



RED ROPE BULLETIN 51 SPRING 2026

Lowstern and the Great Cafetiere Crisis of 2026!



'Lowstern' is the Yorkshire Ramblers hut near Clapham, Yorkshire. We were there over the long Easter bank holiday weekend. It's a spacious, well equipped hut with a great view - one would normally look forward to this with unalloyed joy (?) but this time I had been told the washrooms were being renovated, only one shower might be available and on the previous weekend there had been lots of plaster dust around. As the hut sleeps 16, meaning every bunk would be full, I was concerned - how would it work out ? I had also been told there wasn't a cafetiere.

When I informed the trip WhatsApp group the response was not about the possibility of the hut being too crowded or a mess but about the absence of a cafetiere - and they say that RR has become too middle-class! In the event some industrial-sized cafetieres were brought by the trippers, the workers completed the work on the washrooms at 5.30pm on the Thursday when we arrived and all was well!

This was a London RR trip, ably organised by Jo Weller and Pam Mossman. There were also members there from the south-west and a couple of other regions. The atmosphere was excellent, as was the cooking, with lots of co-operation and the odd dash of outright silliness: self-appointed 'Pudding Commissar' Nigel wrote a sign warding off anyone who may have had their eyes on his ingredients saying that the items were !TOXIC! and were to be avoided at all cost!

The weather was good apart from the first full day. Later 'Storm Dave' gave us a battering overnight when the building seemed to shake in the strong, blustery wind. However, as you can see, we also had other sunny days to be thankful for.

Clapham is close to a limestone area where the Norber Erratics can be found. These are blocks of very tough rock dumped by a glacier after the last ice-age 12,000 years ago. Some are balanced on a limestone stand

which has been protected from the elements by the Erratics. Over the centuries the limestone has been worn down making them appear to be almost floating in the landscape. (Why a pop combo has not been named after them continues to be a mystery!) Another scenic walk close to this area takes you 14 km into the charming town of Settle.

The Ribbleshead Viaduct, a staggering example of Victorian industrial architecture, was also visited. It was sadly discovered that over the many years it took to build, many workers, and members of their families, had died young through accidents or disease.

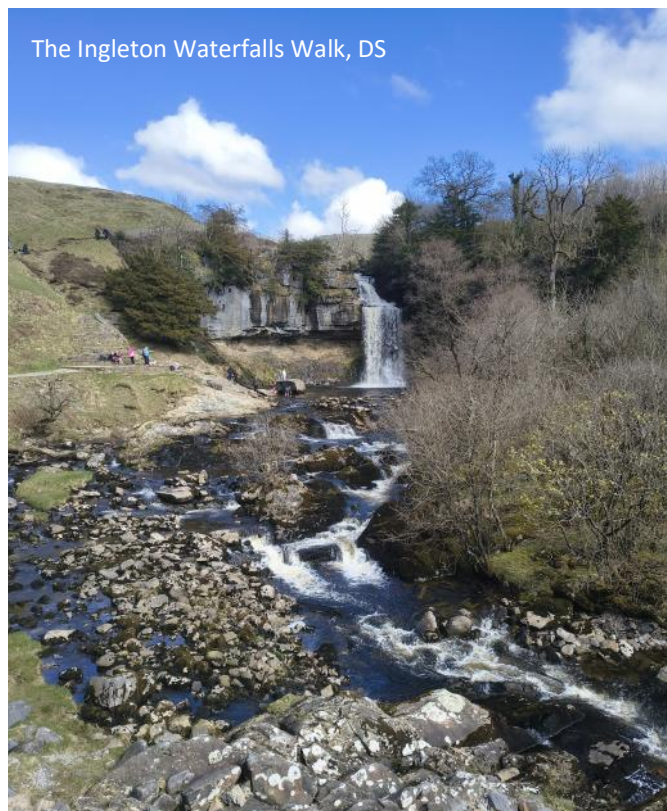
The majority of the Red Ropers walked every day, with the last full day reserved for the 'stand alone, iconic' 723m Ingleborough. Some only went as far as the intriguing Gaping Gill where Fell Beck descends into the cathedral sized space below, eventually reappearing in Ingleborough Cave nearly 2 km to the south.

