

Red Rope Socialist Walking and Climbing Club

bulletin 47 spring 2024 www.redrope.org.uk

National Gathering New and Improved Shocker!

Red Rope National Gathering Friday 14th – 16th June 2024

Booking: We are offering a discount of 33% to encourage attendance by members who have joined since 01/06/2022. Others can benefit from a 10% early booking discount when booking at least 3 months in advance. You cannot benefit from both reductions.

Band	2 nightly rate	Less 33%	Less 10%
1	£26	£18	£24
2	£40	£26	£36
3	£52	£34	£46
4	£66	£44	£60
5	£80	£54	£72

To make your booking, please fill in the booking form and make payments into the Trips account. We are trying a new booking form; you can access it using the following:
https://forms.gle/2mLtdNiSgURe53b87

You can request a meal for the Friday night (included in the price) via the booking form, rather than having to go to the pub, which last year was packed. Make the payment using a bank transfer (BACS) with a reference consisting of Gath24 + your first name + initial of your surname. The bank account is Red Rope Trips Account, sort code 08-92-99, account no 65829967. As soon as your payment has been received you will have reserved your place.

Where? Thornbridge Outdoors, Great Longstone, Nr Bakewell, Derbyshire DE45 1NY. We tried the Farmhouse last year but this year we are staying in the Lodge which is better equipped with smaller rooms. In a fantastic location in the heart of the Peak District, this is a perfect base to access the wonderfully diverse countryside and interesting towns/villages. It is very near the small village of Great Longstone where there are 2 pubs, a shop and a local park. The Monsal Trail is accessible from the grounds and is popular with walkers and cyclists. This flat, traffic free route travels 8.5 miles between Bakewell and Bakewell Mill near Buxton. The gritstone edges of Froggatt and Stanage are also within easy reach.

The Lodge is a modern building on one level and sleeps 38 with seating in the dining room for 36. The dormitory has 7 bedrooms, all named after local caverns and caves, with a mixture of bunk beds and single beds. Bedding is supplied but please bring a towel.
For more information, see:
https://www.thornbridgeoutdoors.co.uk/facilities/indoor-accommodation/lodge/

Public Transport: The nearest stations are Grindleford and Hathersage on the line between Manchester and Sheffield. There is a bus service between the stations and Bakewell see —

https://peakdistrictbytrain.org/tickets-timetables/bus-services-timetables/

Also from Chesterfield to Bakewell: https://www.hulleys-of-baslow.co.uk/170---chesterfield---bakewell

There are also hourly buses to Ashford in the Water (which is nearer than Bakewell) from Derby / Matlock and Buxton

https://www.highpeakbuses.com/bus-services/transpeak-tp3/

bulletin@redrope.org.uk **Many thanks to all contributors.**
Cover photo by Sarah Thwaites. Editor, David Symonds. Next deadline 08/09.

Directions: See **https://www.thornbridgeoutdoors.co.uk/contact-bookings/.** Those with Sat Nav need to be careful that they don't end up at Thornbridge Hall – their postcode is very similar, and they are just over the road from us but there is no direct link across. Anyone ending up there must drive all the way around their estate to reach us. Our postcode is DE45 1NY.

Parking: The car park holds around 25 cars but these are shared with guests in the Lodge as well as the Farm. If it gets a bit packed, there is also space to park on the road.

Camping: There is a possibility of camping in the grounds for a small number of tents but the overall number of places for the trip will be 38 and the charges will be the same.

