

Outdoor FOCUS

THE QUARTERLY JOURNAL OF THE OWPG / WINTER 2022



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Cover Windermere gull (David Taylor)

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 information visit www.owpg.org.uk.

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Editing/design David Taylor ISSN 2043-8591 print ISSN 2043-8605 online

If you'd like to contribute to the next edition of *Outdoor Focus* please send an email with your article idea to davidtphoto@gmail.com. The copy deadline is 15 February 2022.



LIFE MEMBERSHIP

Ronald Turnbull on a well-deserved award...

At the AGM in October, the Committee recommended that Leni Gillman, our recent Secretary, be awarded Life Membership of the guild, and this was approved unanimously.

Back in 2017 when the guild was at serious risk of foundering due to a lack of officers, and in particular of a Secretary, Leni stepped in as Minutes Secretary to lighten the burden on then Secretary Tanya Oliver. This despite being not especially youthful, indeed after over 30 years of OWPG membership and at an age when many of us might be hanging up our official OWPG boots in favour of some semi-retirement slippers.... When Tanya in turn stood down two years later, Leni stepped into the Secretary role, which she filled for two years with quiet competence, supported by Peter, her husband, as Chair. Without her, the guild would very possibly no longer be in existence.

Leni's distinguished career includes several OWPG Awards for Excellence, being one of only two members to have won a Boardman-Tasker Award, and biographies of David Bowie as well as of George Mallory of Everest.

Current Chair Stan Abbott writes: "This award of Life Membership is intended to reflect our collective appreciation for the manner in which Leni stepped forward to ensure that the good ship OWPG could stay afloat at a time when it began to feel like we had been holed below the waterline. We as a committee – and the membership at large – want to share our immense gratitude for her life-saving contribution."

David Foster, who was standing in as Treasurer at the same time, concurs: "I completely agree that Leni deserves Life Membership for stepping up to the plate when no-one else did or could."

KEITH FERGUS (1972-2022)

Felicity Martin pays tribute to a former member of OWPG

I am sad to report that former OWPG member Keith Fergus died on 4 November 2022, the day before his 50th birthday. He had been diagnosed with aggressive bowel cancer earlier in the year. Keith lived just south of Glasgow and was an active contributor to his local community. However, he will be more familiar as a name rather than a face to most OWPG members. He was usually too busy to attend distant events, but had a prolific output of both writing and photography.

His books were published by Cicerone among others, but he wrote most titles for Pocket Mountains, including a series that described 25 walks from 'Source to Sea' along major Scottish rivers. All his work focussed on Scotland, apart from a book of walks in Cornwall, where his family usually spent their summer holidays.

My first contact with Keith was when he approached me with a proposal for a book of walks around the Galloway Coast, which I published under the imprint Catkin Press in 2012. I learnt that he had been in the printing trade and, when made redundant, had turned his hobby of photography into a business.

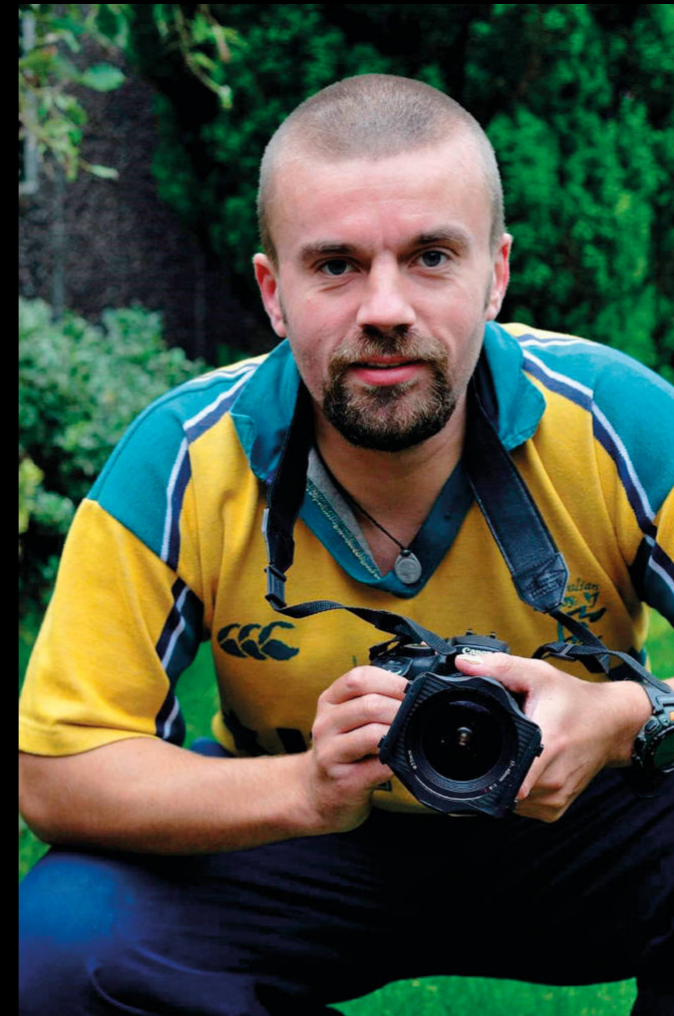
Using the name Scottish Horizons, Keith

started by producing calendars and cards, especially of Dumfries and Galloway, which he knew well as his parents lived there. He went on to have two photographic books published and began contributing photographic features regularly to *The Scots Magazine*.

Keith worked hard at his new career and his walks writing steadily increased. He was industrious at seeking and fulfilling commissions. Scottish history and language were special interests and he would include relevant background where possible in his walks. As well as his output of books, he was published in *TGO*, *Walk*, *Country Walking*, *Scotland* and other magazines.

Increasingly he became involved in the world of cycling. Having begun as a volunteer instructor for his local authority, he progressed to co-ordinating cycle training in primary schools and became a leading cycle tutor, growing a new generation of instructors and ride leaders. Keith's OWPG membership

lapsed a couple of years ago, but he is fondly remembered by those of us who knew him. He leaves behind his wife Helen and two teenage children, to whom the sympathies of the Guild are offered.



CHANNEL ISLANDS

Paddy Dillon wonders whether two books is better than one...

People don't visit the Channel Islands. It's true, they don't. Instead, they visit Jersey or Guernsey, with an emphasis on the word 'or'. I didn't realise that when I pitched the idea for a *Channel Island Walks* guidebook to Cicerone in the late 90s. At the time, the Channel Islands weren't really walking destinations either. Instead, they were places where people went for a holiday but somehow ended up walking. Anyway, I had a contract in hand and I just needed to write the guidebook.

