



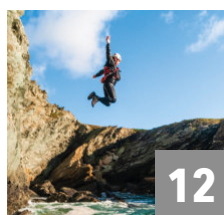
Outdoor FOCUS

THE QUARTERLY JOURNAL OF THE OWPG / AUTUMN 2023

Outdoor FOCUS autumn 2023

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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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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 November 2023**.

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Cover Lochan an lasgair in Glen Torridon / David Taylor

New Member



Andy Hamilton

Over the last 20 years I've been working as an author and forager and I love experimenting as well as researching. After writing the bestselling *Booze for Free*, I specialised in turning the hedgerow into a drinks cabinet; Japanese knotweed tequila margaritas anyone? More recently, I went back to my roots and have just finished writing a book for the National Trust which is aimed at novice foragers (publication date April 2024).

In way of beating the call of a comfortable, indoor, middle aged life out of my system I started writing a long form, non-fiction narrative called *New Wild Order* (publication date Jan 2025). I'm experimenting with some of the ancient ways of living that would have been commonplace in our society. Recently, this meant camping in the wild without food, following the ancient Norse tradition of Utisetá, or sitting out. I followed it up with a few nights camping with just a hammock.

www.theotherandyhamilton.com

SNAP UNHAPPY

David Taylor *really* doesn't want to be a photographer in the movies...

Photographers truly are an odd bunch, aren't they? Or rather, you could be forgiven for thinking that after watching any film that features one. The movie photographer is usually either slightly unhinged, a compulsive voyeur, or – more often than not! – an unholy combination of the two. A good example is Seymour 'Sy' Parrish, the antagonist of *One Hour Photo* (2002). Robin Williams plays a creepily obsessive photo technician who discovers that family man Will Yorkin (Michael Vartan) is having an affair. He then starts to intimidate Yorkin's family: shooting his daughter paparazzi-style with a long lens and forcing Yorkin at knife-point to pose naked with his lover. Fortunately for the sanity of the family, Parrish is eventually arrested. 'I just took pictures' is his unusual defence.

And then there's Harlen Maguire in *Road to Perdition* (2002), played by Jude Law. Maguire is a crime-scene forensic photographer who suffers from a ghostly pale complexion thanks to *far* too much time spent in the darkroom. To his credit, Maguire is dedicated to his craft. Unfortunately this does mean that if his subjects aren't quite

dead he'll happily finish them off to meet a deadline. Worse, as a lucrative sideline, he's a paid assassin for the mob.

Even when a photographer is the hero there's usually something oddly disturbing about his or her behaviour. In Hitchcock's *Rear Window* (1954) James Stewart plays L.B. 'Jeff' Jefferies, a professional photographer stuck at home after carelessly breaking a leg on assignment. To wile away the time he watches – through the titular rear window of his apartment – the comings and goings of the people in the building opposite. Even though his observations eventually unmask a murderer (and demonstrates a use for flash not covered in any photography how-to book) there's something very troubling about his obsessional need to watch and record. Though, as many critics have cheerfully pointed out since, Hitchcock points an accusing finger at the audience too. Watch *Rear Window* and you are complicit in Jefferies' (rather too keen) interest in his neighbours' messy lives.

Of course movies aren't real life and not every photographer is a creepy, disturbed voyeur. (Your experience may differ.) However, just once in a while it would be refreshing to see a well-balanced and happy snapper on the silver screen.



Grace Kelly and James Stewart publicising *Rear Window* in 1954 (Wikimedia Commons)

THE SINGING WALKERS

Peter Gillman takes a tuneful tour through the home counties

Two of the best ways to keep the effects of ageing at bay, it is said, are by walking and singing. As I edge uneasily into my 80s, I have found a way of combining both.

For OWPG members, the walking part goes without saying. For a long time, my walking was focussed on climbing the Munros. I extended my Munros campaign through four decades, completing for the first time in 1997, when I was 55. When the Munros list was revised shortly afterwards, I at first resisted adding the new four that I had not previously climbed. Finally I succumbed again, and climbed the last of the four - Sgorr an Lochain Uaine - in 2010, when I was 68. I climbed my two last Munros in 2014, when I was 72 (I will return to this venture shortly.)

Since then my walking ambitions have reduced in scale. These days I go for walks in the southern Home Counties, mostly in Surrey and Kent, notching distances of around six miles. Here is where the second anti-ageing strategy comes in. Every three weeks or so I do so in the company of members of the Croydon Male Voice Choir.