David Symonds

Jill Hochmuth adds:

I just wanted to say a big thank you for making me feel so welcome and included on my first trip, it was really kind. Thanks also for the great walks, food and conversation. It was really good to meet such a lovely group. Hope to see you all again on another trip soon.

The Ingleton Waterfalls Walk, DS





Lowstern - Jane Miller



'The Erratics' - Stephanie Downey



Ribblehead Viaduct - Jane Miller



The Gaping Gills - Pam Mossman

BMC Related Info

The discount code is **BMCOSM25** for **30% off** a 12 months recurring OS Maps subscription which you can redeem on the OS website <https://ordnancesurvey.co.uk/os-maps-12-months-recurring->

RR BMC contact Matilda Simon 04/09/25

I watched the BMC AGM Zoom event last night and was quite impressed with the new CEO Paul Ratcliffe (a canoeist) who has sorted out the financial crisis they had a year ago. I had forgotten how complex the structure of the BMC is, with 40 staff and 500 volunteers!

Some impressive members of staff and directors spoke, such as Hanne Doherty, the interim chair of the board. The meeting was followed by a discussion which raised the question of why, since in 2022 the BMC took a position on Ukraine and pushed for Russian competitors to be banned, they haven't similarly urged the international body to ban Israeli climbers. The debate was recorded if you want to find it. This statement from Climbers for Palestine was also mentioned : <https://www.climbersforpalestine.org/>

16/01/26 Clonagh Delderfield

BMC Membership and Clubs Co-ordinator reported:

NEW: Club members now get £10,000 personal accident cover

Another announcement in the last edition of Club Together was the inclusion of £10,000 personal accident cover to all club members. This started from 1 January and now provides all club members with a range of benefits including [cover for physiotherapy/osteopathy, optical expenses and counselling](#).

NEW: EU-based Club members now benefit from combined liability cover

From 1 January 2026, an amendment to the combined liability insurance cover is providing an additional benefit to clubs. Members of your club who live within the European Union and choose to be a BMC member can now benefit from the combined liability cover in the same way as all other club members. The timing of this announcement means that the registration of members who live in the EU is currently an option for clubs and members to take up, and not a compulsory requirement. If you have questions contact insurers **Howden's** for more info about the combined liability insurance for BMC affiliated clubs.

How to stay safe in a field of cows



- Be alert: keep an eye out for any signage warning of cows on your route.
- Give cattle space: don't walk through a herd and never separate cows from calves (stay clear of calves.)
- You are allowed to leave a footpath to walk around cows, according to [the Ramblers Association](#). Position yourself so cattle are not between you and your nearest exit route.
- Walk – don't run – through fields with cows quickly and quietly and avoid sudden movements or using your phone. Unfamiliar sounds are stressful for cattle so stay quiet and calm. If you panic, or run from them, they may also start running.
- If you are walking with a dog, keep it under close control – ideally on a lead – and away from cattle. But let your dog off the lead if you feel threatened: it will be easier for both of you to get away.
- If cows run towards you, don't try to confront them: get yourself to a safe place.
- Once you're safely home, report problems with cattle to the local authority and the [Health and Safety Executive](#) with as much detail on the location and what happened as possible. **Info from the Guardian.**

"I was headbutted by a cow in the Alps once - knocked flat on my back, but luckily the cow then backed off rather than treading on me & crushing my ribs. I was with friends who walked past with no problem, at the start of a trekking holiday!" **Pam Case**

[Hikers urged to check themselves for ticks after deadly virus found in UK | Health | The Guardian](#)

<https://travelhealthpro.org.uk/factsheet/22/tick-borne-encephalitis>

Tick Borne Encephalitis is extremely rare but apparently on the increase in Britain. The wife of a hillwalking friend contracted this over 25 years ago (maybe in western Europe) and because it wasn't diagnosed early she had a horrible lingering death. Having said that the risks need to be kept in perspective - they are probably a lot less than those of a life changing injury whilst travelling, or walking along a road. All the outdoor magazines have had articles about ticks and Lyme's disease but people are probably not so aware of TBE. **Richard Bennett**

Biggest Turn Out for Years at Red Rope AGM!