I don't see the point of travel agents. I like to do my own thing, but back when the internet was a baby, it wasn't easy to check and co-ordinate transport and accommodation. Reluctantly, I went to Thomas Cook's and asked them to book everything for me. I wanted a flight to Jersey, accommodation for two weeks, a ferry to Guernsey, accommodation for two weeks, and a flight home. That's the one and only time I've ever used a travel agent.

I'd never set foot on the islands, so I had no idea what the walking was like, but I'd had a dozen guidebooks published so I reckoned I'd be fine. However, I wasn't prepared for a magazine to ask me for a major centrefold feature about walking on Jersey before I'd even got there. The deadline was extremely tight, in that I had to deliver before leaving Jersey.

That was guaranteed to keep me on my toes.

As for the walks, I had Military Survey 1:25,000 mapping as my only reference. Military Survey? Yes, because the Ordnance Survey never published maps of the Channel Islands. As one of the islanders told me, 'I remember them coming. They had landing crafts and soldiers. It was like being occupied again!' A casual reminder that the Channel Islands had been occupied through World War II, as evidenced to this day by massive concrete defences erected by the Germans, guarding against a counter-attack that never came. At least it was a massive drain on Hitler's funds.

The maps were good enough to reveal some interesting paths. Of course, I'd heard that the coastal walking was pretty scenic and occasionally

rugged, but I'd heard nothing about the interior, apart from the fact that it was built-up and agricultural. The maps revealed very few paths in the interior, but I was delighted to find a network of 'green lanes' with 15mph speed limits. It didn't take me long to realise that if I concentrated entirely on the coast, then I'd end up with very few walks. However, both the coast and interior were full of interesting tourist sites, so I structured all my coastal walks to duck inland at certain points to reach intriguing attractions and heritage features, linking as many field paths and green lanes as I could.

A quick ferry to Guernsey and I applied the same 'rules', in that I made all my coastal walks head inland at some point. The only difference was

that instead of the 'green lanes' I used in Jersey, Guernsey had a network of 'ruettes tranquilles' (quiet lanes) that also had a 15mph speed limit. The other things that Guernsey had were extra islands. I knew from the outset that I would have to visit Alderney, Sark and Herm, but if there's one thing I really like doing, it's island-hopping. I reached Alderney by flying on 'Joey' – the Trislander mascot for Guernsey's own Aurigny airline. (Joey is now housed in a children's play barn.) I had a whole day to run myself ragged, so that I'd be able to offer two days of walking to my readers. Sark was easily

reached by ferry and I did the same thing, making a hefty day's walk so that I could write it up as two days. The island was Europe's last feudal state at the time, but has since embraced democracy. The tiny island of Herm only took a few hours to explore, but that almost began with a disaster when I leapt for the ferry as it was already departing Guernsey... and damn nearly landed in the harbour!

I finished with 47 walks after 27 days in the Channel Islands, and I had a day to spare at the end, so I took a day-trip to St Malo in France. Channel Island history is inextricably bound to that of France, or more particularly to Normandy. Despite the islands being loyal to the Crown, they have never been part of the United Kingdom, but

are remnants of the Duchy of Normandy. Those Military Survey maps I used were peppered with French placenames to the extent that I almost felt I was in France. Add to this the fact that Jersey and Guernsey issue their own currency, enact their own laws, fly their own flags, have their own National Trusts and use different colours for mundane things such as post-boxes, it felt like being at home and being abroad at the same time.

As for *Channel Island Walks*, the book was published in 1999, mostly in black-and-white with a few colour inserts and my own hand-drawn maps. The initial print run sold out after ten years, which wasn't great, but at least it paid its way, and I was able to recycle most of the walks through magazines for a bit of extra revenue. It was clear

that the book was unlikely to be reprinted, but after a change of ownership at Cicerone, it was thrown a lifeline – maybe it would work better as two books?

Cue another research trip of one month, again split evenly between Jersey and Guernsey. I checked all my original walks, even added a few, brought everything fully up-to-date and took plenty of new pictures. As for the mapping, the old Military Survey maps had been completely updated by a local company, Digimap, and permission was sought to use them in the new books. Hoping that this new approach would pay dividends, everything was submitted to Cicerone.

Walking on Jersey and *Walking on Guernsey* were both published in 2011 in full colour. Of course, as two books, one was bound to sell more than the other, and it wouldn't take a genius to guess that Jersey outsold Guernsey. The islands have always been rivals, always trying to out-do each other, and I felt a slight twinge of guilt to have given one of those islands yet another reason to claim a point scored over the other. Jersey folk refer to Guernsey folk as ânes, or donkeys. Guernsey folk refer to Jersey folk as crapauds, or toads. I try not to focus on the differences between the islands, but Jersey has a national park and Guernsey doesn't!

There's one thing that I wish all the islands would support with more enthusiasm. A long-distance 'Channel Islands Way' was mooted many years ago, and I included details in my books. The basic premise is easy to understand. You just walk around the coastlines of Jersey, Guernsey, Alderney, Sark and Herm, covering in excess of 100 miles, seeing the best that the islands have to offer. I've seen this route reported in major national newspapers and travel magazines, yet you can spend weeks on the islands and never hear about it. I think the problem is that each island likes to keep all their visitors to themselves, and they don't like to share, which is a pity.

The publication history of both books reflects a difference in sales. Jersey went into a second

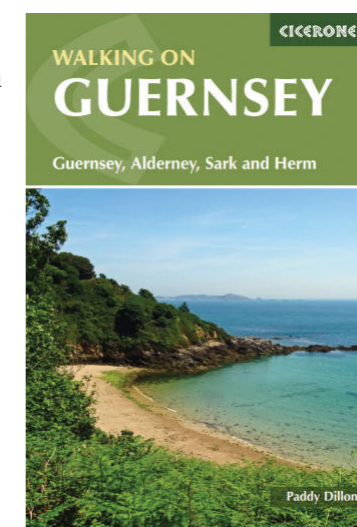
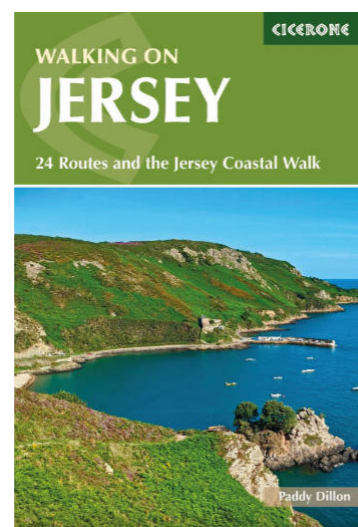
edition in 2015, with Guernsey going into a second edition in 2016. Jersey was reprinted in 2017, with Guernsey being reprinted in 2022. Further research trips were necessary to take both books into their third editions, only this time the islands were visited a couple of years apart, due to the increasing drift in their publication history. Jersey's third edition was published in 2021, with Guernsey's third edition due to follow in 2023. The latest versions have been comprehensively overhauled and now come with GPX tracks, for anyone who wants them. Why anyone would want

them is another matter, since it's impossible to get lost in the Channel Islands, but it's easy to record those tracks, so why not offer them to the readers?

