

Outdoor FOCUS

THE QUARTERLY JOURNAL OF THE OWPG / AUTUMN 2025



The Editor Writes In this issue, Andrew Bibby (p6) reminds us of the approaching 25th anniversary of the Countryside Rights of Way Act (CRoW) 2000. The act that enshrined into law a right to “enter and remain on the land” for “open-air recreation”. At the time it was a milestone achievement, despite numerous exclusions, granting access to mountain, moor, heath, down, and registered common land, collectively known as ‘open country’. By definition however, a landowner can encircle any such land, and it becomes ‘enclosed’, and therefore excluded from access rights. So how strong is the protection of CRoW really?

On p10 Stan Abbott highlights such an example, where one of the Lake District’s great viewpoints is enclosed and forbidden to access. What protection do we have against other landowners following this example?

Wild camping had long been practised on Dartmoor and was recognised in 1985 under the Dartmoor Commons Act right to “open-air recreation”. The public outcry against a challenge to those rights in 2022, demonstrated that rights can’t be taken for



granted, they must be both exercised responsibly and vigilantly protected. Fortunately, in 2023, the Supreme Court agreed that ‘open-air recreation’ included wild camping. But why do we have that right on Dartmoor and not Exmoor? Why can we not camp along the great expanse of the Pennines, or other great open country? Why does the defini-

tion of open-air recreation allow wild camping in one act and not the other?

In Scotland the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 went much further granting access rights to most land and waterways, including wild camping, known as the ‘right to roam’. Official figures showed that the costs of implementing CRoW were six times that of the equivalent costs of implementing the right to roam in Scotland. Now there is growing momentum to extend the right to roam across the rest of the UK. For our industry, focused on outdoor recreation, surely this is the biggest issue of our time.

Thanks to Julian Baird for the fine image of Bowerman’s Nose on Dartmoor - well-suited for the cover of this issue.

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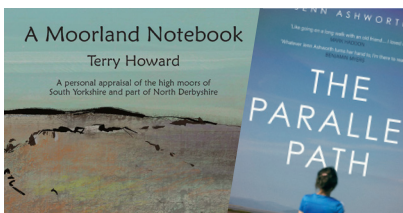


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My favourite kit

Editor David Jordan

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Cover Bowerman’s Nose, Dartmoor

Photographer Julian Baird

The Outdoor Writers and Photographers Guild (OWPG) is the only UK-based association of media professionals working largely or entirely on outdoor subjects. Our membership covers every field of activity and all corners of the globe. We include writers, journalists, bloggers, photographers, publishers and editors, all with a passionate interest in the outdoors. For information on who we are, what we do, and where we’ve been, visit www.owpg.org.uk – or join us on Facebook.

New Members



Leo Le Bon

In 1968, when most Americans considered “adventure travel” an oxymoron, I founded Mountain Travel USA with fellow mountaineers, the first US company dedicated exclusively to taking civilians on active adventures, treks and expeditions to places like Nepal, Tibet, and Antarctica, to trek, to climb and camp. That company became MT Sobek, still a major industry leader today. We were very successful, and the business grew under my vision until 1990 when I retired.

I am a mountaineer of the high mountains, but also a Yosemite lad on 5.8 to 5.9. I live in California and close to those cliffs, but as a father, businessman and above all a prudent fellow, I have avoided the very steep North Faces and highest in the world. So, I am now 91 and in good health and still ride my bike. I was born in Belgium but have been a US citizen for 70 years.

I’ve recently published my memoir ‘Trail Blazing the Unknown’, chronicling six decades of pioneering expeditions and featuring 300 photographs, some of which were taken by my good friend John Cleare, a former member of OWPG who passed away recently. The story isn’t just personal; it’s the untold history of how active adventure travel evolved from a genuinely complex undertaking to the accessible tourism industry we know today. The contrast between the pioneering era and today’s travel landscape makes for an interesting comparison.

This is my fourth book. Of my three earlier books perhaps best known, is the Twelve Great Treks of the World, I also did Majestic Mountains of Six Continents, and The Adventurous Travellers Guide.

Website: <https://www.wanderlustconsulting.com/>

Submission deadline for the Winter issue is 31st October.



© Tony Buckingham

Sophie Atherton

Writing about the outdoors has been part of my work as journalist and writer since my first job as a reporter nearly 25 years ago. I got that job, on the Western Telegraph in Pembrokeshire, partly on the strength of a tip off about Skomer Island getting a new tractor and I went to cover the story for the paper on the day the tractor arrived. Reporting mostly wasn’t outdoorsy enough for me though and I soon moved on to work as a regional media & communications officer for the RSPB in Exeter. What a treat getting paid to visit nature reserves and go birding - and then write about how great it is! Good things do sometimes come to an end though and I moved on to mostly writing about brewing, beer and pubs. I did manage to get outdoors professionally at times, to write about the best pubs for birdwatching or stories involving hop growing, but I reached a point where I couldn’t stop thinking how good it felt when my job was doing publicity for nature and that I wanted to get back to it. Since then I’ve done nearly 100 issues of a nature newsletter called What are you looking at? (WAYLA) and had nature writing commissions from The Telegraph and Bird Watching magazine. Beer and pub writing is still usefully bread & butter for me, but I’m currently working on two nature books that I hope to find a publisher for in the near future.

Website: <https://sophieatherton.com/>

Newsletter: <https://sophiesnaturenews.substack.com/>

Know someone?

Do you know someone who could benefit from and enjoy membership of the Guild?

Why not reach out to them with the ‘[new member discount](#)’ offer found on the website under ‘downloads and discounts’.

New Members



Matt Overd

I've always loved the outdoors, as a child, then climbing and wild camping in my 20s, and later introducing my children to blue and green spaces. Covid left me needing rests to climb the stairs, but not willing to accept I had already topped my last mountain, I challenged myself to walk 1,000 miles in a year. And what a year! I once again summited mountains but also explored lower-level gems that I had previously overlooked in favour of the taller and more extreme.

I was re-hooked and keen to share walking with others. I was privileged to curate and produce 200 self-guided walks for the Youth Hostel Association's Festival of Walking, which continues to take advantage of stunning locations to provide inspiration, guidance and social walking for new and experienced walkers.

I established Walking Pace – to celebrate every walker and every walk - and through this created One Mile Walks, a campaign to engage people who - for whatever reason - want to walk, or can only manage, shorter distances. One Mile Walks is also pushing the boundaries on providing access information.

Away from walking I am a long-time charity professional having worked with small, large and household name organisations. Disability access, vulnerability and marginalised groups have been a theme throughout my career, and I have written, produced and edited a variety educational resources and publications.

I look forward to meeting more OWPG members and would enjoy hearing about your favourite one-mile walks.

Web: walkingpace.uk & onemilewalks.uk

LinkedIn: [linkedin.com/in/matt-overd/](https://www.linkedin.com/in/matt-overd/)

Seasonal Images

Showcase your photography in Outdoor Focus!

Submit your seasonal images to feature in the magazine.

