

MASS TRESPASS ARRESTS ON KINDER SCOUT



red rope socialist walking and climbing club

bulletin 41 spring 2021

www.redrope.org.uk

The World Turned Upside-Down

In 1649 to St. George's Hill

**A ragged band they called the Diggers came to show the people's will.
They defied the landlords, they defied the laws -
They were the dispossessed, reclaiming what was theirs.**

**We come in peace, they said, to dig and sow,
We come to work the lands in common and make the waste ground grow.
This earth divided we will make whole
So it may be a common treasury for all.**

**The sin of property we do disdain
No man has any right to buy or sell the earth for private gain.
By theft and murder they took the land -
Now everywhere the walls spring up at their command.**

**They make the laws to chain us well -
The clergy dazzle us with heaven or they damn us into hell.
We will not worship the God they serve,
a God of greed who feeds the rich while poor folk starve.**

**We work and eat together, we need no swords.
We will not bow to the masters, nor pay rent to the lords.
Still we are free, though we are poor -
Ye Diggers all, stand up for glory, stand up now!**

**From the men of property the orders came.
They sent the hired men and troopers to wipe out the Diggers' claim -
Tear down their cottages, destroy their corn.
They were dispersed, only the vision lingers on.**

**Ye poor take courage, ye rich take care.
This earth was made a common treasury for everyone to share,
All things in common, all people one.
They came in peace - the order came to cut them down.**

*Words and music © Leon Rosselson, 1975. Many thanks to Leon for permission to use it.
The lyrics are derived from a pamphlet attributed to the Digger leader Gerrard Winstanley.
Versions of the song by Leon, Dick Gaughan and Billy Bragg can be heard on You Tube.*

bulletin@redrope.org.uk

This bulletin looks at the history and politics of trespass in England. Pete Watson's motion, emphatically passed at the AGM, was to do with opposing the Police Bill and its effect on the right to roam and protest.

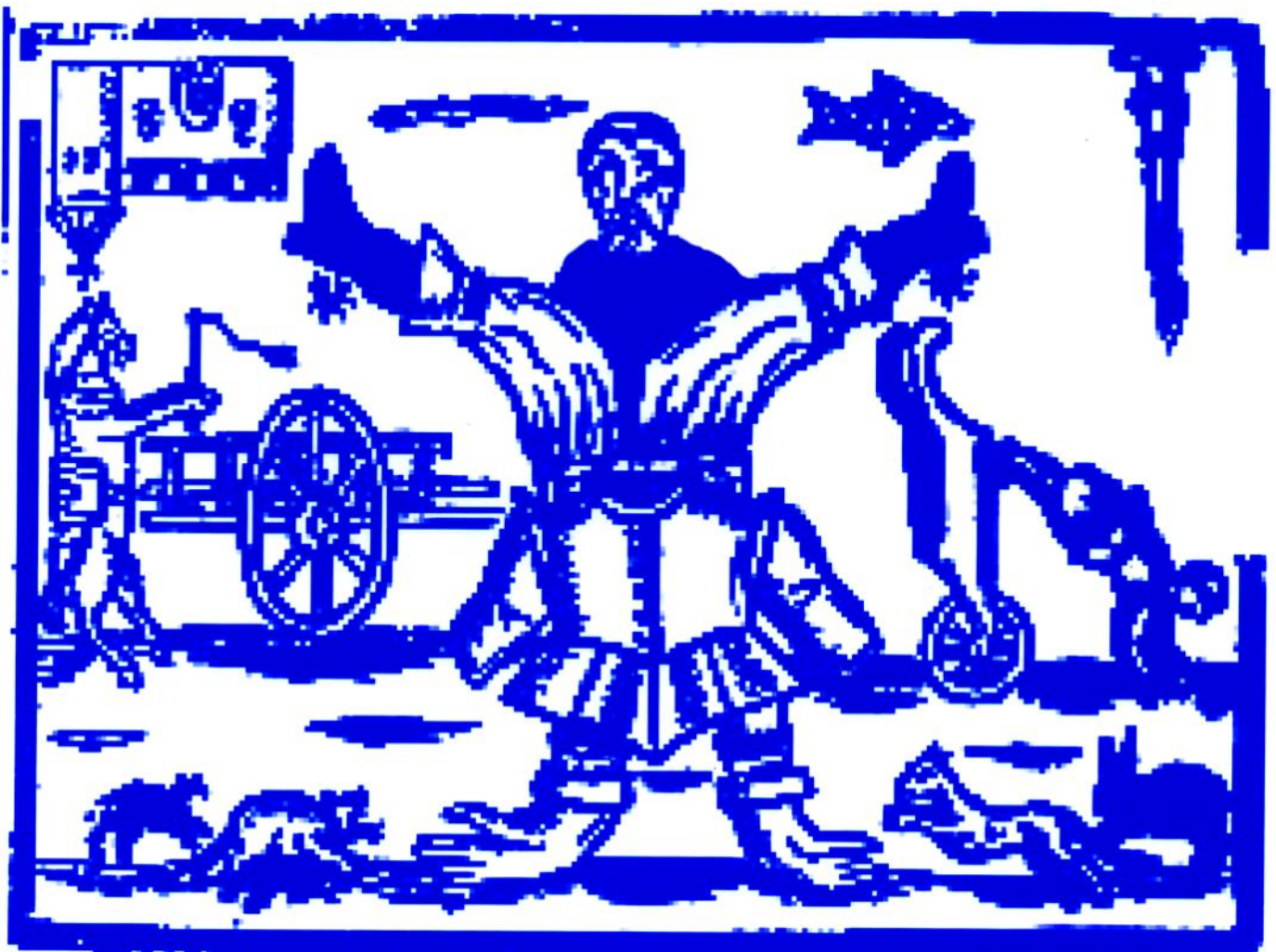
Pete and Jon Marsden (right) were part of a group of Nottingham RRs who went on to private land to mark the Kinder Trespass on 24 April. Pete says, "Passers-by were mostly sympathetic and we had a lovely picnic!" (See the XR/CRow statement, p.7)

Thanks to Pam Case for getting permission to use Leon Rosselson's lyrics opposite. It's a great way to be able start this edition. The next deadline is 31 October.

