



# The Disabled Rambler

## The Newsletter of the Disabled Ramblers

A charitable company: Registered Charity No. 1103508

[www.disabledramblers.co.uk](http://www.disabledramblers.co.uk)

SPRING 2014



### Editor's Ramblings

The 2014 rambling season got off to a wet but well supported start near Milton Keynes on the Friday before the AGM, the other two rambles of the tour being blessed with more clement weather. You will remember that in the last issue I highlighted DR's likely inability to provide loan scooters on rambles in 2014 as Robin Helby would be unable to tow the Mobile Support Unit (MSU) trailer to rambles. However, thanks to a lot of work from many people, most rambles will have at least three and often as many as seven loan scooters available.

The introduction of Regional Representatives - and especially regional rambles - has brought a new dimension to DR which is already benefitting those who are unable to travel far. Accordingly, page 2 is devoted to regional rambling. As a Regional Representative, I can say that potential members seem pleased to be contacted by someone in their own locality who understands their problems - especially as regards local terrain and logistics. Regional rambles are proving a great success despite the fact that we are unable to provide loan scooters or the other supports available on the national programme. However, the preparation and safety aspects of regional rambles are the same.

You might be surprised to know that work is already well advanced on the 2015 ramble programme! A skeleton timetable has been developed and John Cuthbertson is looking for rambles from Regional Representatives but he welcomes ideas for potential rambles from anybody and can be contacted at [jrvcuthbertson@hotmail.com](mailto:jrvcuthbertson@hotmail.com).



With thanks to Anne Webber

Can I wish you all an enjoyable ramble season with safe, uncomplicated travel, unlike our friend on the right!

### DR supports Winchcombe Riverside path.

A year ago DR gave its support to a project to surface a riverside path in Winchcombe to allow access for mothers with buggies, walkers with disabilities and wheelchair users. Winchcombe Walkers are Welcome (WWaW); a local community based group and part of the National Walkers are Welcome Network; has raised over £24,000 to improve the footpath and have written to thank us for our (non-financial) support. The route will be dressed with stone; have new gates and footbridges and in places the gradient will be reduced. Work is planned to start in June and take four to six weeks.

Further funding for the project has come from Cotswold Voluntary Wardens Countryside Fund and the Gloucestershire Ramblers, with the bulk coming from a Tewkesbury Borough Council Capital Grant and the Gloucestershire Environmental Trust with landfill tax contributions donated by Cory Environmental.



Ilmington, Foxcote Estate in the Cotswolds



Wyre Estuary



Calder Vale



By one of the seven pools in Sutton Park, Sutton Coldfield

# LET'S GO REGIONAL RAMBLING



Farley mount



Burley , New Forest

# DISABLED RAMBLERS AGM 2014

Held on Saturday 27th April



L-R Eileen Tomlinson (Treasurer), Tony Dickens (Chairman) Val Rawlings (Secretary)

## **(Edited) CHAIRMAN'S REPORT by Tony Dickens**

This AGM I'm reporting on a very busy and demanding year for the committee and I would like to start by expressing my personal thanks to them all.

The 2013 Rambles Programme comprised of six tours visiting five main areas and was complemented by many Regional Rambles. This has been a key growth area for DR in the past year and it's good to see one of our long term objectives beginning to flourish. I'm confident that in time this feature will encourage more people to join DR, especially those that have a very limited ability to travel. The 2014 Rambles Programme was ready and up on the website before the end of 2013, which is such a great help to members in planning their year and booking accommodation. A special thanks to John Cuthbertson for achieving this.

You will all know of the stroke suffered by Robin's wife last October, which has meant that he has had to withdraw from providing the magnificent service that he has given for so many years. It was initially feared that we might be unable to provide loan scooters at all for the 2014 programme but the committee has put in a huge amount of time and effort to address this problem and members have come forward with offers of practical help. A special mention must be made of the offer by Veronica Jones and her husband, to tow the original MSU with four scooters to sixteen rambles in the 2014 main programme including the entire Devon Tour. Additional scooters plus a new trailer have been added to our fleet so, with minor exceptions, rambles have at least three and often as many as seven loan scooters available. This is a truly outstanding result so a very big thank you is due to all those involved in bringing this about.

Membership recently stood at 174 compared with over 200 at the end of last year. Such fluctuations are not unusual in organisations such as ours. However, since the excellent piece of film on BBC News there has been an upsurge of contacts and applications to join.

The vast majority of members have signed up to receiving all their communications electronically by email. This is most welcome and saves a great deal of time and money for printing. Our splendid website continues to be an ongoing source of news, reports, comments, items for sale and much more – and it's always bang up to date!

