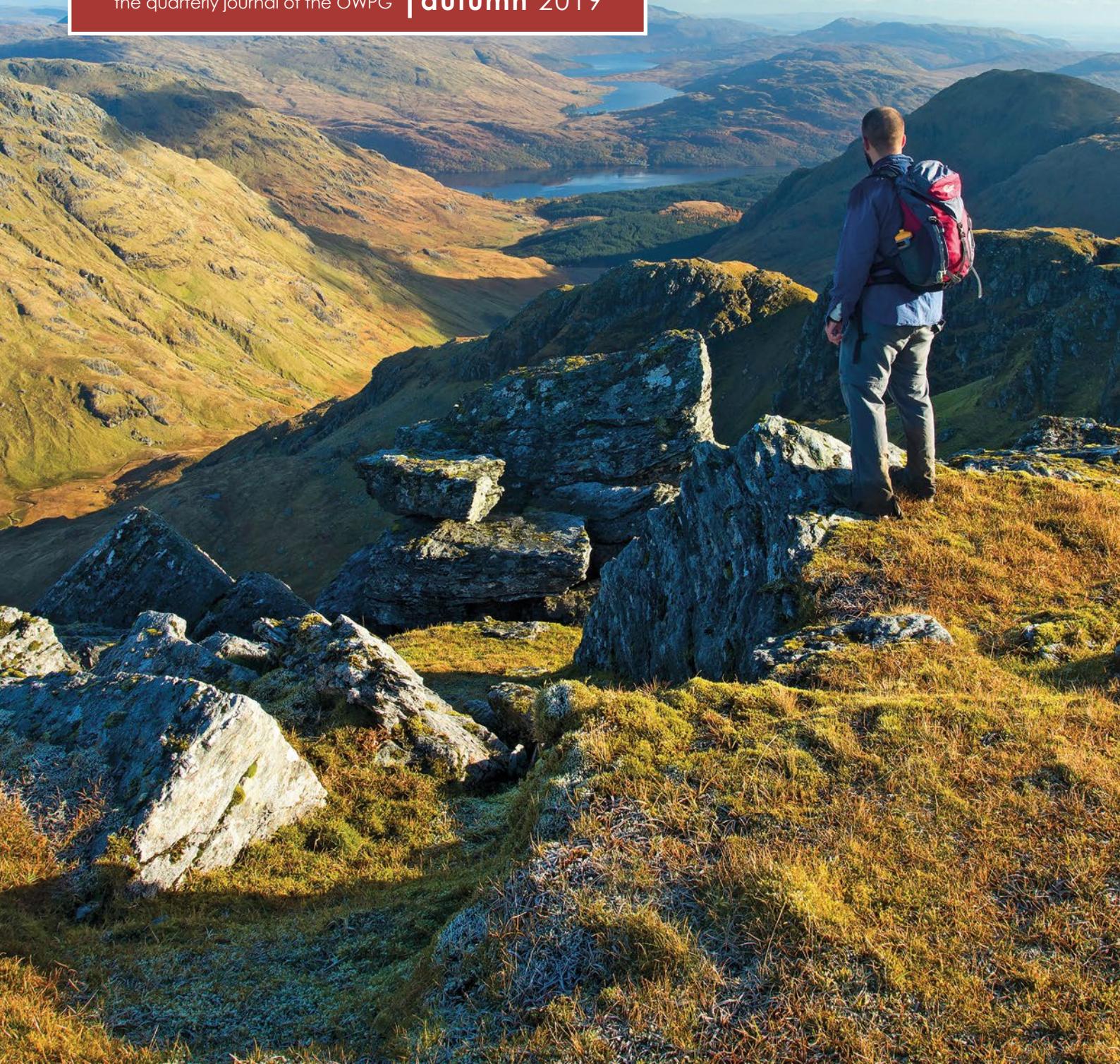


outdoor
FOCUS

the quarterly journal of the OWPG | autumn 2019



From the editor...

David Taylor

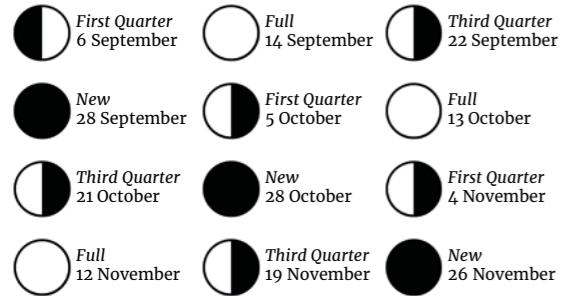
There must have been something in the water in 1969. Think of all the 50th anniversary celebrations there have been this year: The Apollo 11 moon landing, Woodstock, the maiden flights of both the Boeing 747 and Concorde, and the first showing of an odd new TV comedy called *Monty Python's Flying Circus*.

The outdoor community also has cause to acknowledge a few half centuries this year too. Cicerone of course celebrated its 50th anniversary earlier this year (see the previous edition of OF).

In this issue of *Outdoor Focus*, we commemorate 50 years of *Descent*, Britain's only national magazine devoted to caving - edited and designed by OWPG member Chris Howes. Happy Birthday to all of the above, each an inspiration in its own way.



Moon phases



1 SEP	Sunrise time 06.12 Sunrise direction 75° Sunset time 19.47 Sunset direction 284°	1 OCT	Sunrise time 07.00 Sunrise direction 94° Sunset time 18.39 Sunset direction 266°	1 NOV	Sunrise time 06.53 Sunrise direction 113° Sunset time 16.34 Sunset direction 247°
15 SEP	Sunrise time 06.34 Sunrise direction 84° Sunset time 19.15 Sunset direction 276°	15 OCT	Sunrise time 07.23 Sunrise direction 103° Sunset time 18.07 Sunset direction 257°	15 NOV	Sunrise time 07.17 Sunrise direction 119° Sunset time 16.11 Sunset direction 241°

Sunset/Sunrise times and direction correct for London. Times in BST (GMT from 1 Nov)



Cover star

Keith Fergus

Looking across Loch Lomond to Loch Arklet and Loch Katrine from the summit of Beinn Ime, Loch Lomond and The Trossachs National Park
www.scottishhorizons.co.uk

If you'd like to contribute to the next edition of *Outdoor Focus* please send an email with your article idea to me at davidtphoto@gmail.com. The deadline for copy is the 15 November.

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OWPG NEWS



Colin leading the walk - photo courtesy of Friends of DalesBus

FIFTY YEARS OF THE DALES WAY CELEBRATED IN STYLE

one of England's most popular long distance walks, connecting the towns and cities of West Yorkshire with the Yorkshire Dales and the Lake District.

Colin, now the Chairman of the Dales Way Association, and a Vice President of both the West Riding Ramblers and the Yorkshire Dales Society, said it was 'his privilege to have been able to lead the original walk on 23 March 1969 and now the Golden Jubilee Walk just over 50 years later'.

