

Outdoor Focus

# OF



**There is the seed of an idea contained inside the cover of a 50-year-old, classic book, reviewed by Roly Smith on page 14. *Rock Climbers in Action in Snowdonia*, by John Cleare & Tony Smyth, was once published by Secker & Warburg.**

I phoned John Cleare for a cover image of the new edition. During that conversation he explained that – at the age of 80 – he had decided to become a self publisher.

“Being a self publisher is better because you can do what you want,” he said. “And they left a lot of good

photos out of the first edition!”

For those of you who don't know the man, his words need a context.

John was a founder of the OWPG back in 1980s. He has written 40 books. As a freelancer, he is known as ‘the’ British mountain photographer of the post-war era. He went on to create Mountain Camera, his own picture library, with the help of the BBC in the 1970s. Three decades of work followed. Digitalisation towards the end of the 1990s was the fall.

“It changed photography,” he

said. “Creatively for the better. Business wise, it killed it. Until 2000, I was selling photos all over the world. It just stopped overnight.”

His advice to anyone starting up?

“Today, one would need to have several strings to one's bow. But if I was much younger, I would self publish to make money. I should have become a self published author sooner.”

Inside the jacket of his new, *Rock Climbers in Action...* are two words: ‘Mountain Camera’ [aka self published]. Another classic from JC. Check it out.



p7

Villagers turn out to mark Kinder Scout for lessons on how to trespass, while not getting ‘kettled’, maybe.

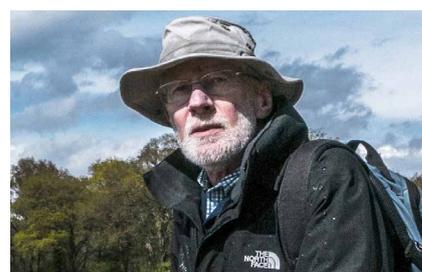


p8

Townsend on the politics of rewilding, and why they matter... or not

p14

Those inspiring books, reviewed



p16

The Gobster still getting ‘gobby’, but much better prepared.

**Editor** Stephen Neale  
[OFeditor@owpg.org.uk](mailto:OFeditor@owpg.org.uk)

**Design** Stephen Neale

**Cover** – Someone having a go with an ink pot

**The Outdoor Writers and Photographers Guild is the only UK-based association of media professionals working largely or entirely on outdoor subjects. Our members cover every field of activity and all corners of the globe. They include writers, journalists, film makers, photographers, publishers and editors, all with a passionate interest in the outdoors. For more visit [www.owpg.org.uk](http://www.owpg.org.uk)**

# OWPG can collaborate to cash in on the self publishing revolution

One sided contracts, diminishing ad revenues and falling pay rates are the battle lines around which traditional publishers and freelancers are still scrapping in 2016. OF editor Stephen Neale and Northern Eye's Tony Bowerman debate the new opportunities we might pursue as a collective of publishing entrepreneurs: The Outdoor Publishers Guild.



Dear Tony,

Traditional publishers and workers in the creative trades have collectively failed to find new ways of earning real money: the way a good plumber or decorator does. The various platforms (Youtube, Facebook, Twitter etc.) successfully allow us to filter the social media tide, so that what falls into our time-lines is in the main, better, funnier, more relevant and more informative than most else I pick up on Trail, Camping, The Guardian, Golf Monthly or Granta.

The likes of Youtube get paid via mass advertising sold at tiny rates to a targeted mass of consumers.

I haven't stopped consuming media. I've stopped buying it. Cause the platforms either [unwittingly] facilitate the stealing of everything for me, or else they provide free content that is very good entertainment indeed.

I think whether we are a small publisher or a freelancer with a basic website, chasing ads or commissions is the wrong way to go about establishing a sustainable income. In my opinion, we must each pursue a self publishing model – whether in print or online – that is subscription based. Only this will render Google, Facebook and others to what they should already really be: innovative versions of the Yellow Pages, that carry quick to create entertainment teasers to OUR paid for content that can be downloaded onto mobile (or posted hard copy).

Thoughts, Tony?



Dear Stephen,

There's more to the problem than just oversupply of media. A quick trawl of any chosen keyword or phrase on Google soon throws up example of poor or semi-literate text.

There is also some excellent writing and journalism on the internet. Some may appear on pay or subscription only sites but there is also plenty of quality articles that can be read for 'free'. In our own outdoor market, websites such as Mud & Routes or UKHillwalking provide good content that is free at the point of use because there are worthwhile ways to 'monetise' a website with sufficient traffic. I think it's too early to write off traditional media yet.

It's true, of course, that the internet has killed off some things: printed encyclopaedias and dictionaries, for example. But there are other forms of published work that still have plenty of life left in them. Luckily for us, they include climbing, walking and outdoor books and magazines.

They can work in concert with outdoor apps, rather than being replaced by them. All it takes is a little thought. And that means not just good design, proper supply chains and modern marketing, but also proper writing by authors who know what they're talking about. For us at Northern Eye Books, that means using only authors who are members of the OWPG for the simple reason that they know what they are doing and can provide what we need in a format that matches our market.

What do you say to that, Stephen?



## self publishing



Dear Tony,

I agree outdoor books are alive and well. But too much profit is going to the publishers: not to the photographer and the writer. We are the Outdoor Writers and Photographers Guild.