A selection of the best images appropriate to the season submitted each quarter will be featured in the magazine, with the cover photo selected from the submissions.

Don't miss the opportunity to feature; submit yours to editor@owpg.org.uk

Submit the highest resolution image available, min 300ppi, potential covers must be portrait format.



Thanks to Roger Butler for submitting these two stunning autumnal images that made the cover selection a really tough call this time!

REAR South to Arnside Knott, from The Helm, nr Kendal
FRONT Autumn colour nr Tarn Hows in the Lake District

Then & Now..

Alf Alderson contemplates 50 years of changes



I realised last Easter with some alarm that this literally moveable feast marked fifty years – fifty years! – since I first ventured into the great outdoors without parental supervision.

And as I mulled over the worryingly rapid passing of the years, I couldn't help but reflect on how things have changed in the outdoor world – as everywhere else, of course - in that time.

It was the Easter of 1975 when, with my schoolmate Bob, I camped in Langdale, spectacularly badly equipped for the adventure and blissfully unaware of the fact. My second-hand canvas tent leaked in heavy rain; my boots were no more waterproof than the tent; and my sleeping arrangements consisted of nothing more than a cheap zip-up nylon sleeping bag.

The lack of a decent sleeping bag and no sleeping mat for the sub-zero temperatures we encountered taught me a valuable lesson

I've never forgotten – ensure you have the best possible sleeping arrangements and your trip will be infinitely more enjoyable.

There was snow in the valley and the peaks surrounding us were knee-deep in white stuff, which is probably the most obvious change in the last 50 years – global warming has ensured that such conditions, particularly so late in the season, are considerably less common now than they were in the 1970s.

My lack of preparedness for our adventure would probably be less likely today, too; the massive increase in popularity of all things outdoors means that not only is the gear to do it more accessible, better and cheaper than it's ever been, there's also no end of advice on how to do it properly (much of it provided by OWPG members); from guide books and magazines to You Tube and social media, there really is no excuse these days for being inadequately prepared as you head for the hills or coast.

That said, it's noticeable that mountain rescue teams are busier now than ever before; the increasing reliance on smartphones and apps to navigate, as opposed to an old-fashioned paper map, can all end in disaster from something as simple as a flat battery or lack of signal. But imagine having had access to that kind of technology in the 1970s - it would have been regarded as pure science fiction back then!

Another obvious change has been the increase in the number of people who're out and about these days. On our Langdale trip in 1975 we walked up Scafell Pike on a glorious sunny day through a spectacular snow-draped landscape and saw fewer than a dozen other people; today, in those conditions, the numbers would probably be in triple figures.

Likewise, shortly after this trip to the Lakes I started surfing, at a time when ten or more people in the water was considered a crowd; today you can increase that figure five-fold or more at most surf beaches when there's a good swell.



I suppose it's a positive thing that so many more people now enjoy and appreciate our wild places, but the pressure it puts on them – and the way it can detract from enjoying the experience – are conundrums to which there seems to be no real answer.

Which isn't something I'd ever even have considered as I sat atop Scafell Pike on that sunny March day in 1975...



'Then & now' - share yours!

What changes have been prominent or poignant in your outdoor adventures over the years?

It might be access, opportunity, equipment, or clothing. Perhaps it's introspective - how have you changed?

Keep it positive, and submit yours to editor@owpg.org.uk

600 words & 2-4 images

Campaigning for access 25 years after CRoW



Andrew Bibby reflects on how much has been achieved, and how far there is still to go.

side (almost) unscathed, even if the peat is more eroded than it should be and the water more acidic.

But at the time when I moved north there was also a big frustration when it came to walking or running on the moorland: the 'keep out' signs which demarcated the land from which we were all excluded (unless we had paid to be there in the Autumn with our guns to try to bag as many brace of grouse as we could). It meant, for example, that the highest land in my part of the Pennines, Boulsworth Hill, was out of bounds if I wanted to get there from my side of the Yorkshire/Lancashire border. So too were impressive outcrops of millstone grit rocks, such as the Alcomden Stones, the Dove Stones and the Hare Stones.

Of course there was always the option of trespassing. Back in the 1990s, *TGO* magazine actually ran a piece of mine suggesting an all-day watershed walk in the area which certainly would have involved quite a lot of surreptitious

illegality for anyone taking me up on my proposal. But by then things were changing. By then a number of us locally had begun to take action. The Access to Boulsworth Campaign (ABC) got going. We had public meetings. We had



newsletters.

We took prominent Labour politicians walking on to the forbidden moors (including Michael Meacher, who was to go on to play a major role in steering the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 through Parliament). We tried to make ourselves a nuisance.

We weren't the only people campaigning for access of course, but in the end all the effort was worthwhile and those 'keep out' signs had to come down. The CRoW Act didn't by any means give us everything we'd like in terms of countryside access but it did mark a historic moment in terms of access to upland areas in England and Wales. (Scotland's history is of course different).

This November will mark the 25th anniversary of the CRoW Act receiving its Royal Assent and entering into law, and – although ABC is now a distant memory – some of us involved in the campaign then have got together again to mark the occasion. We're organising a national Freedom to Roam: the Next

I moved to the south Pennines house where I still live today from inner-city Coventry more than thirty-five years ago. It was quite a contrast. Instead of being woken in the small hours by the noise of a fight outside the nightclub across the dual carriageway opposite I got woken up by the sound of ducks and geese on the nearby Rochdale Canal.

And of course there were now hills on my doorstep which I lost no time in getting to know. Our beautiful moors have survived all that the Industrial Revolution could throw at them and have emerged the other





Step conference on November 29th in the main hall of the community-owned Hebden Bridge Town Hall and preceding it in the morning with an organised walk on moorlands close to Boulsworth which – until CRow – were forbidden to us.

The day isn't just intended to be a celebration. It's an attempt to gather all our forces for a new push to persuade the current Labour government to extend the rights which we can enjoy to get to know our countryside.

Despite CRow there is still much unfinished business. So many woods remain hidden away behind private signs. Our river banks are too often inaccessible. And, bizarrely, land demarcated under CRow as access land sometimes can't actually be legally accessed because there's no way to reach it without trespassing.

The laws defending land ownership and private property still trump the natural desire of many of us to experience the great outdoors.

This is a good time to focus again on this issue. There are hopes that the government will have published a Green Paper on access and the countryside before our event in November – not a White Paper, so not necessarily anticipating future legislation, but at least something to discuss. And we've arranged speakers and workshop leaders who we think will ensure we can make the most of the opportunity. Our speakers include veteran campaigner Kate Ashbrook of the Open Spaces Society (Kate was a regular speaker a quarter of a century ago at our ABC events!) and Amy-Jane Beer from the feisty Right to Roam group which is using social media to build new support for the issue.

Fellow OWP members will of course be more than welcome to be with us on 29th November (and Scottish colleagues can come and tell us how the 2003 Scottish legislation has transformed rights north of the border!). **Details are at** heartofthepennines.org.uk/r2r.