A special feature of Saturday's celebrations was a courtesy bus service using two of the exact type of local West Yorkshire Road Car buses that were used carried walkers to and from the Yorkshire Dales in 1969.

Provided by the Keighley Bus Museum, in conjunction with the Friends of DalesBus, these superbly preserved vehicles took walkers of 2019 on a time journey using the identical form of transport used by walkers 50 years ago.

On their return to Ilkley, walkers joined Sir Rodney Brooke, President of the Ilkley Manor House Trust and Ilkley & Keighley MP John Grogan, as Mr Grogan officially opened a special exhibition dedicated to the story of the Dales Way which is at Ilkley's historic Manor House throughout August.

The Dales Way 50th exhibition is open at the Ilkley Manor House (www.ilkleymanorhouse.org) - every Saturday and Sunday 11am-4pm, until 1 September - entrance free. Supported by the Yorkshire Dales National Park Sustainable Development Fund, the Dales Way Association has also published a special illustrated souvenir booklet *50 years of the Dales Way* (www.dalesway.org). Priced at £4.99 it is available at the Grove Bookshop in Ilkley or can be obtained post free at www.skyware.co.uk.

Over 70 walkers joined local author and OWPG member Colin Speakman at the weekend on a six mile walk on the Dales Way, along the banks of the River Wharfe, from the start of the Dales Way in Ilkley to Bolton Abbey in the Yorkshire Dales National Park.

The walk (picture above) was to celebrate the original public walk organised over fifty years ago to inaugurate the 81 mile long Dales Way, what is now

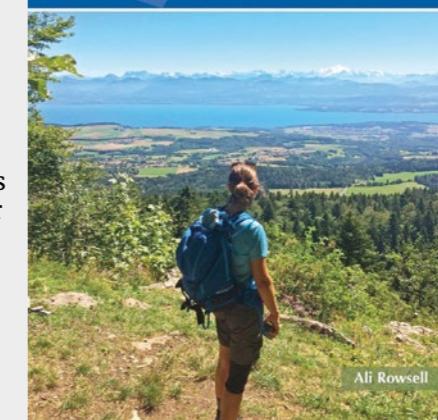
New Member

Ali Rowsell

Ali Rowsell is a full-time teacher who has worked across the globe, in countries such as Australia, South Korea and Switzerland. Ali specialises in writing about the outdoors - in particular mountain walking - as well as being a freelance International Mountain Leader. Ali's first book *Switzerland's Jura Crest Trail* was published by Cicerone in January 2019. She also writes articles for Cicerone on summer and winter mountain walking, around the world.

Based in Sussex, Ali can regularly be found exploring every kilometre of the South Downs, as well as Ashdown Forest. Ali regularly works and plays in Snowdonia and the Lake District, and has explored all other National Parks the UK has to offer.

TREKKING SWITZERLAND'S JURA CREST TRAIL
CICERONE
A two week trek from Zurich to Geneva



Outdoor Events

Newquay Fish Festival
13-15 September
www.newquayfishfestival.co.uk

South West Outdoors Festival, Cornwall
27-29 September
www.bit.ly/SWOFSept2019

Alwinton Show, Northumberland
12 October
www.alwintonshow.co.uk

Countryside Live, Yorkshire
19-20 October
www.countrysidelive.co.uk

Rural Entrepreneur Live, NEC
6-7 November
www.ruralentrepreneur.co.uk



DEFRA, land management, and... beavers

Rob Yorke RICS, OPWG member and rural chartered surveyor, interviewed Ben Goldsmith, a non-executive director at DEFRA, on behalf of the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) on all things rural, land use, farming, natural capital jargon, trees, upland communities, and the important new role of beavers in the landscape

(Rob Yorke) What is your role in DEFRA?

(Ben Goldsmith) As an informal adviser to the secretary of state, I have been particularly keen to make sure that voices not often heard in DEFRA have a say; for example, during the preparation of the Agriculture Bill.

Part of RICS' role is about valuation. Based on the maxim 'If you can't measure it, you can't manage it,' are we getting overly bogged down in valuing natural capital?

In a way I sympathise with the view that there is an intrinsic value to nature, which you can't put a price on, and by doing so somehow corrupts our relationship with it. Having said that, the country is moving towards environmental land management schemes (ELMS) in respect of rural payments, under which we will be paying land managers to provide services to the public according to the way they manage their land, so we will have to put an economic value on those services.

Do you think the jargon – biodiversity offsetting, payment for ecosystems services, natural capital itself – prevents us from, in the words of ecologist Sir John Lawton, 'just getting on with it'?

Yes, there is a place for that language, but perhaps not when you are promoting

The way the Agriculture Bill seeks to transform how taxpayers' money is spent in the countryside, will I think be the biggest win for nature that we have ever seen in this country.

these ideas to the public. I would much rather we talk about the beauty of nature and wildlife in words the public understands when we are trying to get ideas across. Some of the jargon, such as the word 'sustainability', has been overused, and the word rewilding has some controversial connotations. But of course, those working on the creation of new market mechanisms to enable 'nature recovery' do need to use certain technical terms.

At a recent natural capital investment conference, environmentalist Tony Juniper said: 'It is no longer about halting decline, it is about restoring nature.' How do you think chartered surveyors can do that?

The way the Agriculture Bill seeks to transform how taxpayers' money is spent in the countryside, will I think be the biggest win for nature that we have ever seen in this country. Instead of being handed over to farmers or land managers on a per-[hectare?] basis, millions of pounds will be paid directly in exchange for 'nature recovery'. There is going to be a huge role for advisers of all kinds, including chartered surveyors, to help land managers, [individually and collectively], figure out how this is going to work and maximise their income under new schemes.

Are you saying there's more common ground than we generally hear about between the Agriculture Bill and the 25-Year environment plan?

I see the Agriculture Bill as the principle source of funding to fulfil the 25-year environment plan. Just to give a small example, if you have got an unproductive corner of a field, which is a hassle to manage as farmland with little financial return under the current schemes, the

proposed ELMS approach may provide the incentive to put a pond in that corner.

Talking of water, is the return of beavers an example of where there is potentially more in common between environmentalists and land managers over conservation?

I am delighted that beavers are slowly returning to our landscape after an absence of centuries. I do think that we have a duty to put back the pieces of the jigsaw that we have removed.

Perhaps in a less antagonistic way, given the tension caused by illegal releases of beavers and other species?

When the government seems not to move, some conservationists inevitably decide to take matters into their own hands. However eager the public seems to be, it is important that efforts to restore missing species have the buy-in of local communities. That is critical to the success of any project. I don't know the circumstances around how beavers made it into the River Otter or the River Tay, but I am delighted that it happened.

What if landowners need to manage them?

You generally won't find a beaver more than ten metres from water. In lots of countries you are not allowed to farm right up to the water's edge because we know it causes soil erosion, run-off of nitrates and other chemicals. So frankly I am a believer in 'backing-off' from the water a little bit; in which case, beavers are much less of a problem.

