



BIGGAR RAMBLERS

Walking in Clydesdale

www.biggarramblers.co.uk

NEWSLETTER February 2018

From the Chair

At the start of a new year, let me wish all of you a Happy New Year. I hope everyone had an enjoyable festive season. For us in the Biggar Ramblers, a good number joined together at the Carols by Candlelight at New Lanark. That was a good evening. Another good evening was our AGM in November when we discussed the year past and met our business commitments as a Group. My thanks go to those continuing on the Committee, and joining it. What became clear to me from both events is the *esprit de corps* that is present amongst us to enjoy the social side of walking together. Looking forward into 2018, I am sure you will continue to enjoy the walks arranged for the Group by those of us within the Group. My wish is for you to enjoy 2018 and I hope to see many of you on those walks.

Brian

Spring is sprung - well almost

The Met Office has advised us that this year, as often happens, Winter will be closely followed by Spring. Well that's easy for them to say! But if you happen to be a Walks Secretary it means you have to get down to producing a brand new Spring Programme. We are happy to report that John and his gang have risen to the challenge and have put together a first class compilation of jolly jaunts over the hills and dales of Clydesdale and beyond. We can sup soup in Carlops, meet a Turkey at Coulter and a Mouse at Lanark, paddle in Daer reservoir and get the train at Penicuik. Also, Brian is organising another "bus" ramble on 8th March. So, something for everyone. But, if you peruse the programme closely, you will discover that some leaders are contributing more than one walk. We do need more leaders to come forward, so if you've ever thought it would be interesting to do a walk in a particular area or over a nice hill, then go on – give it a go. Leading is easy and good fun and there will be full support from all your colleagues. Old ones, new ones, short ones, long ones, flat ones, lumpy ones (walks, not leaders), John will be delighted to hear from you. To help you out, Ramblers have produced an excellent Walk Leaders Checklist, obtainable from Isobel or from Ramblers HQ - www.ramblers.org.uk/walkleader It contains vital information such as how to choose the coldest, wettest, windiest spot on the walk to stop for lunch, how to open an apparently locked gate after most of the party have laboriously clambered over a rickety stile and how to wait just long enough for the slow walkers to catch up before shooting off up the hill at high speed. Seriously, folks, it does have a lot of useful advice.. We also recommend that all walkers should carry an "In case of emergency" ICE card. This has your personal/medical information, together with useful tips on how to contact the emergency services and is also obtainable from Isobel or the Ramblers HQ.

Note for doggies - we have sometimes been asked if our canine friends could come on the occasional walk. Normally the answer is "NO", but we are trialling a dog friendly walk on the new prog. to gauge reaction. This will be Lesley's walk on 9th May. Hounds and their people must be Ramblers members and, if successful, doggy walks may be included from time to time on future programmes. Lesley will be sending round an e-mail nearer the date. Let us know what you think.

The Annual General Meeting

15 interested members met for free tea and coffee and biscuits and a chat at the "Elph" in Biggar on 20th November. The downside was that they also had to sit through the AGM. (*No pain - no gain!* - Ed) However this is always an interesting and useful meeting, and it is a pity that more members are not able to come and hear how their Group is faring and what the Committee have been doing to keep your Group running smoothly - or indeed running at all!

Brian reported that sadly Derrick Norris had passed away during the year. Many of us who were rambling some years ago will remember Derrick as a friendly and enthusiastic walking companion. Brian had enquired from Ramblers Scotland what areas were considered "wild" by Ramblers and SNH and therefore not suitable for windfarms. Apparently Clydesdale is not one of these. Brian reported that, following our participation in the Borders Walking Festival in September, a warm letter of thanks had been received from the organisers.

Isobel reported that membership was steady in the region of 72. Walk attendance forms and expenses forms will soon be available on the website. Leaders' mobile numbers are no longer circulated. Isobel drew attention to the Walk Leaders' Checklist and ICE card (see above) which are available to all who want them. She had received information about the Festival of Winter Walks 23/12 to 07/01 and we put 2 walks on the programme during the Festival period.

