



RED ROPE | THE SOCIALIST
WALKING AND
CLIMBING CLUB

National Committee discussion on Red Rope fees in light of the BMC's increased charges

The BMC have increased their affiliation charges by 23% for this calendar year because of a hefty insurance claim, following a 'catastrophic' i.e. life changing accident. (This was not someone in Red Rope.)

70% of Red Rope's membership income pays our affiliation fees to the BMC. Half of that pays for 3rd party liability insurance, meaning that if a Red Roper dislodged a rock, for example, causing an injury to a member of the public the insurance would cover the claim, which could be huge. Red Rope cannot change fees without approval from our 5 April AGM, when we can decide on a response for 2026.

How could we minimise the increase for members? This was discussed at NC meetings in October and on the 27th of January, which was preceded by an intensive exchange of emails, many of which appear below. Did the banding criteria need to be revised, as many members are now retired? Should trip charges be increased to contribute to the national club's income? It could be argued that the benefits of insurance are more likely to apply to members on trips. The discussion concerned practicalities but also ethics - did our charges tally with being a socialist club? *(The word 'trip' here refers to stays from 2 to 7 nights in huts, or similar, as opposed to a day walk.)*

16/12/2024 (Janet Saunders - IT Officer)

It's a good idea to discuss the banding system. However, I think we need some information to stop us falling into anecdotal musings about a solution.

A) Band distribution in the club. Has this changed? Is it becoming more skewed in one direction? B) Trip finances and banding of people going on trips. Are the trips bandings evenly spread? Are trips costs breaking even? Do lots of week-long trips these days suit retired people, as opposed to cheap weekends aimed at anyone? Does that perhaps exclude some people? C) RR membership fee. Is our system sustainable in the light of the BMC increases?

16/12/2024 (Richard Bennett - RR Scotland's Treasurer)

To reply to recent speculation that members on low bands are having more than their fair share of trips, our figures show that the opposite seems to be the case for RR Scotland. Maybe someone could reply for National Trips?

We have 64 Scotland trips going back to 2018 for which we have complete electronic records.

Band 1: 5 members went on 45 trips/ **Band 2:** 9 members went on 62 trips/ **Band 3:** 13 members went on 120 trips

Band 4: 8 members went on 121 trips/ **Band 5:** 8 members went on 51 trips.

If we look at the numbers of Scotland members who have never been on a Scotland trip we see that the lower the member's band, the less likely they are to come on a weekend trip.

Hugh Wallis (National Trips Treasurer) *later stated that in 2024 there were slightly more people in lower bands than higher bands on national trips, i.e. not trips organised by regions.*

16/12/2024 (Steve Wright - Deputy National Secretary)

The latest BMC increase does provide a very good reason to discuss the issues around our fees approach. Now that so many of us have retired it would be interesting to hear how others think we might incorporate assets (like house ownership), savings and inheritances into our system. Do we still need 5 bands or would 3 do – say, equivalent to unemployed benefit or state pension only; standard tax payer; higher tax payer – as was suggested to me by a West Midlands member some years back?

17/12/2024 (Barbara Segal)

Here's a bit of background to the banding discussion. The most recent figures I can find on band distribution are from October 2023, which I've included on the next page.

Proportion of Members by Band				
1	2	3	4	5
15%	27.67%	34.33%	19%	17%

So significantly more members are below Band 3 than above it. I think that when we changed from 8 to 5 bands those proportions were pretty much the same, as Band 3 was seen as the 'break even' point for running the club. Lots of members have probably retired since then, and given that we have a high proportion of women members (whose pensions are on average well below those of men), the change may not be too surprising.

The Band 1 cut-off is below the pension credit threshold, so anyone of pensionable age on Band 1 should qualify for a state top-up (subject to the amount they have in savings), which would take them into Band 2. I think that when we last looked at it, the figures implied that only members of working age who were not in paid work could be in Band 1 (with possible exceptions such as those with dependent children, or people not eligible for state benefits).

I don't think we can account for the complexities of members' finances, but one fairly clear and significant element is whether they have to pay rent, and I'd support that as a reason for dropping down a band. I am more ambivalent about mortgage payments, as these are to some extent payments for the purchase of a valuable asset, though I accept that that's probably not the reason why most Red Rope members do it!

It probably is time that we had another look at our payment structure, particularly – given what Richard says - if it would encourage more members to take advantage of our trips.