I joined the choir in 2005, after meeting a long-time friend who extolled its virtues. I used to sing in my youth, in my school choir, in a folk-song club and on protest events such as the Aldermaston marches. But my singing had fallen into abeyance. Now I rediscovered its pleasures in the choir, whose repertoire ranged from folk-song, show-biz classics, spirituals and male voice anthems. I joined the



↓ Crossing a meadow near Westerham, Kent



Resting and recuperating at Station pub, Nutsfield, Surrey: Peter Gillman far right



basses, one of the choir's four sections, along with the top tenors, second tenors and baritones. Around 60 strong, the choir rehearses every Thursday and stages some ten concerts a year, mostly at halls and churches in and around Croydon. The choir also undertakes an annual tour, sometimes in the UK (Gloucester and Norwich have been recent locations), sometimes abroad, to France, Belgium and the Netherlands.

In 2010 I was still walking in Scotland (see timetable above). It had been 15 years since I last climbed a Munro in winter, an activity which brought some of the finest memories of all. Then, in February 2010, I woke to see our garden carpeted in snow. The instinct was irresistible. I called my two closest friends in the bass section and proposed going for a walk. They agreed without hesitation and so we drove to the village of Shoreham in northern Kent. I constructed a round trip of some six miles and we savoured the winter conditions, snow ankle deep on places, a familiar chill wind that I remembered intimately from the Scottish winter.

Thus was the Croydon Male Voice Choir Walking Group born. A few weeks later we embarked on our second walk, having extended the invitation to other voice sections. Our trip that time took us to back to Kent, this time starting and finishing at the village of Knockholt, passing the government retreat of Chevening en route.



We continued with walks every month or so but then came an unfortunate hiatus when in a silly holiday accident I ruptured my quadriceps tendon. (In short, I pulled a very large tv set onto my thigh). I was in hospital for a week and spent another three weeks in plaster. Full recovery took me seven months and I made it my motivational goal to climb a Munro or two. I selected the Drumochter pair of Geal-Charn and A'Mharcoinach, climbing them with my younger son, Seth. Having re-established my fitness I resurrected the choir walking group and our outings resumed.

At first I continued to select and navigated the routes. Then I teamed up with a choir baritone named Dave Bannister, who had recently retired and reckoned he knew most of the available routes in the Home Counties from his own fitness runs (he was a keen skier). Together we formalised the requirements. The routes should be around six miles. They had to be circular, starting and finishing at a pub - not just any pub, but one serving real ales and with a decent restaurant. In addition, there had to be another pub around halfway for a spell of rest and recuperation.

You may have noticed a new theme entering the narrative, namely alcohol. It is widely accepted, I think, that many male choristers like to combine their singing with drinking beer. I should add that while I usually limited my mid-walk consumption to half a pint, some of my fellow-walkers could down two pints and then continue without appearing unduly perturbed. (I need to point out that a further route requirement was that the start/finish pub could be reached by public transport.)

In this way, we crisscrossed the lanes, meadows and woods of Kent and Surrey, with the further relish of grappling with the ascents and descents of the North Downs. This was some way below the demands of Munros, of course, but still challenging enough for a group whose average age was well into the sixties.

Our largest group consisted of 20, including five wives-or-girlfriends, always welcomed to leaven the implicitly male nature of the enterprise. Our smallest was two, which occurred on one of our earliest walks. I found myself alone at the scheduled start time, engaging in a philosophical debate over whether a solo outing would count as a choir walk. I was spared my dilemma when another choir member arrived and we and we enjoyed a delightful two-person ramble in northern Surrey.

To begin with, the walking and the singing remained separate activities. But then we discerned how they could be combined. The finest acoustics were to be found beneath a road or railway bridge, best of all the bridges under the M23 or M25. We would cluster at halfway, the top voices on one side, the lower voices on the other, and would sing two or three of the most resounding numbers from our repertoire.

Then we started singing in the aforementioned pubs that were so crucial to the undertaking. We would sing a couple of numbers at the halfway stopping point, sometimes to a minimal audience of a few drinkers, occasionally more. We were generally well-received and felt we had achieved acceptance when a publican served us a round of drinks on the house on the sole condition we carried on singing.

We also took to singing at the start/finish pub after we



Ascending hill in rain near Limpsfield, Kent





Singing in tunnel below M23 in Surrey in December 2020. (NB Social distancing)



Nearing finish in evening sunshine in Merstham, Surrey

had eaten. Once we were stopped on the grounds that the pub did not have a music licence. Far more often we were welcomed and our ultimate accolade came when a diner put £50 behind the bar to sustain our singing (and drinking).

In the past 13 years we have notched around 150 walks. Our longest was eight miles: seven walkers completed it, while five remained in the halfway pub and commissioned a cab to take them to the finish. We have walked in all weathers, from heatwaves to drenching rain. It is worth observing, however, that not once have we achieved the full winter conditions of our very first outing – a clear token, I feel, of the effects of global warming. We had to pause our walks when Covid arrived, but resumed as soon as we were permitted. We observed the limit of six people per group, sometimes arranging ourselves in two groups which set off five minutes apart.