BW, David Symonds

* Contact Pam if you'd like to buy cards for charity featuring the 'tulip' image on the back cover and the first ten lines of Leon's song.
<pamcase@yahoo.co.uk>

+ That's a young Benny Rothman on the front cover!





WINTER HILL MASS PROTEST

*Will yo' come o' Sunday morning for a walk o'er
Winter Hill? Ten thousand went last Sunday but
there's room for thousands still!*

*O the moors are rare and bonny and the
heather's sweet and fine, And the road across
this hill top is the public's – yours and mine!*

Allen Clarke

10,000 marched over Winter Hill near Bolton, Lancashire, in September 1896 to reclaim the right to roam. Colonel Richard Ainsworth owned the moors on Winter Hill and decided in August 1896 to stop the right to roam across his land. The Ainsworths had made their money from the slave trade. Now a 'nouveau riche' anti-union employer and land owner, Ainsworth wanted to confine land use solely for grouse shooting.

Winter Hill was a place where local workers could escape from the towns and cities and breathe fresh air. It had been walked over for generations. Ainsworth however put up a locked gate, erected a No Trespass sign and hired 'gamekeepers' to keep the public off his land.

The local branches of the Social Democratic Federation, an early Marxist organisation, and the British Socialist Party decided on direct action. They advertised in the local paper that they would "test the right of way" on Sunday, Sept. 6th 1896. A few hundred set off from the meeting point. But soon this swelled in number as the march moved towards Winter Hill. The Bolton Journal described it as "thousands of persons of all ages and description". The march was met by police and gamekeepers at the

locked gate. In the melee which followed the gate was torn down.

Senior police officer Willoughby was thrown over a low wall and the head game keeper's son, who was seeking to note down the names of "ring leaders", was "kicked about the lower part of the body" according to the local newspaper. The march then took off over the Winter Hill. This was followed by further large marches including a Wednesday afternoon protest that allowed shop workers to attend.

In 1897 the radical leaders of the protests were put on trial and the court found in favour of land-owner Ainsworth. They were not imprisoned but faced a heavy fine for which a Defence Fund had been set up. The Winter Hill protests were then redirected into the hostile territory of the British legal system. Unfortunately, no campaign was waged by the SDF or BSP to convert local anger into long term action. And it was not until 1996 that Bolton Council declared Coal Pit Road, the scene of the mass protest, a public right of way. Nevertheless, the Winter Hill mass trespass must not be forgotten in these days of further government plans to restrict our right to roam.

Pete Watson

There will be a march on Winter Hill on 5 Sept., 2021 to commemorate the 125th anniversary of the original trespass, which Red Rope will join.

Acknowledgements to Paul Salveson's talk on commemorating the mass protest and his pamphlet "Will Yo' Come O' Sunday Mornin'?"

AN EXTRACT FROM AN ARTICLE ON WINTER HILL BY PAUL SALVESEN IN THE CHARTIST MAGAZINE, NOV. 2020

The coronavirus pandemic hasn't had many upsides but there are some, like the increase in cycling and local walking. A lot of people have started exploring their local area for the first time. Even in densely populated places you're often within fairly easy reach of the countryside or public parks.

For many urban socialists access to the countryside has always been important. It was a temporary escape from mill, mine and factory. Most of us will have heard of the Kinder Scout Mass Trespass of 1932 but before then Robert Blatchford's 'Clarion' newspaper inspired a hugely popular cycling club as well as walking groups, field naturalists and botanists. The ILP Clarion House at Roughlee, at the foot of Pendle Hill, is the last surviving example of the network of 'club houses' which sprung up across the north of England in the early years of the 20th century.

A less well known event was the Winter Hill rights of way battle of 1896, which I first came across in Allen Clarke's book of 1920, 'Moorlands and Memories', based on his own articles in the Bolton Journal and Guardian, written during and just after the First World War. He wrote that, "10,000 Boltonians marched up Bran Hey to pull down a gate and protest against a footpath being closed by the landlord." Huge demonstrations continued over two more weekends. It was the biggest ever rights of way battle in British history. What is particularly interesting is that, unlike Kinder Scout, the participants were local people. The marchers gained in number as they tramped through working class areas of Bolton and out onto the moors.

If the law was on the side of Ainsworth the people of Bolton were on the side of the campaigners.

Allen Clarke, a former mill worker, continued to write in a political but subtle and entertaining way, encouraging readers to value their moorland paths. He was an active member of the non-sectarian Bolton Labour Church which organised family walks on Sunday afternoons. The walks were 'educational' with children taught to recognise plants, trees and birds. The main tutor was John Fletcher, whose day job was working down a coal mine in Westhoughton. They were not shy about discussing politics. Clarke writes of one moorland walk on a summer's day when "we argued socialism, Tolstoyism and many other 'isms' before standing to sing Edward Carpenter's hymn: *England arise! The long, long night is over, faint in the east, before the dawn appears...*"

The First World War literally killed off much of that popular working class culture, though the Clarion Cycling Club enjoyed a temporary revival. The rise of the car and new forms of entertainment finally finished it off in the 1950s, though the Bolton Clarion Cycling Club, and many more as far south as Brighton, continue to flourish.

Hopefully events of 2020 will further encourage people's re-discovery of their own, very local, countryside. A group of local socialists and trade unionists have started to look at ideas for how to celebrate 2021's big anniversary and readers are invited to "like" our Facebook page "Winter Hill 125".

