



The Disabled Rambler

The Newsletter of the Disabled Ramblers.
Registered Charity No. 1103508

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EDITORIAL



Hello everybody and welcome to my first attempt at editing the full production of your magazine. Many thanks to all of you who have sent in articles and photos. I have to say it's a very encouraging response, please keep sending them in. Thanks also to those of you who have sent me things for the "items for sale" column. I will try to get them all into this issue or the next.

Once again thanks for your support.

Tony Hunt

CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE

Are we happy with the present access to the countryside? I ask because I have just attended the quarterly meeting of the Countryside for All (CfA) National Forum. The Forum was set up in the early 90s in anticipation of the 1995 Disability Discrimination Act and from a donation by BT of £4m for research into standards for access to the countryside.

The CfA Forum was focused on access for the disabled, bringing together the major parties such as the Countryside Agency, National Trust, the National Parks & Trails, plus the major disability charities.

The next decade was a period of exchange of information and good practice resulting in considerably better access - though mainly in the managed parks. Most of the manmade barriers in the National Trails and National Parks were removed. All the visitor centres have accessible toilets. The ironic outcome of three acts of Parliament on disability is that the CfA Forum is no more. Attendance had been falling over the past five years, and there was no enthusiasm from members to support any projects or research. Whilst it is sad for this forum to cease, the real reason is that the major agencies are now confident they provide reasonable access.

We were only invited to join the Forum in 2003 and faced strong pressure for only one standard of access for everywhere, even in remote rural areas. We owe a great debt to our President, Mike

Bruton, for organising support for Natural England's 'By All Reasonable Means', which radically proposed that path standards should vary depending on the terrain. This remains the official advice on countryside access and recognises that we want to enjoy the countryside as it is and not some sanitised version with tarmac paths.

Even if there is less interest by the disabled, a new act will require Natural England to consult on access. They are forming a new working group which we have been invited to join. We are, by far, the most active charity in accessing the countryside and hopefully we can continue to influence any proposals.

One clear lesson is that change takes campaigning and a new generation of activists is needed to carry on our work!

Robin Helby

AGM COOKHAM RAMBLE

April 7th 2011



The day dawned sunny and bright, and stayed that way all day (I know I got sunburned, editor) a wonderful start to our rambling season. Thirty disabled ramblers, carers and friends, assembled (by kind permission of the 'John Lewis Group') at the Odney Club, Cookham, in Berkshire. The Club has a Manor House about 200 years old (Lullebrook Manor) and an extensive and beautifully maintained estate bordering the River Thames. The ramble started by crossing part of the estate. On leaving we discovered

workmen busy on a little bridge we were about to cross; fortunately we were able to cross before they had to remove the planks for repair! This led us on to a public footpath which had been recently upgraded by the local 'Rights of Way' department just a short time prior to the day of the ramble.

Following this path for about 1/3rd of a mile alongside fields, we accessed the Thames Path National Trail and made our way towards Boulter's Lock via Cliveden Reach.

Our route was full of interest with 3 species of geese, swans, ducks, Coots and Moorhens on the water with Kites and Buzzards soaring above the high Cliveden cliffs across the river.



On other side of the path there was an attractive group of farm buildings and fields with farm animals. About half way to the lock we were confronted by a calf on the path which did not want to let us pass but, thanks to our fearless cowboys, the calf was guided safely back behind the nearby fencing! At Boulter's Lock we paused to see if

there were any boats passing through the Lock, and sure enough, there was one.

We then crossed over the lock cut to access Ray Mill Island which is usually a haven of peace, but we were confronted by a pile driver being operated to repair the riverbank! It really seemed to us that the best laid plans of mice and men.....! Luckily the work stopped shortly after our arrival and we were able to explore the beautifully landscaped island in tranquillity enjoying the scenery including the spectacular weir, the cafe and “facilities”.

After lunch our return route was along the Thames Path and into the Odney grounds where we enjoyed a mini ramble around the estate. Afterwards a few ramblers were seen on the terrace of the Manor enjoying a pot of tea in the late sun, a perfect ending to our first ramble of the 2011 season.



Brenda & Keith Harris

TWO JOURNEYS

This all started for me on the 12th of June 2011 when I decided to have a go at the “Powick Hams Ramble” which was to start at the ancient pack-horse bridge at Powick - it was to be a very wet ramble.

However, on Saturday 11th June in Fourges, France a few hundred or more racing pigeons were released to make the journey to their various homes in Britain. Amongst these were some from Skelmersdale in Lancashire some 366 miles away. More of that later in my story.