P6 TOP & MIDDLE Restricted access signs, **P6 BOTTOM** 1931 Ramblers' rally for access rights held at Winnat's Pass in the Peak District, **TOP LEFT** Trail closed sign, **ABOVE** Freedom to Roam: the Next Step conference, Saturday 29th September



The Zino's Cry

Chris Scaife writes from Madeira

The Zino's petrel, or Freira, is one of Europe's rarest birds. In fact, by the mid-twentieth century, it was believed to be extinct; but having been rediscovered in 1969 it is now considered a Lazarus species. Once it has fledged, the Zino's spends the first four years of its life – and the rest of its non-breeding season days – at sea, flying at speed across the Atlantic waves. This bird has a wide pelagic range and, although almost indistinguishable in flight from the other Macaronesian gadfly petrels, Fea's and Desertas, the first confirmed British record came from a Scilly Isles boat trip in July 2020. To experience the sights and sounds of a breeding colony, however, there is only one place to visit.

Anyone who has been to Madeira will know that this is a land of jagged rocky peaks as much as cerulean waters, so perhaps it is fitting that in order to see the island's rarest seabirds I spent the night high up in the mountains. I joined guides Catarina and Hugo, who run the responsible wildlife tour company Madeira Wind Birds, for a night on Pico do Areeiro, the island's third highest peak.

In the gloaming, we set off along a paved walkway, looking down upon a cloud inversion. We passed some candelabra of Pride of Madeira, the endemic shrub coming to the end of its flowering season; but at this altitude there were still one or two blue inflorescences. As the path wound its way along the rocky terrain, we met some Zino's researchers, the only others allowed out here at night. A little farther along the ridge we stopped and Catarina pointed out the nesting sites: a ledge just below us, another over near the researchers and a couple on a nearby summit. There are about 85 nests in total, and that is the entire world's breeding population, all within this tiny radius.

Hugo mentioned that the chicks had begun to hatch just a few days earlier, so the activity was likely to be quite intense. The mere sliver of crescent moon meant it was darker than normal, so the birds were likely to fly higher above the ground than on lighter nights and we had a strong

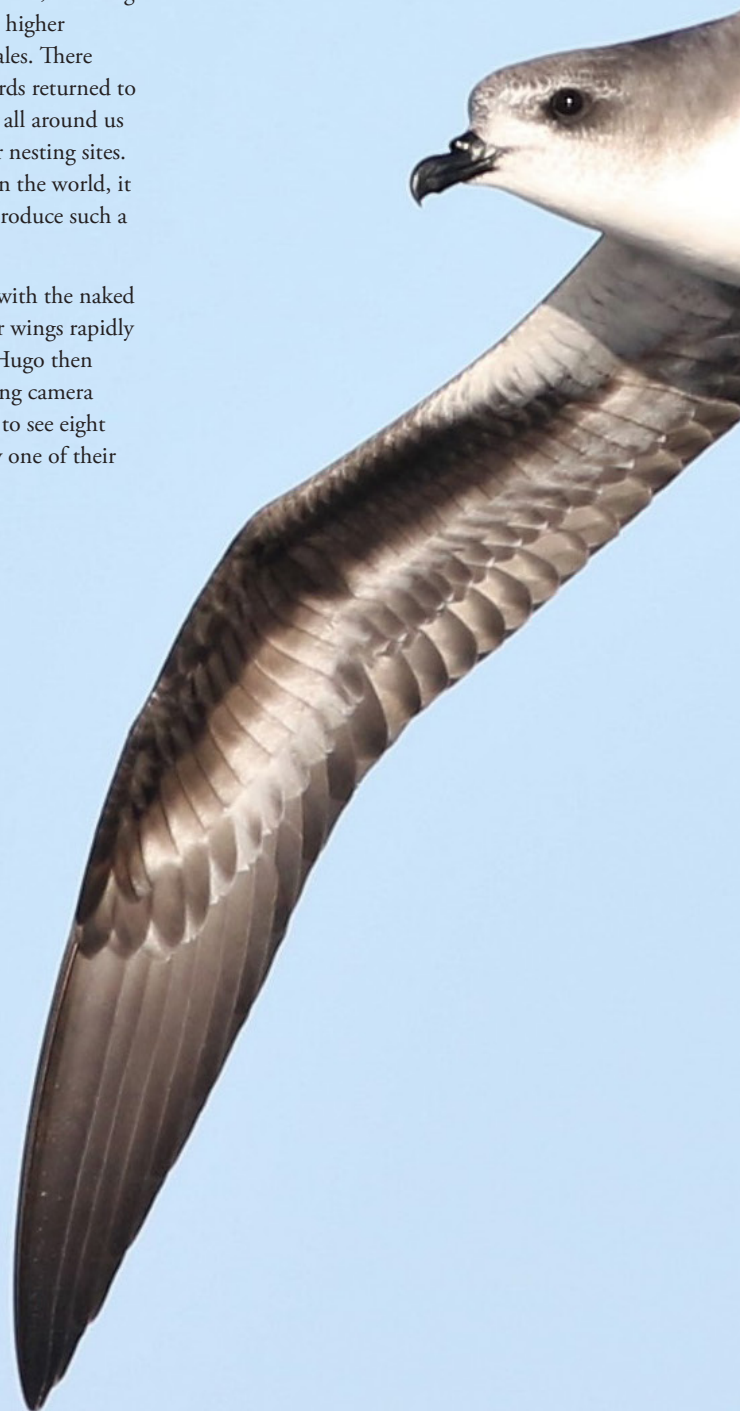
chance of seeing their silhouettes. This all boded well.

With all traces of twilight gone, we heard a haunting wail from below. Bird songs and calls cover a whole range of different sounds, but the Zino's cry might just be the ghostliest of them all. This single howl was followed by ten minutes of silence, in which I remained naïve as to the true wonders that awaited. Then I had to duck as one almost flew into me.

From that moment, the cries permeated the still night. We heard the low, moaning wails of the females and the higher screeching sounds of the males. There were distant howls as the birds returned to land from the sea, and cries all around us as they moved towards their nesting sites. With so few of these birds in the world, it is incredible that they can produce such a clamour.

I saw two more silhouettes with the naked eye, the petrels beating their wings rapidly as they flew in front of us. Hugo then handed me a thermal imaging camera and through this I was able to see eight individuals flitting about by one of their nesting ledges.

Spending time under the stars on a mountaintop, at a comfortable temperature, is always enjoyable. When that time is spent in the propinquity of such a rare bird, which treated us to occasional glimpses and a spectral chorus, this becomes one of the world's great wildlife experiences.





There is one clear reason Zino's petrels are so rare and it is human beings. There are steep, rocky slopes everywhere on the island and, before humans arrived, there would have been few natural predators. There are no native land mammals and the petrels avoid predation by gulls by not flying inland in daylight. It is not hard to imagine seabirds nesting all over these mountains in the past, and ancient Zino's remains have been found in eastern Madeira and on nearby Porto Santo, far from their current restricted breeding range. But as people brought rats, cats and more people to cultivate the land, they have taken the bird to the brink of extinction. The negative impact of humans on Madeira's wildlife was also apparent with my other Wind Birds excursions taken a few days after the Zino's tour: I had half a day birdwatching as there is no longer sufficient native habitat for them to offer a full-day trip; and the whale watching is now best treated as seabird watching, as there are not enough fish in the sea to give reliable sightings of cetaceans.