(For info on Paul's 2020 book "Moorlands, Memories and Reflections" see www.lancashireloominary.co.uk)



THE BOOK OF TRESPASS

In this book Nick Hayes shows that 92% of land and 97% of waterways are in private hands in England. Half of Scotland was in the hands of only 963 owners in 2012. Land ownership in Wales is similar .

Trespass is therefore almost unavoidable if we want to roam the countryside. Nick Hayes states that the sign 'Trespassers will be Prosecuted' is a lie. Since 1694 trespass is only a civil offence and can only be brought to court if there has been damage to the property. The landowner cannot detain you nor obtain your name and address. Only if you resist or obstruct can it become more serious.

Legislation to outlaw protest such as the Criminal Justice Act 1994 and the new Police Bill, however, adds to the powers of the police and threatens our right to roam.

This is a beautifully constructed book. It is full of great lino prints by Nick of places where he has trespassed and usually camped for the night, as shown to the right. Each chapter is named after an animal which describes an aspect of the history of land ownership - Nick trespasses on a relevant estate to tell the story.

'Sheep' describes how wool production impelled the aristocracy to enclose common land to raise sheep for profit. Nick trespasses on the Duke of Buccleuch's land, thirty times the size of Hyde Park, and originally built on wool production. From the first Enclosure Act in 1388, thousands of similar laws have been passed to enclose and exclude. The dispossessed were branded 'vagrants'. Travelling to find a home and work could lead to branding with a 'V' for vagabond. An especially persecuted group were the Roma, described as "an outlandish people" in the misnamed Egyptian Act of 1531.

In 'Cow', Nick recounts how British landowners received enormous wealth from slave ownership. When slavery was 'abolished' they received massive compensation which polarised wealth even further. The 'ex slaves' were forced to remain 'apprenticed' in the plantations. (To find out about your town's slave legacy look at The Legacy of British Slave Ownership <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/>)

In 'Pheasant' Nick explodes the 'Downton Abbey' myth about the aristocracy being the custodians of the countryside. Every year thirty-five million partridge and pheasant are released into the estates of England, which is twice the bio-mass of all the country's wild birds. Moor burning to promote grouse breeding causes untold damage to the peat eco-system.

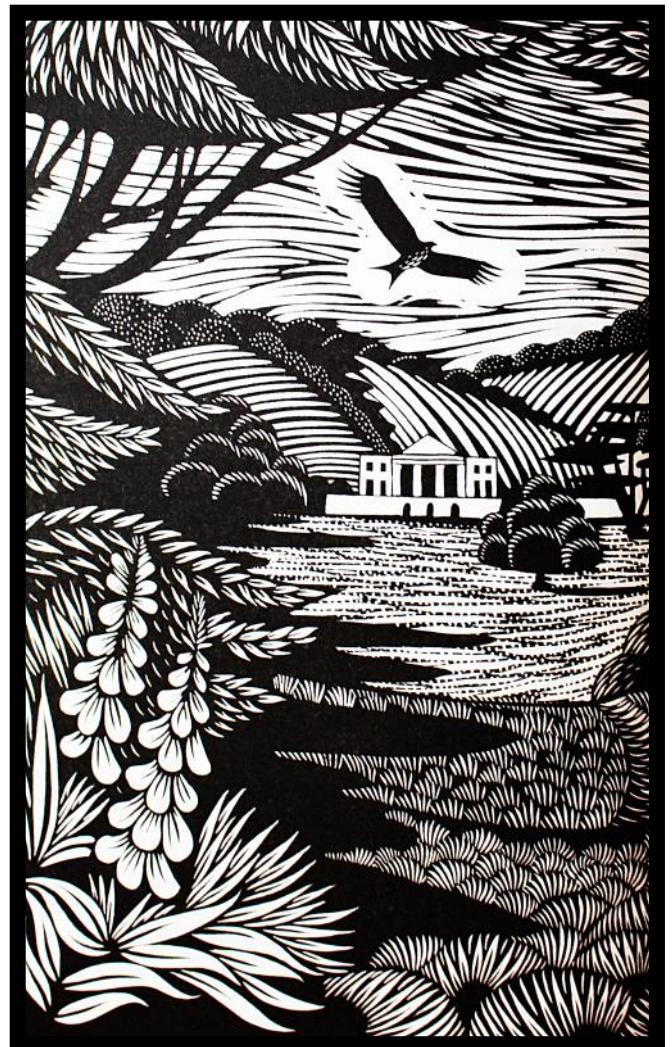
The book also underlines that these changes have not come without resistance. From Ketts' rebellion in Tudor

times up to Greenham common and the Kinder Trespass, people have not just accepted their lot, but have fought for their rights to land and freedom to roam.

Nick's answers seem to lie in adopting a Scottish Outdoor Access Code elsewhere in the UK where people can have access to private lands but with a responsibility not to damage the land. He also would like the Crown Lands opened. He advocates trespass and protest to force the opening up of these lands. His policies seem limited however, as the idea of public ownership of land and a socialist approach doesn't appear in this book. Nevertheless, this is an inspiring and rewarding call to change our countryside through trespass and protest.

Pete Watson

The next page shows the message to landowners by XR and the Right to Roam campaign about the action on 24 April which is mentioned on page 3. Many thanks for their permission to reproduce it here.



DEAR LANDOWNER

We trespass your land today not in defiance of you, as the law currently defines it, but to start a conversation. Like other countries across Europe, including Scotland, Estonia, Norway and Sweden, we believe that a connection with nature is a birth-right, not a crime. But with the English public forbidden from 92% of the land and 97% of rivers, the scale of our exclusion is neither justifiable nor tenable. Something must change. 2016, the State of Nature Report pooled data from over 50 conservation & research organisations to find that the UK was one of the most nature-depleted countries in the world. But, without a connection to nature, it is no surprise that many people find it hard to comprehend the scale of our climate crisis and habitat loss. As the scientist M J Pyle wrote, "what is the extinction of a condor to a child that has never known the wren". People need a connection to nature in order to care.