The photographic profession is dead. Killed off by technology and platforms of Shutterstock etc. that allow publishers to download hundreds and thousands of high quality, images at a fraction of the price they cost to produce.

The freelance photographer earning a livelihood from a client publisher is dead. Yes. OK. I can find individuals bucking that trend. But I'm speaking generally here. I'm speaking about our members.

Then we have the freelance writer. The outdoor writing industry is dead. Killed off by the rates publishers pay for writers because the profits the publishers make has also reduced. Freelance rates in the outdoor industry cannot sustain a living 365 days a year. I've worked as a self-employed finance writer. Yes. I can earn a good living. There are still a few categories of 'writer' than can earn a living. Outdoor writer is not one of them.

Even the combo of photographer / writer freelancer working for a client publisher is mostly unsustainable. The same cannot be said for publishers and editors. Those two professions are making money. The future: The Outdoor Publishers and Editors Guild. Self publishing and editing is the future for writers and photographers. Ebooks, apps and hard copy. The King is Dead. Long live the King!

What do you say to that, Tony.



Dear Stephen,

But what of the solutions, for there must be some? Let's be positive; let's seek out solutions, and not just reiterate problems. We're a versatile lot.

Maybe the OWPG should adopt a new credo? In a world where, in the long term, only the fit survive, there will always still be room for the agile. It's just a matter of finding and fitting into the evolving niches in the new ecology.

So, smile and move up the food chain. Create your own platform. Or gather together a group of like minded people (OWPG members, perhaps?), and create a shared platform. Form a limited company. Become a publisher in the broader sense. Write, design and publish you own articles or ebooks; publish other people's articles or books, create a website, blog, video channel or app.

Get creative. Be inventive. Survive.

Build an audience using all the traditional writing skills of theme and content and story. Pull in website visitors and then 'monetise' (a hideous neologism?) your site.

With enough traffic built on the back of a good niche, a good domain name, a good 'modern' 'responsive' (and probably CMS) website, supported by proper and well written content and quality photography, there are plenty of ways to earn a respectable income. Yes, I know it's very easy to say but way, way harder to do; and it may take persistence to reach that critical threshold.

But I'm convinced it can be done, and there are plenty of successful examples out there for those who know where look.

Still not convinced? Look at the rate cards for the top outdoor internet sites and then multiply that by the adverts on the site; then add in revenue streams from other forms of advertising: Adsense, affiliate schemes, accommodation listings and rotational banner ads, etc.; or simply browse Company Check to see the abbreviated accounts for key players. I say again, it can be done.

And, just as soon as we get round to it, it shall be done ...

Can you find points of agreement here, Stephen?

Or are we all doomed ...?



Dear Tony,

Your 'collaborative approach' for fellow travellers is 'credible'. OK. A genuine question. Can I join you? Can we join you? Or much better... would you like to join us?

You reference partnerships via CMS and a 'gathering' of like minds. That's the key I'm sure: forming a collective to create 'something'. An immersive platform. A unique user group behind a pay wall. An audience of loyal consumers. A truly innovative app that is no gimmick. That's a big challenge; in terms of both time, creative thought and ability. Assuming we can get together, and we can create something, the next stage is finding time to take that 'something' on. Then offering it to a partner collective that has additional skill sets, more knowledge, a beta project; an open source frame or even a system already earning money, but one that has a vested interest in taking our knowledge, and base, and fledgling platform to the next level, because of the value for all concerned.

I think there are many upstarts, universities, working groups, struggling businesses, emerging businesses that would be willing to listen and join; to piggyback organic growth on a digital platform we might create.

A Guild website that is public, may work. Not my idea. But I can see the merits. Something like this could be a start, maybe?: <http://www.theguardian.com/world/interactive/2013/may/26/firestorm-bush-fire-dunalley-holmes-family>



Dear Tony

I got involved with a collective of IT professionals about six months ago, with a view to replicating the Firestorm work. It's all beta. We didn't get much further than identifying the coding problems, the bugs, the size of the tech/ code team, the sheer scale of appreciation for what the Guardian team had achieved technically... and then there was the journalism. Happy to share what I've got at a future meet. We, as a Guild, could attempt something like Firestorm, with a view to building a user base maybe?



Dear Stephen,

Some good points. Peering into my misted crystal ball, the way ahead is unclear. Which way should we go for the best? What exactly does the future hold?

First of all, let me say that news of the death of the wooden book is much exaggerated. The book may well (soon) be dead; but long live the book.

In the same way that TV hasn't killed off cinema, or apps like Spotify put an end to recorded music, I think the book will survive. (Curiously, there seems to be a reactive link here to a huge resurgence of vinyl records — explain that!)

For the moment at least, Northern Eye Books thinks there's still plenty of life in the old model of paper books. But they must come with a new twist for the digital age. And still growing sales seem to prove us right, albeit for now. Tomorrow is another day and we must plan for that too. A book (or magazine or, indeed, whatever platform: website, smartphone or tablet app, augmented reality, etc.) must be more than content. More than just words and pictures.

The Guardian's exemplary Firestorm website is a case in point. It looks and reads well and provides a new take on how the web should work.

Dear Stephen

Certainly, well written content and astounding images are still paramount — but not enough on their own.

They must fit into a broader framework composed of a well researched market, based on buyer or visitor statistics for the chosen segment/ key geographic areas; a clearly specified target audience, a startlingly strong concept, a deliberate and easy-to-use structure stripped of all superfluous elements, the right use of both 'interpretation' and infographics, good typography, and clever modern design that incorporates the best elements from both magazines and the internet.