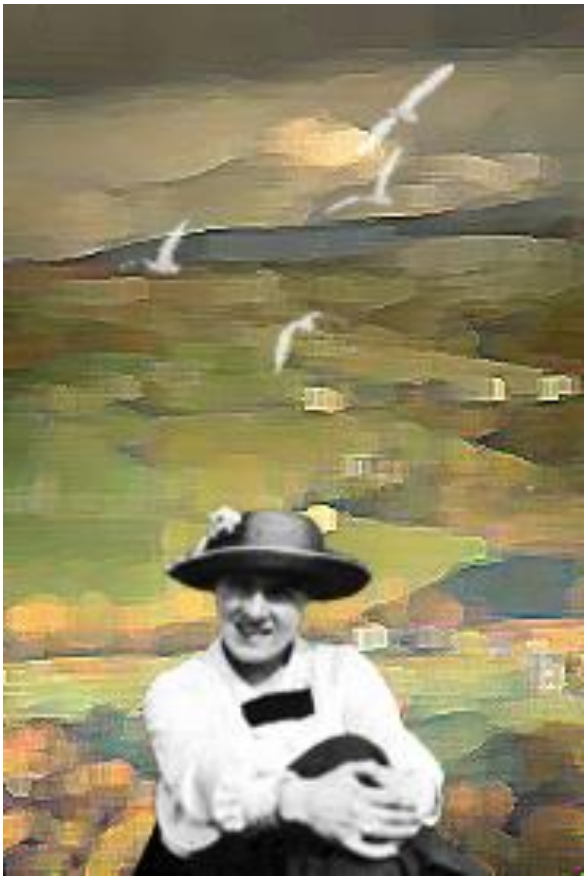
When? The centre will be open from 4pm on Friday 14th June. Saturday will be organised as usual with suggestions for walks discussed the night before. Dinner at 7 will be followed by the evening's entertainment, which will include a quiz. This timing makes it easier for nearby members to come just for the day and socialise, but also means substantial walks can happen on both Saturday and Sunday. On Saturday we are planning a bunch of activities during the day. On Sunday we have some navigation training for anyone interested.

Training: We have arranged some navigation training and route planning free of charge for members. We hope you will take up the opportunity of learning a new skill, or polishing up on old ones. This will be a skill sharing activity - more details will follow.

Treasure Hunt: If you want some fiendishly frustrating fun in the countryside look no further!

Drinks: No need to bring your own as beer, wine and fruit juice will be on sale at cost price.

Covid-19: Please read the RR Covid guidance and the declaration form on the RR website. It is important that you do not join a trip if immediately prior to the trip you or your household have symptoms of Covid-19. Cancellations made for Covid related reasons will be fully refunded.



One of last year's attendees, on the left, appropriately, said she had had a fab time but there did seem to be a lot of rather ne'er do well, beatnik types around, although they were generally a convivial bunch. N.B. In relation to the dorm below she felt it might be worth pointing out that she had not noticed any giants on the premises but if you did it would be wise not to refer to them as 'big boots'.



National Trips Update



The important news is that after months of analysis Hugh, our Trips Treasurer, has declared our Trips Programme to be financially viable. Concern had been expressed that extending the programme had increased the risk of financial loss but careful planning to break even at Band 3 has proved successful.

We won't add any more to the 12 trips booked for 2024, 14 if we include The Gathering in June and the NC week-end at CY in October, but two noteworthy updates: we have extended places at Bridges YHA, Shropshire, (photo top right) in July by booking a second 4 bed dorm giving us potential for separate male/female spaces in addition to 8 camping places. We have also added a trip to Grisedale Barn near Grassington in March to provide a balance with trips to less mountainous areas throughout the year. (Members can join a reserve list for a part-week place, if it becomes available, as long as they can travel independently.)



Our Trips Group met on Zoom in January to discuss trip policies. Positive changes are ahead so please look out for details of AGM motions and join us in April to get these implemented.



One idea which has already made it onto our booking form (look out for the latest version 'UPDATED Jan. 2024') is the extension of skill sharing on trips which up to now has focused on leading walks, scrambles and climbs. The Trips Group felt that our members have a lot of other talents to offer so we have added the following:

Skill-sharing

Do you have a skill or interest you may be willing to share on the trip?
e.g scrambling, navigation, nature, history, geography, cookery, any other?

We hope this will encourage members to think about the wider range of activities enjoyed on trips and to share interests whilst exploring new places together. We look forward to seeing many of you on a trip this year. **Becky and Sarah**

Current membership percentage by band and region 26/01/2024 by Membership Secretary, Gill Platt.

