



The Disabled Rambler

The Newsletter of the Disabled Ramblers

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Hello again

Doesn't time fly? It only seems a month or so ago when I was writing this introduction in the last Newsletter and now the blue bells have come and gone, the flowers are out, and the weather is getting much warmer so that we can get out and about again.

During May Bernard and I led the Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire Tour and thoroughly enjoyed ourselves meeting and talking with so many of you. Yes, it was hard work, but very rewarding, and all the preparation beforehand paid off. I got to know many of the Rangers, Wardens and Site Managers of the venues we visited and they couldn't have been more helpful in their emails and telephone calls and one, Joe, a ranger at Hardwick Hall, even walked part of the route with us. Our thanks must also go to John Cuthbertson who was always on hand during the preparations with sound advice to us on leading our first rambles.

This month there are rambles in North Yorkshire with Ian Lawson and John Cuthbertson closely followed with the Borders with Hugh Williamson, James Babington-Smith and John. If you can, take a look at the photos on the web to see what they got up to.

The next Newsletter deadline is **Monday 11th September**

Judy

Where ever we live there are organisations that affect the everyday lives of the disabled community. Each and every one of them can affect your quality of life by either putting barriers across public rights of way or by making them wheelchair and disabled friendly. I am fortunate to live in a National Park whose work on footpaths and bridleways is constant. They have a Disabled Action Group which influences their work. In additional we have the Borough Council, the National Trust, English Heritage, Yorkshire Water and the Forestry Commission who all can make access onto the land that they manage easier for the disabled community. In my experience they will respond if an access issue is raised with them. So if you cannot easily find accessible routes on their website point it out. If their "easy access hazard free" routes are anything but, then invite them to sit in a wheelchair and find out for themselves how easy or hazard free the routes are. It is effective. An exchange of emails that lasted 2 hours with Yorkshire Water got the promise of a RADAR key operated kissing gate to be installed in place of the barrier that prevents wheelchair users from enjoying the lakeside walk that is perfect for any wheelchair. All the organisations that affect your quality of life are approachable and unlikely to ignore a well presented request to improve access. All you need to do is ask ! After all shy bairns get no sweets! **Ian Lawson**

: In Warminster we have a Town Park with a lake and a circular path. I have scooted round :
: that several times in the past. It does however lead on to a Nature Reserve (which covers the :
: distance of 3 or 4 fields leading to the edge of town). Yes, you can guess what is coming I :
: decided to go through the Nature Reserve. I had not used that for the past five years when I :
: used it for walking my dog when I was more able.

: Thank goodness the fine afternoon had attracted out walkers, some with dogs and mums with :
: children. How easy it is not to notice gates as a walker!! Yes, I encountered two kissing gates :
: and two spring gates. Very fortunately there were willing walkers there to help me, encourage :
: the right steering through the kissing gates etc. although at the last of these I had to put my :
: scooter into manual and push it for a few feet before getting back on and reversing back on to :
: the country lane. For the return journey I stuck first of all to the country lane and then through a :
: small housing estate and back into the town centre and home - all of which I knew from the :
: days when I had a car - this time I was glad to find dropped kerbs in plenty. So "all is well :
: which ends well"

: **Winifred Charman**

My Freedom from the Cage— Vincent Murray

It begins with two very good friends of mine, Judy and Bernard Cunningham. We were talking one evening about walking and how much they enjoyed it. I explained how much I used to enjoy walking too but unfortunately now I'm unable to walk long distances. They explained to me about Disabled Ramblers and using a suitable mobility scooter. As I am a proud person and have been independent most of my life, I didn't think it was for me. So I left it for while to think about and decided if I wanted to get my freedom back to ramble in the countryside again I would have to make a decision. Next time I visited Judy and Bernard they talked more about joining the Disabled Ramblers and explained it more fully to me and so I made a decision to join. They helped me to fill in the application form, and I made my first bookings to the Cannock Chase rambles earlier this year. This was a new experience for me which I really enjoyed, especially meeting up with new people.

In May, I went on the Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire Tour, and now I feel I have my freedom back, to enable me to get out and about again without pain and suffering. This is wonderful and I would thoroughly recommend it to anyone who wants to be free and independent again and enjoy the countryside.

Inside the Disabled Ramblers: No 2 - by Jan Kemp

2017 began, as usual, with **The AGM**, this year at Birches Valley Visitors' Centre in Staffs. John Cuthbertson gave a review of 2016 and you can see an outline of the presentation at <https://www.dropbox.com/s/dzsok7rievrgph9/AGM%202017%20Chairman%27s%20Report.pdf?dl=0>.

He opened by talking about the people and events which first brought DR into existence and then he looked in detail at the contribution of so many people to our success last year. This link can show the photos and the text but you'll miss out on the stories people told on the day.