09/01/2025 & 11/01/2025 (Steve Wright)

I was the lead person on setting the bands and fee levels when we reduced from 8 bands to 5. I seem to recall that the bands were set according to financial factors like - basic unemployment benefit (for band 1 upper level?), tax free threshold (band 2?), average income (for band 3 upper level?), 40% tax threshold (for band 5 lower level). This still seems to be an equitable way of defining bands.

David Symonds (Bulletin Editor) Steve's earlier comment said we now need to review factors other than income. Many RRers are retired and have both a reduced income but also some significantly reduced outgoings, particularly if they own a property and live with a partner, meaning that expenditure on energy and broadband, for example, is halved. They may benefit from free local public transport and cheaper train fares if they have a seniors card. They may also have significant savings - I realise some members already bear these considerations in mind.

14/01/2025 (Janet Saunders)

For a bit of background, I have checked a few other clubs' membership fees for comparison. It is a bit of a mix and a few clubs that I checked had no fees online, and for some of the mountaineering clubs you have to be nominated by a member: Ramblers £43 a year, 2 adults joint membership of £58 (not BMC affiliated) BMC individual £40.11 p.a., Rucksack MC £60 (£25 for under 27s) My other club, Warwick Climbing Club, is now £30.

In short, I think our 2 cheapest bands get a pretty good deal, particularly for taking part in a mountaineering/hill walking club, where all the trips are subsidised. If you only want to ramble, then RR still compares quite favourably to the Ramblers' individual fee, although of course they have many more events to choose from.

14/01/2025 (Helen Todd)

I'm the Mountaineering Scotland rep on the Red Rope Scotland committee. Also I worked at Ramblers Scotland for 20 years before retiring last April (but in policy, not membership, so I don't know much about the Ramblers insurance/affiliation system).

I attended the Mountaineering Scotland AGM in November and they spent a lot of time discussing concerns over increasing insurance costs. They had done a lot of research themselves to find another provider, but as has been noted before, Howdens are pretty much the only show in town and they couldn't find a cheaper alternative. However, affiliation to the Ramblers isn't the same as for Mountaineering Scotland (and presumably the BMC).

Change of affiliation would lose our right to stay in club huts and doesn't give any reciprocal rights for Alpine huts in Europe. These are two key reasons for being members of Mountaineering Scotland for most of our members.

David later mentioned that he had spoken to two people from Howden's. He brought up the point that many of our members do quite modest walks. They seemed sympathetic but couldn't offer an alternative solution. The BMC have said they will look into the possibility of negotiating different levels of cover.

14/01/2025 (Barbara)

Part of the rates paid by higher band members is to subsidise those on lower incomes. I think some of our members forget that – or perhaps we don't make enough of it when people join. The membership charges are still roughly in the same ratio as they've always been, but the trip charges for higher band members are relatively less than they used to be, and we've recently reduced their transport charges for these bands as well.

The Band 5 overnight charge of £33 is a brilliant bargain – covering a bed, all meals, organised activities, good company and usually relatively comfortable accommodation – and it even includes a contribution to towards the costs of someone on a lower band. I think these charges should be raised (for the higher bands.)

15/01/2025 (Becky Bates—national trips officer)

We don't support a rise in trip charges this year as trips seem to be breaking even and trip finances will gain 10% from the scrapping of the early booking discount of 10% . The NC may feel trips should subsidise other club activities? However, higher membership fees may lead to members 'rounding down' when calculating their band.

16/01/2025 (Hugh)

I have been wondering if, assuming we stay affiliated to BMC, we should try to fund some of the increase in fees through the bed night charge. That way people who make use of huts, where the BMC insurance is more relevant, would pay more towards it, unlike people who just go on day walks. For info, there were 728 bed nights last year so, for example, a £2 increase on average Band 3 charges would bring in around an extra £1500.

16/01/2025 (Becky)

I support Hugh's idea and think the following trip rates a reasonable compromise to help reduce membership fee increases - £12; 18; 24; 30; 36

16/01/2025 (Hugh)

I'm more concerned about the difficulties of persuading new people to join rather than existing people leaving. For these the percentage increases are irrelevant; it's more that a membership fee of over £60 (for Band 5) seems high compared with other organisations (particularly if not intending to go on trips).

What about adding £1 to Band 1, £2 to Band 2, £3 to Band 3, £4 to Band 4 & £5 to Band 5? That would keep all increases to less than 10% with slightly higher percentage increases on higher bands. According to Humphrey's figures, that would bring in £663 less than his proposal. If we agreed to give £1 per bed-night from the Trips account it would probably produce more than that.