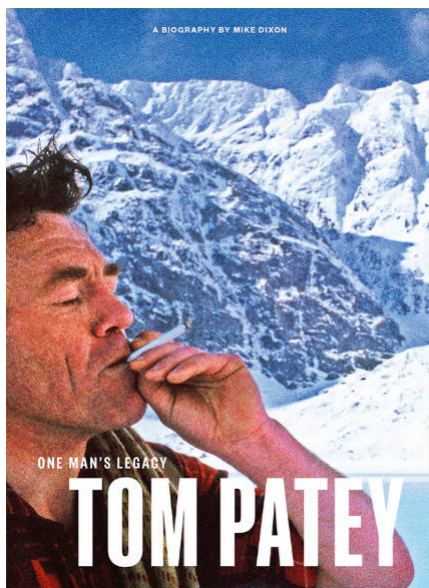
So... *Channel Island Walks* wasn't actually a good idea for a book, while *Walking on Jersey* and *Walking on Guernsey* have turned out to be great ideas. The proof is in the sales figures. Jersey and Guernsey have sold seven times as many copies as the old Channel Islands book, over the same number of years.

The moral of the story? Maybe there isn't one. On the other hand, if you have a guidebook that isn't doing too well, maybe split it into two guidebooks and see if they do better. It sounds unlikely, but it worked in this instance.

www.paddydillon.co.uk



Book Reviews / Roly Smith



One Man's Legacy: Tom Patey
Mike Dixon
Scottish Mountaineering Press, £30 (hb)

It's been over 50 years since the publication of the much-loved collection of Tom Patey's writings, poems and songs in *One Man's Mountains* (Victor Gollancz, 1971). So the time is long overdue for a proper biography of the mercurial but charismatic Scottish climber. This book is essential reading for anyone even vaguely interested in the life of Patey, who died in May 1970 at the age of only 38, when he fell to his death while abseiling after the first ascent of the 120-foot Maiden sea stack off the north coast of Scotland.

Dixon does a great job in recording the career of this larger-than-life product of the 1950s bothy culture, who was as well-known as an hilarious raconteur and squeezebox musician as he was for his skill as tough, pioneering and fearless climber. The son of a Scottish Episcopalian Church minister, for 10 years Patey was also a respected GP in Ullapool, in the far north-west of Scotland. This

gave him easy access to pharmaceutical substances, which in some cases may have assisted his climbing performance.

His multitude of first ascents include the fearsome Zero Gully on the north face of Ben Nevis in 1957, the first winter traverse of the Cuillin ridge in 1965, and some notable first ascents in the Alps and the Karakoram, including the Muztagh Tower in 1956 and Rakaposhi in 1958. All are faithfully recorded in this no-holds-barred account of his short but eventful life, illuminated by many previously unseen photographs most notably by his good friend, Guild stalwart and Golden Eagle winner John Cleare.

It is evident from this revealing biography that Patey shared many of the apparently selfish traits of that other mercurial climber of the 1950s, Don Whillans. He would often refuse to join in the day-to-day domestic duties around a camp, leaving them to others while he single-mindedly concentrated on his lead climbing role, which was especially evident when negotiating difficult mixed climbing terrain.

East Dartmoor's Lesser-Known Tors and Rocks Max Piper

The Dartmoor Company, £24 (pb)

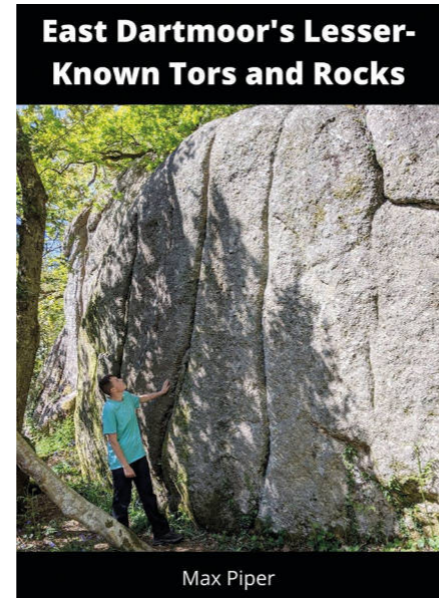
There are only about 160 named tors named on the Ordnance Survey's 1:25,000 Outdoor Leisure map of Dartmoor. But this new book, by a 20-year-old first-time author, comprehensively lists and describes no fewer than 300 in the often-overlooked and forgotten "Far East" of the National Park.

The name tor for these

prominent rock outcrops comes from the Celtic word *twr*, and the east of Dartmoor as defined in this book includes the parishes of Chagford, Lustleigh, Manaton and North Bovey, to the north and east of Widecombe.

This is a beautifully photographed and totally fascinating survey of these long-forgotten and often tree-obscured outcrops. They go by such attractive names as Twizzle Tree Tor, Puggiestone, Pepperdon Hole Rocks and The Cob Loaf. Most charming of all is perhaps Figgie Daniel on Easdon Down, which is a smaller version of the more famous Bowerman's Nose on Hayne Down, and apparently named after a local shepherd who had a large nose!

Many of these forgotten tors are enclosed in deep woodland and not always easy of access, and although many are also quite insignificant and hard to find, all have their unique character and local stories. Quite a few, such as the four Wray Cleave Wood tors and the massive Rook's Hole Tor – locally nicknamed the "Whale Rock" – are every bit as large and impressive as the better-known



Max Piper

examples the OS chose to identify on the central Dartmoor plateau

Apart from its rather ponderous title and quite steep price tag for a 350-page paperback, this attractive volume should inspire a new generation of tor-baggers, who will undoubtedly soon want to be embarking on ticking off their "Pipers."

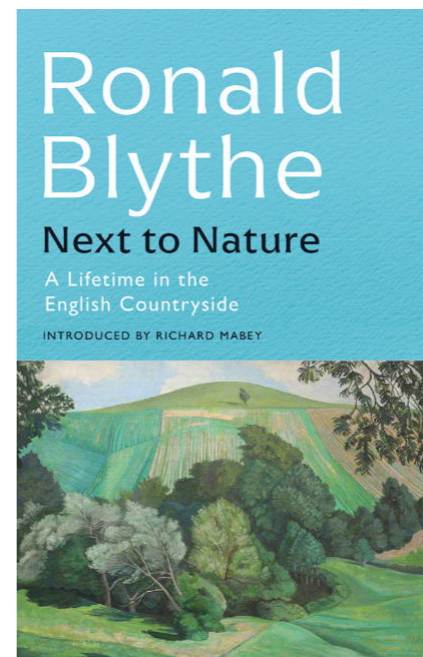
Next to Nature: A Lifetime in the English Countryside

Ronald Blythe
John Murray, £25 (hb)

This wonderful collection of essays by the man described by one of the galaxy of writers who introduce them as "the patron saint of the southern English countryside" marks the 100th birthday of Ronald Blythe. Perhaps best-known for his classic 1969 portrait of village life in *Akenfield*, Blythe is widely regarded as one of our greatest living countryside writers. Remarkably, he is still churning out his weekly contributions to the *Church Times*, many of which are reproduced here, as he has for the past half century.