46 members attended our Annual General Meeting in March 2026 which was the highest attendance for several years. Maybe having it on a week night helped, or was it due to increased interest in the issues?

Lewis Winks, from Right to Roam, spoke at the meeting. He explained that R to R started during the pandemic, when access to the countryside was an important issue. Two founding members, Nick Hayes and Guy Shrubshole (authors of "The Book of Trespass" and "Who Owns England?") got together after writing complementary books about how the land was taken from the people, and living under the "spell" of trespass. He described R to R as an ecological campaign with 15 local groups mainly in England. It stands for "flipping" the current system in England and Wales, which has a default of public exclusion. Some questions were raised in the meeting about the state of footpaths, stiles, and general deterioration of rights of way.

Readers may note the British Mountaineering Council have launched a "We Wild Camp" campaign which is explained in the latest Summit (p. 43) arguing for six key reforms. These in summary argue for the extension of responsible wild camping. This is in addition to the coalition they support called "Outdoors for All" which argues for an extension of the right to access the countryside, which can be found at <https://thebmc.co.uk/en/outdoorsforall>. These are issues which I know Red Rope members have supported and been involved in.

The detailed minutes which describe the motions that were discussed and the votes taken at the AGM can be found at <https://www.redrope.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2026/03/AGM26-minutes.pdf>.

A new way to work out the membership fees was agreed. It was felt that the old way of assessment was outdated, and a new six band system was agreed which requires members to self-assess which band is appropriate for their circumstances. An amendment was accepted which means that the new system would be trialled for next year. An amendment which welcomed the new system but was critical of some aspects, and called for a rewording, was defeated.

A motion to realign the date when new membership

fees are set was agreed. The purpose of this is to align our fees with the increases expected from our BMC affiliation, which takes up the bulk of our income.

A motion to "tweak" our transport charges on trips was agreed. Public transport costs have gone up a lot over recent years. The purpose of this policy change is to increase the refund that people who have to travel by public transport receive and increase the amount that car passengers pay to even things up and reduce transport losses. Trip Treasurer Hugh Wallis reassured people that a complicated formula will be made easy by a tweak in the spreadsheet used by trip treasurers.

It was agreed that for regional trips, members travelling via the organising region on their way to the venue should be included in the transport arrangements and charges.

A motion to reduce the quorum at the AGM from 10% of members to 20 members was carried but did not get the two thirds majority needed for motions which would change the constitution and therefore was not passed.

There was a debate about the merits of continuing to use Meta products. A motion argued that Red Rope should cease using Facebook and where possible move from Meta products including WhatsApp. This motion was defeated. There has been an ongoing discussion on the all-members list about this issue. My feeling was that the majority voted against the motion because Facebook was currently useful and there wasn't a viable alternative. Alternatives to WhatsApp such as Signal can be explored by regions. Pete Clark asked for interested members to get in touch with him via eastanglia@redrope.org.uk to create a small working party to look at alternatives to Meta.

Two motions to improve the safety and the rights of our members were also passed. The first was a Code of Conduct, which describes what is unacceptable behaviour and the procedure to deal with this within the club. This can be found on our website, at https://www.redrope.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2026/01/Red-Rope-Policies-v2026_01.pdf.

The second updated our Safeguarding Children policy.

Pete Watson, Red Rope National Secretary

Hot Tub Sassenach Socialists in Scotland!

'Lapwing Rise'', Banavie, Lochaber, 21-28th Feb 2026

Eight of us had a great week in this amazing cottage with a view of Ben Nevis and only three miles from Fort William. The trip started off with none of us finding Lapwing Rise cottage immediately. Eventually Pravin found the railway crossing where you use a yellow phone and are answered in Gaelic. You then have to explain you want Steppes cottage, then you get interrogated about how long you need to cross. Sherry had to wait for the train - on one occasion I had to call to say we had crossed, and on the last day one of the phones was out of order!