It would be easy to add up the number of nights each year and transfer that to the national account. Taking Janet's point about this being a lot for high band people, we could half that to £1 average and go with half Humphrey's suggested membership fee increase.

We could also implement Becky's proposals on trip fees. Half could go to the main account leaving the remainder to fund inflation-related increases on trips. Raising membership may be less acceptable – especially for those who don't go on trips.

16/01/2025 (Sarah Bates - joint national trips officer)

Tend to agree with Hugh. If money is needed – most people think trips very good value – and, I think, they would continue to use them. Raising membership may be less acceptable – especially for those who don't go on trips.

16/01/2025 (Janet) As far as insurance is concerned incidents can happen on day walks too. Some of us go on hilly day walks, and slips and trips for example, can happen anywhere. However, It does share out the burden more among people who get most value from the club, so would be interesting to see sample figures across the board. If the top band paid £4 per night extra that would increase cost of a week by £28 which seems a bit harsh.

16/01/2025 (Hugh)

I note the affiliation fee increase is just under £1500, which coincidentally is what I said putting £2 extra on average nightly charges (with 728 bed nights) would bring in. Taking Janet's point about this being a lot for high band people, we could half that to £1 average and go with half Humphrey's suggested membership fee increase.

16/01/2025 (David Symonds)

Thanks to Hugh for the idea above. In relation to the recent annual accounts I would suggest that we should be concerned to closely monitor the National Gathering's finances in future, given that the weekend made a loss of about £750 in 2024, and if necessary drop to one digital and one paper bulletin per year.

16/01/2025 (Humphrey)

Are we really proposing a massive increase which will lead to lots of people leaving the club? This would be the first increase in the membership charge for six years (last increase was agreed by the 2019 AGM) the average increase is 15% and I am proposing holding the Band 1 increase down to 11%. The Bank of England have an online inflation calculator which lets you work out what particular prices would be if they had changed at the overall rate of inflation. See <https://www.bankofengland.co.uk/monetary-policy/inflation/inflation-calculator>

If you put our current bands, as set in 2019 into it, you get the "Inflation Adj." rates below, and as you can see all the proposed increases are substantially less. Even the BMC's 23% increase, from £23.90 to £29.33 is slightly below general inflation: it would be £30.48.

Humphrey then inserted a table showing how bands would be changed if determined by inflation, ranging from Band 1 being £15 to Band 5 at £64. He then added: I can see the argument that people who go on trips get more benefit from the affiliations than day walkers, but if we accept Hugh's proposal there needs to be a totally clear mechanism by which part of the nightly charge ends up in the admin. account to actually help pay for affiliations.

Humphrey's final proposal and motion, is on the next page.

16/01/2025 (Janet)

From my perspective general inflation means that all living costs have gone up - low incomes and low pensions have not kept pace with this. People with decent jobs or good pensions seem to be able to cope with inflation while others have to look for savings. It's therefore a good idea to keep the lower fees at a low percentage rise.

16/01/2025 (David) I think Janet makes an excellent point here. In keeping with the gist of it I would favour 'stretching' the differences by lowering the band 1 charge slightly and compensate by increasing the upper bands' rates to arrive at a ratio of 1:4 for both sets of charges. To pick up on the point about members who don't go on trips wondering what the membership fee covers, apart from admin, some NC travel costs and bulletin and postage charges, the main answer is membership of the BMC, which people who go on trips are most likely to benefit from in terms of access to huts and BMC insurance. This isn't to say that they might not be happy to support others in the club, and the BMC, but I would say it's something that we should be clear about. On a more positive note there is the 15% discount in gear shops, not that I would want to encourage flagrant consumerism!

After messages from Hugh and David in favour of making savings to avoid a £64 Band 5 membership fee, which Janet had also argued against earlier, Humphrey came up with the idea of decreasing his latest figures slightly and using £1000 from the club’s account of £20,000, to make up the difference. Richard’s alternative on the next page had not been submitted at the time.