Our health is declining, our NHS cracking under the pressure. Physically, we are suffering through our sedentary lifestyles, with both heart disease and obesity on the rise; mentally, we have urgent crises of stress and depression. Science has shown that all the above are linked to Nature Deficit Disorder, and that the symptoms can be alleviated by a renewed connection with nature. We trespass today because we know, in body, mind and soul, that nature can heal us.

The coronavirus pandemic has revealed the extent to which exclusion from nature is an issue of class and race, of justice as much as fairness. As research by the Office for National Statistics, CPRE and others have shown, it is the poorest and most marginalised communities which are the least likely to own any green space of their own, the least likely to live in a nature abundant area, to live in proximity to a National Park or AONB or to have the transport available to enjoy them. Wherever we live, whatever our income, whoever we are, the right to access nature should belong to us all.

The Countryside and Rights of Way (CRoW) act allows us to wander freely on 8% of the land. But since much of this open access land is remote from the majority of the population, its benefits have been profoundly limited. To see an effect on our nation's health, and the pressure on the NHS, we need to access nature regularly, which means we need it near to our homes. When rivers can regulate our stress levels,

when woodlands can fortify our immune systems, when the open space of greenbelt land can offer us room to exercise, why are we forbidden from so much of our landscape? We need to bring CRoW to our doorsteps. (CRoW: The Countryside and Rights of Way Act ,2000)

We appreciate the concern that access to the land has not always been met with respect for it. But when so many of us grow up excluded from nature, when the government has been spending just £2000 a year on publicising the Countryside Code, is it any wonder some people don't know how to behave responsibly? When the Scottish Land Reform Act of 2003 and the CRoW act of 2000 opened up the land to the public it also placed clear definitions on our responsibilities to it. Rather than inviting negligence into the countryside, extending our rights of access would allow the nation to forge a new relationship with the land, to learn and educate ourselves about the proper way to respect the countryside and its workings. The right to roam would reboot our connection to nature, and teach us first hand the responsibilities we owe it.

We appreciate that the countryside is a place of work. But we also see that your work is undervalued by society. Rather than interfering with your work, greater access rights would allow us a better recognition of the essential labour you put towards our lives and our society. We envision a future in which people come to the countryside not just to be in it, but to support and improve it in partnership with those who live and work within it.

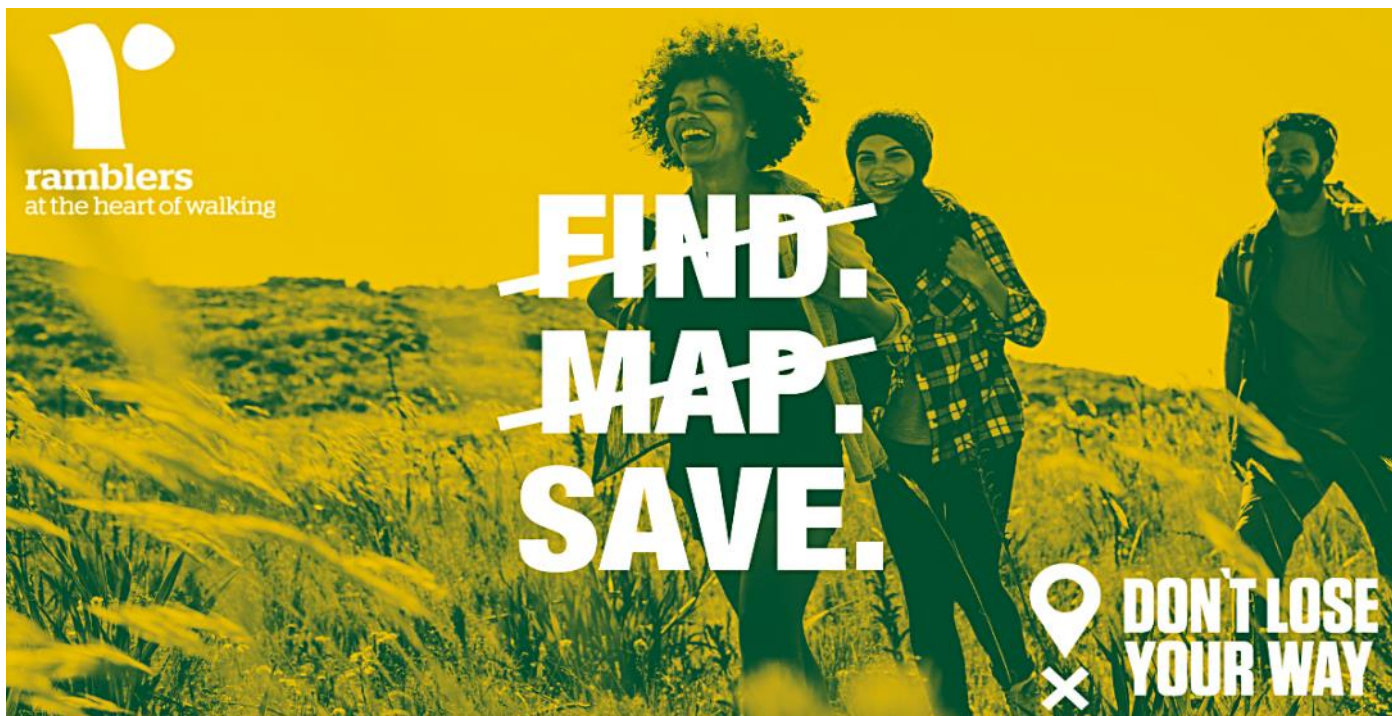
For our environment to survive, for our society to thrive, our countryside cannot simply be the preserve of those fortunate enough to own it. We want to be a part of the countryside; we urgently need to reconnect to nature. And until we can have a conversation about how best to make this happen, respectfully, we will keep coming back. Sincerely,



righttoroam.org.uk and
extinctionrebellion.uk/

24 April, 2021





We have a fantastic network of public rights of way in England and Wales - 140,000 miles of footpaths, bridleways and restricted byways which criss-cross the country and enable us to access our amazing natural landscapes and navigate our towns and cities. But there are thousands of miles of public paths which are unrecorded and, if not claimed by 1st January 2026, could be lost forever.