On a sadder note, we hear of six members who have passed on since the last AGM, namely Don Smith, Barney Wilson, Monica Jackson, Ray Allen, Marion Duncan and Chris Alder. They will be missed by all who knew them.

We are extremely fortunate to have officers in place now that are highly efficient and proactive in what they do and support each other so well in carrying out their various duties. They are doing a really great job and I would like to propose a collective vote of thanks to them. Our organisation is in good hands and I'm confident that it has a healthy future.

Finally, I am planning to retire from the Chair and the Committee (but not from rambling) at the next AGM after completing my three-year stint.

## TREASURER'S REPORT

The accounts for 2013 were presented and accepted by the meeting after some questions of detail were clarified. The Treasurer reported that they had been prepared and checked by a firm of Manchester accountants as a cost-free gesture. Bob Clinton of Clinton Stone have offered to do the 2014 accounts as well.

After a couple of difficult years, 2013 saw a return to a more comfortable financial position. The timely presentation of expense claims has helped clarify the overall movement of funds within the charity. This will be especially important in the future as arrangements for providing loan scooters on rambles in 2014 and beyond will be potentially more costly than using the MSU alone. It will be essential to monitor costs to establish patterns for future planning.

The bond which represents a proportion of our reserves matured in April this year. With the current poor returns on savings it was proving difficult to find a worthwhile home for the money until it is needed. The treasurer welcomed all suggestions but was confident of finding as good a deal as possible in the near future.

Changes in the Gift Aid scheme have made it easier to administer as small cash donations can now be processed without the details of the person involved. This could increase the benefit to DR from the scheme.

## AWARDS

### Wenman Trophy

The Wenman Trophy was awarded to Val Rawlings for her work in promoting Regional Rambles.

### Life membership

Dorothy Dickens was awarded Life Membership for her many years of unstinting work as Membership Secretary.



Chairman Tony Dickens presents the Wenman Trophy to Val Rawlings.



Dorothy Dickens - Life Member

## BBC TV'S BREAKFAST PROGRAMME JOIN A RAMBLE

DR was recently invited to be on BBC TV's Breakfast show to highlight the problems of disabled access in the countryside.

John Cuthbertson and a band of Disabled Ramblers were able to illustrate both the joys and difficulties of rambling on wheels together with an example of a gate which provides one form of solution.

For anyone who missed the item, it may still be available on the BBC website. Copy and paste the following link into your web browser:  
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-27100367>.



On day 1 the BBC team joined the group on a category 3 ramble of 6 miles from Castlemorton Common to The Gullet on the Malvern Hills (published on ViewRanger). Members were given the opportunity to express what a huge pleasure it is for a disabled person to be out in the countryside, especially if they used to be a (walking) ramble. It was surprising how much fun can be had at 4 mph! Many people struggle for years not being able to walk far due to arthritis and other debilitating ailments before discovering the liberation that a suitable scooter can bring. However, people with disabilities face many challenges from man-made obstacles such as stiles, kissing gates and steps in the countryside. The importance of DR and similar organisations working with Landowners, and bodies like The Forestry Commission to improve access, without creating concrete roads, was highlighted.



John Cuthbertson with BBC Reporter Graham Satchell



John demonstrates a kissing gate with a RADAR lock

On day 2 John had to be up at the crack of dawn to do a piece from 06.30 with BBC Reporter Graham Satchell illustrating how a modified kissing gate incorporating a RADAR lock can provide both adequate livestock security and disabled access.

A special thank you is due to John and Liz who put in a lot of hard work before, during and after this day.

## POSTSCRIPT

Jan Kemp, our Membership Secretary, writes:

I can link 35 enquiries with the programme, 7 of which have resulted in memberships. A ratio of 5 enquiries to one membership is similar to the usual of about 1:4 under normal conditions. Some of those enquiring lived in Scotland and Ireland and others were explicitly only interested in services very local to themselves.

# THE "BIG ZIPPER EXPERIENCE"

## or "The Power of Friendship" by Terry Taylor

Tuesday, 24th September 2013, Penrhyn Quarry, North Wales.

Weather: morning misty fog, expected to lift later, then a warm, clear afternoon, no rain.



What more could we ask for? We? Yes! It's always "we" now, as I am no longer able to do so many things alone. I can think about them, and frequently do so, but, like many in DR, I need a kindly helper to enable me to do most things. Fortunately, (for me!) I have found my 'true' friends, though it does take time, doesn't it? It is a painful, disappointing and often demoralising experience, but, it is so important to all of us! This article was intended to be an attempt to explain why it is important, for me personally, to explore my present limits, to the 'extreme.'

It then struck me, in a straight-between-the-eyes sort of way; something I'd already accepted to a certain extent; that I was asking so much - too much even - from these willing friends, to go out on a limb to help me achieve such crazy and really quite useless objectives!