His stylish essays acutely observe the gradual passing of the seasons, illuminated by his gentle wit and the ever-observant eye of a dedicated and knowledgeable naturalist. In that sense, he could perhaps be described as a modern Gilbert White, with Bottengoms Farm, near Wormingford, taking the place of White's home at The Wakes at the foot of the South Downs at Selbourne.

Blythe still lives in an Elizabethan yeoman's house on the Essex-Suffolk border, which he inherited from his friend, the artist John Nash, whose charming wood engravings head each monthly chapter. With an



affectionate introduction by his old friend Richard Mabey, and monthly prefaces by distinguished writers such as Mark Cocker, Robert Macfarlane and former Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams, the high regard in which Blythe is still held is obvious.

If you can overcome the numerous Biblical references (Blythe is a local lay preacher), this is an acutely observed journey by a master writer through the ever-changing countryside of a much underrated part of England.

Lakeland Fell Running for Mortals

John Myatt
Pesda Press, £24.99 (pb)

Guild member John Myatt puts his cards on the table right from the start. In his introductory essay he answers my initial question in relation to this weighty 328-page paperback. "This guide is too big to carry in your backpack," he readily admits, advising readers to keep it at home or in the car and photocopy the relevant pages or

even create an online version using a mapmaker.

And what about that "for mortals" tag? This 60-plus-year-old veteran who runs every day from his Lake District home says the book is aimed at park and club runners who pursue their sport mainly on roads but who haven't but would like to try running in the hills. It's for those, he says, "...who want to head for the fells but who are wary about taking the first step, maybe even a little intimidated by fell-running mountain goats who might even seem almost like another species."

Intriguingly and perhaps even uniquely, the route descriptions of the 70 runs covered in the book are all written in the first person, which adds an unexpected personal touch to what is basically a purely directional guidebook. So don't look for too much interpretation or purple prose describing the landscape, because you won't find it here.

But many of the routes, which are based on Alfred Wainwright's seven tried and tested regions of the Lakes, take you to little visited and therefore very tempting fells. These include Binsey near Bewaldeth; Steel Fell and Dead Pike in the Wythburn Fells; Beda Fell between Bannerdale and Boredale and the charmingly-named Whoop and Lank Rigg on the western edge near Ennerdale.

Of course, the book could be used just as easily as a walking guide for non-fell runners, but they'd have the exactly same problem with its weight. Even that might be acceptable if it is used as a beautifully photographed planner for future expeditions, or as an aide mémoire of past ones.

2022 BIG WEEKEND

Stan Abbott, Chair and Big Weekend Organiser, looks back on a successful event...

Note It is with sadness that I have to report that FSC Malham Tarn, probably my favourite among Big Weekend venues I have booked, is to close after FSC rejected a rescue package thrashed out with its landlord, the National Trust.

And so to Grange-over-Sands – the “accidental” venue of October’s Big Weekend. Accidental, because this venue had first been booked to stage our 2020 event when it became clear that we needed a larger venue than Malham Tarn if we were to comply with the tightening regulations around social distancing.

Ah, COVID regulations – we can almost begin to feel nostalgic for them in a world of war, hyper-inflation and governmental chaos and incompetence. Of course, in the event, we ended up with no Big Weekend at all in 2021 as rules tightened further, leaving us with two Big Weekends booked – one at the Malham Field Studies Council centre and one at Grange.

The passage of two years since our original introduction to Grange did raise a few organisational issues but, against many of the odds, our Big Weekend was smiled upon favourably by the weather gods and members and guests were able to enjoy a range of activities to get a feel for this special part of the world on the edge of the vastness of Morecambe Bay.

With tidal conditions and seasonality unfavourable to the idea of walk across the sands of the Bay, we did the next best thing by sharing time with Michael Wilson, local fisherman and now King’s Guide to the Sands and his partner, Joanne. I also very much enjoyed hosting our Golden Eagle winner, Nick Owen, and Alison and learning more about the mountain

rescue volunteers, who are so close to the hearts of our members (indeed, we can count such volunteers among our own membership).

It was great too to host the family of the late Kev Reynolds, a much-missed member of the OWPG family, and to hear how they intend to honour his prolific legacy by working with Cicerone to keep his guide books up to date. Indeed, thanks as ever to Joe Williams and the Cicerone team for sponsoring our annual dinner and for ongoing support in so many ways.

The positive feedback I have had tells me that David Bellamy’s landscape class was especially enjoyed, as was Nori Jemil’s Photography for Writers. Neighbouring Hampsfell was comfortably conquered, revealing the panorama of Morecambe Bay, while I was pleased to share an exploration of Neolithic and Bronze Age Furness, including a fine view across the Bay from the small but perfectly formed stone circle at Birkrigg.

The book table was well received, and your committee has endorsed the idea of extending this next year to include the opportunity for members to share their recent work of all kinds.

This was my valedictory Big Weekend as organiser, it being fully five years since my hand defied my brain by rising at the 2018 AGM at Newlands to agree to take on the organisation of our annual get-together. My first act was to rename the AGM as the Big Weekend, with



apologies to Radio One. I think that did help to reposition the event as a get-together for members that also incorporates our AGM, rather than an AGM with other events around it.

Your committee has been working hard to move beyond the multi-tasking era during which we’ve struggled to fill key officer roles and so I’m now delighted to hand over to Kevin Sene, who now assumes responsibility for the delivery of our 2023 Big Weekend for which the FSC venue of Millport, on Great Cumbrae, has been booked for some time now. Remember the date – it’s Friday October 13, so that’s an easy one to remember!

I now find myself with more time to devote to the role of Chair and, in particular, to the twin tasks of drawing in new members and making sure that we provide value for money so as to ensure good membership retention. Our outgoing Membership Secretary Ronald Turnbull reports that the signs in this regard are already encouraging and so I welcome on board his successor, Josephine Collingwood. Our regular Zoom sessions, so ably organised by Felicity Martin, have brought real added value to membership and I hope that more regional events will do the same. I urge you all to participate in the online forums and make full use of the advice notes and member benefits on the website.