Humphrey Southall, RR National Treasurer’s motion, supported by the NC

“This AGM agrees that the membership charges for 2026, and for subsequent years until further notice, shall be as follows” :

	Current	From 2026
Band 1:	£13.50	£15
Band 2:	£21	£23
Band 3:	£31	£34
Band 4:	£44	£48
Band 5:	£55	£60

BACKGROUND NOTES: The 2024 accounts show that 68% of the club’s expenditure from membership income was on affiliating to the British Mountaineering Council (BMC) and, for Scottish members, Mountaineering Scotland (MS). These affiliations are required by the Red Rope constitution. The BMC have increased their club affiliation fees for 2025 onwards from £23.90 per member to £29.33, and MS from £21.75 to £26.75. These are 23% increases, which according to the Bank of England inflation calculator (<https://www.bankofengland.co.uk/monetary-policy/inflation/inflation-calculator>) is still just under the general rate of inflation since 2019, when they were last raised.

Some increases in our membership charges are therefore now unavoidable but we are able to limit the average increase to just under 10% for three reasons:(1) As the annual accounts show, once you allow for an increase in membership, since 2019 we have substantially reduced our other expenditure from the membership charge: it was £17.02 per member in 2019 and £10.96 in 2024. This is mainly because of increased use of the internet, reducing what we spent on postage and holding in-person meetings.

(2) Because of those savings, we have been making unplanned surpluses each year, totalling over £6,000 since 2019. This is effectively money members have paid forward to cover future expenditure, and we can now draw on it to reduce the impact of the cost of living crisis. The revised charges imply our drawing £1,000 or so each year from reserves. Given that those reserves are c. £20,000, we will still have enough “rainy day” money in 4 or 5 years time.

(3) We have also started affiliating Band 1 members to the BMC at their Discounted rate "for Under 18's, unemployed, or furloughed members", of £22.91 rather than £29.33. This saves about £250 this year.

The revised charges mean an increase averaged across all bands of 9.62%. They maintain the long-term rule that Band 5 is four times Band 1.

National Trip Treasurer Report (Hugh)

Transport costs were trains and ferries £469, designated trip cars £207, total £676. The deficit of £253 on transport was offset by a surplus on accommodation.

	2023	2024
Bed Nights	601	728
Income	14,362	17,549
Expenditure	13,228	16,713
Surplus	1,134	837

Generally trip finances seem fine. The table summarises the last 2 years, excluding National Gatherings, which are neutral for the National Trips account. So, about a 20% increase in activity, with both costs and income up around £3K on previous year. A small surplus confirms no need to increase rates just now - with the removal of the Early Booking Discount I expect trips will probably create a slightly larger surplus in 2025.

Richard Bennett's motion regarding the banding system, supported by RR Scotland

Red Rope members will know about the UK's housing crisis. People in privately rented accommodation fare the worst. To allow our lower earning members to fully participate in our activities I believe we need a fairer banding system. Families on low incomes spend *on average* as much on housing and heating as high earners because the former are much more likely to be in expensive and energy inefficient private rented whereas the latter may own their own home. While over 60% of over-50-year-olds own their home outright, 75% of under-50 families with children have a mortgage or are in private rented accommodation. Nearly 60% of lone parent or single person households are renting privately.

Using figures for overnight and mileage receipts for 64 Scotland trips over the last 6 years shows that the revised method of calculating banding would have little impact on our finance. Considering housing costs would move some members to a lower band but accounting for household income would move others up the scale.

This re-banding would make the charges fairer but would not help those already in Band 1 who cannot afford to fully participate in the club's activities. Maybe those on very low income deserve to come on trips for free? Perhaps this would be off-putting, and a small charge might be better. It could though, be worth offering a free first trip for potential members on a low income to encourage them to join Red Rope.

An illustration of what a new banding system might look like is given in the table below. The equivalised income is the figure which would give a single person the same standard of living as the household. It would be derived by taking the household income less rent or mortgage and dividing it by a factor for the size of household.

Band	Equivalised income. Up to ../month	Subscription	Overnight	Mileage at current fuel price
A	£500.00	£5	£5	£0.02
B	£800.00	£15	£10	£0.04
C	£1,400.00	£22.50	£15	£0.06
D	£2,000.00	£30	£23	£0.092
E	£2,800.00	£45	£27.50	£0.11
F	Over £2,800.00	£60	£35	£0.14

The motion to be put forward at the AGM will be to include housing costs and household composition in the calculation together with a new low band. The system runs on trust and it is not practical to make rigid rules that cater for all household circumstances and therefore members would continue to be given discretion to make an appropriate selection. The income levels and charges would have to be decided after adequate discussion at the AGM and by the national committee.

Current Band 1 charges may be enough to deter some people from fully participating in the club's activities. Maybe those on a very low income deserve to come on trips for free? Perhaps this would be off-putting, and a small charge might be better. It could though, be worth offering a free first trip for potential members on a low income to encourage them to join Red Rope.