Lazarus, of course, rose again, and there is hope for this Lazarus species. In 2004, the Zino's petrel was downgraded from Critically Endangered to Endangered on the IUCN Red List. The population, whilst clearly low, is currently stable and appears to be increasing slightly. Conservationists are to thank for this, as they seek to eradicate rats, provide artificial burrows and sow seeds for native vegetation to protect the nesting sites. In a world in which wildlife often seems to be descending into oblivion, the Zino's cry is not going unnoticed.

ABOVE Zino's petrel in flight, © Peter Flood
BELOW The Zino's petrel breeding site, © Hugo Romano



Forbidden: the Lake District's private Marilyn



Stan Abbott recounts a first ascent of the “forbidden” Swinside Hill, a Marilyn he likes to call Mount Swinside...

Our Lake District home sits at the heart of the Newlands Valley, a relatively quiet corner, albeit only a couple of miles from the honeypot of Keswick.

From the front door I have a choice of three modest fells: Causey Pike, Barrow, and Catbells. Each one rewards the walker with panoramic views that bely its relatively modest height (Causey Pike is the tallest, at just a whisker over 2,000ft).

The ascents of Causey Pike and Catbells also offer scrambling options that allow you to imagine you are tackling something much bigger, and – in the case of Catbells

– this is just one feature that makes it among the most popular short climbs in the Lakes.

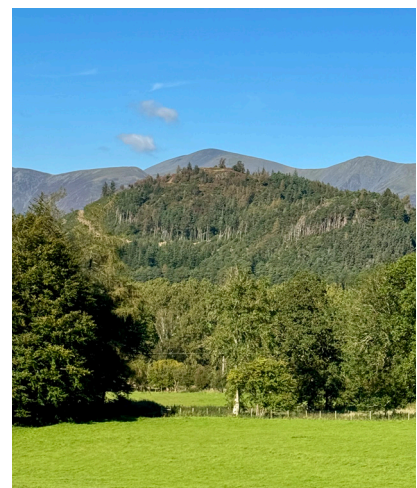
The entry to Newlands Valley, however, is guarded by a hill of rather more modest proportions, but somewhat more mystery. To the eye, Swinside Hill is unremarkable, being of less lofty proportions (803 feet or 245 metres) and quite regular in shape. Its intrigue for me had always been that it is a “private hill”, its enjoyment not available to the general public.

Unlike any of three aforementioned more senior peaks, Swinside just qualifies as a Marilyn: that’s to say it rises more loftily above its surroundings than the others. The land falls steeply from its summit to the encircling road, at 120 metres above sea level, but then more slowly right down to the shores of Derwentwater, at 82 metres, and the boggy Newlands Valley floor, just a little higher, to its other flank.

Officially, it has a prominence of 151.9-metres. So, it’s a Marilyn by a margin of no more than my own height! It is a club of which its slightly more distant and more loudly fêted neighbours, Skiddaw and Blencathra, are both members. Sadly, belonging in such austere company does not bring with it any automatic rights of access.



The “right to roam” in England, was granted as part of the 2000 Countryside and Rights of Way Act. However, the limitations of this legislation, when compared with Scotland or Scandinavia, are well known to the rambling community, and the particular exception of “enclosed land” is the one that



renders Swinside Hill “out of bounds”. It is enclosed for the purpose of rearing pheasant, partridge and other birds for shooting.

In this regard it seems quite unusual: while there are many areas upon which roaming is not permitted (reservoir catchments spring to mind), you can, seemingly, climb up most hills without judicial impediment, the most common exception being military ranges.



The idea that a hill could be enclosed as if it were a low-lying woodland had always irked me: despite its modest size I was confident the Swinside vista would compare well with that from Catbells, in whose sight line it sits. Until quite recently, most of the hill was forested, but over the last few years, there's been a gradual and seductive process of "strip-trees", making an assault on Swinside's summit all the more tempting as more and more of its underlying form becomes visible.

In a fantasy world in which I was Laird of Swinside and All Lands Thereabouts, I would build a modest folly on the summit, with a telescope pointing to the stars from its roof.

Back in the real world, the opportunity to at least discover the view from Swinside summit, came with a change in the leasehold of the Swinside Inn, our local, and an old coaching inn, latterly part of the Theakston's estate.

The Swinside Inn sits at the foot of Mount Swinside, on an elevated platform that affords great views towards Barrow, whose long screes of mine spoil glow reddish gold in summer evenings as the sun sets behind its top.

A couple of years ago, the licence was acquired by Mike Anderton, who also bought the cottage over the road, and nearby Uzzicar Farm. Some in the valley weren't happy: the Bright family had been in the cottage for generations and the tenants at Uzzicar had also been there since John Peel was a lad (De ye ken?). Letting rooms at the pub all got a makeover and new rooms were created in the cottage, the presumed aim being to relieve shooting guests and others of more of their cash.

The food offer at the pub also improved beyond recognition, albeit at prices that seem to have become the post-Covid, post-Brexit, Lake District norm. Mike was around the pub quite a bit and, chatting

with him, it quickly became apparent that, contrary to suppositions, he was no flash Harry, swanning onto the scene with new money.



"I'm very much your local lad," he said, while readily agreeing to permit a small group of OWPG members to ascend Mount Swinside. I recruited four members, but by the time a date was fixed, two were injured, one was on an expedition and the fourth had, sadly, died. So, as the day of the climb approached, I posted an invitation to the neighbourhood WhatsApp group. Although seemingly ignored by the most vocal critics of the pheasant shoot, four very interesting neighbours, none of whom we had previously met, did come along on the day, meaning our intrepid assault party numbered eight or ten in total.

Mike was on landlord duty at the Swinside Inn, but had taken the trouble to mark critical junctures in our ascent with cones, and, having concluded that we could manage without ropes, it was beneath a bright Spring sun that we set off up the forest track, ascending Mount Swinside via a gentle clockwise arc. The first couple of hundred feet are in mature woodland, but, as we gain the western shoulder, the track swings more sharply to the right and fine views north over Bassenthwaite open up.

Perhaps all too soon we find ourselves on the summit, where a few well-established trees rise from beds of blueberry. The panorama is every bit what I had hoped and expected it would be: east and south towards Catbells and then every subsequent summit on the Newlands Round; and then most of those on the Coledale Round, to the south-west and west; Basenthwaite

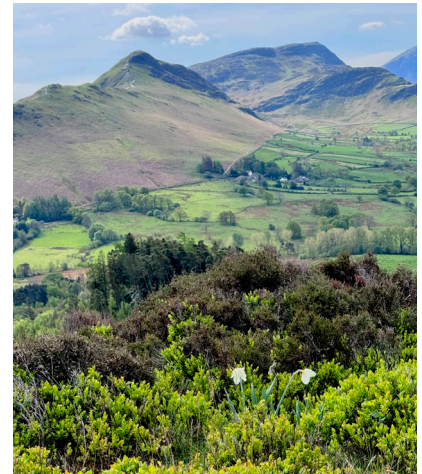
Lake, beneath Skiddaw's might, leads the eye towards the northern horizon, the Solway Firth and the hills of Galloway. A stand of taller non-native pines means you have to work just a little to get a clear view of Derwentwater and Keswick, to the north-east.