Region	Band 1	Band 2	Band 3	Band 4	Band 5	Total	% by Region
Bristol		8	7	3	5	23	7.40%
East Anglia	2	7	7	3	1	20	6.43%
Leicester	2	5	7	3	4	21	6.75%
London	6	11	18	15	14	64	20.58%
Manchester	5	7	12	6	10	40	12.86%
Merseyside	9	17	10	7	1	44	14.15%
North East	2	1	3	1		7	2.25%
Scotland	5	8	11	7	6	37	11.90%
Sheffield	9	7	9	3	5	33	10.61%
West Midlands	3	3	12	1	3	22	7.07%

Update on the Loft at Blea Tarn

Red Rope has recently been making good use of Cae Ysgubor, the LMC hut in Beddgelert to which our members have access as individuals. Their other hut, The Loft at Blea Tarn, despite its stunning location between the Langdales, has not been so popular due to its much more basic facilities. A few years ago Red Rope members contributed to what were meant to be significant improvements to the hut, including the installation of a shower. Unfortunately, these have yet to happen.

The major work to be undertaken required re-negotiation of the lease on the building, which is owned by the National Trust, and this was put on hold at the start of Covid. Then, in 2021, the Trust undertook a full structural survey of the Loft, which recommended a substantial rebuild of the roof, walls and internal timbers. LMC have raised a substantial amount of money for the planned refurbishment of the hut once this work has been completed, but are awaiting an update from the Trust as to when this might be. The increased cost of materials during the delay means that the money available will buy less.

In the meantime The NT have undertaken some repairs, which will be of interest to those who have stayed there. There is a new gate post at the entrance to the car park and the exhaust pipe from next door's generator has been routed away from the hut. The drinking water supply has recently been serviced and upgraded and new filters, vermin proof mesh and fail safe solenoid valve for the UV system have been fitted.

In addition to ongoing costs, LMC has spent around £1,000 in the past year, on a new gas regulator and 10 tons of hardcore, which has been spread around the car park. This proved its worth when the space was still useable after the heavy rain in November.

LMC and Red Rope would like more people to use the Loft, which helps keep the hut in good condition. It's a great place for casual stays and a great venue for group trips in good weather. It's cheap - £4 to £8 depending on your band, £6 pppn for groups - and unlike Cae Ysgubor, you don't need to buy a key fob.

A note re. costs and charges for the huts

From 1 January 2024 all overnight charges at Cae Ysgubor and The Loft have been increased by £1 per person per night. The new charges for Red Rope members can be found in the updated notes for users on the Red Rope website. LMC have budgeted for around £2,000 to be spent on materials for routine maintenance of their huts in 2024. With the exception of a small amount of electrical work, all the labour (a mind-boggling amount!) will be carried out by LMC members.

Barbara Segal *View from Blea Tarn by Olya Bowers*





Manchester's day walks

Manchester's day walks continue to be very successful. Building on the habit of trying to get out every Sunday from when we were allowed to during Covid, 2023 saw us walking 47 days in total. Distance wise we walked from Manchester to Ullapool and ascent wise almost 9 ½ Ben Nevises. Walks were mainly on Sundays but a mid-week walking group has been formed. Attendance has ranged from 3 to 14 people as well as our two four legged friends Lola and Copper. We have also welcomed friends from France and the States.

All of our walks are within an hour's drive from Manchester and we're lucky that there are great walks in every direction. We walk mainly in the Peak District, the West Pennine Moors and in the South Pennines around Hebden Bridge. However we did have a trip to Wales walking from Loggerheads Country park up to Moel Famau which gave us good views of the coastline. There have also been some canal walks (good for very wet days) exploring Manchester's industrial heritage. We often stop in a local pub at the end to have a quick half or cup of tea!

Highlights of walks this year: losing Sean in the Trough of Bowland and then getting totally drenched, although the two were not connected! Fantastic clear views from Great Hill on the West Pennine Moors from the Lake District to North Wales. Barbara's favourite walk to Kinder to celebrate her big birthday, after dancing the night away the previous evening. Dividing into 2 groups on a snowy day in the Goyt valley as one of the cars got stuck .

Having a walk almost every week has meant that it has been easier for new members to join us and existing members to come when they can. Making arrangements mainly by WhatsApp has made it easier to plan and co-ordinate walks as well as share photos, routes and statistics afterwards. Catherine, as day walks co-ordinator, keeps the whole thing going. Sean has continued to keep the walking log set up by Diana which is a great reminder of where we've been. It's also sent to potential new members so they can have an idea of what we have been doing before they decide to join us. So far walks in 2024 have continued this momentum, with the rainbow we saw on our New Year's Day walk a good omen for the year to come.

Aileen Somerset, with thanks to Sean Ashton and Andrew Starkie for the stats – and advice on pubs!