It is resolved that: **1)** The banding shall be determined by total household income less housing costs all divided by an equivalising factor for household size. **2)** Where income is from all sources including: **a.** wages after deduction of income tax and national insurance, **b.** post-tax interest on savings and dividends from investments, **c.** benefits excluding those for maternity, disability or bereavement. **3)** Where housing costs are mortgage or rent **4)** The equivalising factor shall be based on a simplified version of the OECD scale and is the sum of 1.0 for the first or only adult in the household, 0.5 for a second adult and 0.4 for each child or further adult. **5)** There shall be an additional lower band. **6)** The charges in the table above are recommended following an estimation of the effect of these changes on national subscription income and Scotland group trip income but the national committee shall determine the rates after consideration of the effects on National and other groups' trips. **7)** By default the income levels shall be uprated each year in line with CPI inflation unless the national committee considers that there are exceptional reasons to do otherwise.

Richard Bennett's motion regarding transport charges, supported by RR Scotland

Motion 1 on Transport Charges

This AGM notes that:

The decision taken at the 2024 AGM to cap transport charges at Band 3 was based on anecdotal evidence about a local problem.

Application of the rules can penalise those who have to use public transport because a lift is not available in a designated trip car.

The current rules discriminate against members who live far from regional centres. For example, there are Scottish members living more than 150 miles from Edinburgh or Glasgow.

Some members live in regions which cannot or do not organise many trips; they are discriminated against when joining other groups trips if Policy C11 is applied.

When members travel independently it can lead to inefficient use of cars or shortage of designated trip vehicles.

This AGM calls on the national committee to provide the data showing that higher band members were disproportionately travelling independently before the charges were capped and have not done so since, i.e. percentage of members travelling independently in each band.

This AGM resolves that:

All participants in a trip will share the transport costs (reimbursement of car providers and public transport) irrespective of the distance travelled but adjusted by band. However, any member who travels to or from the venue by bus, if this reduces the number of trip vehicles required, will not be charged.

A simple points-based system could be used, e.g. Band-1, 1 point/ Band-5, 5 points.

For example considering the Scotland group trip to Coruisk in July 2024:

Band	No. of participants	Points
2	1	2
3	3	9
4	4	16
5	2	10
Total		37

Transport costs were trains and ferries £469, designated trip cars £207, total £676. The deficit of £253 on transport was offset by a surplus on accommodation.

Using the same cross-subsidy, cost per point $£423/37 = £11.43$

Band-2 members pay $2 \times £11.43 = £22.86$, Band-5 $5 \times £11.43 = £57.15$

Actual payments under the existing system (except that 3 members travelling from England were not subjected to policy C11) varied from £36.25 to £67.41.

Motion 2 on Transport Charges

Should motion 1 be passed then motion 2 will be withdrawn.

The cap on transport charges at Band 3 is not in accordance with the Socialist ethos of the club and will be removed.

When trip participants have to use public transport because a place is not available in a designated trip car reasonable fares will be reimbursed and they will be charged mileage as though they had a lift.

When all trip participants must make a journey by public transport (e.g. ferries) all fares will be reimbursed and they will pay banded trip charges for the journey.

RED ROPE NEEDS YOU!

It's that time of year when everyone starts thinking about fresh activities and making plans. Have you been on some great trips or day walks last year? Ever wondered how it all gets organised? Would you like to give some of your time to HELP?

Did you know that Red Rope as a National Club is managed by a dedicated group of volunteers called the National Committee? – and we need your help! Some of us have been doing our jobs for years – and while this imparts a great deal of experience – we desperately need some fresh recruits. We would really welcome newer members of the club or long-term members with new time on their hands to step up to contribute their skills and expertise, to take on or job-share roles.

National Committee members meet 3 times a year on zoom, and at last once face to face if possible. Sometimes sub-groups get together online for planning or dealing with issues arising on an occasional basis. We are all on a mailing list which gets occasionally busy, then goes quiet for ages while things tick over. Regional Organisers are also on this list and contribute as much as they feel necessary – or take the discussion out to the regional groups when needed. I have always found it a lot of fun being involved with the National Club. Anyone can volunteer for any post.

We no longer have an official **Publicity Officer** – could you be the person to get on top of getting the word out about Red Rope as a club?