Public paths in England and Wales are recorded on the *definitive map* – the legal record of rights of way which are held by local councils. The requirement for local councils to have a definitive map of rights of way came from the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act (1949), a pioneering legislative achievement of the Attlee government. Over the 1950s and 1960s (and in some areas into the 1970s and 80s) councils drew up their maps with assistance from parishes and communities. But the process of mapping wasn't straightforward, and many historical paths were simply missed off. In 2020, the Ramblers' "Don't Lose Your Way" campaign created a tool enabling members of the public to compare the current Ordnance Survey map with 2 historical maps and find any potentially missing paths. Thousands of people joined the search for these lost paths, and together mapped all of England and Wales in just six weeks. Using this tool, we identified over **49,000 miles of potentially unrecorded paths**. The resulting map of possibly lost rights of way can be seen [opposite](#).

We won't be able to save all paths and we are now going through a process of prioritising these paths to focus on the ones which would bring the most benefit to the rights of way network. See dontloseyourway.ramblers.org.uk.

However, identification is only the first step – to save any individual path an application needs to be made to the local council for it to be added to the definitive map. We are now building further tools and guidance to enable any member of the public to research and make an application for one (or more!) of these lost paths. Making an application involves digging into historical records (see insert box) to unearth clues that the route was public in the past and, if the application is successful, will mean that the path is protected long into the future. These applications based on historical evidence cannot be made after the government deadline of the 1st January 2026 (considering the size of the problem, the Ramblers are calling for this deadline to be extended by at least five years. (See our [position statement](#)).

Our public rights of way network is crucial in enabling us all to access the countryside, whether on foot, bicycle or horseback, but it is more than that. Our paths are part of the "ordinary" history of our country, describing how our ancestors interacted with, and enjoyed, the landscape over centuries. It would be fantastic if Red Rope members could get involved to help save this important part of our shared heritage and secure access long into the future. To join the movement and get involved with the historical research please sign up [here](#). Our right to access the countryside has been hard fought over many decades and we now have under five years left to save these vital paths for generations to come.

Jack Cornish, the Ramblers

A New Campaign: Since the first lockdown in March 2020, people have been discovering how essential their local open spaces are to their well-being. The irony is that green spaces are under threat from a series of proposed changes to planning legislation. There is a simple way to give green space greater protection. Read on and find out more about our new campaign to explain and publicise the need for voluntary registration of more land as town or village greens throughout England and Wales.

We have recently launched our “Grant a Green” campaign. The society is to urge local councils in England and Wales voluntarily to register their open spaces as town or village greens, to protect them from development and give local people rights of recreation there.

It is more important now than ever to secure our green spaces. Not only have the restrictions of movement meant that people have discovered that their local open spaces are essential for their health and sanity, but also those spaces are under unprecedented threat.

The Westminster government is intent on destroying the planning system, and green spaces are in the firing line for development. In Wales, such spaces are under threat from outdated and inadequate planning guidance. Land owning councils can set an example to others, and provide a gift for their communities, by registering their land in the same way as a village green. *Kate Ashbrook, the Open Spaces Society*

Key documents to help prove a right of way:

Tithe maps

Enclosure maps

Railway and canal plans

Parish and estate maps,

O.S .maps and records

Jack Cornish Don't Lose Your Way, The Ramblers

The map represents the 49,000 miles of potentially lost rights of way found last year.



Red Rope Trips and Covid 19

A trips sub-group has been busy planning for our re-launch. There has been a high level of interest and we have just one space remaining on the Muir Cottage trip with all other national trips full. We are still uncertain that huts will re-open in time for our summer trips but fingers are crossed.

Members will be able to opt out of shared transport if they wish to, and cover their own costs. Banded public transport will be possible only when no lift is available.

New food hygiene guidelines will be shared before each trip and agreed at the first trip meeting.

Trip participants will be asked to read and sign the following declaration before a trip. Cancellations made for any of the issues listed will be fully refunded:

It is important that you do not join a trip if you or any of your household/bubble

- **Has symptoms of Covid 19**
- **Has tested positive for Covid 19 in the last 14 days**
- **Is awaiting the result of a Covid 19 test**
- **Has been asked to self-isolate**

The trips sub-group were reluctant to make Covid testing before trips a requirement but this was discussed further at the recent AGM with members speaking in favour, so it will be discussed again in June before the first of our scheduled hut trips in July.

Becky Bates

Those were the days, my friend . . .

I wonder how many readers remember these two early appearances of Red Rope banners:



Having organised a trip (1980 / 81?) that coincided, alas, with a big CND demonstration, we made a makeshift banner and took it up Coniston Old Man.



In 1982, Brian Muir and John Lockwood duly celebrated the working class's iconic 1932 trespass on Kinder Scout.

That was when we were all ferociously committed to strangling Thatcherism at birth and playing our part in ushering in an era of socialism (albeit a transitional one); when we argued endlessly in minibuses and huts about how this was to be done and tried to get other trip members to buy our own particular left newspaper; when we ignored the long-standing theoretical injunction against socialism in one country and set about enthusiastically trying to build 'socialism in one club'.

Marx famously said very little about what communism would be like; that was a matter for those who led the revolution forwards. All we had to go on, therefore, was that lapidary phrase from the Critique of the Gotha Programme: *From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs!* On that basis, we invented the bands – and have argued about them ever since, along with complicated rules about what was and was not a club trip. For the most part, unlike almost all groups with roots in the left in those days, we remained a broad democratic alliance across the left party spectrum.