Back to the ramble, nine Trampers had turned up to brave the weather and we set off across the fields towards the site of the battle of Worcester in the Civil War. At the confluence of the River Teme and the Severn, John Cuthbertson explained some interesting details of the battle and that objects from the conflict were still being found by the local farmers whose fields we were going through. We had to negotiate about half a dozen kissing gates but, thanks to the “RADAR” key, they could be opened to give the disabled easy passage. We were glad of the previous dry spell as it meant the ground was passable, although in some places very sticky and muddy but not flooded. We reached the new Diglis Bridge where we rested under it out of the rain for a brief coffee break before crossing over the bridge to get to the town. Here we learnt about the locks and weir which form an island between them.

On the eastern banks of the Severn at this point are large areas of reclaimed land once occupied by an oil terminal, iron foundry and the famous Worcester Porcelain Works. All that remains is the Worcester Porcelain Museum which is well worth a visit. The whole area is being built on providing many flats with parking on the ground floor as the area is prone to flooding.

Our lunch stop was in the cloisters of Worcester Cathedral with a very welcome and warm café. There was time to visit the Cathedral itself on our muddy Trampers to see the tomb of King John (who signed the Magna Carta) . Lunch over, we returned to our cars via a shorter route on tarmac which meant that we could clean our tyres of mud we had accumulated.



Now I return to the story of the pigeons. Eight of those birds reached their home in Skelmersdale, but on returning home on the Monday after the ramble, I found one of the birds had landed in my garden - actually it was settled in a half barrel tub in amongst the Lobelia and Geraniums seemingly to 'give up'. I contacted the owner from the information on the four rings on its legs but, unfortunately, it died.

Margaret Cartwright

M6 TOLL EXEMPTION

Disabled people in receipt of the higher rate of DLA and who also have a vehicle excise zero tax exemption disc (better known as Road Tax) are allowed to purchase an exemption pass for £15 which lasts for 3 years. This can be used by either the disabled driver or passenger. For an application form or more information go to: <http://www.m6toll.co.uk/pricing/exemptions/>

NO ACCESS TO MOST AREAS ON THE ISLES OF SCILLY

It all started when my number two son and his family offered to take me to the Scilly Isles in July 2011, but I had to get from Morpeth to Peterborough by myself (actually I wanted the adventure of travelling alone). I made the arrangements and asked for help from the railway company, but they forgot! When I arrived at the station the staff shouted at me for holding up the train - but I shouted back (go girl, good for you, editor) I am not really a shouting person, but one learns!! After that, they cared for me extremely well.



The Isles of Scilly is an area of outstanding natural beauty.

I have listed what is and what is not available for the disabled visitor to the Isles:

ST MARY'S

- Taxis offer a very good service.
- The bus drivers are most helpful, offering an hourly service.
- Boat operators are wonderful at helping disabled passengers on and off their boats.
- The Scillonian has a stair lift.
- The airport staff offer an excellent, caring service.
- Mobility scooters are available from the Rotary club.
- Golf buggies are available for hire, from Freely Mobile, they may not be taken off road (which seems a bit pointless to me), unless they are used in place of a motor vehicle, a driving licence is required.
- Sand Buggies are available for hire from the council, for use on the beaches that are accessible.



Unfortunately access to many areas is impossible for those who cannot walk any distance, the helicopter is the one I flew home on and used to view what I could not see on foot.

Disabled are excluded from visiting:

- All nature trails
- Watermill Cove and Pellistry Bay (two of the more beautiful beaches)
- Porth Hellick area.
- Penninis Lighthouse.
- Coastal Paths.
- Bar Point.
- Porthcressa Beach.
- Brodfield Wreck.
- Pellow's Redoubt.
- Bant Carn, Innisdgen and other archaeological sites.

I attempted to visit these places with a mobility scooter and failed.

I managed to visit, with ease:

- Juliet's Garden.
- Carn Vean Tea Room.
- Porthmellon Beach
- Old Town Bay and restaurants.
- Hughtown Restaurants.
- Craft Centres.

I visited with some difficulty:

- Halangy Site.
- Mount Todden Battery. This was achieved by using a buggy, 2 sticks and my hands and knees. (Well done, editor.)



TRESCO is not DISABLED FRIENDLY

I booked a buggy to take me from the quay side around TreSCO, apparently buggies are not allowed on the quay side and could not be delivered to me (too far from the collection point, apparently?). I tried to walk the full distance along the quay side but was unable to do so and ended up in a collapsed state, forcing my son to bring the buggy to me, even though he was told he could not do this, we were absolutely disgusted by this complete lack of care and service.