Janet Saunders (that's me) has taken over the **IT Officer** role, with technical help from Bronwen Reid, but we would love another person who's not afraid of basic IT to step in to help and hopefully take on some of the role in future – currently this is not complicated, it involves managing our mailing lists, ensuring we've paid our annual hosting bill and a very light touch on the Facebook groups. I also still maintain the website – but there's always room for people to job-share or volunteer to help with this.

The **Bulletin Editor** has been producing lovely magazines for quite a few years now, and would love to hear from anyone interested in taking over.

We don't have anyone to focus on organising **Training** within the club. It's about arranging any training courses needed, or just monitoring if we are doing enough to facilitate training. Could that be you?

Similarly, our **Huts Liaison Officer** for using the LMC huts stood down last year – we need someone to take on this role of liaising with LMC hut committee and being the contact person for our own group bookings and individual bookings of the huts.

All the committee jobs come up for re-election at the annual AGM on 5th April so please consider giving some of your time to help run Red Rope, just get in touch with Pete or Steve on secretary@redrope.org.uk to find out more and put your name forward.

Janet Saunders

Red Rope Needs *More* of You – a Personal Opinion!

Janet's piece on the need for new National Committee members also mentions regional organisers, though just in passing. What she doesn't say is that each region should have a representative on the NC and that the regional reps are equal members of the NC and should be at least as important as the officers in making decisions for the club. Yet regional reps don't attend NC meetings, few participate in the decision-making and some regions don't even have an NC rep. For Red Rope to be a democratic organisation, decisions should be made by our members, represented by their NC reps. In fact, I'd argue that the regional reps should – if anything – take a greater part in decision-making than the officers, with the latter obviously providing advice based on their experience in implementing decisions. So officers would have equal votes on the committee but their main role would be to act as a sort of executive.

Although NC officers come from a number of different regions, they are not 'typical' RR members – for example, they all go on Red Rope trips – and they don't necessarily represent their regions on the committee. That's not what they're there for. And it's all too easy to develop group-think when not challenged by a larger group of members. How many NC officers report back to their regional members and gather input on NC agenda items?

As one of the longest serving NC members (though recently resigned) I know that most current NC members put in a huge amount of work and do a great job, but how about a bit more democracy in the club, which I hope socialists would support? As things stand it can be difficult to attend NC meetings as a regional rep with no officer role, but if there were at least 2 or 3 regions participating it would be easier for others to get involved.

I'd be interested in other members' thoughts on this – either in the next bulletin or via a discussion on red_rope_national@lists.riseup.net

Barbara Segal

Bosigran, Cornwall, September 2024

12 people arrived at The Count House, owned by the Climbing Club and dramatically set near the cliffs between St. Ives and St. Just. The house was busy but we all happily settled into our mixed dormitory in a 12 bedded space. We generally slept soundly and new toilet and shower facilities kept us all clean. We took turns to cook the evening meals and had some great main courses and desserts together. Food was plentiful!

Over the week people enjoyed a range of activities - climbing every day for the climbing contingency of 5; cliff walking; sea swimming; cycling; discovery of a fabulous array of ancient stones and monuments; cultural visits to The Tate in St Ives, St Michael's Mount and tin mining museums; Cornish cream teas – so much amazing stuff to do!

We took advantage of the peninsula's open-topped bus which enabled walking one way and returning by bus, which ensured flexibility for everyone to tailor activities to their own pace. Best of all – we had fantastic sunny weather, great meals and good company.

Here are some quotes from the trip –

“An astonishingly sunny week to round off such a long *not* summer. Good things really do come to those who wait and wait and wait.”

“Sunshine and sea swimming, amazing food and lovely company, coastal walking – shall we go to Cape Cornwall? – “no, I can't be arsed”. Cycling, National Trust - week passed so fast with busy days”.

“I was impressed by the clear water, lovely weather, tortuous roads, great hikes and a wealth of pre-historic sites. Lands End not quite as tacky as expected and lovely walks away from the car park. The views from the open-topped bus, the famous quality of light at St Ives and the exhibition of Rothko at the Tate.....a superb trip”

“My favourite day was walking the coastal path from Porthcurno to Sennan Cove. Each cove held a new surprise with different rock formations, colours and textures. After an hour I sat on the clifftop and listened to a chough and then 30 of them flew up from beneath the cliff and straight in front of me – what a treat!”

“As a relatively new member of Red Rope I really enjoyed the trip. Even though I didn't know people, they were very friendly and welcoming! My fears that I would be expected to walk 15 miles a day were unfounded and the range of people meant there was always someone interested in the same activity as me, going at about the same pace.”