In 13 years we have suffered two accidents. In 2015 one walker who was wearing inappropriate footwear slipped in a muddy slope and fractured his ankle. There was a dramatic rescue by a team of paramedics who stretchered him to an ambulance and then to hospital, where he was detained over Christmas. That was on December 22 and we have staged a memorial winter solstice memorial walk ever since.

The second, whisper it, befell the author of this article. In 2018 I was negotiating a muddy uphill slope when I slipped and grabbed a barbed wire fence. I too was taken to hospital and had three stitches inserted in my right hand, but was discharged in time to join the survivors for the evening meal. Since then the walking section of our choir's website has carried a disclaimer to the effect that choir members participate at their risk and the choir assumes no responsibility etc, etc, etc.

The walking section has continued to thrive this year. At 81, I am not even the oldest member: a tenor of 82 takes that prize (and he is fitter than me). As for the choir, there are at least six members older than us. We are both determined to continue walking and singing for as long as the fates permit.



WAINWRIGHT IN LOWESWATER

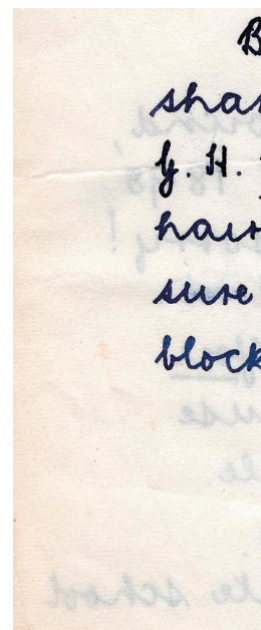
How did Alfred Wainwright get around the Lakes without a car? *Chris Butterfield* has the answer

When Wainwright approached the hamlet of Loweswater for the last time in the early autumn of 1965, I wondered if he felt both relieved and saddened, knowing his 13-year guidebook odyssey would soon be coming to an end. Perhaps he lingered on the final fell, Starling Dodd, longer than he intended, with the realisation that he may never return to these parts again.

It couldn't have been easy when Wainwright began compiling the data for the seven *Pictorial Guides to the Lakeland Fells* between 1952 and 1965. Not only was he working full-time as Kendal Borough Treasurer, but he also couldn't drive. This meant spending every weekend travelling to the fells on buses. There wouldn't have been as many bus services as today, and several fells in the western region would have been tough for Wainwright to reach without a car.

In 2021, I acquired several letters penned by Wainwright in 1965/6 to his friend Mr Kirkby. Whilst reading them, I was surprised to see Wainwright's admission to using taxis to complete *The Western Fells* guidebook. He didn't seem pleased that he had to resort to help but took it in good humour. After reading the letters, I was left with unanswered questions. Did he mean a paid taxi or a lift from a friend, and where did he travel from and to?

I contacted the previous owner of the letters, Dot Davison from Cumbria, who confirmed Wainwright referred to 'paid' taxis. Dot acquired the letters in 2014 from her friend Ena Davidson, who lived in a residential home in Keswick for several years before she died in 2016. Dot recalls Ena saying Mr Kirkby was a bank manager from Keswick and her walking partner for many years. Mr





ER
answer

Kirkby was also Wainwright's walking partner, and he gave Ena his Wainwright letters before he died in the latter half of the 1980s.

Recently I had lunch with author and photographer Sheila Richardson. She was a good friend of Wainwright, so I brought up the subject of him using taxis and showed her his letter. To my complete astonishment, she knew the story. In the late 1970s, Sheila gave a talk for the Women's Institute in Lorton. There she met Jeanie Hope, the general secretary of the Loweswater and Brackenthwaite show committee. They became friends, and Sheila regularly visited Jeanie at her cottage in High Lorton.

Jeanie was originally from Montana. She moved to West Cumbria in 1919 when she was just a baby to live with her grandparents. Jeanie married farmer William Hope, one of four brothers who farmed in the Loweswater area. They ran High Nook Farm for 25 years. Jeanie left the farm after William died in 1975 and moved to High Lorton. In 2002 she received an MBE in recognition of her services to the local community. Jeanie died in 2011 at the age of 92.

Around the late 70s, Sheila mentioned Wainwright to Jeanie. To her surprise, Jeanie said he'd been a guest at their farm on many occasions. As well as running a farm, William and Jeanie ran a bed and

breakfast, which supplemented their income. "He was a very nice gentleman," she told Sheila. Wainwright kept himself to himself and was treated like any other guest.

The farm was the perfect location for Wainwright to complete the fieldwork for the fells near Loweswater and Ennerdale, but how did he get there? The bus from Keswick only went as far as Seatoller. Jeanie had also revealed to Sheila that Wainwright travelled to and from the farm by taxi from Keswick. The most likely route for a taxi from Keswick to Loweswater would have been through Whinlatter Forest.