As Chair I want to see us engaging properly in a variety of activities that will add meaning and authenticity to

the work of the Guild and its members and so I am especially keen to see the position of media relations officer relaunched and rejuvenated, with the aim of achieving regular bulletins to the outdoors and related media.

I want to see better exploitation of the outward-looking features that Guild is already blessed with... the Golden Eagle and gear awards, our associate membership category, our awards sponsorship and so on. As members, please begin to think now about potential Golden Eagle nominees – this is your award to someone we believe has made a real contribution to the idea of sharing the outdoors world with society at large.

These are just some of the actions that can improve our visibility and thus the appeal of becoming a member of the Guild and they can all assist us in proactively prospecting for new members, not just among authors and journalists who write books about or take pictures of the outdoors, but also among social media bloggers and influencers, those who work in interpretation, illustration – and writing in broader outdoor “spheres”, including conservation, nature and self-planned travel.

The boundaries between all the various outdoor specialisms are blurring and constantly shifting: we can turn these changes to our advantage by offering a broader umbrella for those who would like to share and learn from the experiences of their peers.

▲ Top Windermere (David Taylor) Middle Haverthwaite Station (Allan Hartley) Bottom Jacquetta and Judith (Chris Howes)

GUIDEBOOK

James Rushforth

Photographing Iceland (volumes 1 and 2) fotovue

Photographing Iceland was a five-year labour of love for James Rushforth. Here Egill Bjarnason explains what the book means to him from the foreword of volume one...

With *Photographing Iceland*, James Rushforth has put together a striking visual account of one of the wildest landscapes on earth. Drawing on decades of experience photographing remote sites, James set himself a new challenge here in a land marked by extremes.

I grew up in Selfoss, Iceland, bicycling around the countryside and working on sailboats for months at a time. So I know all too well how unpredictable and unforgiving the landscape can be. Violent storms blow up out of nowhere, while the lunar highlands can leave you hopelessly lost. I certainly learned that the hard way a few times – breathless and frozen on the side of some remote road.

And so I know, too, the incredible labour that went into creating this book. Behind every photograph is a stunning amount of patience. A single photo might require driving along narrow fjords in difficult winter conditions, before ascending hillsides in the dark with 5kg of camera equipment. Waiting for hours for the right light, or for severe weather to pass. Fixing flats with frozen fingers. Belaying deep into unexplored ice caves. Spending days without seeing another person.

While at a glance, the subjects of the

photographs may seem to be solid, reliable markers – a mountain, a hilltop, an expanse of stone – what's really captured here is the constant change of the Icelandic world. The slow drift of a glacier's face. The languorous movements of the northern lights. The shifting course of a braided river channel, or spattering hot mud pots, or the drifting steam of a geyser. These are photos of ephemera. And as invasive species encroach on existing fauna, and glaciers melt more rapidly, this book is testimony to the need to conserve one of the largest wilderness areas in Europe.

Folded into this book, too, is an act of deep generosity. James extends a true invitation, sharing the best routes and viewpoints; advising the reader on the best light and weather, and giving careful guidance so that others can discover these sights while remaining respectful of the natural and fragile landscape.

That's the real strength of the eye at work, here. Not simply the ability to notice our subglacial meltwater channels or descend into treacherous rifts: the way the collection makes way for you, the reader, to follow in his footsteps, and see for yourself our home of glinting ice and shadow.



▲ Aurora borealis over Hellnar Church

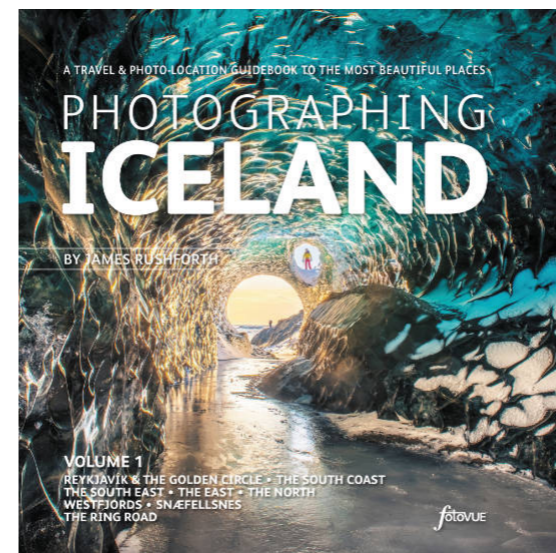


The **Guidebook Award** is sponsored by Aquapac, manufacturer of 100% waterproof cases, bags and pouches. Aquapac is British company headquartered in London, and sells all over the world.

Highly Commended...

David Taylor

111 Places in Newcastle that you shouldn't miss



▲ Múlagljúfur Canyon

◀ The covers of Photographing Iceland volumes 1 and 2

WHAT THE JUDGES SAID...

An extraordinarily ambitious project: five years' research resulting in two volumes packed with practical information and tips. Everything you needed to know – you name it, it's there.... Good to see that some publishers are brave enough to go this big/expensive – an amazing achievement.

Judges Sue Viccars, commissioning editor of *Dartmoor Magazine* and Chris Bagshaw, editor, writer and former OWPG member

ABOUT JAMES

James Rushforth is an experienced and professional climber, mountaineer, skier, travel writer and guest speaker. An internationally acclaimed photographer and author who has worked with distinguished publishing houses Rockfax, Cicerone Press and FotoVue.

Based in the UK, James spends much of his time exploring the Italian Dolomites and Iceland, where he has authored a number of books to both regions. He has partnered with Wild Photography Holidays to lead specialist photography workshops to the Arctic, Greenland, Iceland, the Faroe Islands, Romania & Italy.

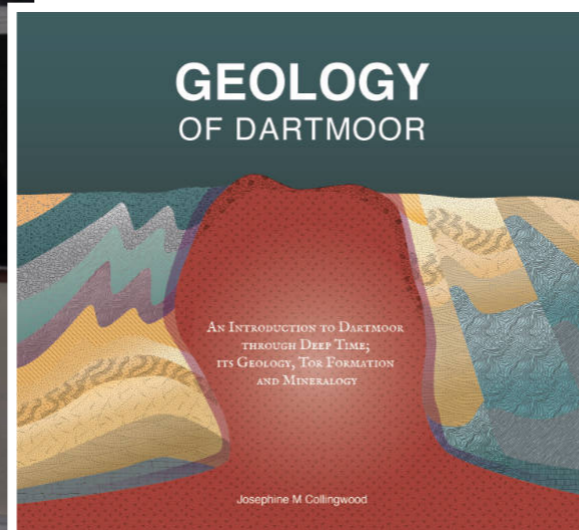
www.jamesrushforth.com

OUTDOOR BOOK

Josephine Collingwood

Geology of Dartmoor Tavicinity Publishing

The *Geology of Dartmoor* takes the reader on a journey through deep time from Dartmoor's earliest geological history to the present day...