This was light relief from the conditions of the week. The Saturday we arrived a skier had gone missing and two mountain rescue teams were out. Five of us went up to the CIC hut, which is very close to Ben Nevis, and turned round due to severe wind. I was so cold after pausing to eat a sandwich that I needed help to put my gloves on. The other three walked to the Steall Falls.

On the Monday there was a forecast of low cloud so it was decided to drive north-west and walk two and a half hours to the Peanmachan bothy and abandoned village. The weather turned out to be lovely and lunch was enjoyed outside the bothy. Sarah noticed beautiful stonework on some of the remaining ruins. The bothy had been the school mistress's house, built in 1905 and abandoned in 1945 because the ration of paraffin was ½ a pint a week, plus one candle! The railway arriving meant no income from cattle droving - apparently the 2,600 people crammed into this tiny peninsula had been dumped there by the aristocracy during the Clearances and were living off limpets.

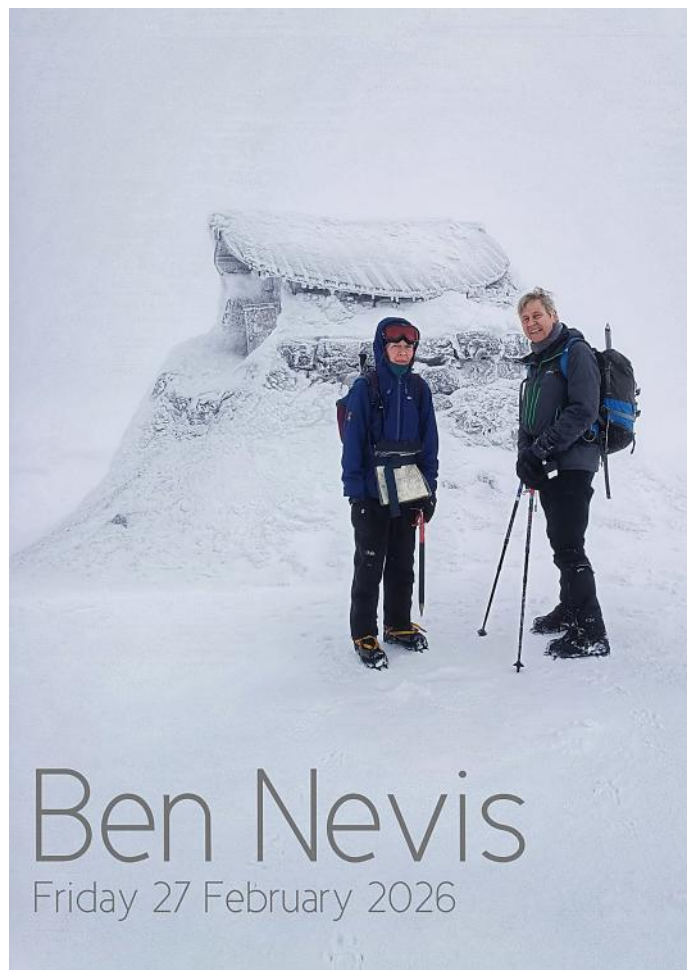
On the Tuesday the weather was dreich and very windy. However, four of us started up Beinn Bhan but gave up when the cloud descended. Other trips were to the Dun Deardail Fort (where vitrified rocks were seen) and to the shops in Fort William. The Parallel Roads in Glen Roy (an interesting, world-famous glacial feature) was thought by Charles Darwin to be a raised beach and was previously believed to have been made by Fingal the Giant of Fingal's Cave fame.

There was beautiful weather on the last day so three of the group went up Ben Nevis, needing ice axes and crampons for the top half of it, in near white-out conditions, with the mountain rescue team from Skye now looking for an experienced climber who had gone missing the previous day. Three of us did Braigh nan Uamhachan, the horse-shoe east of Streap, with stunning views - and primroses!