It was common knowledge throughout Loweswater that Wainwright stayed at High Nook. Combining that with Wainwright's letter and Sheila's conversation with Jeanie, a direct source, gave the story more weight. I tried to identify which taxi company Wainwright may have used. He was unlikely to reveal his identity to any driver, so this part of the story was always a long shot. Tom Davies and his wife Rene founded Davies Taxis of Keswick in 1965, the same year Wainwright travelled to Loweswater. The Davies family suspect Wainwright may have used more established taxis, such as John Harrison, whom I was unable to contact, or Harry Braithwaite, who had died.

↑ Mellbreak

↓ A section of Wainwright's letter to his friend Mr Kirkby, written in December 1965

ook Seven is finished, but only after much
neful use of taxis. Fellwalking de luxe!
Kirby, R. J. Vity and W. J. Salmer would go
less at the very thought, and I'm not at all
that Edward H. Kirby, being a chip off the old
, will ever write to me again.

yours sincerely,
A Wainwright

My next step was to visit High Nook Farm to see how it may have looked back in Wainwright's day. I contacted a friend Roger Hiley, who lives in a lovely old cottage near the centre of the village close to the farm. I explained to Roger about my research, and he kindly agreed to walk with me and share his local knowledge. He also brought along his two lovely Golden Retrievers, Dylan and Dougal.

Roger and I set off for the farm in the early afternoon on a mild but windy day. As we walked, I was mesmerised by the beautiful scenery around me. No wonder Wainwright chose Loweswater as a base for his work. We soon approached the rough track by the beck that led up to the old farm where the late great fellwanderer once stayed. Back then, you weren't required to book a room in advance. Weary travellers could simply knock on the door and be given a room in the main house.

Carling Knott is the closest fell to High Nook, and surprisingly not a Wainwright.

However, it was considered for inclusion in Wainwright's original notebook. Holme Wood is at the base of Carling Knott and has much history. It was replanted in the 1950s and designed in the shape of a pheasant by the Queen's former Balmoral forester, Johnston Edwards MBE. The bird's eye is comprised of larches. In autumn, the yellow leaves stand out against the green of the many other species of trees.


From High Nook, we headed north to the lake of Loweswater via Watergate Farm and then east to Crummock Water before returning to the cottage. Roger explained that until recently, the water from Crummock and Ennerdale was used to feed the local towns. However, due to the growing population in West Cumbria, Ennerdale Water was running low, endangering many rare and protected species, so the water is now piped in from Thirlmere.

While preparing to leave Loweswater, I reflected on my visit and wondered what Wainwright might have been thinking as

↓ The approach to High Nook





 Did Wainwright enter his temporary residence through this open door?

he departed for the final time. My thoughts then turned to some of Wainwright's comments in 'Some Personal Notes in Conclusion' at the end of book two, *The Far Eastern Fells*. He had gracefully declined all the offers of hospitality and transport and was pigheaded enough to want to do it without help. Wainwright had written that almost a decade before he ventured into the Western Fells, and maybe it was too early to think about any potential problems ahead.

Thanks to Roger for his company and kind hospitality in Loweswater. His

knowledge of the district helped me tie this story's strands together. Finally, a special thanks to Sheila Richardson, a friend of Wainwright who has been a vital source of information. She has kindly shared many Wainwright-related stories over the years, which I am truly grateful for. Sheila was also featured in the Coast to Coast Walk story in my recently published book *Wainwright Memories*.

Visit www.alfredwainwright.co.uk to find out more.

BIG WEEKEND THE PAST TWENTY YEARS

Kevin Sene delves into some highs and lows of the Big Weekend in recent years

Since the Outdoor Writers' Guild* was formed in 1980, the AGM get-together has become one of the highlights of the year. In those early days, it made sense to meet during the Camping and Outdoor Leisure Association (COLA) trade show as many members were gear writers and would be there anyway, and it was handily timed around the end of the Himalayan climbing season. The venue was the George Hotel in Harrogate.