But of course, there are places where beavers will be an issue and we need to give landowners the right to manage them. If you are farming a high-quality arable holding and beavers interfere with your drainage system, then you have

The other source of optimism is in respect of the great blank canvases that our less-productive agricultural land represents...

to be able to move them or even to kill them. That stands to reason. In the same way, while the wild boar re-establishes itself in our woodlands, we have got to make sure we hunt them enough. It's just a simple part of playing our role in the environment and being sensitive to the needs of landowners who have a genuine problem. But there is a tendency among the British landowning class to reject outright the notion that they should share the landscape with other species.

I think there is a word for this: co-existence. We surely must be able to co-exist with wildlife in a way that other countries do.

Are we in danger of doom fatigue over biodiversity losses? Is there is more room for optimism to reframe the narrative?

I think there are two potential sources of good news. The first is modern technology enabling us to farm more productively, with lower inputs to grow food with less impact on the environment. I am a big believer that the government should be spending more on research and development to help advance the technology, alongside there being more we can learn from organic practices. I think there is a huge opportunity for the productive parts of our farming sector to improve in terms of productivity, responsibility and impact.

The other source of optimism is in respect of the great blank canvases that our less-productive agricultural land represents – the great marshes of the East of England and Dartmoor; places where genuinely productive and profitable farming just isn't possible. I think farmers in those places can fare much better by diversifying, with the aim first and foremost of helping nature recover, and food production in those



places being a by-product of that work. Active management, including grazing animals, is key to this, with farmers being rewarded by the taxpayer under ELMS.

In my opinion, Michael Gove has been a bit weak on forestry. Where is the leadership in forestry on some of the more marginal pieces of land?

I hold with the theories of Professor Frans Vera, who challenges the notion that Europe and Great Britain were once a closed-canopy forest. He says grazing animals had a much greater impact than we have assumed previously, and that wood pasture would have been the norm before agriculture. Human beings like glades, and the wildlife capturing our imagination today such as songbirds and butterflies exists at the woodland edge. An upland landscape of wooded pasture appeals to me.

Of course, we must have a commercial timber industry, but I would like it to be continuous-cover forestry with native species...

Is there conflict between the various 2020 objectives for biodiversity and renewable energy, say in conserving upland bird populations in areas earmarked for wind farms?

Yes, such policies do sometimes conflict. For instance, elsewhere in the world, the use of oils produced in agriculture including palm oil, or rapeseed oil as fuel for cars, is profoundly immoral because you are stripping the land of natural habitat or food for people. Smaller-scale biomass makes more sense: projects fed

by local woodchip as a by-product from mills are great. I would rather see solar panels on the roofs of warehouses – there are several thousand hectares of flat roofs in the South East of England alone that could be used for this – and solar on our roads as well, which is an interesting idea I have seen pioneered in France. I also think there is a role for offshore wind.

Has onshore wind more or less run its course?

Potentially the best sites have been used up and political winds change but it is about the availability of quality sites.

Do ecologists get in the way of good hydro schemes?

With hydro, the basic rule is about size, so small hydro has lower impact. Whereas large scale hydro mega dams can have a terribly negative impact on flooding communities and are difficult to fix once they have silted up – though, given the dire threats that we face from climate change, I would rather have large scale hydro than coal.

How do you keep legislation 'at the gate' to enable innovation to flourish but trusting people not to overexploit – might an Environment Watchdog's teeth be too sharp?

The Watchdog envisaged in the Environment Bill would have the remit of holding government to account rather than individual farmers and business people and I do think historically the implementation of regulation in the countryside has perhaps been a somewhat bureaucratic. There is scope for simplifying life for rural businesses – though it doesn't necessarily mean regulations should be weakened but I



do think the implementation of that regulation can perhaps be done in a more streamlined and simple way.

Thinking of the Oxford Farming and Oxford Real Farming Conferences – is there more room for cross-fertilisation of ideas, including better quality arguments?

I totally agree – there is so much to be learnt from each other. Those farmers farming profitably with lower inputs in the organic movement have knowledge which could help reduce inputs in conventional farming and vice versa. I really believe in dialogue and cross-sharing of knowledge and information in moving to new ways of farming.

Do we require rural psychologists to help land managers and farmers make some tough transitions in remote areas of the UK?

The average income for small sheep farmers in the uplands is not fair, and the market is not working for them. I think we should assist them to diversify, and pay them for the environmental goods that many of them are already providing. I think they should be paid for the drystone walling, the hedges, pastures full of wildflowers and lots of things they love doing but are not being rewarded for, and encouraged to profit from the enormous number of visitors who go to see those landscapes.

Should UK National Parks become more like the USA's Yellowstone Park and charge?

No, because Yellowstone doesn't have people living there but maybe more like Asturias in northern Spain, where thriving rural communities are being paid for the physical environment created by extensively grazed livestock and environmental services, such as

I would push for innovation in my farming to increase productivity, becoming more responsible in having less impact on the environment

guiding tourists. Every single farming family in one village I visited were doing B&B supported by a special scheme providing tax breaks to their businesses. The landscape is slowly becoming more interesting, more colourful, more alive and it is working economically, socially and environmentally. Why not aspire to these examples in Europe where they have more people, not fewer, than we have in our uplands?

If you were a large landowner, say a Dyson or a Buccleuch, what would your remit for your property adviser be?

It would be entirely different for each of them. As a 'lowland Dyson', I would push for innovation in my farming to increase productivity, becoming more responsible in having less impact on the environment. I would identify those places on my land where farming is not worth doing, and I would seek to environmental services from the land by allowing nature to restore itself. There is space on every farm for a pond or a hedgerow or two and an uncut patch.

If I were a landowner in windswept Scotland, I would move away from a monoculture of red deer for stalking, seeking to make my landscape a more interesting model for visitors. It would still include hunting, fishing, shooting but it would also include birdwatching and hiking, cycling, kayaking and glamping. I would also be looking to be rewarded for reducing flooding and income from local authorities for public access. There is a whole bunch of different things we could look at to diversify into in a brave new world.

This first appeared in RICS Land Journal and please direct any queries, gripes or comments to Rob at robyorke.co.uk

OUR ASSOCIATE MEMBERS

Continuing the series in which the companies and organisations that share our aims and values introduce themselves.



Pathfinder® Guides, published by Crimson Publishing, are branded Ordnance Survey and sold under license by OS. Kevin Freeborn, editor of Pathfinder® Guides is your guide...

What connects an early 19th-century historical novel by James Fenimore Cooper and a walk through Broomy Inclosure in the New Forest National park? Answer: Pathfinder. Inspired by Cooper's stories as a boy, weekends were a reverie of woodland wanderings and den-building among the trees. Whether coincidence, or a great circle-of-life arc, 'Pathfinder' has been part of my professional life since 2007.