The hot tub was used by nearly everyone and some people more than once a day, with at dusk amazing choruses of sparrows in the bush and at other times wonderful stars and views. The food was stunning, with a stand-out meal of Hungarian goulash and dumplings by Rob. The holiday home was heated by an air source heat pump and had solar panels on the surrounding land. The views were truly to die for. **Helen Murrell**

PS I learnt to be more realistic about answering, "What time should you call Mountain Rescue?" on the route card. Sherry put midnight on her walk sheet. I used to put a few hours later than I thought we would possibly return.

Photo below by John Aldous, others on the next page are by Helen Murrell, apart from the Saltire!



Ben Nevis

Friday 27 February 2026



Peanmachan bothy and abandoned village



First Past the Post v Proportional Representation

I joined RR in 1982 and I have always been surprised at just how little political discussion takes place on trips - it always seems to have been like that. What does seem to have changed though is the political composition of the membership. When I joined quite a high proportion of members were in or around the SWP. As a Labour Party member (although one who still had some Trotskyist leanings back then) I was a bit of an anomaly. Nowadays we seem to have become much more wishy washy in a generally leftist/ greenish/ liberal (small "l") way; although to be fair, Gaza seems to have re-ignited quite a few members' anger and activism.

Also, nowadays there seems to be much less blatant racism/ sexism/ homophobia in the wider outdoor movement than there was 40 years ago, which is obviously a good thing. But does it mean that Red Rope has less of a distinct identity?.

For various reasons (mostly health related) I no longer go on trips, but when I did it was an opportunity to get away with a generally nice bunch of people, but maybe my political expectations were less.

On the global stage, FPTP (as in Britain and the US) and pure PR (as in Israel) are both outliers. FPTP has usually produced stable majority governments in Britain, though not from 1974 to 1979 or 2010 to 2019. As long as there are only 2 main parties, which most voters support, it works moderately well. However it creates major parties which are essentially big coalitions and a lot of the political debate occurs within them. It is questionable whether this is better than having that debate on the public stage, with coalition building post election. Obviously FPTP doesn't really work when you have 5 major parties competing in England (6 in Scotland and Wales) and forces people to choose between voting for the party they most want, or voting for the party most likely to stop the party they hate most. It can also lead to bizarre results like Labour winning nearly two-thirds of seats with about a third of votes in 2024....and potentially Reform doing the same in reverse in 2029.

The Israeli system has led to the creation of a plethora of smaller parties, which seek to represent the views of relatively small groups of electors. This makes the creation of government coalitions difficult and forces the major parties to make concessions to small parties to get their support, often by adopting policies which are only supported by a small minority. Obviously there are also other, bigger, issues with "democracy" in Israel

(and the occupied Palestinian territories) which go way beyond the voting system.

But then, other systems also throw up anomalies. The Scottish system combines seats elected by FPTP and "top up" seats to get a parliament which more closely matches vote shares. At the 2015 (?) election, it was obvious that the SNP were going to win more seats under FPTP than their vote share, so would not get any top up seats. I understand there was an unofficial effort to get people to vote Green for these seats, to get a pro-independence majority in the parliament.

Overall, I very much doubt if there is a perfect electoral system, though the best (least worst) system in any country probably depends on the political environment at the time. But what is very clear is that FPTP is not fit for purpose in a multi-party environment. By refusing to recognise this, Labour could be paving the way for a far right government elected on a minority vote.

Simon Temple

In my experience FPTP is not a straightforward left/right issue. I have been against it for decades. I am possibly considered to be on the "soft left" of the Labour Party though want to resist labels. Over 20 years ago I took part in a debate in an LP meeting where I supported PR and another member supported FPTP. The vote went his way. His main argument appeared to be that it was essential for political accountability. That person has since defected to the Greens. I do not know if he has changed his mind on FPTP. I have encountered resistance to PR based in hostility to the Lib Dems. It is not just the right of the party that want to crush any hope of PR.

Rebecca Linton

Karl Marx thought that what we consider 'democracy' creates an illusory sense of participation in decision making. Some voters may not understand where their best interests lie, an idea encapsulated in the term 'false consciousness.' He felt that a choice between parties with very little to distinguish themselves was a charade.