Quite a list. The key here is the 'product' as a whole. All the elements must combine to create something that is not just useful but desirable. It must look and be something that buyers simply want. An impulse buy. It must have the right size, look, feel, weight. And be readily available at the right price. Every element of the whole must work together.

On top of that, of course, comes everything from excellent print and an efficient supply chain to good distribution, proper marketing, advertising and so on.

Do you agree, Stephen?



Dear Tony,

Mostly, I agree with you. But first, where I still don't, is on how we monetize. Ad revenue will continue to decline over the next decade as the daddy platforms get smarter at targeted, low cost ads.

I don't think this is bad news. I plays right into the hands of the pragmatic, paid for publishing model, that you reference so well. The books, the pay walls, where we take our immersive communities, and the digital shop fronts. Mainstream retailers and ad corp's will get even better at driving visitors to our personal shops [websites] and third party retailers, at almost zero cost. Most of us are already reaching new audiences thanks to the likes of smart and effective cookies laid by Amazon etc.. The ad model is there. That will continue to get better. But we each need to capitalise before they pull the rug.

Thoughts, Tony?

Dear Tony,

Building the creative platforms that grow revenue and audiences on the increasingly cheap digital ads could be a part of our immediate strategy, as both individuals and, yes, collectives... and of course, as a Guild, to become successful publishers. That can be via a social media users' group, tucked behind a pay wall or any one of the examples you've given. Collaborative change involving teams is clearly not a unique idea. One community (the OPWG for instance) pooling resources, knowledge and skills with other[s] to create something new.

Ambitious for an individual. Not for a Guild of our size.

Dear Tony

Agreed. Much of Wordpress is about collaboration. Collaborative self publishing is where the future of our outdoor profession lies. Just as you said earlier: we must move up the publishing food chain. From writers and photographers... to publishers. If we do not collectively move, we will collectively die.

Maybe we should all get together in a very large room. Create the next publishing platform that every other Guild member can be a part of. We will need architects, coders, writers, philosophers, thinkers, artists, graphic designers, film makers, managers, leaders, diplomats, marketers, photographers, insiders, IT experts, binders. Pyramid builders from Gaza, maybe. Spiritual, digital and traditional.

But first and foremost, a collective of publishers.

What do you say to that, Tony?

Dear Stephen

But to reach this goal, we need a raft of skills that no one person is likely to have alone. We need to work collaboratively, be flexible, and keep an open mind. We need to buy in skills and know where to find the right experts, be they commissioned writers, photographers or web designers and coders. It's all about the mix.

Perhaps the real lesson here is the benefits of working together as a team? But while books are still our bread and butter, we can't afford to become complacent. There's probably still a sea change in the offing.

We're investing in several new websites. We already run a few including [www.northerneyebooks.co.uk](http://www.northerneyebooks.co.uk) and [www.sandstonetrail.co.uk](http://www.sandstonetrail.co.uk). Both sell a steady daily stream of books online and provide a small additional income from simple adverts.



Dear Stephen

Regards collaboration, a key, it seems to us, is to use a bought in, modern, 'open source' platform. Wordpress themes are a good example. We have websites for the Wales Coast Path and UK Walking under construction. We have a wealth of content, both articles and images.

The only question then is the best way to 'monetise'. We'll be trialling a mix of all the traditional advertising methods plus affiliate sales, accommodation listings and so on. But for the UK Walking site, above a certain critical threshold of visitor numbers, perhaps the subscription model is the way to go. In short, I think there are still ways to make writing and photography pay, but only by combining them with other skills. We need to be creative, adaptable and bold.

Dear Stephen

Ultimately, we must experiment and try other avenues. Move out of our comfort zones.

For right now, there's a huge selection of commercial Wordpress themes that cost as little as £40. For that you get a CMS site that you can have complete control over without incurring outside costs. All you pay for is the initial configuration of the theme by a web designer to match your needs, and occasional updates and tweets that you can't manage yourself. The only other elements you need are a good domain name and a good UK based server on which to host your site. In other words, a cooperative of OWPG members could arguably create, own and run their own site without too much trouble.

As I said earlier, to survive I believe we must all move up the food chain.

So sharpen your teeth and go hunting.

Trespass survivor unveils plaque to school children at historic event

## Kinder Scout inspires next generation



Alan Edwards (left) and Jan Gillett unveil the commemorative plaque

**ONE of the youngest members of the 1932 Mass Trespass at Kinder Scout has unveiled a plaque to commemorate the protest.**

Alan Edwards, from Stockport, was just two years old when he was carried onto the moors by his older sister during the land demo of young people.

Edwards, now 86, was joined in the unveiling by Jan Gillett – son of one of the imprisoned trespassers – at the fourth annual Spirit of Kinder Day, on April 23.

Speakers at The Royal Hotel event, in Hayfield, described how access to land is still unacceptable.

Carey Davies, the British Mountaineering Council's walking development officer, said: "With the benefit of hindsight, the Kinder Trespass has now become

heritage; an act which mainstream politicians and respectable organisations feel comfortable endorsing.

"But let's take a closer look at it. There were 400 young people, many of them unemployed, led by people from ethnic and religious minorities, all following a radical ideology. We shouldn't lose sight of just how challenging and provocative it was."