The nearest we ever came to a split was over the issue of women-only trips.

They were also the days when we rather brashly put ourselves about as dangerous radicals across the wider outdoor movement. We played a major role in the 50th Anniversary Celebrations of the Kinder Scout Mass Trespass. We sent delegates to the BMC's and the RA's Annual Meetings and made the case for our somewhat maximalist motions. We worked closely with SCAM, with whom we trespassed and ran a workshop on building a direct action strategy for access campaigns. We even organised the Hope Valley Conference, a two-day residential event on the broad political economy of access. It was attended by leading figures and activists – past, present and future – in the broad 'outdoor campaigning' world, and made a serious attempt to define a more radical agenda around access issues. . .

. . . But then we hit the mid-80s, the Miners' Strike, and the unleashing of the Neo-Liberal agenda / era within the UK. Along with the rest of the Left / Progressive movement, we entered the long years of working out what we are about and what our vision(s) of some sort of Red-Green future might be and how we might advance those causes.

. . . If you want a glimpse of what Red Rope was like during those early, confident, and immensely enjoyable full-on socialist years, then do have a look at the reflections and reminiscences I put together during the 2020 lockdown. They are now on the club's website. In case you are too young to remember the 1960s and 1970s, I give an initial overview of those formative years. It was out of that milieu that Red Rope emerged – and something of all that may still resonate in odd corners of the club's experience in the 2020s.

Julian Batsleer Nat Sec: 1982 – 1984

Julian adds: More recently, I have been writing an account of the 50th Anniversary Celebration of the Mass Trespass, in which Red Rope played a key role. That article is a 'companion piece' to the article about the origins and early years of the club. It is now available on the Hayfield Kinder Trespass Group's website:

<https://kindertrespass.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Mass-Trespass-50th-Anniversary-JB-20210316-final.pdf>

Julian's extended essay on the first 10 years of the club 'Red Rope finds its feet – the early years' is available via the club's homepage at www.redrope.org.uk It's a very thorough account of an exciting period, putting the formation of RR into an historical and political context.

Welsh Place Names

I have been impressed on Red Rope trips by the efforts made by members to pronounce the names of Scottish hills. Regrettably (for me as a Welsh person, at least) not as much effort goes into Welsh pronunciation! It's something I've been banging on about for years, but the ongoing trend towards using the Welsh versions of place names more generally has made it increasingly important for those visiting Wales. The best (informal) phonetic guide I found to pronunciation was from Cambridge University Hillwalking Club <https://cuhwc.org.uk/> So here are a few examples of places and hills in Welsh mountain areas using their system:

'uhss' is pronounced as in 'goose'
'uh' is pronounced as in 'tug'
'blye', 'nye', etc. are pronounced as in 'eye'
'ch' is pronounced as in Scots 'loch'
'ay' sounds like 'eye'
'th' is pronounced as in 'that'
'hl' – tongue behind your top front teeth and blow!
'c' is pronounced like a 'k' in English
r's are rolled (though I can't do it very well!)
The penultimate vowel is often stressed.

- **Betws-y-Coed:** 'BET-uhss uh COYD'
- **Blaenau Ffestiniog** – 'BLYE-nye fest-IN-yog'
- **Cae Ysgubor** – 'kye uhs-SGEE-borr'
- **Capel Curig** – 'KAP-el KIRR-ig'
- **Carneddau** – 'karr-NETH-eye'
- **Crib Goch** – 'krreeb gaukh'
- **Bannau Brycheiniog** (Brecon Beacons)
'BAN-nye brruh-KHAYN-yog'
- **Moel Eilio** – 'moyl AYL-yo'
- **Moel Siabod** – 'moyl SHAB-od'
- **Mynydd Mawr** – 'MUH-nith mowr'
- **Pen y Fan** – 'PEN uh van'
- **Rhyd Ddu** – 'hrreed thee'
- **Y Lliwedd** – 'uh HLI-weth'
- **Ystradfellte** – 'uh-strad-VE-hl-te'

To hear Welsh spoken try <https://forvo.com/> and **You Tube: Snowdonia - mountains in Welsh.**

Welsh versions of some names, e.g. Caernarfon (Carnarvon) and Aberhonddu (Brecon) are already in common use and more will follow. A recent campaign aims to give Snowdon and Snowdonia their Welsh names – Yr Wyddfa and Eryri, though I confess to rarely having used these myself. Must do better, must do better ...

Barbara Segal

RR Knees Up: Hathersage Rocks - Again!



St Michaels Environmental and Education Centre, Main Rd, Hathersage, S32 1BB

The following is from the Centre's website:

"...limitless walking from the door...close to the popular Derwent Valley reservoirs, the gritstone edges, Chatsworth estate and the caverns of Castleton...We provide top quality, warm accommodation in a variety of dorms... buses daily to Sheffield, Hope, Castleton, Eyam and Bakewell."

The Centre is very comfortable and a good size, which makes it fairly expensive for us to rent, so do yourself and the club a favour and book a place asap!

David Symonds

Hathersage is a pleasant village in the northern Peak District about 10 miles west of Sheffield with gear shops and lots of fabulous walking and climbing options. Another great feature is an open-air heated swimming pool, operating from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m.

It's on the Hope Valley train line so it would be possible for some members to come for the day. If you have never been to a national gathering why not give it a go? You can book on-line this year, as well as by post.

It will run from **Friday 10 to Sunday 12 September**. As you can see, the St. Michael's Centre has a smart, bright interior. The dorms have strong, modern bunks sleeping 38 people.

There will be plenty of time to get into the countryside on both days, particularly as we've already held the 2021 AGM. However, the Saturday night will still feature the traditional fun-packed big meal and quiz!

There will be a bar with real ale, fruit juice and wine at cost price, so there is no need to bring your own drink. There may also be an orienteering game, treasure hunt and the possibility of climbing instruction, depending on demand.