*The **Chinese Communist Revolution** culminated with the proclamation of the People's Republic of China in 1949. Since then, and particularly after the promotion of a mixed economy, the country has greatly improved its citizens' living standards. Without the 5 year cycle of elections they have been able to plan for the long-term, but at what cost?*

Discuss!

Red Rope: to be or not to be...

<redropenc@lists.riseup.net>

*Another discussion took place on the members e list preceding the AGM about whether the club should continue to use Meta companies. **Simon Skerritt said:***

"Red Rope, as a club, is dying. A large proportion of members are now retired and many comrades who were familiar faces on trips over the last 25 years of my membership have now hung up their boots for good. At 57, I was the youngest person by a decade at last year's 'Gathering' in the Peak District. I don't condone Meta's less ethical ways of operation, but like it or not, social media is still the most effective way to reach new members. The AGM motion to ditch it, in particular Facebook, does not provide for any workable alternative strategy beyond a vague, non-committal clause that: "Where possible not-for-profit provided services shall be used instead of other Meta products". Ditching Meta without a properly thought-through replacement plan and product will be a colossal own-goal, and effectively end the club as we know it; it's just a matter of time." **Simon**

Simon then mentioned alternative IT organisations which he didn't recommend, and urged members to vote against the motion not to use Meta.

Richard Bennett replied: "Simon states, without any supporting evidence, that "social media is still the most effective way to reach new members". I would argue that, even if the use of FB resulted in the recruitment of a few new members, a club which claims to have ethical standards should not be supporting an organisation that, as well as the tax and regulation evasion that we expect from big corporations, Meta has been successfully sued on other very concerning humanitarian grounds.

I would not say the club is dying but some parts are moribund and others are just "keeping on keeping on." In Scotland almost all recruitment has been by word of mouth. While our FB pages have about 100 likes (500 for the national) FB and web do not result in many enquiries and certainly do not recruit members. When I last saw a national membership list about 3 years ago there was a field in each row for method of recruitment and social media did not appear anywhere.

The latest MIS has only 3 weekends organised by English regions. Should anyone follow up on receiving the cards we hand out, or from seeing a car sticker, they will be disappointed. All groups do day walks.

I enjoy participating in these but the problem with day walks as a means of attracting new members is that there is so much competition. In Edinburgh there are at least one dozen traditional mountaineering and hillwalking clubs, plus many U3A and meet-up groups. Our banding system has little to no impact on day walks. It is weekends where the banding, the well organised shared transport and the sociable communal meals make us different.

In my view, regions are in a spiral of decline because they can't organise viable trips and without regular weekend meets they are not going to recruit new members. Surely Red Rope has been using social media for long enough now to know that it isn't the solution to the problem. Not all regions are using Facebook. London appears to have well maintained web pages using Wordpress. We need to create pages that will be found by a search. "Mountaineering clubs in Edinburgh" returns almost every local club apart from Red Rope.

In relation to Meta you may like to watch the documentary that was on BBC2

[Inside the Rage Machine - BBC iPlayer](#)

Richard

The motion was defeated. Pete Watson's article about the AGM gives more info about the club's response.



Photo by Madeleine Broderick

Don Kinniburgh, 6 Jan. 1944 - 22 Nov. 2025

Don was an active member of Red Rope for over 30 years, organising trips, especially camping trips to the Dorset coast and Youth Hostel weekends, leading day walks, being a member of the London and National Committees and being our representative to the Ramblers Association. Many members sent comments, remembering Don as a gentle, kind, thoughtful, humble man with a lot of knowledge of the countryside. A tape of birdsong accompanied his coffin as it left the church for burial in his family graveyard at Cudham Church, Kent.

He was brought up on a local farm, where his father was farm manager. This is where his love and knowledge of the countryside began. Two women who were still living locally, and were at school with Don, came to his funeral.

He lived in East London as an adult, teaching English, but also taught in various parts of the USSR, and did lots of other adventurous travelling. On one RR trip, the conversation turned to what could be the most isolated country on the planet. Someone mentioned Outer Mongolia, with its remote and fabled capital, Ulan Bator: 'Oh yes' said Don 'I've been there!'