Pathfinder® Guides marks its 30th anniversary this year. The first titles appeared in 1989, a joint publishing venture between Ordnance Survey and Jarrold Publishing. Why Pathfinder? A founding principle is that all the route maps are based on OS 1:25k mapping and back in the 1980s the OS



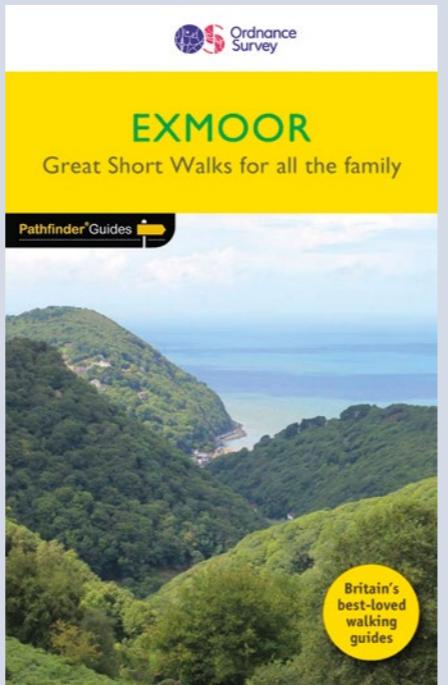
1:25,000-scale maps showing public rights of way were called the 'Pathfinder Series'.

Approaching the Millennium, Jarrold became the sole publishers of the guides and licensed the Pathfinder® trade mark from Ordnance Survey. A handful of the original titles didn't survive into new editions, but the series continued to expand and Jarrold launched a sister series called 'Short Walks'. In 2008 Jarrold sold both lists to Crimson Publishing, the present-day publisher. The publishing wheel turned full circle in 2016 when Pathfinders (with Short Walks) were once again branded OS. The books are now sold and distributed by Ordnance Survey.

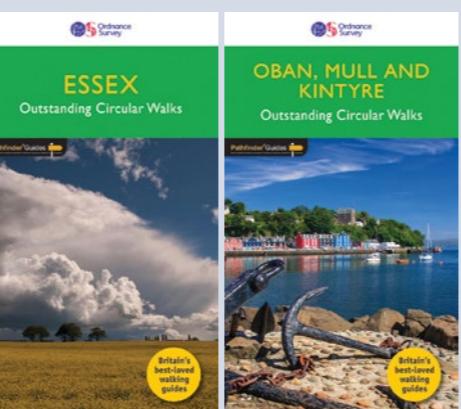
Today there are 80 titles in the combined lists and more than 100 titles have been published over the past thirty years. The basic format of Pathfinder® Guides is reassuringly familiar: 96 pages with 28 circular walks, typically between three and ten miles, ordered by increasing length/completion time and divided into three categories – green, extended strolls and more relaxing short walks; blue, half-day walks; and orange, more challenging in terms of distance and sometimes with longer or steeper ascents and, occasionally, with a touch of remoteness or pathless terrain.

Many of the walks – around 2,750 have been commissioned over the years – have been compiled and revised by OWPG members. Terry Marsh, Dennis and Jan Kelsall, Sue Vicens, Tom Hutton, Felicity Martin and David Foster have long and greatly valued associations with Pathfinder® Guides. I think there's a symbiosis to the rhythms of walking and writing, and while each author brings their own unique style, the collective volumes are distinctly Pathfinder.

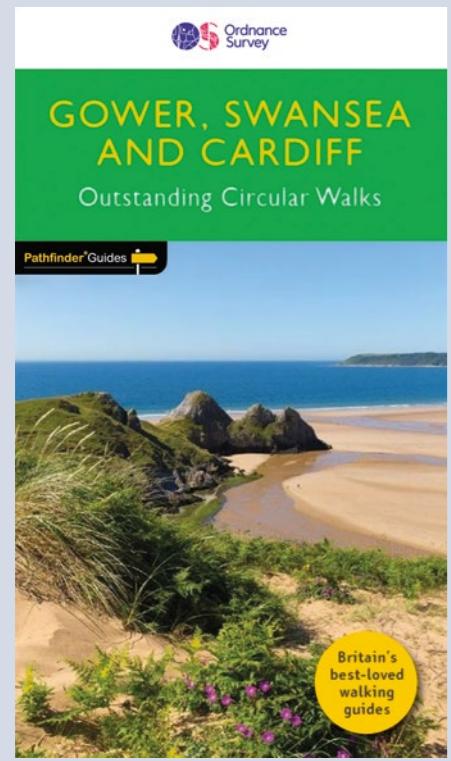
Coverage is nationwide from the Highlands to the Isle of Wight and from Pembrokeshire to Suffolk, featuring titles like Snowdonia and Cotswolds that showcase great walks in Britain's National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, while many of the other titles are county based such as Cornwall and Lincolnshire and the Wolds. From the summit of



Lochnagar in the Cairngorms to Wicken Fen in Cambridgeshire, and Arundel Park in West Sussex to Cwmtu on the Ceredigion coast, there is an incredible breadth and variety of routes in all our guides with something for everyone in each of them. A Pathfinder walk has at least one feature, landscape quality or testament to human endeavour as its objective. The collection of finely crafted routes in each book conveys an affirming sense of place and makes perfect walking.



www.pathfinderwalks.co.uk
www.ordnancesurvey.co.uk



Wordsmith

the man with the world's best job

Kev Reynolds talks about the didgeridoo on a misty hilltop...

Clinging to the southeast slope of the Downs near Chichester, the ancient trees of Kingley Vale are among the oldest living plants in Britain. Gnarled and twisted, it was winds off the sea and the steepness of the slope that limited their development, so instead of growing tall and straight, many of the yews have abandoned any attempt to reach for the sky and instead have plunged their branches downward, burrowing underground and then re-emerging as other trees nearby. There is no undergrowth, for the sun is unable to penetrate the mess of tangled limbs, the lack of light creating a wild and bewitching scene, whose tunnels, archways and caverns recall the silence of a cathedral after nightfall. Disney could set it to music, the curious branches becoming arms that wave and dance; faces appearing to haunt your dreams.

It's his job, his business. He's a professional didgeridoo maker. Sells them on the internet and at craft fairs.

Above this dark and mysterious grove the downland crest reveals a panoramic view that takes in Chichester Harbour and Hayling Island in one direction, and a distant fold of hills in another. On it there's a row of Bronze Age burial mounds, raised like the humps of a camel that elevate the view that is all the more welcome by contrast with the forest gloom below. Out of the darkness into the light; from mystery to revelation.

We emerged onto the first of the mounds one morning and there was no view. Mist had drifted in from the sea and with not a breath of wind there was no likelihood of it lifting any time soon.

Out of the mist from the landward side appeared a solitary walker. A woman in her late-forties, I'd guess, she had a cheap waterproof jacket slung over a shoulder, and muddy trainers on her feet. She was red-faced from the uphill effort, but a bright smile stretched across her mouth.