Extract from The Guardian ''Weather watchers captured images of rare iridescent clouds, with some likening them to UFOs. Nacreous clouds, resembling mother of pearl, usually develop in extremely cold air above the polar regions, but were seen on Tuesday in various parts of the northern UK. The effect, reminiscent of a thin layer of oil on top of water, is produced as sunlight diffracts around ice crystals in the clouds. The Met Office said they are usually seen here only when the cold air circulating around polar regions in the stratosphere, known as a polar vortex, is displaced and hovers temporarily over Britain.'' **Madeleine Broderick** of Merseyside RR posted the photo above to the RR national email list saying **''**Happy Winter Solstice from Parkgate on the Dee Estuary on the Wirral, 21st December, 2023 **"**

Nine Barrows

Walking on a high ridge, between two rows of round barrows, just before sunset. It's a simple place, wild and primordial, but connected intrinsically to every rock, every tump, every hollow, the very wind itself, swirling the grass that now adorns the earth.

I am a part of the landscape I walk through, as were those who lie buried in the barrows, and the people who put them there. We are interlinked by the same line of time; we simply stand at different points along its length. As I walked back down the holloway to the village, a magpie regarded me from atop a field maple, and flit from one tree to another ahead of me, until I reached the road.

Simon Skerritt



Cut-off commenced: a landowners' charter



Kate Ashbrook, general secretary of the Open Spaces Society and long-standing member of Red Rope, reports on Defra's u-turns on public paths.

One of the downsides of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, which gave us the right to walk on mapped access-land in England and Wales, was that it also introduced a cut-off of 1 January 2026 for applications to add historic paths to the definitive map. On this date, our rights to unrecorded and unapplied for routes would be extinguished. The argument was that it would give landowners the certainty of knowing where paths were.

In 2000 the 2026 deadline seemed a long way off, and the environment minister, Michael Meacher, promised funding for voluntary bodies to research and complete the definitive map and statement before the closure.

Twenty-four years later and the money has not been forthcoming, hundreds of applications have been made, but the maps have not been updated because the local authorities are bogged down in their backlogs of claims with ever-diminishing resources to process them.

User groups were delighted when, in February 2022, the environment minister Richard (Lord) Benyon, announced that the government would be abandoning the 2026 end-date. We were told this was a pragmatic decision because of the lack of resources in the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) to carry out the legal work needed to commence the cut-off. It made good sense, and we breathed a sigh of relief.

But we celebrated too soon. Of course the farming and landowning organisations lobbied for the cut-off to be reinstated. A year later, in March 2023, then environment secretary Thérèse Coffey reversed Benyon's decision and announced that she would honour the 2026 guillotine.

2008 Natural England had set up a stakeholder working group (SWG) on which were balanced the interests of landowners, local authorities, and users, to agree a package of measures to ensure that the definitive map applications could be processed more quickly and efficiently. In 2010, the group published *Stepping Forward*, in which it proposed such measures, and these were incorporated into the Deregulation Act 2015. At that time user groups had reluctantly accepted the 2026 cut-off, on the understanding that other measures would be introduced to limit its effect, and to reduce the burden on local authorities so that applications were processed more quickly.

These mitigating measures included a list of routes which would be saved, such as paths in urban areas, and paths in use. It is a complex process to identify these exceptions in law, and the SWG has been working with Defra officials (who lack the necessary legal resource) to assist with drafting.

Then in October 2023 Coffey, kowtowing to landowner pressure and giving only five days' notice, instructed government to take the irreversible step of imposing the guillotine on recording historic ways for the definitive map, extinguishing people's rights on unrecorded paths on 1 January 2026. She ignored the request from SWG that she wait to introduce the cut-off until the regulations for the exceptions were determined. This means that we have the guillotine without the mitigating measures. Although Defra officials are still working with us on the exceptions the risk is that those exceptions may never be introduced. The SWG consensus has been smashed.

Shortly after its commencement, the 2026 cut-off was set back by regulation to 1 January 2031, but it is still only a short time away, a mere seven years, after which our rights to countless routes will be lost.

The user groups will lobby a future government to repeal the cut-off and ensure that the age-old maxim 'Once a highway, always a highway' endures. I am sure that Red Ropers will be ready to join the call for action.