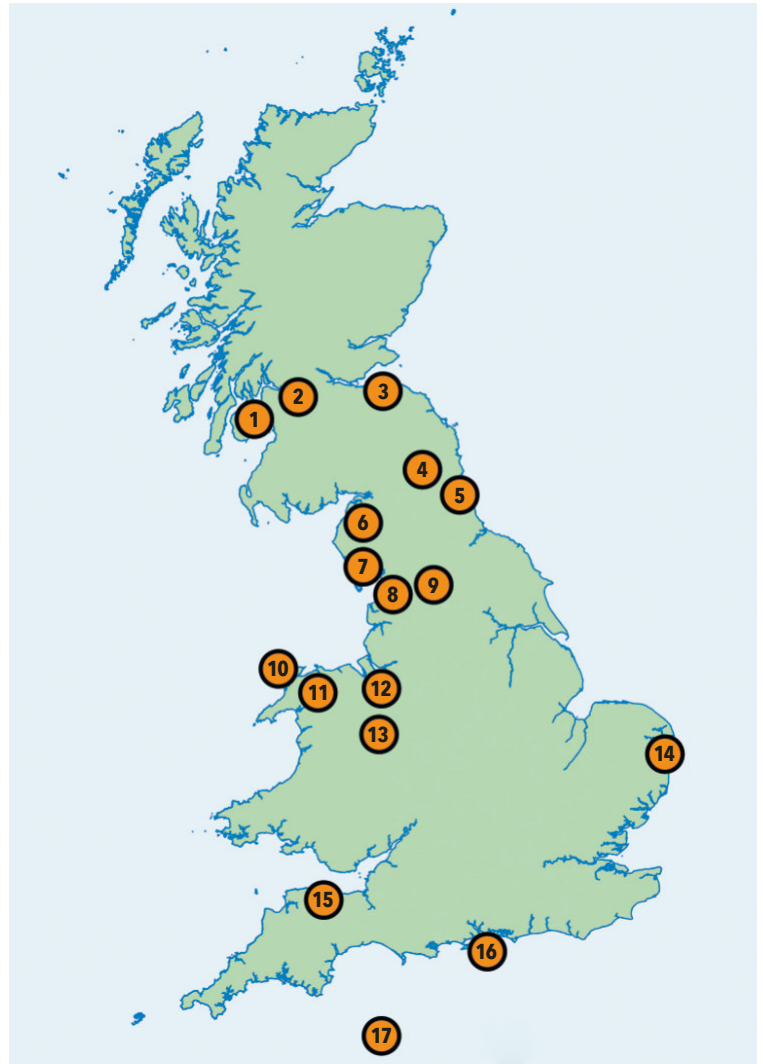
The trade show is no more but the AGM & Awards Dinner - as it became known - has continued to evolve in both scope and destinations. However, newer members may be surprised to learn that until recent years hotel accommodation was often used, such as in Glasgow in 2004, at Lancaster University in 2005 and at an Edinburgh Holiday Inn in 2006. Members would typically book directly with the hotel using a discount code.

That didn't prevent trips to the great outdoors though, including hill walking in the Pentlands, mountain biking in the Scottish Borders, and a rainy coach trip to Ben Lomond. Weekends in Chester and Morpeth followed, plus a memorable trip to Anglesey, which included a 'red squirrel hunt', coasteering, sea kayaking, and a walk up Holyhead Mountain. You'll be glad to know that no red squirrels were harmed during the event.

Another difference was that tourist boards and local councils often helped with arranging activities and even sponsorship, which is difficult to imagine nowadays in these more financially austere times. Discounted ferry or rail tickets were sometimes available too. Much of the credit in securing these links was due to Terry Marsh, who was organiser at that time.

With Dennis Kelsall now in charge, one of the most remarkable sponsored trips was to Jersey in 2012, partly because Jersey's tourist board subsidised flights, accommodation and car hire, as well as laying on an array of activities. Highlights included free tickets for Jersey Zoo and a fast boat trip to one of the UK's most remote outposts, the tidal islands of Les Ecréhous.

Dennis recalls that "almost as soon as we got there, Jonathan Williams of Cicerone, who was Chair at the time, and myself were whisked away to give a local radio interview about the Guild, which was quite a surprise. Due to heavy rainfall the night before we also realised that almost half of the island seemed to be flooded, but it all worked out well in the end."



- | | |
|---------------------|-------------------|
| 1 Cumbrae | 10 Anglesey |
| 2 Glasgow | 11 Plas Y Brenin |
| 3 Edinburgh | 12 Chester |
| 4 Kielder Forest | 13 Shropshire |
| 5 Morpeth | 14 Norfolk Broads |
| 6 Newlands | 15 Exmoor |
| 7 Grange-over-Sands | 16 Isle of Wight |
| 8 Lancaster | 17 Jersey |
| 9 Malham | |

* The December 2006 issue of *Footprint* recalls that the P for Photographers was introduced from October 2007, and *Footprint* itself was renamed as *Outdoor Focus* that year too.



Anglesey / 2009 (Jon Sparks) Jersey / 2012 (Jon Sparks)



Isle of Wight / 2016 (David Taylor)



The National Trust, Northumberland Tourist Board and the Isle of White Council then helped with trips to Shropshire in 2013, Kielder Forest in 2015 and the Isle of Wight in 2016. Activities at Kielder included a visit to a bird of prey centre and a memorable guided trip through the service tunnel beneath the dam for Kielder Water. However, a cloudy night scuppered stargazing after a talk from an expert from Kielder Observatory.

Another change has been the move away from hotels to outdoor centres. Perhaps the first event of that type was at Plas y Brenin in Wales in 2011. Along with walks, mountain biking and a climbing wall, feedback was so positive that another visit was made in 2014.