'Pity about the lack of view,' I said by way of greeting. 'Without the mist you can see a long way.'

'Oh, I know that. Been up here many times.' She bent over to catch her breath, then stood upright and rolled her shoulders. The smile remained as she ran her fingers through a mop of unruly hair, and I thought: here's a woman determined to enjoy the moment. No amount of mist will dampen her spirits today.

'You live nearby then?'

'Not now. But I used to. Born and raised down there, I was,' she nodded into the gloom. 'Devon's home now,' she volunteered. 'Dartmoor.'

'Back here to visit relatives, are you?'

'No. There's no-one left. Dad died years ago and Mum passed away a while back. But we come back every year to collect wood, me and my husband.'

'That's a hellova way to come looking for wood,' I said.

'Ah, but this is special. Yew,' she confided. I was concerned then. The yew trees of Kingley Vale

are protected as part of a nature reserve, and I was about to remind her of the fact when she continued: 'Don't worry, we don't cut anything. Just take pieces of deadwood – and keep well away from the nature reserve.' She nodded in the opposite direction. 'My fella – he's down in the valley right now.'

'But why yew?' I asked. 'What's so special about yew?'

'It's for his work.'

'What work is that?'

'He makes didgeridoos!'

She said it so matter-of-factly I thought I'd

misheard, so asked her to repeat it.

'Didgeridoos,' she said. 'He makes didgeridoos.'

'As a hobby?'

'No. It's what he does. It's his job, his business. He's a professional didgeridoo maker. Sells them on the internet and at craft fairs. He's the best there is. He'll never make a fortune, but who cares? If he's happy, so am I.'

Now I once went to Australia and saw and heard didgeridoos played by Aborigines. There, with the hot Australian sun beating down and the sandstone cliffs of the Blue Mountains nearby, it was a memorable experience. What's more, it was part of the indigenous Aboriginal culture that belonged there. But didgeridoos on Dartmoor? Come on!

We looked at one another, face to face. She was still smiling. It was the smile of a contented, middle-aged woman. But was she having me on?

Don't ask me how he came to make his first didgeridoo, but he was so chuffed with the sound it created, that he made another...

'Tell me this,' I asked. 'I'm intrigued. How did he become a didgeridoo maker? I can't imagine that was his ambition when he was at school. And I'll bet his career adviser never suggested it!'

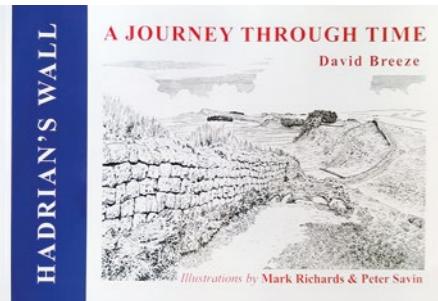
'Not at all,' she replied, and looked down at her feet as though she had a confession to make and needed to avoid eye contact. 'When I first met him he was a drug dealer. A real mess. I was his probation officer.' Then she looked me in the eye once more. This time her expression was more serious, and I detected a slight watering of emotion. 'I brought him up here one day and it changed his life. He said he realised then that there were other ways of getting a high. He cleaned himself up and a year later we crept off to a registry office, got married and ran away to Dartmoor where he discovered he had a talent for working with wood.'

She brightened then with the memory. 'Don't ask me how he came to make his first didgeridoo, but he was so chuffed with the sound it created, that he made another. And another. Now that's what he does for a living. He's even exported a few to Australia.'

'I told you he's the best there is. And it's all because of the view from here that we can't see this morning. It works miracles.'

You know what? I believe her.

Book reviews Roly Smith



Hadrian's Wall: A Journey Through Time

David Breeze, illustrations by Mark Richards & Peter Savin
Bookcase, £15 (pb)

As the author, a distinguished academic on Roman Britain, rightly states in his preface, there are many books about Hadrian's Wall. The difference with this one is that it is chiefly a pictorial history, graced by Mark Richards' well-loved landscapes and Peter Savin's detailed, almost forensic photography.

The result – although a rather unwieldy and unmanageable 72-page, landscape format paperback – is certainly different from anything that's gone before. The remaining architecture of Hadrian's still impressive barrier against the barbarians of the heathen north are picked out in intimate detail in Savin's photography. Many of these are matched by Richards' meticulous penwork, which unfortunately suffers in some cases from too much enlargement, which over-emphasises the stippling effect of his pen.

Breeze's account also investigates what life was like for the legions who were posted to Rome's northern outpost, including intimate details such as cooking and eating, cleanliness, pay and religion.

This handsome volume, admirably produced by Carlisle's best-known bookstore, is one which all devoted Hadrianatics will want to possess.

The Big Rounds

David Lintern
Cicerone, £18.95 (pb)

The Bob Graham, Paddy Buckley and Charlie Ramsay Rounds – of the English Lake District, Snowdonia and Lochaber respectively – are possibly the world's, and certainly Britain's, most challenging long-distance

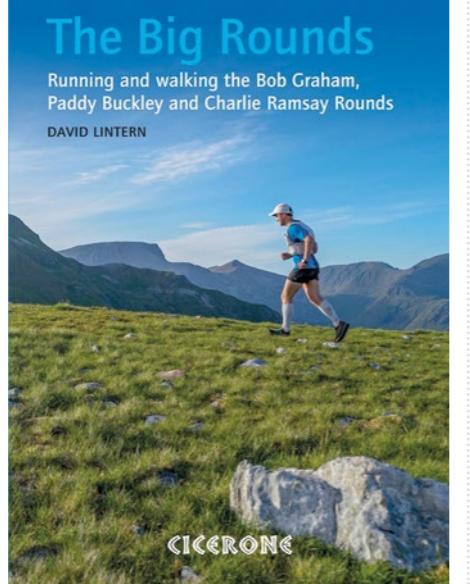
24-hour mountain treks. All are supposed to be climbed, run or walked in one exhausting day, taking in a total of 113 mountain summits which include, of course, the highest points of England, Scotland and Wales.

No fare for the weekend hill-goer then, but David Lintern, who modestly describes himself as "an average mountaineer and a below average runner", says each can make magnificent day or multi-day excursions into some of the UK's most remote, beautiful and exciting hill country.

His personal reminiscences and outstanding mountain photography in this beautifully designed and presented Cicerone guide are certainly a mouth-watering enticement to get out there and explore all or parts of these classic, if generally unobtainable, excursions.

But what I found most fascinating was Lintern's history of each of these challenges, and the accounts of some of the hillwalkers and runners who had first achieved these lung-busting goals.

Who knew, for example, that when gardener and guest house owner Bob Graham first attempted his classic 61-mile, 42 top round of the Lakeland fells in 1932, he wore nothing more than tennis shoes, shorts and a pyjama top. Or that the 57-mile, 24-summit Charlie Ramsay Round of the Lochaber hills originated when Ramsay had incidentally met Chris Brasher, Paddy Buckley and George Rhodes on Skiddaw when they were engaged on the Bob Graham. A swimming recreation officer for Edinburgh City



Council, Ramsey trained by running up Arthur's Seat in his lunch hour.