Carey explained how young protesters taking the same action today over 'private land' would likely be 'kettled' by police before getting out of the car park.

He said poor land access continued to prevent many people 'knowing the lasting satisfaction of a long walk or a hard climb'. Barriers around social background, ethnicity, gender, mental

illness or disability are also problematic, he explained.

"Too many people live lives without landscape, in nondescript and forgotten places which foster a sense of marginalisation and contempt," said Carey. "Access to the outdoors has to be seen as part of a social whole. I believe the Kinder Trespassers understood this well. Their struggle was always part of a struggle for something bigger."

The day included musical interludes by folk singers, and exhibitions of work by local children.

New Mills College and Hayfield Primary pupils gave readings, describing their feelings of freedom after a walk on Kinder.

Dave Toft, of the Kinder Visitor Centre Group, outlined the story and

background to the trespass led by a 21-year-old Benny Rothman.

He concurred with Carey that land access was the children's birthright, but was far from being realised because of the ongoing lack of access nationally.

"According to figures from Natural England, only 8.7 per cent of the country still has free access," said Toft. "So as Benny Rothman would say, our work is not complete."

Philip Pearson – hill-walker and former senior policy officer at the TUC – spoke about Rothman's trade union work and access campaigning.

He described how a local pupil had recently written that 'freedom means everything to me – it allows me to be the person I am.'

"This said everything about Benny Rothman, the leader of the trespass," he added.

Organisations attending the event included the Ramblers, the National Trust, Hayfield Civic Trust and the Kinder Mountain Rescue team and Friends of the Peak District.

The Kinder Visitor Centre Group and the Kinder & High Peak Advisory Committee were joint organisers.

The commemorative plaque unveiled by Edwards and Gillett will eventually form part of a the Trespass Trail around Kinder Scout.

# The politics of re

## **Is rewilding in the UK a good idea?**

I realised how impoverished many of our hills and glens were after walking through huge wilderness areas on the Pacific Crest Trail in the Sierra Nevada and Cascade mountains of the Western USA. I spent week after week in beautiful forests that extended

up the mountainsides before fading out as the trees shrank in size and number. There are few places here where you can see similar forests or a natural timberline.

## **What are the potential upsides for rewilding UK?**

Rewilding is about restoring the ecosystems on which life depends. It's about having a healthier environment, greater biodiversity, and wilder landscapes. This benefits everybody: not just those of us who love



**On ridge Spidean Coire nan Clach to Sgurr Ban, with Ruadh-stac Beag, Beinn Eighe NNR – photo by Ronald Turnbull**

# Rewilding UK Plc

nature and wild places. Study after study has shown just how important the natural world is to people's well-being and health.

## What are the potential downsides?

As a supporter of nature conservation I have no doubts about the value of rewilding.

That doesn't mean I think we should try and rewild everywhere, and certainly not productive farmland. However where farming is marginal, and the land is

already fairly wild, the return of more varied wildlife and vegetation should be welcomed.

Rewilding can seem to be about nature not people. It shouldn't be. Rewilding is about both. We are part of nature. In fact, there could be more people living in now



Chris Townsend explains to Stephen Neale why people need to be a part of 'rewilding' in the UK.

empty glens, yet they could still be wilder than they are now. A forested glen with rich wildlife plus human habitations is preferable to a bare glen with ruins. Rewilding shouldn't affect access to the hills in any way either. I am completely opposed to fencing huge areas for wolves to run around in, whilst people are only allowed on vehicle safaris to see them. That would just be a big zoo not a restored natural landscape. Rewilding is for the benefit of people as well as wildlife and the ecosystem in general, as George Monbiot makes clear in his excellent book *Feral*.

**What has Monbiot got right, in your opinion?**

*Feral* triggered the mass media interest in rewilding and has certainly given the subject a much greater airing. The ideas were around long before that book, but were not put in such a provocative and stimulating way.

I attended the Edinburgh Book Festival,

where Monbiot was asked if areas should be fenced off and closed to the public so wolves could be introduced. This was a reference to proposals for the Alladale Estate in the Northern Highlands. Monbiot said he was totally opposed to any restrictions on access.

Of course in Scotland the Alladale proposals are extremely unlikely to get anywhere because of Scotland's access rights. It would be good for rewilding and the outdoor world in general if such rights applied throughout the UK.

**What has Monbiot got wrong?**

Whilst I agree completely with

**Mount Rainier rises above the forests in the Cascade Mountains – photo by Chris Townsend**

Monbiot regarding rewilding I do think he is a bit harsh on some current conservation measures and organisations.

**If you were to judge whether any rewilding programme has been a success, what would it achieve?**

Rewilding is already thriving in many places – for example Wild Ennerdale in the Lake District, the Carrifran Wildwood in the Southern Uplands, Creag Meagaidh National Nature Reserve in the Central Highlands, and Glen Feshie in the Cairngorms – where the forests are returning.

**Is it acceptable for a rewilding programme to facilitate the destruction of a rival eco system?**

Rewilding is a process rather than an absolute. Ultimately rewilding should achieve an ecosystem in balance and with all the creatures and plants that you would expect to find there but what matters is the direction being taken. Ecosystems are never static. They are either declining or becoming wilder.