There was a round of applause for Robin Helby (currently our technical consultant) for all the work and ideas he's put in since 1998. You'll be seeing more of him and his wife on their adapted Trumper this year. Applause also for Eileen Tomlinson for her five years as our Treasurer, and her current work in running rambles and managing our Facebook site. Many other members were thanked for their contributions including, in particular, Val Rawlings & Ron Lyon for their continuing hard work.



The Wenman Trophy, for the most outstanding contribution to DR in 2016, went to Liz and John Cuthbertson. We all know how hard John works but not everyone knows how much Liz puts into DR behind the scenes—we are very grateful for all that they do.

Rhiannon Robinson, our new Treasurer, gave a detailed presentation on the financial position which, thanks to some large bequests, is currently strong. There was worry, though, that our outgoings last year were high and in particular that the cost of towing two trailers with loan scooters to rambles was very high. It was proposed to manage this by limiting loan scooters to four and selling the two old Trampers and the trailer currently kept in Southport. This provoked much discussion, with strong requests to keep the 'Southport' Trampers and trailer. The committee said they would re-examine the matter, and since then ways have been found to keep the equipment, at least for 2017, in the hope that members will be able to make good use of it on locally organised rambles. Many thanks to Eileen Tomlinson and Bob & Pam Teesdale for making this possible. The Treasurer's Report & Financial Statements were circulated to all members in April.

After the formal business, Laura May presented the findings of her research on access to the countryside for the disabled. Laura, now 22, was paralysed when she was 11. She is now an Outdoor Studies student at Manchester Metropolitan University, Cheshire, and 71 members of DR took part in the survey which underpinned her dissertation. Laura was a lively speaker and as an avid sit skier, mountain triker and rock climber was perhaps a little surprised to find herself in a room full of people just as keen as she is to explore the outdoors, whatever their disability.

Our second speaker was Allie Pennington, who set up Freedom Wizard, a charity which helps more people get back into the countryside. She manages a fleet of all terrain wheelchairs and guides guests over the best of rugged Britain and she brought along one of her all-terrain vehicles so that anyone who wanted to could test it out.

The AGM wound up with a shared meal and one of Del Durham's quizzes – at which my table performed pathetically. It didn't matter though because everyone got a prize.

Many thanks to the people who contributed to such a successful AGM.



Allie Pennington and Laura May who gave presentations at the AGM

Inside the Disabled Ramblers: No 2 - by Jan Kemp Cont....

On another topic, there have been some questions about **Cat 3* (Cat 3 starred) Rambles** and it might be useful to look at some of the ideas behind the starred categories.

Lots of people look forward to Cat 3 rambles because they reach wild places and high viewpoints – places you might hesitate to try to reach alone, and couldn't possibly reach without an off-road scooter. And we're all used to the idea that Cat 3s are going to be more demanding than other categories – a bit of a challenge.

The committee itself thought that way and so introduced the idea that, for safety's sake, inexperienced members should start on a Cat 2, then by the time they did their first Cat 3 they'd be used to controlling powerful off-road machines on (sometimes) narrow paths and (always) close to other riders and walkers.

That was fine until we realised it meant that some new members couldn't possibly "qualify" for the rambles they wanted to do. If anyone joined mid-season there were simply not enough Cat 2s at times and places people could manage ahead of the Cat 3 tours they were interested in.

So we thought again and saw that we didn't need a crude blanket ban on Cat 3s. Instead we could expand the number of rambles open to new members by looking at each ramble in detail, working out which routes would stay safe for an inexperienced person if they made a mistake. That's how the Cat 3* (Cat 3 starred) Ramble came into existence - describing routes which are very much Cat 3s but where it seems to us that there are no dangers like very steep climbs where a beginner could tip over backwards and no steep drop-offs where someone who had not yet learned to control their speed and steering might run off the edge. All the rambles suitable for a first ramble, whatever category, are now marked with a star on the booking form.

On Cat 3* Rambles we'll still reach the wild places over routes that might sometimes be tricky – but if something should go wrong for an inexperienced member we can be as confident as we possibly can be that no one will get hurt.

Birches Valley and Abraham's Valley, Staffordshire 2nd and 3rd April

A large group of members enjoyed the rambles which were led by John Cuthbertson over the vast area of Cannock Chase on the 2 days following our AGM. During one of the rambles we were suddenly confronted by a low flying military aircraft coming directly towards us that seemed to only just skim over the trees, which was quite scary at the time, and it wasn't even mentioned on the Risk Assessment. Judy



Have you lost an Olive Green Waterproof?