This is most definitely not purely a book for the marathon walker or runner. It is a beautiful celebration of some of Britain's most challenging hills, and as such is highly recommended.

A Pennine Journey: The story of a long walk in 1938

Alfred Wainwright
The Wainwright Society, £12.50 (pb)

A Pennine Journey is thought by many to be Alfred Wainwright's finest book. Certainly, for a man chiefly known for his intricate pen-and-ink drawings and precise, hand-scribed text, it is the best written of all his works.

Penned as the clouds of war began to gather over Europe, the manuscript was found tucked away in a drawer and published by Jenny Dereham at Michael Joseph in 1986 and republished by Francis Lincoln in 2004.

It describes a long walk the author took at the time of the Munich crisis from Settle up the eastern side of the Pennines to Hadrian's Wall, and back down the western side.

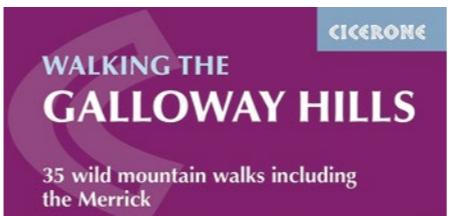
But the wisdom of the Wainwright Society to publish a verbatim version, with no disclaimer for the author's blatantly misogynistic views over 80 years after they were first expressed, must surely be questioned. It was in this book that Wainwright expressed the extraordinary view that he regarded a married woman who went out to work "with contempt." And he went on to claim "quite the worst offence" was that if such a woman resolved to have no children. "They need a whip across their backs," claimed this gentle old man of the hills.

Of course we should make allowances for the times in which these words were written, and they certainly would not be countenanced today. But the author also claimed that women – including the mythical girl who kept him company every night – lacked imagination and the rigid standards and loyalty of men.

Wainwright certainly didn't lack imagination, even writing his own review of his unpublished book, immodestly comparing it to JB Priestley's English Journey which had been published five years

earlier. He wrote: "I can pay no higher compliment by saying that at times I found myself comparing his (ie Wainwright's own) style with that of Priestley's in a manner that was no way derogatory."

But it is his scandalous personal views which spoil for me what is otherwise an entertaining read, enlivened by illustrated postcards which Wainwright sent to a colleague in the Blackburn town treasurer's office.



Walking the Galloway Hills

Ronald Turnbull
Cicerone, £12.95 (pb)

The Galloway Hills are too often by-passed by hill-goers heading for the higher, glamorous and more enticing heights of the Western Highlands and Islands. But they are Guild stalwart Ronald Turnbull's home ground, and his love for these under-rated yet characterful hills shines through in this new Cicerone guide.

He obviously relishes the chance to give these so often ignored mountains the recognition they deserve, and his admitted, "hopelessly ambitious" but highly significant project is "to avoid completing the Monros for at least another 20 years."

All the highlights the few aficionados of these lovely, "small but special" hills might expect are there including the reigning but slightly disappointing peak of the Merrick, and some entertaining accounts of ascents in the wonderfully named range of the

Awful Hand. Turnbull explains it's certainly the biggest and bumpiest of Galloway's three surrounding ridges, but that the "awfulness" is confined to the east, where steep slopes drop down to the bogs which lie to the north of Loch Enoch.

The Galloway Hills are not known for their airy, rocky ridges, but I was pleased to see that Turnbull had included the wonderful rocky ridge of Hoodens Hill in his circular, 15-mile walk from Loch Doon, taking in Craigmawhannel, the Wolf Slock, conical Mullwharchar (692m) and Dungeon Hill. The route is somewhat marred by the return route through the boring conifers which cloak the head of the loch.

Snowdonia: North. 30 low-level and easy walks

Alex Kendall
Cicerone, £9.95 (pb)

Alex Kendall, author of the *The Snowdonia Way*, now turns his hand to 30 easy, low-level walks in the northern part of the Snowdonia National Park.

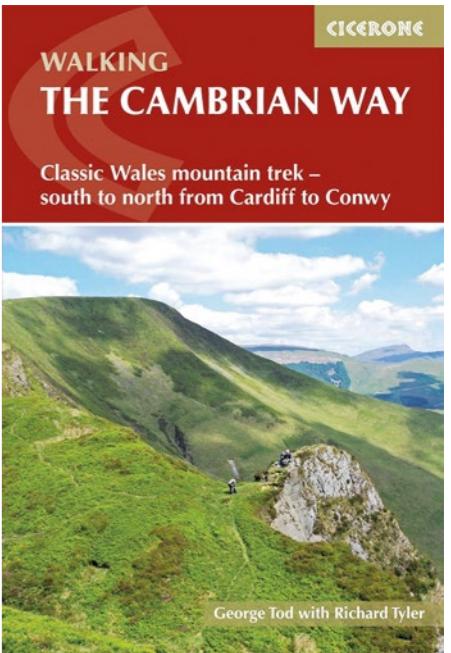
They include Snowdon, the Ogwen and Conwy Valleys, with the welcome and unusual inclusion of a few walks along the North Wales coastline, including the little-visited Conwy Mountain and the prehistoric landscapes around Penmaenmawr, visiting the misnamed Druid's Circle at Meini Hirion.

Other low-level routes are based around Betws y Coed and the Gwydyr Forest, the Ogwen Valley and the Vale of Ffestiniog, Cwn Pennant and Tremadog.

As the author points out, it is in these places that the human story of Snowdonia is best told, ranging from Stone Age settlements to Roman ruins, the medieval castles of Welsh princes and of course, Edward I, through to the more recent remnants of the mining industry.

The well-chosen routes also mines some of Snowdonia's rich veins of myths and legends, including King Arthur, the heroes from the Mabinogion and the terrifying monster known as the Afanc which threatened to flood the Conwy Valley.

This is a useful bad weather alternative when the clag descends on the higher Snowdonia hills.



Walking the Cambrian Way

George Tod with Richard Tyler
Cicerone, £14.95 (pb)

After the border-hugging Offa's Dyke Path, we now have the more central Cambrian Way, a 298-mile long-distance route which threads the Principality from Cardiff to Conwy.

This challenging route owes much to the hard work and determination of the late Tony Drake, Gloucestershire Area Footpaths Secretary of the Ramblers, and the creator of the Offa's Dyke and Cotswold Way long distance paths. Drake, who died in 2012, was the Tom Stephenson of Wales, and called his creation "the mountain connoisseur's walk." The joint authors of this new guide pay due tribute to his pioneering ambition.

Drake's work was carried on by the Ramblers Cambrian Way Working Group and the result is this updated and comprehensive guide. The route passes through the Brecon Beacons and Snowdonia National Parks, also takes in the spectacular escarpments of the Carmarthen Fans, the shapely ridge of Blorenge (as far as I know the only British placename which rhymes with "orange"!) and the boggy heights of Pumlumon, source of both the Severn and the Wye.