Case study *There is a lane at Mundesley, Norfolk, which is now on the definitive map due to an application from the society's local correspondent Ian Witham. It is recorded as a restricted byway with rights for walkers, horse riders, cyclists, and carriage drivers. Routes like these could be lost if applications are not made before 1 January, 2031.*

Annual General Meeting
When: 4 pm Saturday 13th April
Where: on Zoom

This year's Annual General Meeting allows us to take stock of how our club is doing after an active year. It's a chance to decide policy, to look at our constitution and elect our officers for the year. Red Rope is a democratic organisation. Any member can move a motion (deadline dates are below) stand to be an officer or be elected as a rep. from their region to be on our national committee. Officers' reports will be available to see how we're doing in different areas. We are proposing the following new posts which we hope will be of interest:

Safeguarding officer
This role will be an important one, both because it is to do with our values, and it will also be a requirement as an affiliate to the British Mountaineering Council. Safeguarding "means protecting a citizen's health, wellbeing, and human rights; enabling them to live free from harm, abuse and neglect" (NHS England). The BMC will provide online training in the role, have published safeguarding policies and a detailed job description.

Independent examiner of accounts
This role is to look at our finances on an at least annual basis to check everything is fine and make any recommendations about them. It is an independent post and therefore the member would not have a role on the national committee.

Current officer posts (v=vacant)
National Secretary, National Treasurer, Membership Secretary, Bulletin Editor, Monthly Information Sheet Editor, Ramblers Association Rep (v), BMC rep, Mountaineering Scotland Rep, Training Officer (v), Publicity Officer (v), National Trips Sec., National Trips Treasurer, I.T. Officer, LMC Liaison Officer (v). Please consider standing for any post as current officers may be happy for a change of role.

Deadlines:
13th February Notice of AGM sent to members.
2nd March: Any resolutions to be received by secretary
16th March: All resolutions, officer and regional reports and agenda sent out by this date.
30th March: Amendments to be received by secretary.

Attracting new members Our club has been active over the past year with many trips and local walks. We have got new people to join as a result. Last March and April regions were encouraged to organise at least one public event to get new people interested. Many people are now interested in left and green politics, but they aren't always able to find us and we need new activists to ensure the future of our club. Please think of setting a date, or dates, in your region for a well advertised, accessible event to attract newcomers!

Regional Support Payments
Every region with a bank account is entitled to a grant from national funds to help finance any publicity you choose to do and to promote activities in your region. This is currently £1.50 per member. This is an annual payment. The minimum grant is £20, even if you only have a few members. Just ask Humphrey Southall to send it to your region: treasurer@redrope.org.uk

Social media
We have a members only Facebook group (Red Rope Members) which can be used to swap photos, unwanted gear etc. - please join. We also have a public page which has over 500 followers at www.RedRopeWalkingAndClimbingClub
Please 'Like' and 'Follow' the page - it is FREE advertising for us online. And please add your comments to our posts! Interacting by adding comments actually triggers Facebook to give the post more visibility, and that helps to get us noticed. A 'Big Thank You' to those regions who have posted their walks' pics and comments, please keep them coming – it all really helps. Why not also share stuff about related campaigns, or anything people in our club might be interested in e.g. wildlife, a great book or exhibition? Importantly, if you would like to post stuff let me know and I'll give you Page Access. Janet Saunders publicity@redrope.org.uk can also help.

Meetup
'Meetup' is a free way to get new people along. We have agreed to fund a short term "try out" of this if any region is interested. Regions may also consider using Eventbrite for a specific event such as a history walk. If you have any questions, please get in touch at secretary@redrope.org.uk

Thanks, Pete Watson, National Secretary

Highlights of a Red Rope trip to the Bryn Goleu Hut, Dolgellau, Snowdonia, 7- 14 October, 2023

Saturday

10 of us from various regions arrive in sunshine, having enjoyed the early autumn colours on the journey. Impressively, a meal is on the table for 1930 hours.

Sunday

We meet Glyn, a member of Red Rope and the local Mountain Rescue team. He discusses high and low level routes in detail, sharing his valuable local knowledge before taking 7 of us on our first mountain walk. We park along a forest track at SH 685 218, walking past former mines to climb Y Llethr, at 756m the highest summit in the Rhinogs.

