



# BIGGAR RAMBLERS

## *Walking in Clydesdale*

www.biggarramblers.co.uk

## NEWSLETTER February 2016

### **Brian's Bit**

Well, 2016 has arrived and with it my best wishes to you all and I hope that it is one you will enjoy. As the old toast goes, "May the best you've ever seen be the worst you will ever see." The flooding we experienced has affected many, and we know that Ballater, where we have planned our walking weekend in April, has been badly affected. Be assured that the weekend will go ahead and will be tailored to suit the conditions in the area. However, before and after the Away Weekend we are still able to enjoy the walks provided by our usual stalwart band of leaders to whom we continue to owe our grateful thanks. Whatever the weather throws at us we know that we have good walking in our area, and further afield, and I hope you enjoy those that you choose.

Brian

### **The Spring Prog.**

How nice to be able to type the word "Spring"! I think we have all had quite enough of this 3D weather - dark, drier, depressing. And it's now turning cold and snowy into the bargain. So thanks again to John and all his little helpers for cheering us up with the prospect of some nice walking in some nice places and in some nice weather. Wander round Kelvingrove or Lesmahagow, sample the Southern Upland Way and the Borders Abbey Way, enjoy Spring flowers in Peebles, get blown off Cademuir, meet the Three Brethren and visit highland Perthshire. Can't wait to get started.

### **The 2015 AGM**

17 keen members turned up at the Elphinstone Hotel in Biggar on 9<sup>th</sup> November. **Brian** reported that much work went on by the Committee behind the scenes to keep the Group running smoothly. The past year had seen the introduction of walk attendance lists, a list of walks leaders' mobile phone numbers and a new improved Group Website. His personal highlight of the year was completing the last of the "Donalds", a group of hills which he had not known about before joining Biggar Ramblers. **Isobel** reported that membership was 67 at the end of September. Many people continue to be members even though they do not walk regularly. The Scottish Council will meet in Dunfermline on 11<sup>th</sup>/12<sup>th</sup> March. Ordinary members can attend if they wish and the Area Group Support Fund might be prepared to pay their expenses. The new HQ for Ramblers Scotland is in the Sport Scotland building at South Gyle, Edinburgh. **Lynn** presented the accounts which are in a healthy position. The 2014 Christmas dinner and the Away Weekend to Crianlarich broke even. **John** reported that there are 20 or more leaders offering walks on a regular basis so the Group is doing well. **Pam** reported on the successful weekend at Crianlarich and said that the weekend in April 2016 would be based on the Deeside Inn at Ballater. The 2015 Christmas dinner would once again be at the New Lanark Hotel Carol Concert as no alternative suggestions had been received. **Jan** was happy with walk reports appearing in the local press and sometimes pictures were included. Rosemary's excellent little book of local walks received useful publicity. **Michael** reported on his attendance at the Clydesdale to Solway Area council meetings and the South Lanarkshire Access Forum meetings. He also edits the Newsletter and arranges for walking posters to be put up in the area. Last, but definitely not least, **Lesley** was happy to report that the new Group Website was now up and running with just a bit of work required for the "gallery". It will be updated once a week and the gallery once a month. It is very user-friendly and joining forms can be downloaded easily. **Brian** thanked all members of the Committee and all walks leaders for their hard work which had given the Group another successful year. He particularly thanked **Rosemary Turpie** who was leaving her post as Slow Walks Co-ordinator. We will continue to need this type of walk on the programme and leaders were asked to consider this. Rosemary may continue to lead some herself. There was some discussion about our collection of maps etc, which are kindly held by Roy Miller. **Blane** and Roy will draw up an inventory of what we have, and discard out-of-date items. The Committee will discuss this matter further. **Lesley** reported that it was possible to obtain sweatshirts and t-shirts with the Ramblers logo. She will investigate further.

### **The Christmas Dinner**

18 people attended the dinner and carol concert at the New Lanark Hotel on 10<sup>th</sup> December and some hardy souls went on a wet walk up the Clyde beforehand. Some stayed overnight and availed themselves of the spa facilities and the good breakfast the following morning. Numbers were down this year which is a bit disappointing considering the good dinner, excellent concert and nice convivial atmosphere. We are now recognised as regulars at this event and our Group was welcomed by the Master of Ceremonies!