This is a serious, often high-level route, and the authors warn that it should not be the first outing attempted by the novice trekker.

The twin peaks of Mount Elbrus Camp form the backdrop to a camp near the head of the Malka valley ▼



A Circuit of Mount Elbrus

Roger Butler looks back on a memorable backpacking trip in the Caucasus

We have been stolen.” Sergei had just shouted and I peered out of the tent to see him jogging off down the valley. His boots had disappeared in the night and he suspected they were now somewhere in the cluster of timber cottages we had passed the previous afternoon. Dawn light touched the nearby peaks and the great white dome of Elbrus shimmered overhead like a huge marshmallow.

It wasn't the first time we'd run into problems. A few nights earlier, the thunder of hooves announced the arrival of another local thief who helped himself to trekking poles and a line of freshly-rinsed washing. And, shortly before we left for the Caucasus, my ears had pricked up when the radio mentioned a terrorist incident in the airport at a back-of-beyond Russian town called Mineralnye Vody. The story had fallen off the radar by noon but, knowing we would be landing there in just a few days' time, we did start to wonder whether this was the best place for a summer ‘holiday’.

On arrival, we were puzzled when our guides - a maths professor from St Petersburg University and one of his Ukrainian pupils who couldn't speak a word of English - shook our hands and told us our trip was cancelled: “Local problems - we must walk round Mount Elbrus.” Our original plans to trek towards the frontier with Georgia had been shelved and we simply had to go with the flow. And, initially, it was quite a flow - as dusk descended, a giant mudslide blocked our progress up the long Baksan valley and we eventually arrived outside the concrete bunker of a hotel at three in the morning.



▲ Beyond the Irkchat Pass the route crossed the sweeping ice sheet known as the Jikaugenkez plateau

Twenty-five years ago the oxygen of freedom swept across Russia and trekking brochures were suddenly full of daring new destinations: Crimea, Dagestan and the Caucasus. The circuit of Mount Elbrus was already being promoted as the new Tour de Mont Blanc, with talk of unspoilt valleys, pristine meadows, dramatic glaciers and scenery to satisfy anyone who thought the Alps were a bit too commercialised.

Looking back, you would have been daft to even think about Dagestan but, despite murmurings of political disquiet, the glistening Caucasus drew us like the drawstring on a sleeping bag and we knew we would be exploring places that hadn't been seen by western eyes for many, many years. And now, unexpectedly, we were going to pioneer the Mount Elbrus trek before the crowds arrived two or three years later.

They never came. Those ‘local problems’ were about to erupt in nearby Chechnya as the jigsaw of mountain republics on the north side of the Caucasus splintered into ragged pieces calling for independence from Moscow. Ascents of Elbrus (5642m) have remained possible but the surrounding ranges swiftly became off-limits and this part of the world quickly disappeared from any brochures. We were lucky to be able

to make the most of a short-lived window and I've yet to meet anyone else who has walked the Elbrus Circuit.

Our guides had already marched around the entire circuit a week before we arrived - partly to properly reconnoitre the route and partly to hide stashes of food at various points along the way. Semolina, sardines and salty bread seemed to comprise much of our diet - with Mars bars as a reward at the top of each high pass!



◀ The Sultan waterfall crashes through a narrow gorge on the north side of Elbrus

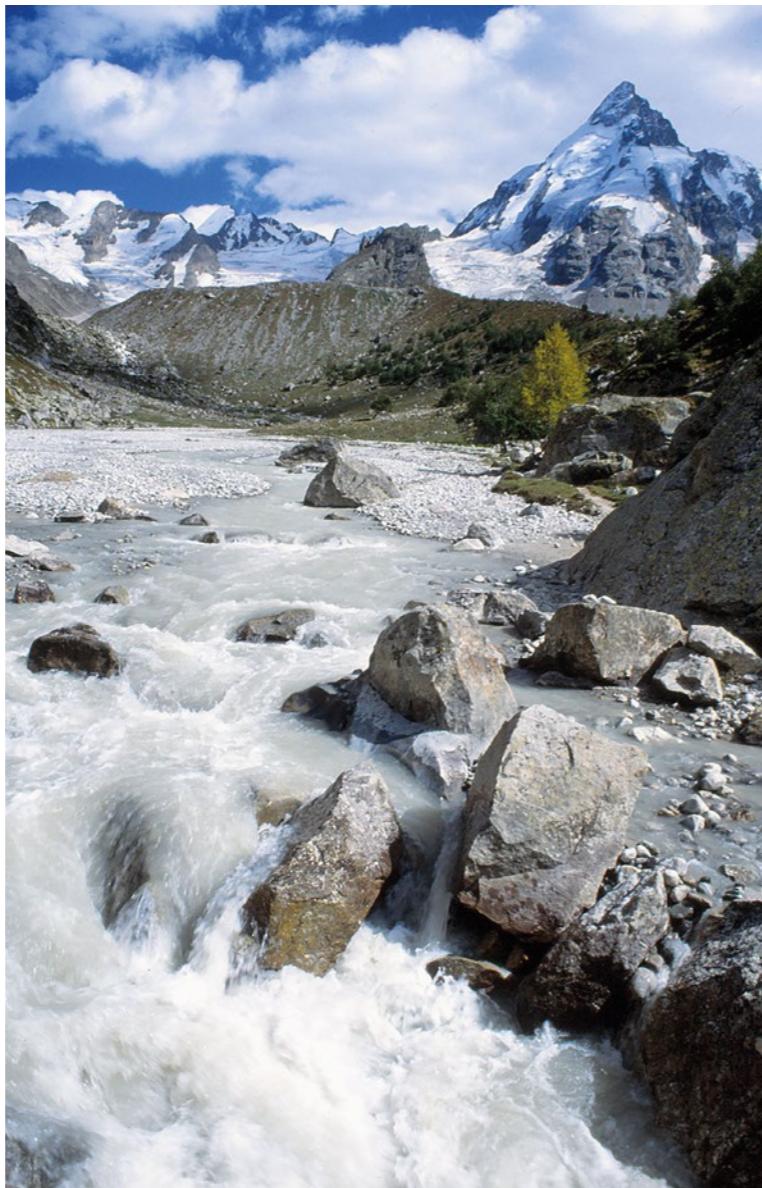
Each pass revealed a fabulous new panorama. The great ice sheet to the north of the high Irikchat Pass (3667m) took our breath away and the view from the Teshikaush Pass was framed by rows of jagged peaks and sheets of wild flowers. We bivvied on a stony plateau near the top of the Azau Pass, where Russians shared vodka and pointed out the cigar-shaped Pruitt Hut on the high slopes of Elbrus. The Balkbashi Pass was a bit more problematic since we holed up there for a day and a night in an August snowstorm.