These same 'true' friends then denied these ideas as "nonsense", that it was the 'real me' who, had re-surfaced after a considerable absence. I hoped that was the case, of course, but in reality it further proved to me their genuine friendship. Quite beyond belief, isn't it? I think so, anyway.

I really had feared, earlier in my stroke history, that 'me' was dead and gone for ever, but my 'small' successes, all written down in my "Stroke History" notebook, gave me hope that 'me' was still there, somewhere deep down. That is why it was - and still is - so essential to me, I believe, that not only do I want challenges, but that I actually need them for both 'self-belief' and recuperation after that period of 'self-mourning.' Enough introspection for now, back to the Big Zipper - and do I mean Big!??

The longest and fastest zip-line in Europe no less, at 1,560yds, reaching up to 100mph. I was there with my long-time friend, Hazel, retired Physio, ex-climber and ocean sailor, addicted to cheese-cake, she who had kicked, cajoled and whipped me into action after my horrendous period of post-stroke fatigue and indolence.

I speak metaphorically of course, but she it was who got me moving again, for sure. We had both wanted to do The Big Zipper for a while, for ourselves primarily, but were equally happy to do it together. I had been spurred into action by DR's Ron & Lynda doing it to raise funds for The Stroke Association just the previous week-end. They had loved it - and raised lots of money in the process!

Hazel and I had arrived early for our trip, I didn't want to be rushed, so allowed more time for 'kitting-up', which I suspected would take me more time than normal. We heard a distant count-down to the invisible launch, somewhere on that huge mountainside of grim, grey rock. Then emerged two small orange torpedoes from the depths of the mountain, coming at an incredible speed. Wow!

"Will I be able to do that?" I wondered to myself while Hazel took a deep breath and stepped back in amazement.

Time for "kitting-up"! Here we go, Hazel! Inexorably, it's getting closer...and closer. Strange feelings of Impending Doom! A bit like a Turkey trussed for Christmas, or waiting for the Officer's whistle blasts at the Somme, before 'going over the Top', I imagine.



Hazel and me, turkeys trussed-up and ready for Christmas.

First, we have the introduction, before the Main Course.....the "Little Zipper", slower, shorter - a mere aperitif - in fact a rehearsal. With the accent on hearse.!

As I feared, getting in position was difficult for me, with left-side limitations, but the launch team (with Hazel's input) were wonderfully patient and caring and did it easily. Various radio voices, "clear landing" ,"clear launch", "3", "2","1" and we were gone! Into space - through the tree-tops - just missing the branches - and there was the landing zone! We all seem to have survived - Wow! Again the Ground Team are excellent, closely followed by Hazel's post-zip concern for my welfare. How did she get here so quickly? We had no time to think about that, as we were soon climbing towards our next challenge in the Safari Truck. This was THE challenge, the REAL challenge, the BIG, yes, very "BIG ZIPPER".

We were taken by truck to the heights of the disused part of the quarry, at 1,500 ft. above sea level, a fantastic view-point onto the woods, valleys and mountains of this beautiful part of Snowdonia.

After a short pep-talk-cum-briefing the BIG launch started, Hazel and myself at the back of the queue, due to my lack of agility. We watched the departure of the first pair of astronauts. It was quite amazing, incredibly fast, a bit like watching the "Red Devils" in action in close-up. We all had our weight, in kilos, written on our wrists - mine (68), Hazel (54).

Heavier people (96 and 88) travel faster, so they were asked to put their arms out sideways at crucial spots as a brake. Sometimes parachutes are used. I wouldn't be able to do this, but fortunately, as a relative 'lightweight', it wasn't required. I did, however, need to keep both legs extended, hard against the bar under my in-step, to maintain my horizontal position in the air.



The Big Zipper.! Close to 100mph! "Is it a bird.? Is it a plane.?"

Again, great help from the Zipperworld staff and Hazel, then a short delay until she was in position. "3,2,1" once more then, "instantly, the bottom fell out of the "World!" We wore goggles, but my eyes couldn't focus we were going so fast and so low I thought! (almost too fast to think!)

Has my left foot come off the bar? Not sure! Move my foot! I can still feel it - I think! - OK! - better now. We're over the lake, that's easier on the eyes! What a beautiful green. Is that emerald green? Or another name I can't remember? had intended to watch Hazel to my left, but forgot - is she in front? Don't know! Oh! I see the landing spot, - am I going too fast? Prepare for impact! Not too bad! Different this time, I'm already on the platform, so can stand up immediately, perhaps. Yes - if I hold on to Richard's arm - yes, I'm up!