“I loved sharing the lifts and walking and meals with everyone and hearing about their lives and interests! Being on the top bunk in a shared dormitory was surprisingly fine for me.”

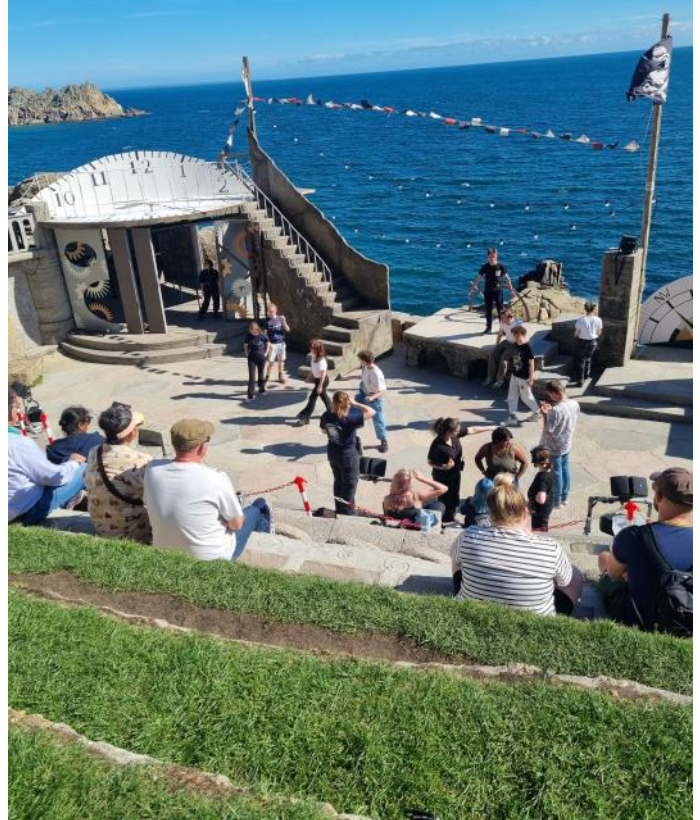
“I loved re-visiting Cornwall after many years and the beautiful beaches and cliff walking was magical. Hunting down the historic remnants of the bronze age, contemplating stone circles and quoits, together with the landscapes and light, is what makes Cornwall so special and unique.”

“I would recommend that anyone considering a trip, just goes for it, as there are possibilities for discovery and exploration in addition to walking and climbing and you don't need to be super-fit and hardy!”

Thank you so much to everyone and especially Sue Whittle who organised the trip with such grace and energy.

Jo Bartlett

The Minack Theatre, Penzance





Newlands Valley, Lakes, 18-21 October 2024

We'd heard a lot about the Newlands hut, "It's got a pot bellied stove!", "It's very basic", "It's got no electricity!" So Andrea and I, travelling up from Liverpool, didn't really know what we were letting ourselves in for! But who could say no to a Scotland group trip in such a lovely area? (Mickey at Dale Head, above)

Ian met us at Penrith and we headed to Keswick for our first walk. Great Wood car park, Walla Crag along to Ashness Bridge. Great views of Derwentwater and Keswick. Then to the Newlands valley! Richard's instructions were excellent but once we turned onto a track at Little Town it was easy to wonder whether we were in fact in the right place! Luckily for us we weren't first to arrive so the pot bellied stove and gas mantles had already been lit. What a wonderful hut! So cosy with lots of comfy seats round the stove!

Saturday morning gave us a beautiful day and we all set out together towards Dale Head. Crossing Newlands Beck was a challenge but eventually we were all across! Then it was up and round Dalehead crags, onto Dalehead and Hindscarth Edge. We split up here, some going towards Hindscarth, the remaining five doing Littledale Edge and Robinson. We were rewarded with marvellous views on the descent down High Snab Bank before heading to Low House farm, round Low Snab to a footbridge returning us to the hut.

Overnight the weather was wild which largely continued for the rest of the trip. Sunday saw us looking for somewhere low level and we ended up in Rosthwaite and had a great stroll along Langstrath Beck. As it was on the way home called in at St John in the Vale on Monday. We got up to High Rigg and then made a steeper than anticipated descent due to the time disappearing quicker than we wanted it to! Really enjoyed the hut, the company and the walking, will definitely be returning!

