousands of people doing dressage, taekwondo, synchronised pole-sitting and strange things with vaulting horses. All of which is very commendable. But what about that most popular sport which, on a fine day, has far more participants than any other, including football, – RAMBLING. Where was the GB Rambling and Orienteering Team at Rio? (*Probably at the wrong airport - Ed*) We would be guaranteed a Gold because, in most inferior countries, ramblers tend to get shot by bandits, eaten by crocodiles or lost in swamps. We think the Ramblers should contact Lord Coe without delay to get us on the list for Tokyo in 2020.

There be Trouble in them there Hills

A recent newspaper article reports that the growing trend of hill walkers using mobile phones and GPS for navigation is fuelling record numbers of rescue call-outs both here and abroad. The advice to anyone venturing into the hills is the same as 100 years ago - take map and compass, learn how to use them and move on from there. The Mountaineering Council of Scotland says "apart from the limitations of battery life, reception and problems with using touch screens with gloves on, the issue lies with peoples' lack of ability in basic navigation skills". And of course, phones and GPS devices don't like being dropped onto rocks or into puddles, they're no good for swatting flies or midges and they can't help you get over a barbed-wire fence. A hill walker should always be able to answer 5 basic questions - where am I, where am I going, which way is it, how far is it, how long will it take? Know how to take a compass bearing - lay the map flat, place centre of the wheel on your present location with the arrow pointing to where you want to go, turn knurled wheel until **N** (north) points up to the top of the map. The bearing you need is now shown in line with the arrow. Hold compass with the arrow pointing straight ahead and move round until the **red** needle is pointing to **N**. You are now facing in the right direction, so off you go. To avoid having to look at the compass the whole time, choose one or two markers in line with where you're heading (e.g. boulder, bush, hillock etc) and approach them by the easiest route, then check your bearing again. Remember Naismith's rule, allow a walking speed of 2 mph on the flat and add 1 minute for every 10 metres ascent. Also, of course, the sun is always due south at mid-day, south-east at 09.00am and south-west at 3.00pm (all GMT). Remember that the ground tends to go UP away from streams/rivers and DOWN towards them, and the closer together the contour lines are, the steeper the hill. Right, that's the end of the lecture, folks, but we hope it was a wee bit useful. (*zzzzzzz - Ed*)

Bits n' Bobs from the Access Forum

Problems with the Clyde Walkway around Bothwell Castle are being looked at by Community Payback, but no movement yet on the proposed extension (June newsletter). Unwelcoming and non-compliant signage at Lanark Loch and racecourse has been replaced. The landowner at Kersewell, by Carnwath, still refusing to restore access to the field traditionally used by the public so SLC to serve a "Section 14" notice. This is a legal order to remove access obstruction. Scottish Outdoor Access Network looking at ways of maintaining paths with reduced resources involving volunteers and community groups. Local community at Elvanfoot trying to get access opened up to the Clyde Windfarm. No sign yet of O.S. putting core paths on their maps. "Outdoor Access Guide" now accessible by police officers and control room staff. It includes info on responsible access rights, the legal position and contacts list of local authority Access Officers. Lots of events taking place at Whitelee windfarm and additional car park and toilet block are planned. Woolfords, Auchengray and Tarbrax Improvement Foundation (WAT IF?) working hard to improve access in their area. Complaints that the Council controls funds from windfarm developments and decides how it is spent. Money only goes to capital projects and local groups should have much more say in how it is allocated. Ongoing dispute with badgers over damage to a path in Lesmahagow. Community Payback working to restore the path. The badgers will be billed for the costs of the Consultant.

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