Abbey Gardens have free mobility scooters for use around the gardens, actually getting to the gardens proved to be a problem as there seemed to be no actual bus service advertised - at least we never found any listings.

Generally the tracks around the gardens were rocky or too narrow making it very difficult to negotiate but we managed using great care and caution. Being accompanied by a carer was most necessary in most areas of the garden; most of the grassy tracks and field borders were negotiable. I would suggest that a 100 cc quad bike should be made available to the disabled who were qualified to use one?



Pavements in the town are hazardous for mobility scooters; they are often too high and there are no dropped kerbs provided for scooters or wheelchairs. There is a lavatory for the disabled in the town.

I spoke to many people whilst on holiday, and found them helpful and kind, but found that the general consensus was that the provision by the authorities for people with mobility problems was not needed or necessary.

Sadly, on the whole, it seems that people with disabilities are not well catered for in the Scilly Isles.

Marion Duncan

CONGRATULATIONS ISLE of WIGHT RAMBLERS!

who have been awarded the “Queen’s Award for Voluntary Service”. This is the MBE for the voluntary sector and sets the benchmark for excellence in volunteering. A proud moment in the 43 year of history of the IOW ramblers.



This was for their ‘Access for All’ campaign, which benefits all disabled people. Prince Edward, Earl of Wessex, presented the Queen’s Award to the IOW Ramblers at Carisbrooke Castle. As part of their achievement in the above campaign they have undertaken projects such as a ‘Donate a Gate’ scheme and many other projects. A new website includes a description of these activities:

www.iowramblers.com.

TRAMPER COMPETITION?



For the whole of Sept and Oct 2011, Linda and I had the good fortune to be down in Devon and Cornwall, and had a wonderful time exploring the glorious British countryside. We also had an opportunity to trial the new ‘Horizon Mayan AC’ mobility Scooter, using it at Godrevy, Cornwall. Our conclusions were: it has incredible torque and no run back between the motor engaging and the brakes disengaging, it will also cover a greater distance between charges than the Trampler. Its drawback was that the tyres were not suitable for off road use and the steering suffered from considerable bump steer but Horizon are updating their demo machine and we are waiting for them to get back to us for another trial.

Peter Voss

CALLING MEMBERS IN & AROUND CUMBRIA

Those who were at the AGM may remember that local area representatives are being appointed. Chris Lyon (my wife) and I (Ron) are looking after Cumbria and we are establishing a network of contacts in the County Council, Lake District National Park Authority, North Pennine AONB and Landowners.

Currently we are actively researching routes for the 2012 Rambles Programme but we are hoping to try and establish permanent routes in Cumbria. Could we ask anyone who is similarly working on routes in the County to let us know so we can avoid duplication and help each other.

Members in Cumbria and around the fringes might like to be put in touch to get to know each other better. We must have a wealth of local knowledge and routes to share on an informal basis.

However, we emphasise that we are not trying to set up a formal Cumbrian Group of Disabled Ramblers. We would prefer to use e-mail as the primary method of communication but recognise that not everybody uses this media, if you are happy to share your details with others wishing to participate please send your details to: Chris & Ron Lyon. E-mail: chrons@fsmail.net

TRAMPER BATTERIES

This information was sourced by Linda Rivers & Peter Voss, when they were at the NEC in February this year at the Boat & Caravan Show.

Batteries available for purchase VAT free but only from companies that are registered as suppliers for mobility scooters/wheelchairs.

There is one company on the Internet which supply batteries up 75 AH, but they do not supply any size above that : www.alpha-batteries.co.uk Phone: 01706 356356.

Linda & Peter did, however, purchase a pair of 100ah Lucas batteries from a company on eBay called UK battery supplier at £255.00 for the two delivered to their home. They only seem to advertise on the internet spasmodically but can be contacted on: 01772 817561.

Batteries are much easier to fit into your Tramper if you take the seat off first.

FOR SALE

MK 1 Tramper, 8 yrs old. Phone: 0121 7053923 or E- mail: Philcgodfrey@btinternet.com

A pair of telescopic ramps (with brackets) suitable for the Kangoo/Berlingo type cars. Telephone: Antony: 01772 412295 for information on cost, etc.

A 'Tramper Trailer' 4 ½ years old, with spare tyre. Has had little use due to change of vehicle. Free to a member but would have to be collected. Telephone Martin: 01404 823966.