▲ *Geology of Dartmoor* book cover
 ▲ Josephine receiving her award from Stan Abbott Photo Chris Howes

ABOUT JOSEPHINE

Josephine Collingwood is a professional author and photographer graduating in both geophysics from Southampton and later in photography from Plymouth. Based near Tavistock, she has lived in or around Dartmoor National Park since 1983. When not rock climbing or adventuring she photographs architectural properties and designs unique infographics and poster art about Dartmoor. Josephine's previous book titles include the Dartmoor Tors Compendium and the Official Visitor Guide to Dartmoor National Park. Over the last few years she has also given illustrated talks about photography and Dartmoor geology.

www.tavicinitypublishing.co.uk

WHAT THE JUDGES SAID...

Beautifully designed and packed full of explanatory diagrams and good photographs. A complex subject made nicely accessible without any dumbing down.

Judges Sue Viccars, commissioning editor of *Dartmoor Magazine* and Chris Bagshaw, editor, writer and former OWPG member



The **Outdoor Book Award** is sponsored by Cordee. Having started life as a sole distributor for rock climbing guidebooks published by the largest climbing clubs in the UK, the business now includes distribution of titles encompassing all outdoor activities. www.cordee.co.uk

Highly Commended...

Viv Crow
Joss Naylor's Lakes, Meres & Waters of the Lake District

DIGITAL

There was no outright winner in the Digital category this year, but Jon Doolan was awarded **Highly Commended** for his website www.jondoolan.com



WHAT THE JUDGES SAID...

We loved the spirit of this website – full of enthusiasm for the outdoors and a desire to encourage others to get out there and do adventurous things, and to write about it. It's impossible not to smile as you flick through and there is much content to entertain.

Judges Jacquetta Megarry (OWPG Awards Organiser, 2018 winner) and Lois Sparling (formerly of Cicerone Press)



◀ Jon receiving his award from Kevin Freeborn of Pathfinder Guides
Photo Chris Howes

OUTDOOR/TRAVEL FEATURE

Jon Sparks The 'Only' Word

The 'Only' Word movingly describes the challenges of regaining a full and rewarding outdoor life after recovering from serious illness. Discover what some of those challenges were in this extract...

That was then. Now, at another comfortable ledge, I pause and look out: the rooftops of Coniston village, glinting waters of the lake, and the dark mass of Grizedale Forest (full of mountain bike memories) shrouding the rise beyond. In the far distance, mere hazy suggestions, the Howgills and the Yorkshire peaks. A wide world, and a stark contrast with the way my world contracted when I was at lowest ebb.

In the few days following each round of chemotherapy, I hardly stirred from the house. Between those episodes, I kept walking and kept riding, even if it was just a few slow miles to a local café for Eggs Benedict. I keep recalling some words from John Hunt's essay on Gimmer Crag in *Classic Rock*. In the summer of 1939, as war-clouds gathered, 'we went climbing every day, with a desperate, unspoken wish to hold on to things we loved while the world threatened to fall apart'. I was struck by that when I first read it, but it resonates more deeply now. Every mile on the bike, however slow, every step along the canal towpath, every move on rock, however easy, was also my way of holding on to things I love.

And now, moving up again, I'm holding on to cold, hard, rock. There are streaks of black moss and splatters of lime-green lichen. Clean weathered rock is mostly mouse-back grey; but in the secret places, where a flake has recently spalled off, the raw rock is a startling, almost

cranberry, pink. Cold, and hard—and utterly wonderful. A reconnection.

The wind is still buffeting, but the hail has relented. My hands are chilled but functioning, though I'm constantly searching for the luxurious jug-handle holds that surely should be there, but surprisingly often aren't. This may be 'only' a Grade 1, but not every move can be reduced to grab and heave. Subtlety—the

hallmark of Lakeland rock—is still called for. So it's good to find, not just that some strength has returned but that muscle-memory is present and correct too. Given half a chance, the body remembers the gentle transfer of weight, the intuitive feel for when the best way over is actually the way round.

Many years ago, I wrote, glibly, 'With most things in the outdoor life, the most interesting place is around the edge of the comfort zone.' That's come to seem more and more true over time,

and a quick text search on my computer suggests I've flogged it almost to exhaustion. And yet here we go again... In fact I believe it more strongly than ever, not in spite of but because of recent experience. I've been through a phase when my comfort zone shrank dramatically, but I was still picking and poking at whatever limits there were.

And Bernie, who'd watched me struggle many times, is watching me now. Not making a

WHAT THE JUDGES SAID...

"This was a fine piece of writing ...The feature was moving and insightful, and the structure excellent."

Judges Carlton Reid (founder of *On Your Bike* magazine/former OWPG member) and Elizabeth Multon (Conway, the outdoor imprint of Bloomsbury)



▲ Bernie Carter on Long Crag Buttress on the day in question

song and dance, about it, just quietly keeping an eye as I pick a line up a little groove and out onto a knobby slab. I'm hardly aware of it as I focus on my moves, but if she's more anxious than she seems: well, she's seen me blue-lighted to A&E; she's seen me receive the attentions of the crash team after reacting badly to one of the chemo drugs. I could hardly blame her if she wanted to wrap me in cotton wool, but she's here and getting on with living same as I am.

Carpe diem has always seemed a good philosophy, but it has even more force when you've confronted the possibility that it could all be taken away.

Just as beauty is in the eye of the beholder, 'Extreme' is in the eye, and the arms and legs and feet and fingers—and, above all, in the mind. Only you know where the limits of your comfort zone are. (Of course, if you never push those limits, at least a little bit, you'll also never really know.) Extreme is not necessarily confined to E9 7a, or Class VI, or Double Black Diamond. For me, all those things aren't Extreme, they're impossible. For me, even 30 years ago, Extreme was leading the wall pitch of Central Pillar (E2 5b) on Esk Buttress. I looked across at The Cumbrian (E6 6b) and knew it would always be beyond me. And even then I was pretty much OK with that.

Long Crag Buttress is only a Grade 1 scramble, but doing it at all was an affirmation. And for this body, this mind, on that day, in that weather, it was definitely flirting with the edge of the comfort zone; there was not much 'only' about it.

To paraphrase Master Yoda:
'Do. Or do not. There is no only.'

ABOUT JON

Jon is a professional photographer and writer specialising in landscape and outdoor subjects, and is based in Lancashire, England. For many years his main focus has been on bikes, and he's ridden everywhere from the boards of the Manchester Velodrome to the wilds of New Zealand.