Everybody had disappeared by now, on foot, so we accepted a ride back with alacrity. I'm not sure I could have walked it, in all honesty, but I'd have given it a good try!!

On our return to Base, a Dutch (fellow-Zippees) couple we had talked with, were waiting to congratulate us, what a lovely thought, and what an amazing day!! And what an incredible example of the "Power of Friendship" in moments of shared crisis, from unexpected quarters.

**Many thanks to Hazel Sneath, and to the Cridge Family, specifically Steve and Leanne, for permission to use their photos, in this article.**

## SUE GEARY WINS NATIONAL PHOTOGRAPHIC COMPETITION

Sue has won the over 18s category of the national "On the Move" competition for disabled photographers, organised by two charities - The Disabled Photographers' Society and Mobility Choice, the charity behind the Mobility Roadshow.



Her winning shot (above left) was an image of Totland Bay pier on the Isle of Wight with a storm clearly approaching in the distance. "I have MS, which affects my mobility and balance so most of my photographs are taken sitting on my scooter or my walker," commented Sue. I can't hold up a heavy DSLR camera, so most of the time I use a small Cannon Powershot which has a viewfinder. I am looking forward to the time when more camera manufacturers bring back the viewfinder!

(above right) Sue receives her prizes - Calumet photographic accessories, a Merlin Annual Pass for entry to a range of top UK attractions for 12 months, and £150 in cash - on the live stage at The Photography Competition at the NEC in Birmingham on 4th March.

## ALL IN A DAYS WORK FOR REGIONAL REPS!

Chris and I were invited to represent DR on an event to mark the start of Tourism Week in the Eden District Council area, which includes the eastern part of The Lakes. We avoided canoeing for a wet and blustery morning on Ullswater and joined the party including Eden Mencap, Tourism for All UK and other disability organisations, plus our local MP, for a reception at the Pooley Bridge steamer pier (below left).

Amongst the many contacts that we made at the event was Colin Hindle, owner of Granny Dowbekin's tearoom in the village which provided the



Hob-nobbing with our MP, Rory Stewart, left of Chris' dog

buffet. He is very interested in DR and hopes to help us as a walker. As many of the people who visit his café have mobility problems he has recently built a new facilities block, including a disabled toilet. He suggested that DR might like to have the publicity of opening the building which he planned to have covered by the local press.  
*Ron Lyon*



Chris opens the new disabled loo



## CURRENT REGIONAL REPRESENTATIVES

Marion	Heaton	mheaton3@aol.com	Derbyshire & Staffordshire
Gavin	Caspersz	gavincaspersz@glasswa.com	Bedfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Hertfordshire, Northants, Oxfordshire
Maria	Davies	marialynnette@yahoo.co.uk	Staffordshire (contact point for Cheshire)
Tony	Dickens	chairman@disabledramblers.co.uk	Norfolk & Cambridgeshire
Peter	Flick	flickstickle@yahoo.co.uk	Devon & Cornwall
Robin	Helby	helby@disabledramblers.org	Surrey
Shirley	Keeble	los_shirl@yahoo.co.uk	Essex
Stuart	Kemp	stuartkemp.email@googlemail.com	Beds & Bucks
Mary	Knight	mary.knight@btinternet.com	Bristol, Somerset
Arthur	Lee	arthurlee@sky.com	Lancashire, Cheshire, Gt Manchester, Merseyside, W Midlands
Ron	Lyon	drcumbria@fsmail.net	Cumbria & North West
Andrew	Mallory	riverside1@riverside1.karoo.co.uk	Yorkshire East & North, Lincolnshire
Val	Rawlings	secretary@disabledramblers.co.uk	South East England
Eileen	Scannell	eileen.scannell@btinternet.com	Warwickshire
Terry	Taylor	theterrytaylor@yahoo.co.uk	Snowdonia and all Wales
Eileen	Tomlinson	treasurer@disabledramblers.co.uk	Lancashire, Yorkshire West & South
Hugh	Williamson	jillwilliamson@waitrose.com	Northumberland & North East

## 2014 to 2015 EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

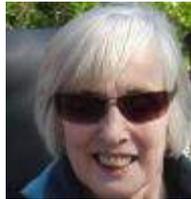
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  - Secretary – Val Rawlings
  - Treasurer – Eileen Tomlinson
  - Robin Helby – National Representative, Technical Advisor
  - Jan Kemp – Membership Secretary
  - John Cuthbertson – Vice-Chairman, Web Officer, Rambles Organiser, Regional Reps Coordinator
  - Ron Lyon – Newsletter Editor
- Bookings Secretary (non-committee post) – Rhiannon Robinson



Tony Dickens



Val Rawlings



Eileen Tomlinson



Robin Helby



Jan Kemp



John Cuthbertson



Ron Lyon

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