The first trip resulted from a period of soul searching for the Guild following disappointing attendance at the AGM in Lancaster in 2010, during an otherwise successful event. This led to the whole basis for the weekend being questioned, with people asking whether it should revert to being linked to a trade show, or maybe break free of the constraints of tourist board connections, or (as it turned out) make more use of outdoor group accommodation? More professional development workshops also became a theme.

After Dennis stepped down in 2016, Ronald Turnbull organised an event at Newlands Adventure Centre in the Lake District, during which a gale force walk up Causey Pike remains a vivid memory for some. Stan Abbott then took over in 2018 and the Big Weekend was born.

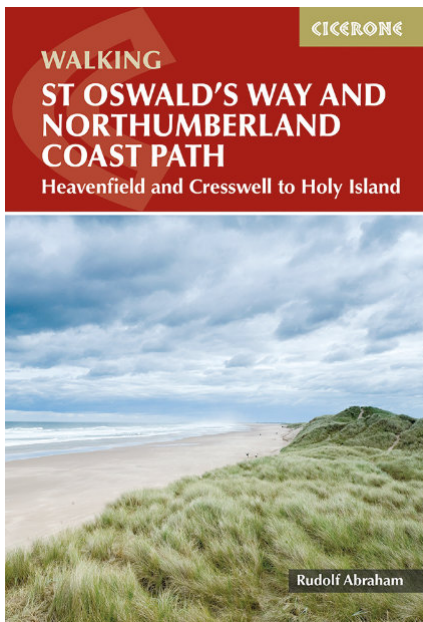
As Stan recalls "I'd been slightly put off attending in the past as the name AGM conjured up images of a weekend spent sitting around desks discussing finances and memberships. However, when the chance to run the weekends came up, I volunteered, having organised press trips before, and after a slightly nerve-wracking start at Exmoor where bookings were slow to come in, have enjoyed it ever since."

A successful trip to the Norfolk Broads followed in 2019, including birdwatching and a trip on a sailing barge, but then the world turned upside down and the planned 2020 trip to Malham was cancelled at the last minute. This eventually went ahead in 2021 and perhaps the main highlight was the chance for everyone to meet again after such a long time. However, for some, a roped caving ascent of a watery underground tunnel - Dr Bannister's Handbasin - came close. Last year's event at Grange-over-Sands then followed with the Cumbrae trip due soon.

As Stan says "I was guilty for too long of not participating in the Guild's headline event. The AGM weekend is the prime opportunity for members to get together to share experiences, tell stories and harvest the mutual support that our organisation offers."

With thanks to Dennis Kelsall and Stan Abbott for sharing their recollections, the archive of Outdoor Focus magazines on the Guild's website, and all who took part in April's Blether.

Book Reviews / Roly Smith



Walking St Oswald's Way and Northumberland Coast Path

Rudolf Abraham

Cicerone, £16.95 (pb)

Once dubbed Northumberland "England's Empty Quarter" and it remains one of the least visited of our National Parks, with its glorious coastline equally and strangely unfrequented.

So this new (and, it must be said, rather expensive) 136-page guide, which links St Oswald's Way to the Northumberland Coast Path northwards across the Border to Berwick-upon-Tweed, is to be welcomed as a glorious temptation to explore this fascinating region. (Although as a Northumbrian aficionado myself, I admit I'd rather it was kept quiet!).

Abraham's somewhat arbitrary 111-mile route follows St Oswald's Way from Heavenfield on Hadrian's Wall to Warkworth and then on to Lindisfarne and Cresswell on the coast, with an

optional 11-mile extension to Berwick. The use of OS's reliable 1:25,000 Explorer mapping, makes this an essential guide.

The author admits there are no technical difficulties to be encountered on the route, but wisely warns that the crossing of the highest points on the Simonside Hills could cause navigation problems in poor weather or high winds.

15 Short Walks in Nidderdale

Jon Fallis

Cicerone, £9.95 (pb)

Why Nidderdale wasn't included in the 2016 extension to the Yorkshire Dales National Park remains a mystery known only to the Whitehall bureaucrats who drew up the revised borders.

The reason usually given why it was not originally included in the Yorkshire Dales park when it was

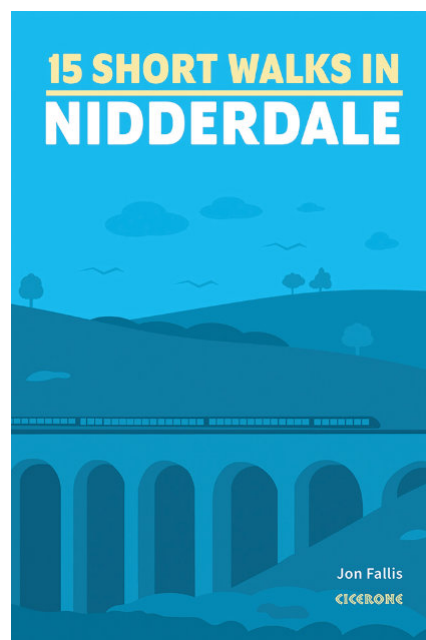
designated in 1954 was that the three reservoirs which flood its upper reaches had somehow industrialised its landscape. This was a decision which makes the 50-odd reservoirs included within the first national park in the Peak District, for example, seem somewhat incongruous.