Jon has also written travel guides and photography manuals. He's now giving much of his time to fiction and plans to self-publish the first of a series of science fiction novels soon.

<https://jonsparks.zenfolio.com>



The **Outdoor/Travel Feature Award** is sponsored by Pathfinder Guides, published by Milestone Publishing. They are Britain's best-loved walking guides and long-established. These high-quality walking guides offer in total more than 14,500 miles and circa 6,000 hours of walking in 94 UK titles.

PHOTOGRAPHY

Josephine Collingwood

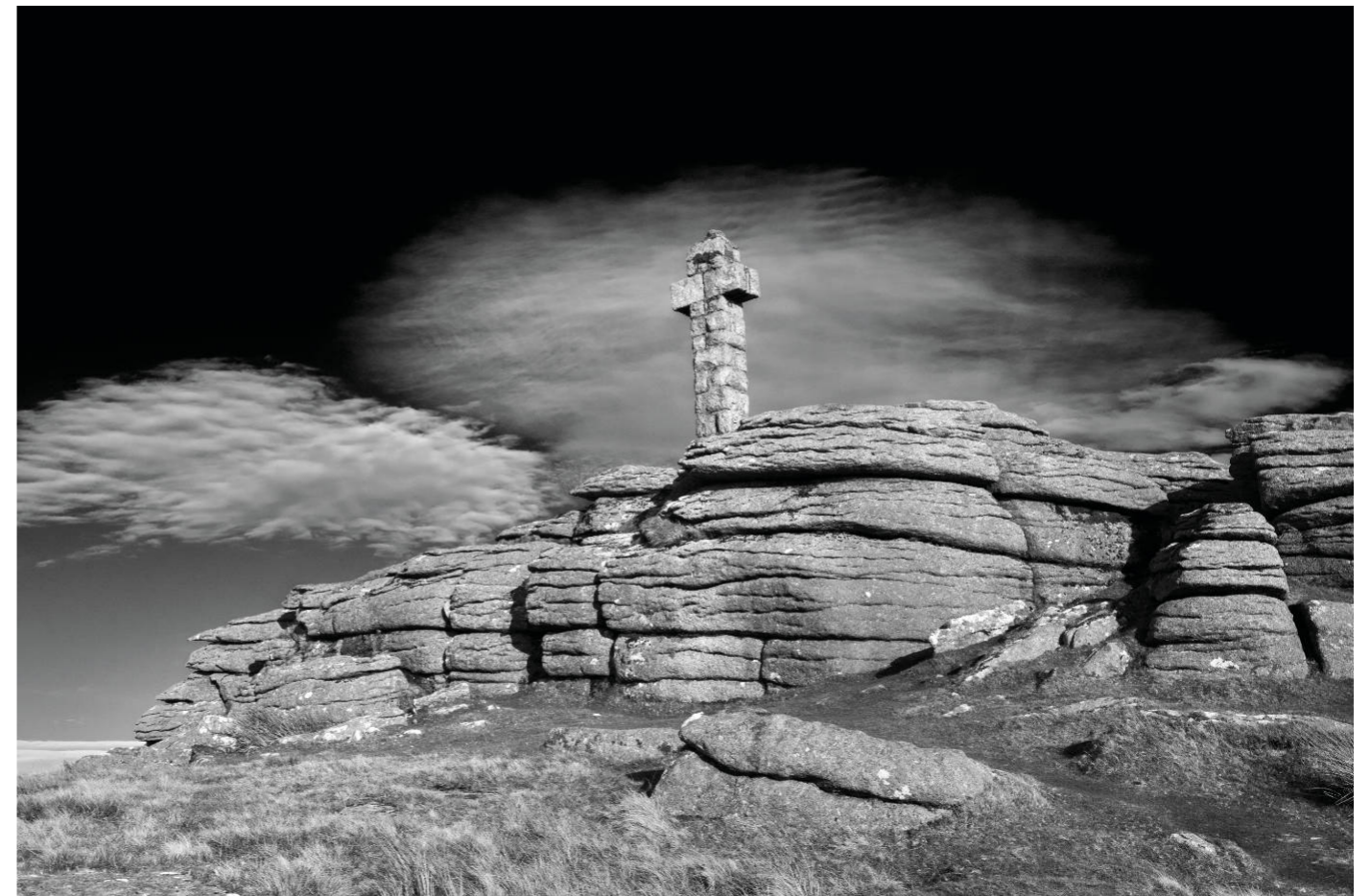
Dartmoor



▲ Grey Wethers Stone Circles

▼ Hound Tor Manaton

▼ Little Hound Tor Stone Circle



▲ Widgery Cross Brat Tor

▼ Shelstone Tor



WHAT THE JUDGES SAID...

The use of black and white lent [the portfolio] a striking quality.

Judges Ashley Cooper (GlobalWarmingImages) and Chris Howes (OWPG Member and 2020 Award winner)



▲ Great Links Tor panoramic

▼ Great Links Tor Stack



▼ Sheeps Tor



Highly Commended
James Rushforth
Dolomites
Felicity Martin

C  N W A Y

The **Photography Award** is sponsored by Conway. An imprint of Bloomsbury Publishing, Conway publishes books that open up the world through tales of contemporary and historical exploration and adventure.

▼ Tony's original climber's Belt, early '60s

TECHNICAL FEATURE

Tony Howard

Origins of the climbing sit harness

There is no-one better suited to writing about the origins of the climbing sit harness than Tony Howard. Here he describes a lifetime of climbing across the world...



◀ Early explorations in Jordan's Mujib Canyon

I started climbing on my home crags in Chew Valley in the Peak District in 1952 when I was twelve. Ever since, life has been a big adventure including working on a Norwegian antarctic whaler in 1958 before it was realised that whales were nearing extinction. Instructing at Outdoor Centres followed, including once for the Ocean Youth Club as well as making the first canoe crossing of Cardigan Bay with friends. In 1963 I started making and selling climbing chocks and designed a climber's waist belt to pad the rope and help carry the increasing amount of gear being used by climbers, prior to which the rope was simply tied round the waist.

In 1965, the year my BMC guidebook to *Saddleworth-Chew* was published, I became a BMC Guide and was on the first ascent of Europe's tallest, steepest North Face, the Troll Wall, simultaneous to a Norwegian team, described by Joe Brown as "one of the greatest ever achievements by British climbers". Two friends and I then started Troll Climbing Equipment. We designed the world's first rock climbing sit harness with Don Whillans for the 1970 British Annapurna Expedition. In 1979 I modified it, creating the first climbing sit harness with a belay loop, another of many 'firsts' from Troll, then one of the world's leading climbing brands. I was totally surprised to receive an award from the OWPG in 2022 for the article on *The Origins of the Climbing Sit Harness* in *Climber* magazine!