One was found in a zipped bag, on the back of one of the Loan Scooters in the MSU. If this is yours please contact me on

jac4912@yahoo.co.uk Judy

How I came to get my Trampler and join DR—Emma Wells

I first wanted a Trampler at the Game Fair at Harewood House in 2014. It had been very wet and torrential rain was forecast and boy did it rain. I was on my Batricar Countryman scooter Trixie when a voice called over to me “By the end of today there’ll only be you and the Trampers that will be able to get round”. It was David on the Trampler stand so he persuaded me to try one. I took it for a spin round a couple of rows of stands and was in love. Then I found the price and knew I could never afford one. I went home and looked for second hand ones but they were still out of my price range.

What happened then was, sadly, my sister Rachel died of cancer but very kindly left me some money and I knew exactly what I should do with it. Now some things are meant to be. At that time there wasn’t a second hand Trampler to be had—typical so I rang 3 dealers to see if they ever got any, two of them said hardly ever but one said there might be a possibility of one coming up and said he would come back to me. He rang me back the following day to say a customer had bought one three months ago but had passed away hardly getting the chance to use it. He put me in touch with the family and my husband Nick and I ended up driving up to near Kendal to buy the scooter. Rachel had obviously been looking down on me because where it came from was 170 miles away but very close to where we went to as children as our uncle had a holiday cottage there. The son told me the only walk that his father had taken with the Trampler was up Longsledale, I can’t count how many times I’d previously done that walk.



I named my Trampler Trevor. We live in a beautiful area so I take him out in the woods and our fields at least twice a day. When she stayed with me Rachel loved coming out with the dogs and me so she’s always with me in my thoughts and I know she would have approved of what I spent her bequest on.

Now I wanted a trailer for him and that’s how I found the Disabled Ramblers, I googled second hand Trampler Trailer and up you came.... I didn’t find a trailer for a very long time but now have one that Nick modified so Trevor fits perfectly.

I’ve been all over with Trevor having a great time staying all week at Burghley Horse Trials - it was amazing and even on cross country day the battery never fell below 54%.

When the 2017 programme came out I saw the Clumber Park ramble so booked myself on. What a great time I had with a friend of mine despite the damp and I was over the moon when Stuart showed me the drinks tray he’d come up with and then kindly gave me his. I also couldn’t believe how brilliantly a trailer transformed into a disabled loo at lunchtime –well done whoever designed that. In fact, I enjoyed the day so much a few days later I took another friend on the Shipley Country Park Ramble. It was damp again but didn’t spoil the day. What a lovely area with such beautiful views and everybody was so friendly and made us feel very welcome. I’m looking forward to coming on many more so thank you everybody for all the hard work you all put in.



LATTERBARROW

is the small mountain behind my house - a popular walk from Hawkshead. I used to take visitors up there to see the stunning view.

I haven’t managed it for many years now; at least twenty. The last time was one Easter with a group of local children in my Watch group when we rolled our boiled eggs all the way down. They are all grown up now. I will

attempt the ascent again on 9th June to raise money for the new charity Freedom Wizard (Allie Pennington was at the DR AGM) who will provide the buggy for people like me to have the amazing experience of going to the top of a mountain. **Jean Crosbie**

IF I make it you can sponsor me and contribute via

<http://www.crowdfunder.co.uk/all-terrain-electric-wheelchair-fund>

Nottinghamshire & Derbyshire Tour—May



Monday 15th May - Clumber Park

We started the week at Clumber Park with a shower but the weather improved later for the group of 11 scooters and 13 walkers. The bluebells and rhododendron were in bloom which added to the lovely scenery throughout the park. We stopped at Hardwick Village for lunch alongside the lake before continuing back to the Visitor Centre passing lots of wildlife and woodland.



Tuesday 16th May - Hardwick Hall

There was a sharp shower early on in our ramble so we sheltered at the Park Centre for our coffee break until it passed then continued passing the Row Ponds and Mill Pond across the fields to Broadoak Hill for lunch overlooking Hardwick Hall. We then continued passing Ault Hucknal church and returned into the park.



Thursday 18th May - Carsington Water

It was a beautiful day that greeted us at Carsington Water and continued warming up throughout the day for the group of 25. It was truly a picnic as we were basking in the sunshine on the hills overlooking the reservoir.



Friday 19th May—Shipley Country Park

Shipley Park was our last ramble and it started and continued wet which seemed to put off some but nevertheless we enjoyed our visit. Our lunch break was planned for the site of the remains of Shipley Hall but when our members saw what was on the menu at the Nutbrook Café it was decided to spend it there instead. We were joined at Derby Lodge by Vas, our webmaster, who took photos and walked with us back to the Visitor Centre where he was amazed how 4 Trampers fitted snugly into the back of the MSU trailer.



A big 'Thank you' to all members and guests who made this a successful tour—Judy & Bernard