**What are the political issues effecting UK rewilding?**

Achieving rewilding on a large scale will be challenging in the UK due to the entrenched power of land owners and the systems of land ownership. More progress is being made in other European countries. Those who want a managed, industrialised countryside regard rewilding as a threat. Every suggestion of reintroducing native animals is met instantly by claims of the disasters that will result. Combating this is difficult but essential.



# How to get into the movies

Andrew White explains techniques of camera panning and interviews

**Panning is possibly the most simple camera move, but so often done badly.**

The art of panning is this:

1) decide on where you are starting the pan from 2) pan in one direction and one direction only 3) find a reason to stop panning 4) stop 5) don't go back again.

Too many videos are filled with panning shots which go one way, then another, and then back again. This is sickening to watch and should be cut out. Now, when you look at the camera tapes from professional cameramen, they often DO pan one way, then stop, wait 10 seconds or so, then pan back the opposite way.

This is to give the editor the possi-

bility of TWO shots in the edit suite – either a pan left to right OR a pan right to left – but not both.

There are various techniques to capturing conversation using a tripod and camera (over the shoulder, face-to-face, two people in shot, overhead).

An interview situation is a lot easier than two people chatting. In an interview, at least one person – the interviewer – knows what they are going to say, and you as a film-maker can plan for that. Usually, in an interview situation, the camera is in place first to record the interviewee. The interviewer will ask their questions out of shot, and the interviewee's responses will be filmed and recorded on sound with a

microphone (usually a tie-clip). Once all the questions have been asked, the camera moves round to film the questions from the interviewer – this time on camera and with a microphone.

By this time, the interviewee has gone, and the interviewer asks their "questions" to an empty chair – or one of the crew could sit in as the "interviewee".

In the edit suit, the on-camera questions from the interviewer are cut with the on camera answers from the interviewee to make the final video.

Two people chatting are more difficult to film, and I'd suggest keeping both people in shot at the same time, and mic both up.

## The **MAIN** Man

**It's good to be a backpacking pilgrim, reports Laurence Main**

**Walking the living land is an ancient spiritual practice. The vital consideration for today is the word 'living' juxtaposed to 'land'. Yes, I do mean the land is more than a bunch of chemicals. It has spirit. Do you consider this when walking your routes? Are you helping your readers to discover this? Realising this must affect how we live and see the planet. It is important.**

Hence the priority of pilgrimage. Walking for a long distance over many days along a traditional route often much older than Christianity, is the way to do it.

Backpacking, sleeping and dreaming in the ancient sites is even better. Everybody should go in a pilgrimage sometime. You can do so for work.

I had backpacked 303 miles on the great Dragon Ley, otherwise known as the St Michael Line for from Carn Lês Boel, in Cornwall, [Ed's note: the line stretches straightish from Hopton-on-Sea, Suffolk, to St Michael's Mount, Cornwall, via villages and other landmarks named after St Michael] when I spent the night in Wayland's Smithy long barrow, in Oxfordshire.

This area is one of the most potent in England.

Going to sleep in the front chamber on my right as I entered the barrow, I slept so soundly that I didn't remember any dreams that night. When waking up at 5.30am on April 16, 2010, I kept still and quiet when a woman entered purposively. I couldn't see what she did or hear what she muttered; and neither of us acknowledged each other as she departed. This was too solemn for cordialities.

Not that I felt like an intruder.

I felt I was playing the part of the passing pilgrim. A small group of us have started a rolling programme of backpacking trails.

We're doing this in stages, usually dedicating one week each month. We feel called to acknowledge the spirit of the land in this way and to serve the living land, just as it has a beneficial effect on us. In critical times, such action is required. You may not know it, but by encouraging city-dwellers to walk in the countryside you are helping them to appreciate what we all do in the outdoors.

Pilgrimage used to be normal. Let's make it so again.

# The OWPG 2016 AGM weekend

October 7-10  
all inclusive  
**£150pp**  
3 nights accom, ferry,  
dinner, activities

Our annual weekender will be based on the Isle of Wight, around the Medina Valley Centre... an outdoor and field studies centre. The accommodation – in twin bedded/bunk rooms – is comfortable, but basic. Home-cooked food will come from the centre's own kitchen.

The £150 price negotiated for members and their partners includes:

- three nights accommodation
- awards dinner
- centre activities
- development courses
- ferry on and off the island

There will be an informal reception on the Friday evening, with a presentation on what the island has to offer, including water sports, historic monuments, walking and cycling.

Saturday evening is the celebration of the best of our members' work at the Special Achievement Awards. If you haven't entered yet, then have a go. The closing date is June 24. Nothing to enter?

Get along anyway to see what you could be entering for next year.

Contact the awards organiser on email at [dave@p3publications.com](mailto:dave@p3publications.com) or the

Guild Secretary secretary@owpg.org.uk

The weekend is open to all members and their spouses or partners. Get your name down as soon as possible via email at [dennis.kelsall@gmail.com](mailto:dennis.kelsall@gmail.com).

Look forward to seeing you all there.

Dennis Kelsall

50 places available, but going fast.

For full details, copy and paste this link into your browser: [https://gallery.mailchimp.com/ca5bc11227ae897c871919d8e7/files/Initial\\_invitation\\_member.pdf](https://gallery.mailchimp.com/ca5bc11227ae897c871919d8e7/files/Initial_invitation_member.pdf)

## Letters

I must correct Jon Sparks on his mainly positive review of my new book with Joe Cornish, *This Land*, which appeared in the last issue of *Outdoor Focus*.