In 1971, inspired by Robert Service's poems, a Canadian friend and I canoed a reputed 1000 mile wilderness gold rush route from Inuvik east of the Mackenzie Delta to the Yukon River. I then continued making first ascents in the UK, also in Greenland, and though still at Troll, worked on yacht delivery, an Icelandic trawler and Danish and Norwegian cargo boats.



▲ Tony on the first ascent of his Vanishing Pillar, Wadi Rum / Photo Di Taylor, 2nd prize mountain action, Kendal Festival 1985

Seeing the mountains of Wadi Rum in the *Lawrence of Arabia* film, led to my most important climbing discovery in 1984. Why hadn't other climbers seen the potential? To work with the Jordanian Tourism Ministry, Di Taylor and I started n.o.m.a.d.s. (New Opportunities for Mountaineering, Adventure and Desert Sports). My guidebook to *Treks & Climbs in Wadi Rum* followed in 1987.

Next, sponsored by H.M. Queen Noor, Di and I explored Jordan for our 1999 Cicerone guide to *Jordan: Walks, Treks, Caves, Climbs and Canyons*. We then prepared a proposal for a country length Jordan Trail but sadly King Hussein had just died so we lost our palace contact. Fortunately, we then received an invite to Palestine to write a guide for the millennium to *The Nativity Trail* (now part of the Palestine Heritage Trail).

As n.o.m.a.d.s. we also had projects in North East

CICERONE

The **Technical Feature Award** is sponsored by Cicerone, a specialist publisher of walking, trekking, mountaineering and cycling guidebooks.

Tony's books

Troll Wall www.bit.ly/th-troll-wall

Quest into the Unknown www.bit.ly/th-quest-unknown

WHAT THE JUDGES SAID...

"Surprisingly interesting — a fascinating and well-researched history that was also really well written."

Judges Carlton Reid (founder of *On Your Bike* magazine/former OWPG member) and Elizabeth Multon (Conway, the outdoor imprint of Bloomsbury)

India, first in Nagaland on the India-Burma border then in Manas National Park in Bodoland, including rafting there from Bhutan. Other projects also lured us to exploratory climbing and/or trekking in Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, Sudan, Ethiopia, Egypt, Oman, Iran, Thailand and Madagascar, but I missed an invite to Buckingham Palace for an explorers event, being away in Nepal.

Meanwhile we continued exploration of our proposed Jordan Trail, soon joined by Jordanians including Murad Arslan who told us, "You are our inspiration, your footsteps made wonderful paths that we are following, you gave us and Jordan more than any words can describe and more than anyone could imagine". Following participation in its inaugural 670km through-walk in 2017 we received an award from H.E. Lina Annab, the Tourism Minister who also walked much of the route.

▼ Tony receiving his award from Joe Williams of Cicerone / Photo Chris Howes



GOLDEN EAGLE AWARD

Nick Owen *For Outstanding Services to the Outdoors*



Nick Owen was nominated for the Golden Eagle Award by a member of OWPG. Nick is the current Team Leader of Langdale Ambleside Mountain Rescue Team, having joined in 1992, and been Team Leader since 2005. He's stepping down as leader in 2023, and one of his biggest legacies will be the initiative behind the AdventureSmart campaign. The campaign is designed to keep people safer in the mountains. It asks three key questions of people: [1] Do they have the right gear, [2] Do they know what the weather will be like, [3] Are they confident of their knowledge and skills? It's a major move to encourage people to be more pro-active, and to reduce the amount of avoidable mountain rescue call outs. Golden Eagle Award winners receive an exclusive watercolour painted by OWPG member David Bellamy, which this year was of Langdale Pikes (below).

▲ Nick receiving the Golden Eagle award from David Bellamy and Stan Abbott Photo Chris Howes



TECHNICAL INNOVATION AWARD

Garmin *For the InReach mini2*



Garmin are one of the few brands in outdoor technology consistently bringing new innovations to market. In 2022 they launched a new range of products aimed at outdoors people featuring massive strides in battery life, partly due to their embrace of solar-charging technology, which makes devices such as GPS watches more practical to use for long periods on multi-day treks and runs. In particular, the OWPG judges singled out the InReach Mini 2 satellite communicator. This

compact and lightweight device enables efficient two-way communication even in areas with zero mobile reception. The second version features significantly better battery life than the first model, and it can now be used seamlessly in conjunction with a smartphone for easier messaging and navigation. The judges have both used the InReach Mini 2 on challenging long-distance mountain trails this year and have been impressed by its performance.

www.garmin.com

JUDGES

OWPG members Chris Townsend and Alex Roddie

The **Technical Innovation Award** is sponsored by the OWPG.

Big Weekend Activity Report

Felicity Martin reflects on what she achieved during the 2022 Big Weekend

Taking the 'soft' activities option can be more stimulating than the 'macho' ones. I studied an OS map before making my choices for the Big Weekend. It was apparent that the canoeing was likely to be on a canalised river, while there were no easy options for non-linear cycle rides.

I reckoned I'd get more out of a steam train ride and boat trip on Windermere, which I haven't visited for decades. It could also contribute to a weekend travel feature I had in mind. The journey was fun with excellent views as we sailed up the lake. The cruise brought back memories of rowing down it in an 8-person whaler, from when I worked in Ambleside.

One of our destinations used to be the Hole in t' Wall in Bo'ness. My vague memory of the pub being up and left from the pier was sufficient to find it. Andrew bought me a pint for old times' sake. I left him watching tourists while I climbed Brant Fell, then hung around on top waiting for a window in the clouds to cast a searchlight of

sun over the hill. An urgent text reminded me I needed to jog back down to catch our return vessel!

On Sunday I became part of the David Bellamy fan club. Our small group hoped to develop our creative abilities with watercolour and he was the ideal teacher. We spent the morning on Grange promenade, sketching in the teeth of a penetrating gale—hardly a 'gentle' activity. Back at Castle Head we gradually thawed out while painting from photographs. David deliberately chose to teach us a technique that was easy to do without the usual distraction of mixing watercolour paints. After



▲ Brant Fell over looking Windermere

drawing the main lines of a composition in pen, we used just one colour—indigo—in varying intensities to represent the tones. It's a quick way to capture a scene and one I intend to keep practising. The day proved absorbing and stretched me in a different way to physical activity.

BIG WEEKEND 2022/gallery



▲ Sunday's walk **Photo** Chris Scaife



▲ Haverthwaite Station **Photo** Felicity Martin



▲ Canoeing on the River Winster **Photo** Jacquetta Megarry



▲ Windermere **Photo** David Taylor



▲ Out on the fells **Photo** Chris Howes



Members at the AGM **Photo** Chris Howes ▲