We lingered for some time on the summit, treasuring this new perspective on Newlands, before descending for lunch at the Swinside Inn.

Commonsense must surely dictate that Swinside Hill is not alone in being closed to the public, but – while many large areas are out of bounds – I can find few hills, and no other Marilyns. Out of bounds for military reasons is County Durham's highest summit, Mickel Fell (788 metres), but you can seek access permission from the Army at Warcop Camp. There may be Cheviot summits similarly afflicted. And then there's Mount Judd, a 500ft hill erected on private land out of spoil from Judkins Quarry, near Nuneaton.

Back home, another family of Swinside pheasants has jumped the fence and is larging it from our bird and squirrel feeders, tapping their beaks on the window should we dare to let supplies run low. Perhaps it's the quid pro quo!

Members who know of other forbidden

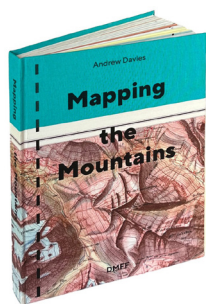


ascents, do drop me a line. Likewise, if you would like to join a future ascent of Mount Swinside. Please don't contact Mike Anderton directly. **Contact stan@gravity-consulting.com**



P10 TOP Author on the summit of Mount Swinside, with the Newlands Round behind, **P10 LEFT** Starting the ascent below Catbells, **P10 MIDDLE** Danger! **P10 RIGHT** Swinside from the foot of Catbells, Skiddaw behind, **ABOVE** Barrow with Causey Pike beyond, **LEFT** View north along Bassenthwaite, **RIGHT** Catbells and Newlands

Mountain maps rank amongst the most beautiful examples of cartography. That beauty becomes even starker when one realises the lengths to which early cartographers went to produce them. These unsung surveyors who hauled heavy equipment in all kinds of weathers to well-nigh inaccessible peaks to take measurements became explorers in their own right, perhaps the first true mountaineers. Mapping the Mountains is a new book which traces the development of this specialised discipline of cartography from Roman times to the present day.



The book asks the fundamental question: what makes a mountain map inherently different from any other kind of topographic map? All topographic maps, after all, are made by measuring spatial relationships on the ground and rendering them on a two-dimensional surface. Perhaps self-evidently, the answer lies in

a fairly accurate estimate of the size of the Earth, he also collated a gazetteer of coordinates for 8,000 locations in the Roman world by way of astronomical observation. By applying the principles of the Geographia, early Renaissance mapmakers were able to improve vastly on medieval maps of the world and the known continents.

The invention of the printing press in the mid-15th century enabled maps to be mass-produced and distributed widely. Because of its proximity to early centres of printing and publishing along the Rhine, most notably Basel, Switzerland became a front-runner in mapmaking. Under the sway of Ptolemy, early mapmakers such as Konrad Türist, Aegidius Tschudi, Sebastian Münster and Johann Stumpf started producing regional maps of the nascent Swiss confederacy, including depictions of mountainous cantons like Valais, Uri, Schwyz and Unterwalden.

Nevertheless, cartographic interest in mountains, glaciers and uninhabitable regions remained relatively non-existent: there was simply no incentive for producing detailed maps of mountains. In these early maps, fancifully embellished in the style of the cartographer, mountains were emphatically present, but peripheral, subordinate to the lines of communication along major valleys and across the main Alpine passes which linked major settlements. Little attempt was made to represent mountains in a two-dimensional

form, but rather as cones and molehills seen in perspective.

Planimetric maps, that is, those depicting elevated terrain from above

Mapping the Mountains

Andrew Davies on the history of mountain cartography

the fact that a third dimension must be introduced to represent the verticality of the landscape, thus presenting cartographers with two key obstacles. Firstly, how to measure vertical angles and distances in poorly navigable terrain, often where the field of vision is obstructed by intervening landforms. And secondly, how to translate this verticality onto a flat surface (i.e. the map) in a way and at a scale which is intelligible to the reader.

With their unprecedented levels of accuracy and detail, the beauty of modern-day mountain maps is matched only by their technical brilliance. Somehow, they are able to make a vertiginous mass of mountains come away from the page in a trick of the eye. This near-perfection – can a map ever be perfect? – has not, of course, been achieved overnight, but over centuries of evolving cartographic skills. The carefully crafted lines, hatching, contours, colours and shading on a map to depict relief are techniques that have been applied and refined by generations of cartographers to produce this illusion, based on painstaking measurements of heights, distances and angles taken in the most inhospitable of environments.

Mountain cartography has developed largely in parallel to the step-ups made in mainstream cartography. One early development, for example, was the ‘rediscovery’ of Ptolemy’s Geographia in the late Middle Ages, a time when overseas exploration by the major European powers was becoming de rigueur. Often called the father of geography, Claudius Ptolemy, probably of Greek origin, worked at the famous library in Alexandria in the 2nd century CE. Not only did he make

in a ‘plan view’ and reducing mountains to a two-dimensional form began appearing in the 17th century. Again, this was an innovation devised in Switzerland most notably by Hans Conrad Gyger, a cartographer who was tasked by the military authorities with drawing a map of north-eastern part of the confederacy. The 1667 map he produced presented the landscape from a vertical viewpoint using natural colours and shaded relief. Ironically, the map failed to have any influence on contemporary mapmakers since it was hidden away as a military secret.

Around the same time, in 1668 King Louis XIV of France appointed the Italian astronomer, Giovanni Domenico Cassini as director of the royal observatory in Paris. He was part of a plan to put France at the forefront of modern science. This included producing an accurate map of the nation, for scientific, military, administrative and economic purposes, based on geodetic principles. Geodesy is the science of accurately measuring the size and understanding the geometry of the Earth and it was under the auspices of Cassini that France harnessed the two key tools to achieve this: astronomy, the observation of celestial objects to accurately pinpoint a location; and triangulation, measuring relationships between the lengths and

angles of fixed points of a triangle. The French were the first to exploit these principles on a large scale for mapping purposes.

Between 1730 and 1744, the territory of France was calibrated by a network of 800 triangles. Over later decades, the topographic details were filled in, involving the mapping of the country’s mountains, rivers, towns and villages. It wasn’t until the 1770s that maps of the French Alps



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© National Library of Scotland

were published, marking completion of the project. Today, these maps reflect the fact that the surveyors were ill-equipped to map mountains in detail, but at the time the one hundred and eighty sheets of France produced at a scale of 1:86,400, were unrivalled in their completeness and cartographic precision.