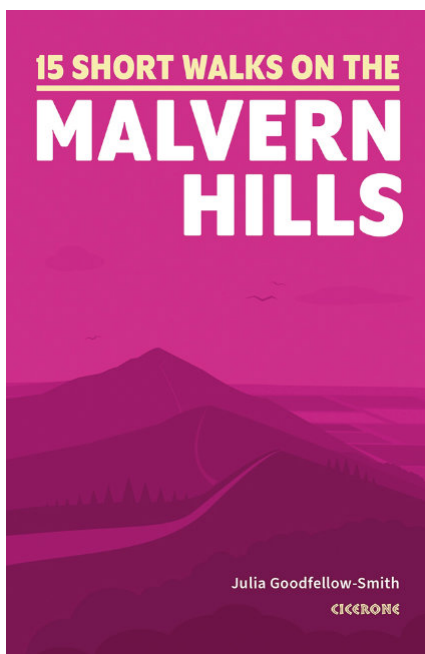
However, for those who know the 600 sq km Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty between the Yorkshire Dales and the Vale of York, Nidderdale has an abundance of attractions which can often be enjoyed without the crowds which can congregate at better-known beauty spots.

So this latest in Cicerone's Short Walks series is to be welcomed and our Ripon-based guide obviously knows the area like the proverbial back of his hand.

All the favourites are there among these 15 walks, divided between Nidderdale itself, Lower Swaledale and the Washburn valley which feeds into the River Wharfe – which in an unaccountable proof-reading error, is spelt throughout without its final 'e'. The monochrome cover of the book also appears to show the Ribbleshead Viaduct, which is miles to the north in the Yorkshire Dales National Park.

But we have 15 easy, fairly non-strenuous walks around Brimham Rocks, Jervaulx Abbey, the How Stean Gorge, Studley Royal (excluding Fountains Abbey) and the Nidd Gorge from Knaresborough among some other lesser-known gems such as a river walk at Pateley Bridge and a Ripley circular.





15 Short Walks on the Malvern Hills

Julia Goodfellow-Smith
Cicerone, £9.95 (pb)

It was the Everest climber Wilfred Noyce who once described the Malvern Hills as the nearest thing we have in Britain to the Himalaya for the way in which they rise spectacularly sheer from the Severn Plain.

Not that this gentle, rolling ridge straddling the borders of Worcestershire and Herefordshire, approaches anywhere near the heights of the Himalaya. But when I was a regular traveller on the Birmingham-Cheltenham line or on the M5 heading for the West Country, I always looked forward to seeing their distinctive blue profile away to the west.

Governed for many years by the Malvern Hills Conservators – now the Malvern Hills Trust – the Malvern Hills consist of some of

the oldest, Precambrian, rocks in Britain, which date to over 500 million years ago. Other than noting the presence of some old quarries, the incredibly ancient and nationally important geology of the ridge seems to have escaped the attention of the author.

But the 15 walks described provide a comprehensive introduction to the undoubted joys of striding the Malverns, including two routes up both the Worcestershire Beacon and the falsely-named British Camp (it was an Iron Age hillfort), which is also known as the Herefordshire Beacon.

It was Edward Elgar, the most supremely English of all our composers, who was said to have remarked on his deathbed to a friend: “If ever you’re walking on the Malvern Hills and hear my Cello Concerto, don’t be frightened, it’s only me.” The Malvern Hills are still alive with the sound of music, and this handy, pocket-sized guide will delight all your senses.

ALSO PUBLISHED

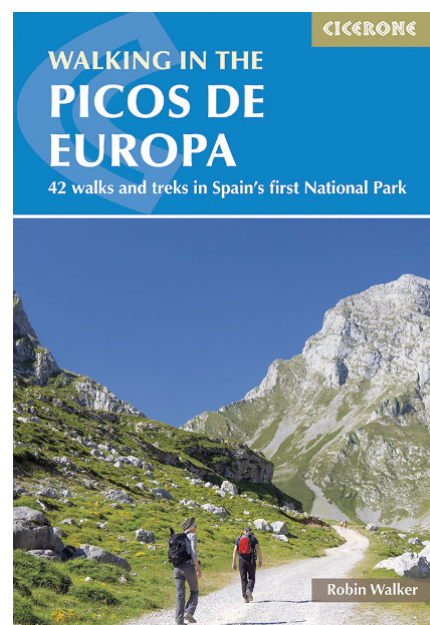
Walking in the Picos de Europa

Robin Walker
Cicerone, £17.95 (pb)

This is the second edition of Robin Walker’s popular guide to 42 walks and treks in Spain’s first-ever National Park, which was originally designated in 1918 and expanded to its present 258 square miles in 1995 and 2014

And as anyone who has visited its bristling range of fine

limestone peaks, outstanding wildlife and 11 charming villages, it is a real gem, often overlooked for the higher and more famous Pyrenees.