Highlights included the crashing Sultan waterfall, the weird pinnacles at the head of the Malka valley and the fairy tale turf-roof cabins used by summer shepherds. River crossings and rickety bridges – sometimes nothing more than a tree trunk – were everyday events and giant puff balls dotted the pastures where rattling horse-drawn machinery cut bands of scented hay.

We tried to converse with locals (there weren't that many) who had never met anyone from Western Europe. Warm flat breads and fresh yoghurt were often their way of saying hello, after which we would be escorted to the nearest mineral springs. One man knew a smattering of English and offered a toast: "to a very special lady... Margaret Thatcher!"

On the last day in the mountains we crept across a steep snowfield and camped at somewhere called Sand Hotel: nothing more than a patch of coarse grit hemmed in by old walls and thorny bushes. A deep gorge continued east below towering cliffs and a track cut across a stony moraine.

Grand mountain scenery in the wild Caucasus >



The dusty village of Terskol welcomed us back to civilisation, though its wayside stalls offered little more than tomatoes and t-shirts.

An early morning drive in a battered Lada took us back to Mineralnye Vody and a flight to Moscow. An interpreter escorted us to check-in where, bizarrely, two rows of grubby ping-pong tables stood next to the ramshackle security desks: "When the buzzer goes you must run to the next building. When the doors open you must run to the plane."

Fair enough, but the waiting passengers far outnumbered available seats and a free-for-all (complete with the occasional punch-up) developed at the foot of the plane. When it eventually rumbled down the runway twenty extra travellers stood and swayed whilst a Great Dane bounded up and down the aisle.

There were cheers of relief as we touched down but heavy bumps caused a trolley of food to shoot out from behind curtains. The dog made the most of a welcome meal but the surly stewardesses gathered up the sausages from the floor and carefully put them back into their foil containers!

< The route necessitated a number of river crossings



THE JOY OF PRIMES

David Taylor extols the virtues of the fixed focal length prime lens

The path of least resistance is a path that it's all too tempting to follow. Take buying a lens for a DSLR or mirrorless camera, for example. The path of least resistance would be to buy a zoom lens. And why not? Zoom lenses are incredibly useful tools that make life far easier for the photographer.

The biggest advantage of a zoom lens is of course the fact that the focal length can be altered. This makes it easier to create a variety of different compositions with a simple twist of the zoom ring, often without moving position at all.

Another advantage of a zoom lens is that it cuts down the need for tedious lens swapping. (Which has the added advantage of reducing the risk of the exposed sensor getting dusty.) The ultimate in convenience is the 'superzoom', a lens with a huge focal length range; from wide-angle at one end to telephoto at the other. For a lot of photographers a 'superzoom' is the only lens they ever need.

And of course zooms reduce the number of lenses that need to be packed into a camera, freeing up space for important stuff such as a plentiful supply of sandwiches.

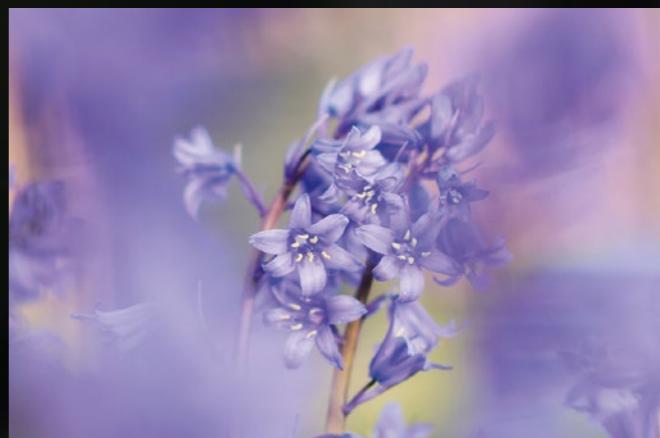
So that's settled then, zooms are the best things since sliced bread? Actually... not so fast. There's another type of lens that should be given serious consideration: the prime lens. A prime lens is one that has a fixed focal length, such as 35mm, 50mm, or 100mm. To cover the focal range of a typical zoom requires two, three even four different prime lenses. This makes buying primes a potentially more expensive option. It also means changing lenses more frequently. And, there's a greater chance that the wrong lens is fitted just when the photographic opportunity of a lifetime presents itself. Oh, did I mention that it's harder work using primes? Rather than turning a zoom ring, a photographer may need to physically move to achieve the perfect composition. Imagine that.

Oddly enough though that's the beauty of a prime lens. The relative inconvenience of a prime lens

forces a photographer think about his or her photography more. On the upside, with practise it quickly becomes easy to 'see' compositions that suit a particular prime lens. A photographer can become so attuned to the characteristics of a prime lens that he or she can compose a shot even before picking up the camera.

Prime lenses have one other big advantage over zooms. Zoom lenses are optically more complex than primes lenses, and so have far more compromises in their design. The biggest compromise is the aperture range, with zoom lenses lumbered with a relatively small maximum aperture - which may even vary as the lens is zoomed through its focal range. (It is possible to buy zooms with large maximum aperture, but these lenses tend to be both heavy and very, very expensive). Prime lenses on the other hand generally have large maximum apertures - f/1.4, f/1.8 and so on. This makes them particularly useful when shooting in low-light conditions - allowing faster shutter speeds and helping the camera's AF system remain fast and accurate, or when limiting depth of field is a key aesthetic decision.

Personally I like primes lenses and always have one or two in my camera bag. It's worth it, even if it does mean going hungry later in the day.



▲ Shot with a 55mm prime lens at an aperture f/1.8, this is the sort of soft, limited depth of field image that can be tricky to shoot with a zoom

FIFTY YEARS UNDERGROUND



In January this year *Descent*, currently Britain's only national caving magazine, turned fifty. *Descent* was initially edited by Bruce Bedford and sold for the pre-decimal price of 2/6 (or 12.5p in the new-fangled money then beginning to make an appearance). Bruce remained editor until issue 82, with *Descent* produced under a variety of publishers, including The Mendip Press and Ambit Publications.

Other than a sole editing credit by Keith Creighton for issue 83, *Descent* has since been edited and designed by OWPG's very own Chris Howes and Judith Calford. (Chris needs no introduction to those who pay attention to OWPG's annual awards, having won the Photography Award on numerous occasions.) From issue 143 onwards *Descent* has been published under Chris and Judith's own Wild Place Publishing label, which – as well as *Descent* – also publishes a wide variety of books about caving and related topics.

Chris and Judith's aim is to provide the very best and most up-to-date information about caves and caving, as well source the most interesting and technically-accomplished photography they can. With those principles in place, and with the help of the magazine's enthusiastic readers and contributors, there's no reason why *Descent* shouldn't be celebrating its centenary in 50 years' time...



For more information about *Descent* or Wild Places Publishing visit the recently redeveloped and refurbished website www.wildplaces.co.uk, or email descent@wildplaces.co.uk

Main Photo Krem Sakwa © Chris Howes