Neither was the importance of accurate maps lost on the military. In Britain, the first detailed maps that appeared were not in the metropolitan south, but in the Highlands of Scotland. In 1746, after finally quashing a number of armed rebellions against the British monarchy which had broken out in the mountainous north over preceding decades, it was decided to carry out a detailed survey of the Highlands. The man in charge was a young surveyor called William Roy and with teams of surveyors in the field and cartographic draughtsmen in the office, he succeeded in mapping the whole of Scotland by 1755. 10 years later, William Roy rose to become the Surveyor General of Great Britain and helped found Britain's national mapping agency, the Ordnance Survey.

By 1800, triangulation had been adopted by most European nations for mapping. Perhaps the most ambitious triangulation project of the era however, was the Great Trigonometrical Survey of India, carried out in British-held India. Starting in 1802, over a period of five decades, the project worked its way from the southernmost tip of the sub-continent north to the Himalayas, a distance of over 2,900 kilometres. In 1849, after painstaking measurements from locations in the Himalayan foothills, a mountain labelled Peak XV was calculated as being over 29,000 feet (8,800 metres) and thus deemed to be the highest peak in the Himalaya. Peak XV was later named in recognition of the head of the Survey, George Everest.

The first maps of the Himalaya appeared in the 1860s, more specifically, in the Karakorum, in the north-western extremity of British-held India, where K2 (8,611m) was identified as the highest

peak. It is worth noting that the heights scaled by the surveyors were at altitudes far in excess of those in the Alps. The British were also eager to map what lay in hostile, forbidden lands beyond the Himalaya, such as Tibet, which was a complete blank on the map. Instead of sending their own surveyors into these uncharted tracts, who would have most probably faced death, they recruited locals who were trained in route surveying. They would travel the unknown byways of Central Asia in disguise, equipped with hidden instrumentation, counting their steps and taking measurements, before eventually coming back with the essential data for mapping: these explorers, known as the 'Pundits', were essentially secret agents acting on behalf of a hostile foreign power. Perhaps the most famous of these was Kishen Singh, who between 1878 and 1882, clocked up 4,500 kilometres, mapping huge unknown tracts of land in Tibet, Mongolia and China under the most impoverished conditions. His feats were as creditable, if not more so, than contemporary European explorers who were subject to much less inhospitable circumstances.

Meanwhile, the nascent sport of mountaineering was creating a need for reliable maps of the Alps in the mid-19th century. At the time, high mountain mapping was still an imperfect science, as the deficiencies of the 1770's maps of the French Alps had shown. The Carte d'État Major (1820-1866) aimed at improving on these and surveyors were sent to the Pyrenees and the Alps to render the mountains more faithfully. When the famous English climber, Edward Whymper, arrived on a peak-bagging mission in the Les Écrins massif in 1861, he was astounded to find a stone shelter on the summit of Mont Pelvoux (3946m). It had been built by Captain Adrien Durand, a surveyor responsible for carrying out triangulation for the Carte d'État Major. During his work on the project, it is estimated he climbed no fewer than forty peaks over 2500 metres and five over 3,000 metres and many of them, including his scaling of Mont Pelvoux in 1828, were first ascents, decades before mountaineering became mainstream.

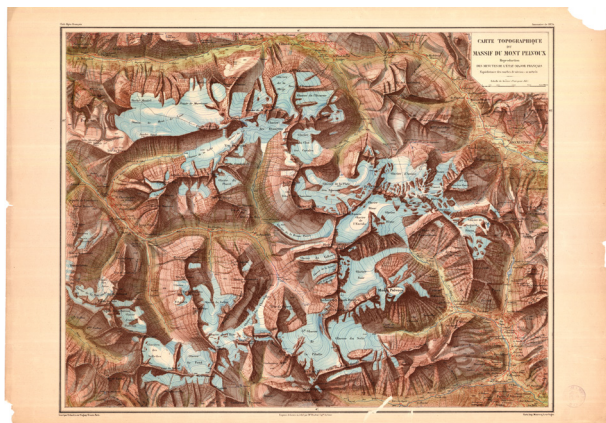
In terms of accuracy, the Carte d'État Major map of Les Écrins at a scale of 1:80,000 (which only appeared in 1866) was matched,



even outstripped, by the smaller scale 1:100,000 Dufour map of Switzerland, created between 1845 and 1865. General Henri-Guillaume Dufour, in charge of the project, first established a triangulation network, which for the first time joined areas to the north of the Alps with those to the south and served as the reference system for the 'Dufour Map'. The resulting map was especially significant for its innovative depiction of mountain relief, using a technique known as oblique-light hachuring, a form of shading which gave the landscape a distinct three-dimensional impression. The Dufour Map became an icon of Swiss ingenuity and in 1863 the Swiss Federal Council rechristened the

highest point of Monte Rosa, also the highest point in Switzerland, the Dufourspitze (4634m).

Even so, contemporary maps, though increasingly accurate, were not always suitable for mountaineering purposes. Not least, the scales were too small and in the latter half of the 19th century, the newly forged Alpine clubs made mapping one of their priorities, producing ad hoc maps of popular mountain ranges, such as Mont Blanc, Les Écrins or the Gross Glockner. The German and Austrian Alpine Clubs, which amalgamated in 1874 were amongst the first to cover a wider range of regions and by the turn of the century they were producing maps of the main mountain ranges in the



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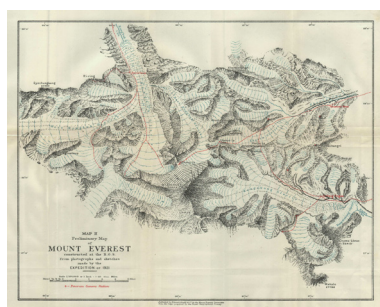
Eastern Alps and at scale of 1:25,000. Remarkably, almost all the sheets that were produced back then can still be purchased in their modern-day versions today. Since the 1930s the club has also been producing a number of maps outside Europe, most notably in the Andes and the Himalaya.

Expedition mapping became prevalent in the first half of the 20th century. Often these expeditions had a heavy focus on national pride and prestige and part of their remit was to bring back scientific data, invariably including a map. In 1906, the famous Italian explorer, the Duke of the Abruzzi, set out on an expedition to unveil the mystery of an obscure, cloud-swathed mountain range in Equatorial Africa called the Ruwenzori, only identified by European travellers 20 years previously. In a military-style campaign, his mission made several inaugural ascents, unveiled the topography of the mountains in the form of a map, and brought back scientific data of climatological, geological and botanical interest. Perhaps the most abiding takeaway from the expedition were the stunning photographs of the cloud-free mountains taken by Vittorio Sella.

Having lost out in the race to the North and South Poles, after the First World War, the British were hell-bent on conquering Mount Everest. At the time of the first reconnaissance mission in 1921, the mountain was described as 'shy and retiring' and had not been inspected from close-up. The main aim of this British-led expedition was to create a detailed map of the mountain, and more specifically to identify assault routes for future attempts in the years ahead. The exceptionally concise map that resulted was credited to a young Canadian cartographer, Oliver Wheeler, who later went on to become Surveyor of India.