Jon's statement that I dated Lewisian gneiss to 500 million years old is incorrect. He appears to be referring to the introduction, in which I was clearly referring to an imaginary journey across England and Wales from the east to west coast.

That journey obviously does not pass through Scotland, and the 500 million year figure refers to the difference in age between the Cretaceous, Pleistocene and Paleocene periods and the Ordovician

and Silurian slates of the Cambrian Mountains and the Preselis.

Jon was apparently confused with the idea of this journey, but it is clearly explained in the introduction that the rest of the book does not follow this imaginary journey, but is roughly chronological.

And where I do refer to the Lewisian gneiss in the first essay on Suilven and Stac Pollaidh in the first chapter, I correctly give its age as "up to 3 billion years."

Roly Smith

I've just joined the guild and was wondering if I could contribute at all to *Outdoor Focus*?

James Forrest

*ED: Thank, James.*

*Always looking for 'how to pieces' and factual based, opinion.*

Members of the OWPG are more than welcome to sample our trips and share our experiences, then write about them. Simply contact me.

Please understand there may be a delay in my reply since I could well be on a pilgrimage.

Laurence Main,  
9 Mawddwy Cottages,  
Minllyn, Dinas Mawddwy,  
Machynlleth, SY20 9LW,  
Wales

Our shiny, new 28-page catalogue is out, featuring more than 60-odd books.

Copy and paste this link into your browser: <http://www.northerneyebooks.co.uk/2016/03/17/new-northern-eye-books-catalogue-for-201617/>

If you'd like to receive a printed copy through the post, please send your name and address via email to: [tony@northerneyebooks.com](mailto:tony@northerneyebooks.com).

Happy browsing.

Tony Bowerman  
Northern Eye Books

Please send thoughts, complaints, corrections, opinions, groans, latest works, reviews to Stephen Neale at [OFeditor@owpg.org.uk](mailto:OFeditor@owpg.org.uk)

**The Road to Little Dribbling: More Notes from a Small Island, by Bill Bryson; Doubleday, £20 (hb)**

In *The Road to Little Dribbling*, Bill Bryson, 2011 Golden Eagle winner and honorary Guild member, returns to the theme of what most people believe was his finest book.

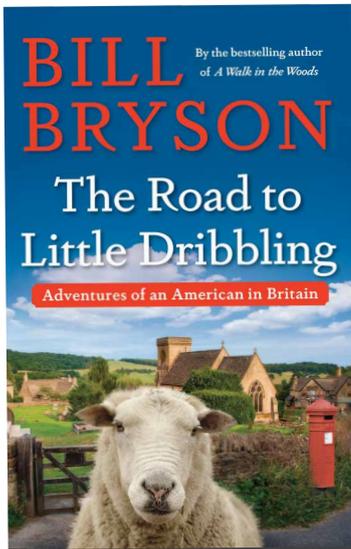
Notes from a Small Island was published to huge critical acclaim 20

years ago, and in 2003, it was voted by BBC Radio 4 listeners as the book which best represented Britain.

Iowa-born Bryson surely remains the world's No 1 anglophile, and his love of his adopted country still shines through on every page of his latest offering. That said, when things go wrong or he feels prices are too high or the service less than perfect, he sails dangerously close, like many of us, to becoming a Grumpy Old Man (or Woman). But that's when he is at his funniest. His reference to the Mass Trespass on Kinder Scout in 1932 is typical of his undisguised admiration for our way of life.

"In other countries they fight over politics and religion. In Britain, it is over who gets to walk on a windswept moor. I think that's rather splendid," he writes.

And Bryson's view on the currently-threatened Green Belt around our cities is interesting too. He calls the 1947 Town and Country Planning Act which enshrined the idea, "the most intelligent, far-sighted, thrillingly and self-evidently successful land management policy any national has ever devised."



The Road to Little Dribbling is a paean of praise for Britain; he calls the Lake District "surely the most beautiful place on earth"; Durham (where he was chancellor of the university) "the nicest small city on the planet," and Windsor Great Park "a little land of enchantment."

What doesn't he like about Britain?

Driving through the West Country in summer and the policy of the National Trust to charge for everything are near the top of the list.

He spent £31.89 at Avebury without even having a cup of tea and comments: "The day cannot be too far off

when you have to pay for toilet paper by the sheet in a little booth manned by a volunteer."

**Rock Climbers in Action in Snowdonia, by John Cleare & Tony Smyth; Mountain Camera, £25 (hb), £20 (pb)**

When it was first published an astonishing 50 years ago, *Rock Climbers in Action in Snowdonia* was a sensation.

For the first time, close-up photography of some of the country's top rock climbers, including luminaries like Joe Brown, Rusty Baillie and Pete Crew, on some of their most memorable routes brought the action onto the coffee tables of a largely vicarious readership.

The expert photography and text could only have been provided by contemporary pioneer climbers, and John Cleare and Tony Smyth's groundbreaking treatment was hailed as a breakthrough in climbing literature.

Now Cleare, an honorary life member and Golden Eagle winner,

has produced a new edition of the famous tome, with additional photographs left out of the first edition.