An Experiment with Meetup

Some members will already be aware of the online platform 'Meetup' for publicising and organising events. There are lots of walking groups using it to advertise their walks.

Before the first lockdown in 2020 last year Coventry and Warwickshire RR had a go at doing this – sadly we never got to go on our first Meetup walk because of Covid but the interest generated was very promising so I am sharing our experiences of using the platform.

'Meetup' is not free – it is a U.S. company, operating in many countries. It earns its money by providing an online platform for people to organize 'meet-ups', and the organizer of a group pays a monthly subscription fee, (in 2019/20 we paid £23 per month). However, it costs nothing to sign up as a 'Meetup' member to search and register your interest in the various groups. What is great about this is that people can search for walking groups *in their area* and get regular updates about their events. If you set up a page for your Red Rope region they will find you and get notified of any events.

Coventry and Warwickshire are down to just a few members, so we planned to use Meetup to get ourselves known and attract people to join us on certain walks. We planned 4 local walks, to advertise as 'Meet-up' walks. We decided to do our first walk for free and then charge guests a fee of £2 cash after that to help cover the cost of the subscription. You are allowed to do that if you make it clear in the event description – or you can collect payments online through the site.

It is very easy to get started - you fill in a profile for your club, with at least one date with a location and brief details. I used an inoffensive picture of some bluebell woods for the page (no people), and listed our first walk with the location, distance and a brief description of the level of walk. I said that more details would follow (car parking etc., which I planned to send the week before) and stipulated 10 places for Meetup members on the walk – we planned for 5 of our existing members, including the walk leader – so no more than 15 in total. If I do this again I would go with fewer 'places' and of course there will be Covid to consider. (Meetup now has specific rules about Covid.)

We chose a location with a large free car park so that Meetup guests could make their own way there because no one wanted to lift-share with a stranger. This kept it simple. We could have chosen a walk via public transport, but they are hard to find out here in the sticks.

60 members and 10 walkers

I was amazed at the speed with which people signed up to the group – *within a week* the site had 60 members and 10 filled walk places – I then amended the club profile to highlight more strongly the 'Socialist' nature of the group and 2 dropped out – quickly filled by others – you can sometimes see what other groups people belong to and this indicated a few were definitely 'fellow travellers'.

The meetup 'organiser' doesn't have to be the walk leader – you can nominate another organiser who can log in and add details, so you can cover for each other.

Several people asked if they could bring a dog – it seems a lot of walking groups discourage dog owners – so you must make this decision before you go onto Meetup and say what your dog policy is. We already had one dog, so we said up to 3 dogs allowed 'under close control' and one walk had 'No dogs' because we knew the route was through pasture. Don't get turned into a dog-walking group by accident!

Easily found online, local focus

There is a lot of help in the system to get you started – and much helpful advice on running a Meetup group. It takes a bit of commitment from one or 2 people to set it up, respond to the occasional query, and of course to commit to the walks, but I found it relatively painless.

The focus of Meetup is local – you can be easily found by folk looking to get out walking, usually in their area – it could be a nice surprise for them to find a socialist club! Of course you have NO guarantee that the people who come on your walks will go on to join Red Rope but at least they will know we exist! It could be a great way to boost falling numbers in some regions. I paid the monthly sub as an individual and claimed it back locally. Perhaps your region could apply for a year's funding from national Red Rope funds!

The sad thing about the experiment was, of course, that our first walk was planned for the end of March and we had to cancel it due to lockdown. It was really easy to send all the group a message to tell them that – all handled within the Meetup platform. I eventually closed our account to save our group funds, but that was also quite easy to do. As our walks start up again, if your region wants a way of reaching a wider audience, why not give 'Meetup' a try?

Janet Saunders

Staying local – finding where to go in town

All this spring we had to “stay local”. In inner London, real open country is ten miles away, so where can we go walking staying off roads?

In the country, Ordnance Survey maps document rights of way, and 1:25,000 scale Explorer maps show access land created by the CROW Act. However, even Hampstead Heath and Richmond Park are not CROW Access Land, and inner London councils, almost uniquely, do not maintain official maps of rights of way, the Ordnance Survey’s main source.

Transport for London’s Walk London web pages provide downloadable directions for seven strategic walking routes. The best known is probably the Thames Path, and its frequent use by Red Rope day walks must make it our most popular path – forget the Aonach Eagach! <https://tfl.gov.uk/modes/walking/top-walking-routes>

The 78-mile Capital Ring circles inner London while the 150-mile London Outer Orbital Path (LOOP) runs through the outer suburbs, but full circuits are major projects. These routes and others are marked on OS Explorer maps, not as rights of way but as “recreational paths”. These are not a dense enough network to offer many circular walks, so during lockdown I have been exploring additional off-road routes in south east London.

A key source is the Ordnance Survey Greenspace map, which exists only online but is completely free. To access it, go to the OSMaps web site, click on the “layers” symbol



bottom right, and select “Greenspace”; then double-click on the map to zoom in on your area: <https://osmaps.ordnancesurvey.co.uk>

The OS say “Greenspaces are outdoor areas such as parks, recreation grounds and playgrounds likely to be accessible to the public”. The sample here shows parks (turquoise), woods (green) and a golf course (yellowy green) – and elsewhere CROW Access Land is also marked. However, Greenspace mapping has limitations: some marked areas are seldom open to walkers, such as allotments; many other open areas are unmarked.

In my explorations, I have been trying quite hard to trespass but have seldom succeeded. Using a mixture of 1:25,000 mapping (accessible to OSMaps Premium subscribers), Greenspace and the also-free aerial photo layer, you can identify routes that look to avoid built-up areas.

A fair amount will be “likely accessible” on OSMaps but what about the rest? Within London, some will be fiercely protected by high pallisade fencing but most of the rest turns out to be open.