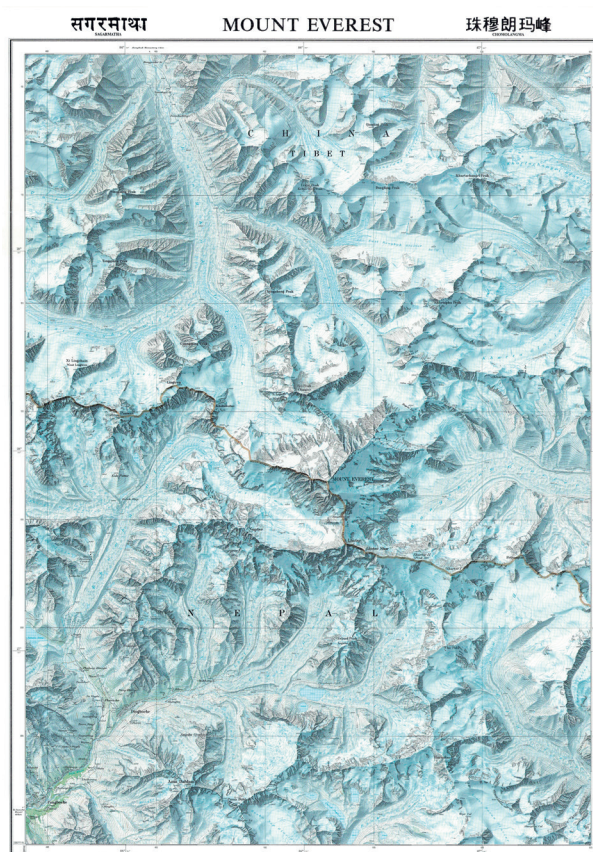
Many surveyors, like Captain Adrien Armand Durand in the French Alps, became accomplished mountaineers, often unnoticed, in the course of their day-to-day work. But the reverse was also true. Many mountaineers learned the art of surveying because it was part of the skills set they needed to help an expedition succeed.

Some like Bradford Washburn, went further. A Harvard graduate, Washburn was one of the America's leading mountaineers in the



1930s and 1940s making several first ascents in the mountainous wastes of Alaska and the Yukon, where his modus operandi was opening up supply routes in inaccessible areas by plane. Washburn

carried out photographic reconnaissance of the terrain beforehand from the air, which gave him a super keen eye for the topography. In 1938 he was appointed director of the Boston Science Museum. Alongside mountaineering and photography, he struck out on another career path as museum curator and cartographer. With his unrivalled knowledge of Alaska, he entered into a collaboration with the Swiss mapping agency (now swisstopo) to produce the first detailed map of the Mount McKinley range (now Denali) in 1960. Incorporating many familiar Swiss cartographic features, it was the first time that the topographic service had ever printed a map outside Switzerland. In the 1970s, he spent the best part of a decade working with Swiss cartographers on a map of the Grand Canyon, which incorporated a depiction of relief which was unprecedented in its detail. The map was published in the July 1978 issue of the National Geographic. His magnum opus came towards the end of his



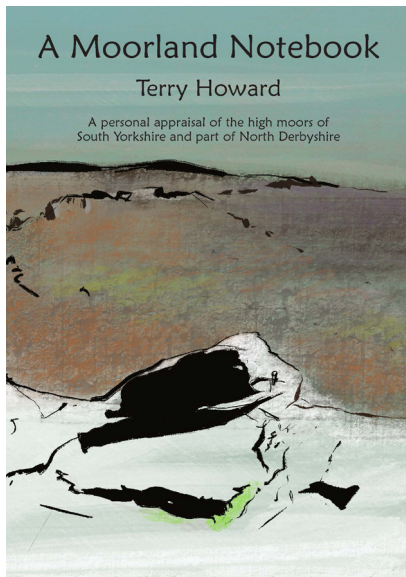
© Swiss Foundation for Alpine Research

life: a 1:50,000 map of Mount Everest made in collaboration with swisstopo and the National Geographic. Composed of data from 160 aerial photographs taken at an altitude of 13,000 metres and using historical and contemporary ground surveying, the project required the permission of the Chinese and Nepalese authorities. The 1988 map was hailed as a masterpiece of Swiss mapmaking and marked the apex of Washburn's career as a cartographer. Almost 40 years later, its exquisiteness, practicability and historical value remain unsurpassed today.

It is perhaps impossible to imagine in our modern world of satellite navigation, where our mobile devices allow us to fix our location with pinpoint accuracy, yet mountaineering - or the simple pleasures of a walk in the mountains - would have been nigh on impossible without the mapmakers of yesteryear. The book, Mapping the Mountains, has been written in homage to the, often anonymous, surveyors and pioneers who braved hostile mountain environments to make it all possible. **For publication details, go to: www.mappingthemountains.eu**

OWPG's Roly Smith reviews the latest outdoor books

If you have a recent book that you'd like us to review here, please get in touch with the Editor (see page 2)



A Moorland Notebook

Terry Howard

Peakrill Press, £12 (pb)

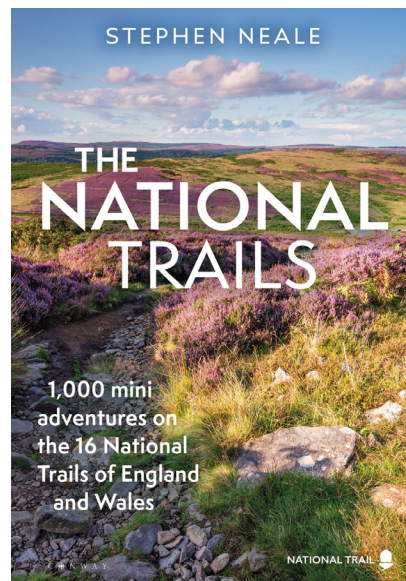
No one knows more about the moorlands of South Yorkshire and the northern Peak than Terry Howard, respected Rambler, campaigner and founder of SCAM – the Sheffield Campaign for Access to Moorland (of which I was proud to be a member). He wrote this book, in which he eloquently expresses his deeply-held love of the moors, in 1993 and it is now welcomingly revised and updated by the author and published by local publisher Peakrill Press.

It includes details of 11 walks in the region, illustrated by the author's maps, based on those executed by one of his heroes, GHB Ward, in his famous *Sheffield Clarion Handbooks*. But included after each walk are several blank pages – I counted a total of 27 – which invite the reader to provide their own notes or sketches about each walk. The reason is explained, but whether modern walkers do make such notes and will think 35 per cent of the pages in a 130-page book are blank remains to be seen.

Of course the greatest change in access legislation since the book was first published is the Countryside and Access to the Countryside Act of 2000, which gave walkers access to most mountain and moorland in Britain – thus fulfilling the original objective of SCAM. The author explains how SCAM was set up after the 50th anniversary celebrations of the Kinder Scout Mass Trespass in 1982,

and how it campaigned vigorously with several organised trespasses to change the law. "I always wanted our trespass walks to be more than just trying to make a political point," he writes. "The moors offer education, discovery and physical exercise, and we wanted to share this, and to allow people to discover the history and heritage they had been deprived of."