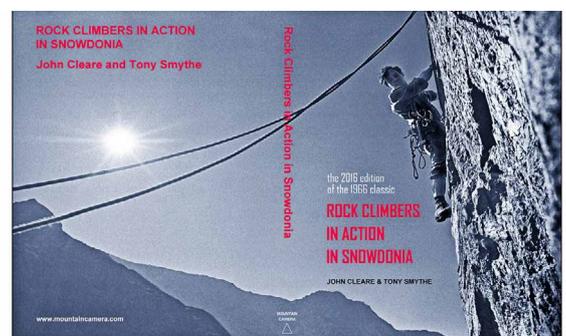
And the truth is that the passing of half a century has done nothing to diminish the vertiginous effect and impression of gripping verticality which characterised the original.

Bearing in mind that these were the days of heavy laid ropes with only steel karabiners and threaded nuts for protection on dangerously long run-outs (there were no such things as helmets, Friends, cams, climbing harnesses and chalk in those days), the skill and courage of the climbers who, unlike today's rock athletes, trained on nothing more than copious amounts of beer and 20 ciggies a day, is still mind-blowing.

It is a tribute to the consummate skill of Cleare's pre-digital photography, capturing the essence of the stomach-churning exposure of routes like Vector, Brown's *pièce de résistance* on Craig Bwlch y Moch, Tremadoc and on "the status symbol of Welsh climbing," Cenotaph Corner on Dinas Cromlech in the Llanberis Pass, that it is still capable of making the nerves tingle.

As he points out in his introduction, it's an entirely different ball game for today's rock jocks.

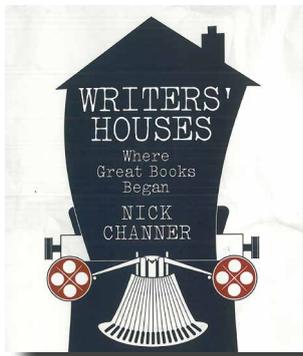
But that illustrious, carefree past,



*Fifty Years On!*

when climbing was still a game, should never be forgotten, and this new edition should ensure that it is not.

**Writers' Houses: Where Great Books Began, Nick Channer; Robert Hale, £22 (hb)**

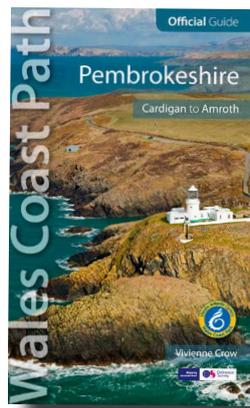


They say you should never judge a book by its cover. That's certainly the case with Nick Channer's fascinating new offering on British houses with literary connections. The designers at Hale, for reasons best known to themselves, chose a dull, two-tone illustration of a typewriter for the dust-jacket of the book, rather than one of the author's own excellent full-colour photographs of the attractive houses which adorn the rest of the book.

Thank goodness that lack of imagination is not repeated in the author's lively and well-researched text. Descriptions of well-known authors' homes range from the Wordsworth and Beatrix Potter houses in the Lake District, Robert Burns's cottage in Alloway, and Dylan Thomas's Boat House at Laugharne, to far lesser-known places such as Thomas Carlyle's Arched House at Ecclefechan, Laurence Stern's Shandy Hall at Coxwold in North Yorkshire, and Tudor Mapledurham House on the Thames near Caversham. This stately redbrick pile has connections both to Kenneth Grahame (it was thought to be the model for Toad Hall in *The Wind in the Willows*), and the 18th century poet Alexander Pope (who fell in love with two sisters who lived there). *Writers' Houses* is an innovative and entertaining take on the well-worn literary walks genre, and the author is to be congratulated on breathing fresh life into these

literary landmarks. NB: Robert Hale ceased trading in December last year after nearly 80 years as an independent publisher of mainly topographical books.

**Wales Coast Path: Pembrokeshire, Vivienne Crow; Northern Eye, £13.99 (pb); Wales Coast Path: Pembrokeshire South, Dennis Kelsall; Northern Eye, £5.99 (pb)**



Northern Eye has turned its award-winning gaze on the glorious, flower-decked coastline of Pembrokeshire in the latest productions

of its popular walking guides.

Vivienne Crow's beautifully-written 14-day excursion along the 186-mile Pembrokeshire section of the Wales Coast Path, between Cardigan and Amroth (formerly known as the Pembrokeshire Coast Path) is a model of concise writing and clear directions.

Once again, Carl Rogers's crisp design incorporating OS mapping makes this an ideal companion to slip into the rucksack for the marathon described by one walker as "the most awe-inspiring, perspective-changing experience of my life."

Dennis Kelsall's mini Top Ten circular walks along the southern section of the Pembrokeshire part of the path include the Marloes, Dale and Angle peninsulas, as well as Bosherton Lakes and the Stackpole estate inland.

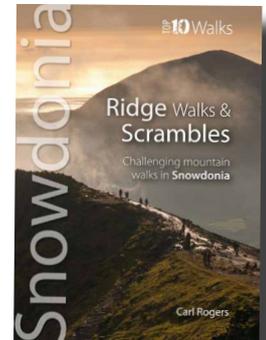
**Snowdonia: Mountain Walks & Snowdonia: Ridge walks and scrambles, both by Carl Rogers; both Northern Eye, £5.99 (pb).**

The mighty hills of the Snowdonia

range form the subject of Northern Eye's latest handy mini-guides, both written, designed and largely photographed by Carl Rogers.