Lynn said that, if leaders wish to donate their recce expenses to the Group, a cheque will be issued and then they can send a personal cheque back to the Social Account. Just ticking the donation box on the expenses form sends the money to Ramblers HQ. Make sure you claim your recce expenses as this boosts the Group activity and means we get a bigger grant (*or Biggar grant? - Ed*) The Arran weekend and the Xmas Dinner both broke even. There are no longer any grants from SLC.

John thanked all walk leaders for the number and quality of walks provided and he believes we give a good mix of grades of walk and places visited. We have a core of about 20 leaders but recently it has been a struggle to fill gaps. Shorter walks are becoming more popular and give new leaders a chance to come forward. More challenging walks take time to plan but are an essential part of the mix. Brian said that the year's programme totalled 316 miles over 49 walks, av. 6.4 miles per walk.

Pam reported that the 2016 Christmas dinner and the weekend in Arran were well attended and very successful. Bookings were well advanced for the 2017 dinner at the New Lanark Hotel. The Away weekend in 2018 will be on Mull and bookings were already looking good.

Jan thanked leaders for their prompt reports. More space is being allocated in the papers, and photos often appear. We publish walk reports in three local papers and on the website. Jan said she would be standing down at this AGM after 3 years as Press Secretary.

Michael attended meetings of the Clydesdale to Solway Area Council. The main news is the "Area Gathering" planned for Moffat on 12th May, consisting of 3 walks led by members of Moffat Mountain Rescue, with a buffet and speaker in the evening. Michael also attended the South Lanarkshire Access Forum where the main items have been work on the Clyde Walkway including a Clyde Walkway app. for your smartphone, more work in the Clyde/Avon valley and access issues at Braidwood, Kersewell and Garvald. (*He also edits this esteemed journal - Ed*)

Lesley reported that the website is running well, with only the occasional blip, with great help from her contact Sara who continues to help at no cost. Most membership enquiries now come through the link with the Ramblers.. Lesley also quickly circulates e-mails from members giving info re walks and other relevant matters. She also maintains a record of walk attendances.

Brian thanked all Committee members and walk leaders for their invaluable help over the past year and he welcomed Margaret Young as the replacement for Jan.

Due to an absence of volunteers, the rest of the Committee agreed to sign on for a further 3-year stint. But that'll be it, folks. In 2020, 2 major events will occur; President Trump will be flushed down the cludgie but, more importantly, most of your present Committee will stroll off into the sunset. So over the next year or three, we will be on a recruitment drive for keen new Committee members. So please think about taking over one of the exciting jobs mentioned above and help to give your local Group a successful and active and thriving future.

Our People

You probably remember that a couple of years ago our colleague Rosemary Turpie produced a nice little book of walks around the villages of the Upperward. In recognition of that, Rosemary and her collaborator Ian Gilchrist were recently invited to a reception at the Scottish Parliament to celebrate 15 years of the Land Reform Act and the part played by the Ramblers in helping to bring about the open access legislation which is now the envy of the World. Sadly, Rosemary had 'flu and couldn't attend but Ian very much enjoyed the occasion, meeting MSP's and Ramblers officials and listening to some excellent speakers. Apparently the Act has been a great success leading to a substantial increase in people accessing and enjoying our lovely countryside. Our congratulations go to Rosemary and Ian, and our thanks for helping to open up our own wonderful Clydesdale.

Our old friend Roy Miller is presently in the Kello, enjoying a period of rest and relaxation and being looked after very well by the nice young nurses. He is doing well and expects to be back home shortly, but will welcome a visit by anyone who happens to be passing. And Nan Agnew is recovering well after her recent operation at the Golden Jubilee hospital, but probably won't be back walking just yet. We send our very best wishes to Roy and Nan.