GUEST REVIEW

Coastal Pub Walks: South Wales

Julia Goodfellow-Smith
Northern Eye Books, £6.99 (pb)

If you like a walk that involves a pub then Julia Goodfellow-Smith’s new book is definitely for you; the 10 walks described all feature one pub somewhere along the route. Helpfully, the route instructions are accompanied by information such as opening times, what type of drink is on offer, and whether food is available. Wonderfully, local or craft beers are a common theme, and a good number of the pubs serve beers brewed on-site.

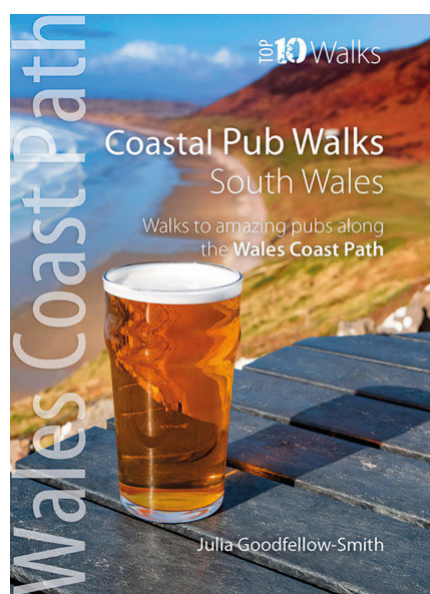
The walks are varied, and Goodfellow-Smith has provided clear directions on how to follow

Book Reviews *continued*

the routes. As the title suggests, these are coastal walks, though one walk (5) is somewhat inland. The reason? The Cefn Bryn Ridge is a fine place to see out across to the Bristol Channel.

One (literally) tiny niggle is the minute size of the text in the book. However, this is a small price to pay to keep the book conveniently pocket-sized but still packed with useful and interesting information.

David Taylor



Answers

(1) The Peak District. The South Downs is the newest (2) Northumberland. (3) Dartmoor. (4) Exmoor (5) Slightly Pembrokeshire. (6) Slightly Pembrokeshire, the Broads annually receives roughly 400mm less rainfall than the UK average (7) The Lake District. Scfell Pike was one of 13 mountains donated to the National Trust in 1919 to commemorate British servicemen killed in the First World War. (8) It's not Yr Wyddfa (Snowdon). Ben Macdui in the Cairngorms is 224 metres higher. (9) The North York Moors, which is 30% heather moorland. (10) Eryri. (11) Alice Liddell was buried in Lyndhurst in the New Forest. (12) Thanks to a spot of movie magic, the Batcave is hidden behind Henrhyd Waterfall. (13) Callander, which immediately saw an increase in visitor numbers. (14) The South Downs. (15) The Yorkshire Dales (at Aysgarth Falls).

National Parks

Think you know all there is to know about the UK's National Parks? Test your knowledge with this quiz. Answers below left.

- 1 Created in 1951, which was the UK's **first** National Park?
- 2 The **largest** Dark Sky Park in the UK can be found in which National Park?
- 3 Just over two miles in length, Stall Moor Stone Row is thought to be the **longest** stone row in the world. Where can you find it?
- 4 Which National Park was **primarily** designated for its coastal landscape?
- 5 In which National Park can you **explore** the Valley of the Rocks?
- 6 Which National Park can be found in one of the **driest** parts of the UK?
- 7 Britain's **highest** War Memorial can be found in which National Park?
- 8 What is the **highest** peak in the National Park family, and in which park can you find it?
- 9 Where can you find the **largest** expanse of heather moorland in England and Wales?
- 10 Snowdonia was recently **renamed**. What is its new official Welsh title?
- 11 Alice Liddell, who **inspired** Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland*, is buried in which National Park?
- 12 What watery feature in Bannau Brycheiniog (formerly the Brecon Beacons) had a **starring** role in the Batman movie *The Dark Knight Rises*?
- 13 Which **town** in the Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park was the stand in for the fictional Tannochbrae in the BBCs *Dr Finlay's Casebook* series?
- 14 Which National Park is the most **populous**?
- 15 Kevin Costner's *Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves* was **filmed** in four National Parks: Northumberland, the South Downs, the New Forest... and which other?