Fiona Coyne

Cromer, January 2025

This was a week long trip on the north east coast of Norfolk in the chilly month of January. Cromer is a seaside town with all the facilities we needed, from food shops, railway station to a local cinema. The local bus service is excellent. Norfolk is a wildlife enthusiast's paradise. The salt marsh was a great place to watch a short eared owl. My day out to Holkham Gap rewarded me with sightings of ringed plover, a close up spectacle of a marsh harrier with a massive wing span, red kite, curlew with their long curved beaks, sandlings, turnstones and oyster catchers with beaks like bright red lipstick. I heard the pink footed geese before I saw them, a dark cloud reminiscent of a war movie, descending on to the field to feed in their thousands. **Janey Hewitt**

The unique thing about this trip for me was that it was a walking holiday by the sea. Walking along miles of sandy beach, with the odd groyne or patch of flint pebbles to negotiate, is relaxing, stimulating, and restorative. It was great to join the East Anglia region for their Sunday walk, which covered varied terrain and reached the summit of Norfolk, at 105 metres! Lovely to meet up with local members and have a chat.

We were a week or so too late to see the grey seal pupping and mating season, where thousands of new-born pups rest on the beaches before heading off to sea for the first time. But we did organise a walk along that section of the beach and through the nearby nature reserve. Mostly the seals seemed content, resting in groups along the water's edge. But occasionally another seal would try to join the group, resulting in a stand-off and a lot of noisy posturing, reminiscent of the confrontations between mods and rockers in the 1960's. But no blood was shed, and the intruder was successfully forced back into the water.

The evenings provided delicious meals and interesting conversations, ranging from UK housing policy through the ages, to Red Rope trips past present and future, including tales of our chance encounters with other walkers and wildlife enthusiasts during the day. I brought back a few pebbles that had caught my eye – but they never look quite as good on my window sill as they did when I saw their rich colours glistening amongst the shingle of the beach!

Jon Marsden



Annual National Gathering: Friday 13 June to Sunday 15 June 2025 Dovedale House, Ilam, Derbyshire

This is your chance to meet friendly Red Ropers from all corners of the UK and enjoy walks, delicious meals and different activities on the biggest trip of the year. There is even a discount to encourage members who have never been on a trip to attend! Dovedale House is situated in the picturesque village of Ilam, **near Ashbourne**, within the Peak National Park, providing access to a different part of Derbyshire to last year's gathering. There are plenty of areas to walk, cycle or climb. The house has bunk-house style places for up to 50 people in 12 rooms varying in size from 2-10 beds, plus an ensuite room with disabled access on the ground floor.

There is a large car park at Dovedale House. There is also parking available next door at Ilam Park but it is only free for National Trust members. <https://www.groupaccommodation.com/properties/dovedale-house-ilam-ashbourne-derbyshire-peak-district>

Band	Standard/	with 'New to Trips' Discount of 33%
1	£26	£18
2	£40	£26
3	£52	£34
4	£66	£44
5	£80	£54

See www.redrope.org.uk > Latest News> 2025 National Gathering, for full booking details. Contact membership@redrope.org.uk if you could organise a quiz, entertainment or training opportunities.

bulletin@redrope.org.uk

This is an unusually text heavy edition. The intention is to increase interest in the AGM on 5 April – and hopefully not the opposite! Many thanks to everyone who submitted material. I took the front cover photo in Borrowdale on an RR trip. **David Symonds**

Upgrades to the Loft hut at Blea Tarn *Blea Tarn is between the Langdales in the Lakes.*

News from the Lancashire Mountaineering Club:

We have had a gas boiler installed at the hut to provide hot water to the two sinks, a new 4 ring gas hob and a new gas cylinder cage outside the hut to conform to safety regulations. This work alone has cost £7200 - we have also redecorated the interior of the hut and fitted new carpet to the small bedroom.

As a result of a recent fire service assessment, we have upgraded to two interlinked smoke alarms, a new Co2 alarm, PIR safety lights to the external staircase and have fire extinguishers supplied and serviced by a local company.

The Loft remains basic compared to the Welsh hut at Beddgelert, but it is warm and dry and a wonderful place to stop, especially since all the above work has been completed. We still do not have a shower, but it is something we are working on.

LMC are not able to undertake the major alterations planned until the National Trust complete significant structural repairs. Unfortunately they are unable to give a timescale due to financial constraints.

Red Rope has a hut sharing agreement with the LMC which enables our members to stay at their huts at very reasonable prices. You can stay as part of a normal trip but also as an individual, or small group, if you go through the process explained on the RR website > Quick Links> LMC huts.