Take the example maps. The Explorer map shows a river running east-west, but little obvious sign of a possible walk. The Greenspace map shows a string of parks in the west, but then a golf course, a long stretch running between houses, and a wood with no right of way along the river. In fact, there is a fine off-road “Riverway” all along the river (marked in red), signposted by the council. The golf course has a high fence, but the adjacent wooded area is outside; there is a narrow parkland strip right through that housing; and that wood is fully open to the public.

The best known parks are in inner London, but far more of outer London is parkland of some kind, and blank areas on maps repeatedly turn out to be public open spaces. According to the GLA, 18 per cent of Greater London is parks, and there are many, many more places we can go than the Thames Path.

However, the pandemic has greatly boosted demand for local places to walk, and there are good reasons why in normal times most Red Rope London walks are outside the M25. Better mapping of actually accessible land would help but we need more:

Trails linking parks often follow rivers, but with frequent stretches where the river cannot be followed. Inner London rivers often disappear underground, but many outer London stretches could be opened up.

The outer green belt is mostly farmed (69 per cent of England is farmland), but closer-in large areas are closed-off sports grounds and golf courses. Some way of creating access, at least down the sides, would help immensely.

The Ramblers’ “Don’t Lose Your Way” campaign won’t help much within London as it is about re-establishing historic rights, not creating new access. Its 2026 deadline is for submitting applications to councils and there is no deadline and little funding for councils to process them.

Rights of Way and CROW create public access to private land, but walking in London is mainly about public lands, mostly council-owned and endangered by “austerity” and by assaults on planning laws.

Humphrey Southall

PS Apologies if you misunderstood the title! Another challenge to London walkers is that in the city it is hard to just go behind a bush, and public toilets are harder to find open now. This too is partly about local government cuts: <https://tribunemag.co.uk/2021/04/let-the-people-piss>

Left: OS 1:25,000 Explorer Map of part of south east London

Right: OS Greenspace map of the same area.



The great debate: phones or maps?

There was a recent exchange of views on the national email list about this topic. **Richard Bennett** sent the text below which was followed by John Aldous sending the first image, with the caption, "I hear you, comrade!" Rob van Beeke added the Wayfinders image and the comment, "What's all this about phones?"

"Quite a few people have expressed concerns about the risks of relying solely on a phone for navigation. I would agree with that for mountain walking. I prefer a paper map on the hills, not because the battery might go flat (that's never happened to me though I did lose most of a paper map in a gale when I needed to take it out of the plastic freezer bag to refold it) but because it's impossible to operate it with even thin gloves on. Also none of the phones I've had have been waterproof. Scottish rain being much wetter than English rain, one of my phones in an inside pocket under my waterproof still filled up with water. Seeing water sloshing round behind the screen a friend suggested that I could use it as a spirit level. However there are times when GPS could be a life saver—a phone with at least something like OS Finder (?) is good to get a confirmatory grid reference.

In 1997, before we had such things, two friends in another walking club died falling through a cornice on Creag Meagaidh after visibility had badly and unexpectedly deteriorated. They were well prepared, one had marked the planned route on his OS map together with compass bearings. They were a party of 5 so the man in the middle was using his compass to give directions and to monitor the leader. However, they'd accumulated an error of 200m

or so which unfortunately turned out to be too large a margin. Also if you are on skis it is very difficult to estimate the distance that you have travelled or maintain a bearing in poor visibility. With a group from Edinburgh and some locals we spent hours in a snowstorm trying to find a hut on the edge of the Wapta glacier in the Rockies. Despite a systematic search we only fortuitously spotted it at about 2 a.m. because of a momentary improvement in visibility. With GPS we would have been snug in our sleeping bags by midnight! Though the leaking petrol stove in the hut would still have burst into flames. No fire extinguisher!

The phone comes into its own on low-level walks though. When I walked the southern half of the Offa's Dyke path Mickey McDiarmid kindly lent me two guide books with strip-maps. Although it was mostly well signposted there were times when there were a multiplicity of paths or no obvious one and the 1:25000 maps showing field boundaries were essential to avoid getting on the wrong side of barbed wire and hawthorn hedges while carrying a rucksack heavy with food and camping gear. I wouldn't want to carry a full set of maps for the whole of a low-level long distance path, a phone is much better."

Richard Bennett

Richard commented on the first image:

"The man in the picture has the compass and is giving directions to the woman at the front of party. Obviously reading a compass is man's work and should he make a navigation error the woman will be the one to fall through the cornice. Safety first!"

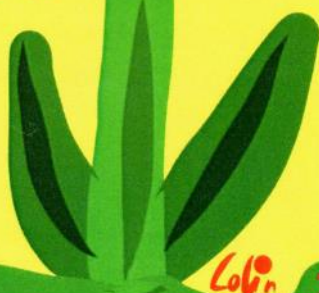




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The BMC wants you to share your rubbish stories!

Our H2O Facebook page is full of interesting stories and is a great record of the amount of waste we are removing from our mountains, crags and hills. From nappies, banana skins, bottles and wet wipes to pants, socks and a ghetto blaster – we've been removing all sorts. We would love to hear from anyone that is about to undertake a litter pick. In particular, where you go, how much rubbish you remove and if you find anything of interest. You can do this by sharing your stories with us on our dedicated Facebook Group. We can provide litter pickers and bags.

JOIN: [The H2O Facebook Group](#)

DOWNLOAD: [Removing litter safely during COVID BMC guidance](#)

- Everyday about 8 million pieces of plastic pollution find their way into our oceans
- Approximately 6.3 billion tonnes of plastic waste is generated in the UK each year and out of this around 9% has been recycled, 12% incinerated & 79% is in landfills or the natural environment
- Approximately 480 billion bottles were sold globally in 2016 and only 7% of these were recycled
- A tissue takes around 6 weeks to break down, a fag-end takes up to 10 years and a can takes 200 years.