Humphrey leads the way. The weather is perfect for walking - breezy, warm and dry. We leave climbing Diffwys for another day, which is just as well as the sole departs from Simon's boot. Glyn delves into his rucksack to reveal duct tape, cable ties and an assortment of emergency solutions.

Monday

Five of us want to walk up Diffwys at 750m. Who will lead the walk? Our usual mountain walk leader is swimming today, saving himself for Cader Idris. Four of us have attended navigation training, partly financed by Red Rope. I suggest we split the leading into five sections, which works well. We drive as high as the road allows, then walk along tracks. There is no wind, the heat rises from the ground, trapped by overhead clouds and the hill rises sharply before us. It is hot. We take small steps. It is a sensory experience as we suddenly feel the cloud cooling our skin, the silence in the hills, the lack of bird song, the absence of others and the feel underfoot of soft grass. Then we are above the clouds. We frequently turn around to marvel at the scenery but nothing prepares me for the panoramic view of a mountain range peeping through cloud inversion. The cloud rolls between mountains like a cascading waterfall, constantly moving. It's simply stunning to watch on this calm day with the cloud unaffected by even a light wind.

We have lunch at the trig point with another fine view, then leisurely make our way back, noting features and 'handrails', polishing our navigation skills. Meanwhile other members are enjoying a sea swim at Barmouth.

Back at the house I find stepping into the bath - a claw bath no less - is higher than any step I have encountered this week! Later, four of us cross the £1 toll bridge to the George III, in Penmaenpool for a pre-dinner drink. Drinks are sipped on the outside balcony which overlook where the mountains meet the sea, while the evening draws in. It is a grand way to end the day.

Tuesday

Cader Idris dominates the skyline, sweeping and curving to create a natural amphitheatre. The last time I came to climb Cader Idris I was turned away in the car park due to strong winds. In such conditions a walker can be blown off Cader as easily as puffing out a birthday candle. However, today the conditions are perfect. Dry and warm with a breeze.

Eight of us walk up the Pony Path from the north side of the mountain (£6 cash only parking). We begin by walking through woodland and tumbling streams before a steady climb to the summit. Once again we are rewarded with fine views.

Wednesday

We take our mid-week Covid tests and spend the morning reading, while outside rain lashes down relentlessly. Over coffee we research indoor places of interest. There aren't many. We settle on Machynlleth Arts Centre and an adjacent old fashioned bookshop. The exhibition is diverse, laid out over three floors of workshops and many rooms. Some art is modern, there are mosaics and a wonderful portfolio of pastel and oil paintings of scenes at a local agricultural show.

Thursday

Six of us are lucky to be led once again by Glyn taking in Cefn Clawdd. It's another fine clear day. We meet no one else.

Friday, our final day.

A very wet start. We search for more opportunities for culture in the dry. 9 members visit Ysgwrn Farm House. After lunch some people walk above Pistyll Cain waterfalls, while others do the famous Precipice Walk with big drops down to the Mawddach Valley.

It is a splendid way to end the trip.

Janey Hewitt

Many thanks to the photographers.













Alison Hargreaves, 1962 – 1995

The mountains are there to be climbed and enjoyed not conquered. I feel when solo climbing more attuned to the elements than at any other time...
from 'A Hard Day's Summer'

Alison was one of Britain's all-time greatest mountaineers. When few female climbers were making headlines, she undertook bold and ambitious alpine expeditions in the Himalaya. In the summer of 1993 she climbed all 6 of the most demanding north faces in the Alps. In 1995, she scaled Everest solo, without oxygen and unsupported. She was hailed as a heroine. Two months later, she died in a storm on K2 and the press turned on her: how could a mother of two young children take such risks? Her death highlighted the double standards applied to male and female climbers. *UK Climbers magazine.*

Climber and award winning poet Helen Mort wrote the poem 'Routes' as her tribute to Alison. The BMC have a new section on their website called 'Outdoor Her' with advice specifically for women .

Routes

You might have died
where the road kicks back on itself
and the rain lies black
against the tarmac, barely glistening.

Or met with lightning
in a field watched only by
three knuckled trees, your figure
brief, joined to the sky.

Or simply counted out
your allocated breaths
your numbered heartbeats
in an ordinary room

and never seen
the Karakoram opening,
the clouds finding their shapes
beneath your feet.

Helen Mort