## **Absent Friends**

Members will be saddened to learn of the recent death of Dr John Hacking. He and his late wife, Mary, always used to enjoy coming on our Away Weekends including our trip to Malta and, although they were not walkers themselves, they strongly supported the Group and enjoyed the company of ramblers and we found them great companions. They were GPs in Forth for many years and particularly loved their garden. John was an RAF doctor and he spent his last years in the Erskine Home.

We are also so sorry to report that Jim Fraser passed away before Christmas. He was not a member but always used to come on Away Weekends with his great friend Patricia Kellas. He was excellent company and was always very "dapper" and was very keen on fast cars. He will be greatly missed.

Finally there was the sad disappearance of Tom Brown in Glen Nevis some while ago. Tom was not known to many of us but had walked with us from time to time. But he died doing what he enjoyed.

## **Biggar Ramblers - the Royal connection**

At the recent opening of the new Biggar Museum, our colleague Blane was seen deep in conversation with HRH Princess Anne. He cannot divulge the subjects discussed but walks leaders should be aware of the possibility of a large black limo drawing up at the Corn Exchange at 09.14 one day and a pair of Dolce & Gabbana boots emerging from the back. Also work is underway to redesign the walking programme to incorporate the Royal Warrant, but that is highly confidential and for your eyes only!

## **Keep your phone connected**

In an emergency, a text message to the Emergency Services on 112 will usually get through when a voice message has problems. To send a text to 112 your phone needs to be registered. You have probably done this already but just a reminder that if you have recently replaced your phone or indeed your sim-card, you will have to re-register. Text 'register' to 112, read their auto reply, then reply with the word 'yes'. Your mobile is now registered to send a text to 112 in an emergency. For very useful info on calling 112, google 'Lyle Brotherton', click on 'Lyle Brotherton – You Tube', select the video 'help me- the secrets of using 112 on a mobile phone in an emergency'. Lyle also has several other little videos which are worth a look.

## **A word from Lesley, our IT lady**

There are still some members who are not on Lesley's e-mail address list which she uses for contacting the Group as a whole with urgent/useful info, e.g. last minute changes to walks etc. Lesley emphasises that all messages for the Group should go through her for dissemination and NOT via the facebook site which is not used by everyone and is only a social add-on to the web-site. The new web-site is up and running and looking good and Lesley requests that info for the site should be sent as a PDF or as an e-mail attachment.

## **We need to get it right**

There are occasional instances of walks shown on the programme with slightly inaccurate distances or gradings. This can cause grief to elderly strollers such as your editor who, expecting a pleasant amble through woods and meadows, suddenly find themselves on a 15 mile SB+ hike up a mountain! Therefore John asks us all to take special care in describing our carefully crafted routes, perhaps with a second opinion if not certain.

## **The Pentlands may be getting nearer**

A bill is going through the Scottish Parliament, sponsored by Christine Graham MSP and supported by the Ramblers, to substantially extend the boundaries of the Pentlands Regional Park. The new boundary would be the A702 to Melbourne, the A721 to Carnwath and the A70 Lang Whang to Balerno. This would encompass the Black Mount and the Covenanter's Grave as well as a swathe of wild remote terrain which makes the Russian Steppes look like the cosy Cotswolds. The aim is to protect the area from developments such as windfarms and to bring in investment to make the area more accessible and more attractive for leisure activities. However the Parliamentary Committee and the NFU and landowners are not keen due to the likelihood of increased costs falling particularly on local authorities who are already tight for cash. Our Group are probably not too bothered as we like wild remote trackless wastes with no-one else in sight!

## **How to find the core paths**

Now that the core-path project is more or less completed throughout Scotland, these are a very useful source of information when planning walks. Go to [www.environment.scotland.gov.uk](http://www.environment.scotland.gov.uk), click on 'map view', click on 'land', in little panel click on 'choose your data', scroll down and un-tick various items you don't want until at the end you come to 'core paths'. Click on that and you get them on the map which can be zoomed into easily. Because this can be a bit tricky to work at first, we suggest bookmarking the site once you've got it!