And the author is uniquely placed to describe these often forgotten aspects of the moors. Some recent examples featured in the book include Great and Little Hull, two previously lost small hills behind Stanage Edge, and T'owd Woman Stone, a 2.5 m high prehistoric standing stone on the moors above Bamford and Hathersage, which may have once been the tallest in the Peak.



The National Trails

Stephen Neale

Conway, £20 (pb)

I learnt a new word in the author's introduction to this handsome gazetteer for things to do and places to go on the 16 National Trails of Britain. It is "oxytocin" and apparently it is produced by people listening or telling stories, or simply when we get intimate with nature.

Describing 1,000 "hidden" (though none are truly hidden) places along the National Trails, from the Peddars Way to the granddaddy of them all, Tom Stephenson's Pennine Way, the author provides what are essentially spiritual introductions to each trail. Examples are: "Touch the void

in lucid dreams" for the Yorkshire Wolds Way, or "The Ridgeway is more connected to magic, wizards and wise women than any other National Trail..."

But, as he admits in his introduction, the book was written, edited and put together by "more than 100 people" between 2023 and 2025. As the book seems to be primarily a gazetteer of things to do and places to go and stay along the trails, as opposed to a traditional directional walking guide, we are left to wonder exactly who those contributors were.

And I was a little surprised to read in the description of Sycamore Gap in the Hadrian's Wall chapter merely described as "The most famous section of the path" with no reference at all to its recent senseless felling. It is briefly acknowledged in the Pennine Way North chapter with the terse note "The tree will return," but with the enormous public interest in the recent imprisonment of the offenders, I think really think it was worth a little more. Many of the introductions hardly describe the physical features of the character of the trail. That for the South West Path southern section, for example describes the attractions and dangers of swimming in coastal waters, while the Coast Path (North and East) is devoted to the delights of foraging for seafood, with the proviso of always asking for permission and saying "thank you" when you do so.

There are some jarring abbreviations in the text, such as "Rez" for reservoirs and "Ln" for lane, and although the book is subtitled "1,000 mini adventures" along the trails, I'm afraid I can't see details of B & Bs and caravan parks as being particularly adventurous

The Parallel Path

Jean Ashworth

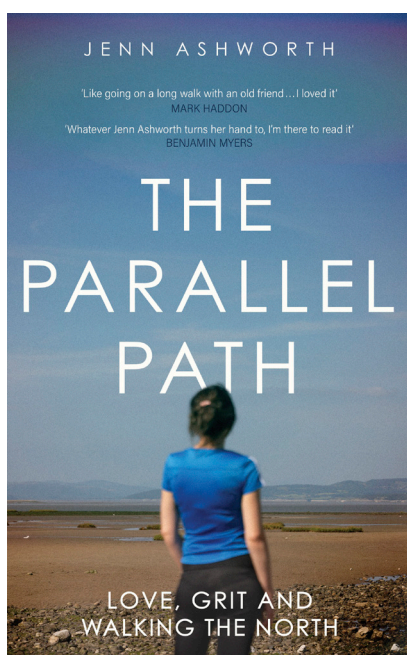
Sceptre, £20 (hb)

This is another in the recent flood of introspective, highly personalised accounts of a long walk, in this case Alfred Wainwright's 190-mile Coast to Coast, soon to become officially recognised as a National Trail. It follows works like Raynor Winn's now highly-controversial but best-selling *The Salt Path* on the South West Coast Path and Anita Sethi's *I Belong Here* on the Pennine Way.

In this case the author, a professor of writing at Lancaster University, was

escaping from the Covid lockdown and an overwhelming feeling of being mentally burnt out. So she decided, with the loyal backing of her husband, to leave him and their young son and daughter behind and embark on the Coast to Coast, from St Bees in Cumbria to Robin Hood's Bay in Yorkshire, crossing the three Nationals Parks of the Lake District, the Yorkshire Dales and the North York Moors en route. She had no experience of long distance walking before, so it's fair to say she approached the walk with some trepidation, but as many have experienced before, found that she grew in strength and confidence as she went, despite suffering crippling bouts of tinnitus towards the end of the walk.

But what was really different and unusual about Ashworth's journey, honestly, beautifully and often amusingly described, is that she kept in contact with a very dear friend every day along the way, through him leaving previously posted letters for her at her various B & B stopping points. Clive, her friend and neighbour, was dying from cancer, but the pair had built up a strong, purely platonic relationship, and his constant encouragement was to give her walk vital impetus.



In the news - Discovering Dartmoor

Check out member Julian Baird's You Tube channel where he has published a 5 part video series 'Discovering Dartmoor'

youtube.com/@jbairdexp & discoveringdartmoor.com

In the news - Jon Sparks

Following his battle with cancer, Sir Chris Hoy is promoting a new cycle sportive event called Tour de 4, to show that people with cancer can still do amazing things, and to raise funds for cancer charities. Now living with his own diagnosis, Jon Sparks (OWPG's Substack editor) will be tackling the 37 mile blue route, further than he's ridden for some time.

He's created a GoFundMe page so please take a look if you'd like to support both the fight against cancer and those living with it: <https://tinyurl.com/54s49rz4>

MY FAVOURITE KIT

Alf Alderson

BLACK DIAMOND AVALUNG PACK

The coming ski season will be the twentieth in which I've used my Black Diamond Avalung pack – so if nothing else, it has to be praised for endurance and longevity. Admittedly, there have been a number of repairs along the way, and parts of the pack are now held together with duct tape, but that also says a lot about it – if it wasn't a great piece of kit I would never have bothered with those repairs.

I should perhaps explain the peculiar name of the pack before I extol its virtues; it incorporates a 'breathing tube', which without going into detail is designed to help you survive if caught in an avalanche. Just how effective this would actually be I'm fortunately yet to find out (and I hope I never do), but that isn't really what I like so much about the pack. No, it's the simple yet effective design – there's one compartment for your avalanche safety gear, a second (with a hydration system sleeve) for the rest of your kit, and a zippered internal pocket for stuff like sunglasses, knife and suncream, along with external attachments for skis, poles, axe etc. – everything you need, and nowt you don't.



I've used the pack for everything from mornings thrashing around in fresh powder to hut-to-hut ski tours, and it fits so comfortably I don't even notice I'm wearing it, although friends notice when I'm not – last winter someone remarked on the fact that I was skiing without my pack one day, which is a measure of how much I actually use it.

It's reaching the end of its life now, despite all my repairs, and it will be like saying goodbye to an old friend when I take it off for the last time – we've had some great days together in mountains all over the world; I wonder if I can find another one of the same vintage on EBay?

But even if I could, it wouldn't be the same as skiing with my faithful old friend.

What is your favourite piece of kit?

Let us know. Submit 300-500 words and 1 or 2 pictures to editor@owpg.org.uk