The Mountain Walks guide covers the finest mountain walks in the Snowdonia National Park, from the high Carneddau in the north to a round of the Cadair Idris peaks in the south. Don't expect too many surprises in the routes here though. That on Snowdon, for example, ascends by the Pyg Track and descends by the Miners' Track, so unless you do it in the middle of winter, you may find yourself in a queue at some points.

The Ridge Walks and Scrambles mini-guide does offer a few lesser-known routes, such as the Lech Ddu spur on Carnedd Dafydd, the Bochlwyd Horseshoe from Llyn Ogwen, and the Northern Glyderau, taking in Elidir Fawr and Carnedd y Filiast, from Nant Ffrancon. As we have come to expect with Northern Eye productions, each of these attractive little mini-guides offer good mapping, clear directions and superb photography of every route.



**New and revised editions**

North Downs Way by Colin Saunders (Aurum Press £14.99); Scrambles in the Lake District, North and South, by Brian Evans (Cicerone, £14.95 each); Walking the Cotswold Way by Kev Reynolds (Cicerone, £14.95); Walking the Great Glen Way by Paddy Dillon (Cicerone, £14.95); Walking the Pembrokeshire Coast Path by Dennis & Jan Kelsall (Cicerone, £16.95) and Walking the Thames Path (Cicerone, £15.95) by Leigh Hatts; Walking in the South Downs National Park by Kev Reynolds (Cicerone, £12.95 pb)

# The Gobster

**'Be Prepared' is a useful motto to bear in mind when responding to a request to give a lecture or presentation. Research the subject you've been asked to speak on, rehearse what you're going to say, arrive at the venue in plenty of time and assess the mood of your audience before you step onto the stage or podium.**

Mostly I try to follow that rule, but on occasion I've been caught out by misunderstanding the invitation...

The Cirque de Gavarnie is the best-known feature of the Pyrenees; a massive wall of limestone streaked with waterfalls and layered with terraces of snow and ice, on which climbers at the top of their game have created a wealth of seemingly impossible routes. The Cirque de Gavarnie is, of course, the cradle of Pyrénéisme.

In 2006 I received a surprise invitation from the Mayor of Gavarnie to attend a celebration of mountaineering, its focus being the 50th anniversary of the first ascent of the North Face of the Tour du Marboré – one of the Cirque's most prominent features.

Now I'm no great shakes as a climber and have never even attempted any of the major routes on Gavarnie's cliffs, so the invitation left me bemused. The only possible explanation was the 25-year friendship I'd enjoyed with Jean and Pierre Ravier, the

ultimate Pyrénéistes. It was Jean who had made that epic first ascent all those years ago, and although we'd never met face to face, our friendship had been maintained through a regular series of letters – theirs written in French, mine in English. They speak no English, I no French. But somehow that never mattered. Until now.

We met for the first time in Gavarnie's main street, and within moments I'd been gathered into their larger family of climbing friends from both sides of the border, and taken with them into the Pyrenean National Park Centre's lecture theatre. When I tried to slip into the back row, I was hustled out and given a seat at the front beside Marcel Kahn, another top-class veteran climber with an excellent command of English.

The celebrations began with a welcome by M. le Mayor, followed by a lecture on the history of climbing in the Pyrenees, and a dual presentation by my friends Jean and Pierre, with Marcel whispering a commentary in my ear.

After that M. le Mayor took the microphone again.

Moments later, Marcel nudged me in the ribs and whispered: 'Now it's your turn.'

'What do you mean, "Your turn?"'

'M. le Mayor has just announced that you're the

next speaker!'

If addressing the audience had been mentioned in the letter of invitation from M. le Mayor, I would surely have noticed - wouldn't I? Or would I? Not for the first time I cursed my lack of linguistic skills and looked for the emergency exit. But there was no escape, and no point in arguing either; I was a guest. An ignorant one at that.

'You'll have to do the translations,' I told Marcel, and took the stage when a smiling M. le Mayor beckoned me to join him. And there, facing an audience of about 200 French and Spanish mountaineers, I – the lone Englishman with nothing prepared – had to 'wing it' while Marcel, whom I'd only met an hour or so earlier, turned my bumbling words into French. I just hope he made a better job of it than I did.

Less than 18 months later I was back in Gavarnie, this time with a multi-national group of writers and academics who had been part of the conference of mountain literature at Toulouse University, mentioned in the last edition of OF. Six of us were to be filmed giving readings against that classic mountain backdrop, but while the other five novelists and poets had suitable pieces they could read from their published works, as a

mere guidebook writer I had nothing of value of my own to read, so was invited to compose a 10-minute piece especially for the occasion.

The four days of the conference passed by in a whirl and I hadn't managed to write anything before we set off by coach for the three-hour journey to Gavarnie.

I'll scribble something on the way, I thought, but another of the writers sat next to me and began a three-hour conversation. It was fascinating, but not what I'd had in mind, for my notebook was still blank when we arrived at the Granges de Holle where lunch was waiting.

"We will begin filming when we've finished eating," said the organiser, and my heart sank.

There was so much lively conversation going on that it was impossible to concentrate, so I crept outside and, muffled against a cold wind, found a boulder to lean on, and began to compose my offering for the camera.

Five minutes later word came that as the light was deteriorating, filming would start straight away. The sweat of panic formed on my brow.

Having been vaguely aware of the others reading their pieces, suddenly it was my turn and the next thing I knew, the green light came on and I began to speak – without having the foggiest notion where, or how, my piece to camera would end...

Be prepared? I will be, next time.