He also had tales of Russian parties in his block of flats, where he was defeated by the number of vodka toasts, sliding slowly under the table. His cousin Jim told us how he was surprised to find out everything Don had done, especially volunteering at only 19 to help build huts after the Skopje earthquake and landslide.

Barbara Segal remembers that for several years he represented Red Rope as the club's Ramblers rep, during which time he raised our profile in the wider walking community. He regularly reported back to the NC and attended the Ramblers' AGM to which she accompanied him on a couple of occasions.

On one of these RR proposed a motion about an inappropriate Ramblers partnership with BUPA health insurance. Don contacted other delegates for support in advance and reported that: "Two motions at the AGM aroused heated discussion. The first was Red Rope's motion criticising the Ramblers Board's decision to enter a 'commercial partnership' with BUPA Healthcare and calling for this not to be renewed." (The Inner London Ramblers had already protested separately to the Board over this, and they seconded the motion.) Some people present expressed ethical objections to this 'partnership',

while others feared that such a withdrawal could be seen as a 'political act'. The motion was finally passed by 56 votes to 43, with 11 abstentions. He had been nervous about speaking at the meeting but persevered and was successful.

Barabara continues, "Like many of my favourite Red Ropers, Don had his quirks, in particular his occasional obsession with perfection! Among several much repeated anecdotes was the one when he took an hour to clean a lettuce leaf by leaf! But over all I'll remember his companionship in a number of settings, gentleness and his extensive knowledge about a wide range of things."

Pam Case, who collected these comments, concludes by mentioning that at the funeral it became clear how much Don had supported his deceased brother's Peruvian wife and daughter, Karyn. Karyn arranged the funeral and spoke emotionally and movingly about her great love for Don, a substitute father to her and grandfather to her son. He regularly visited them in Peru.

The photo shows Don on the left with Steve Butters of London Red Rope in Great Langdale.



Palantir Data Analytic and AI Company

Palantir is here to disrupt...and, when it's necessary, to scare our enemies and on occasion, kill them." – Alex Karp, Palantir CEO, 2025

All NHS trusts have been asked by the government to have a Federated Data Programme to collect, streamline and analyse data for Integrated Care Boards. This is the latest reorganisation of the NHS where important decisions are made about NHS spending in large regional groups. The government, possibly influenced by Peter Mandelson, awarded this contract to Palantir, but it was already used by government through defence contracts.

Palantir is a data analytics company which works in defence, police matters and with the Israeli Forces and US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). The New York Police (NYPD) have been trying to move away from Palantir since 2017, in part because when Palantir gets on to a computer it cannot be deleted. Concerns with Palantir are due to

- a.) their lack of experience in health.
- b.) no option for patients to refuse to be involved with them despite GDPR.
- c.) NHS data is extremely valuable to many commercial firms.

There is ongoing speculation in relation to Peter Thiel, co-founder of Palantir, and both Jeffrey Epstein and Peter Mandelson. Peter Mandelson introduced Peter Thiel to Keir Starmer in 2022. This seemed to open the door for a £330m NHS contract, and also a £240m Ministry of Defence deal which may have been awarded without competitive tender, as reported in the Guardian on 12th March 2026. Many NHS staff are boycotting the Palantir data entry system due to its association with the Israeli Defence forces.

The Good Law Project, the British Medical Association, Just Treatment, Corporate Watch, Keep our NHS Public, Medact, UTAU Union of Tech workers, Amnesty International and many councils have expressed grave concern over people being exposed to potential misuse of their data. A Medact briefing on Palantir states that "In 2025, Palantir was named by the UN Special Rapporteur on human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967 as an enabler of "unlawful use of force". Amnesty International named Palantir as one of multiple companies enabling or profiteering from genocide, occupation, and apartheid.

What can members of Red Rope do?

1. Get informed; look on KONP North East website or Medact <https://www.medact.org/resources/reports/> "Concerns Regarding Palantir Technologies and NHS Data Systems"
2. So far most General Practices have not opted in. Write to your GP saying you do not wish to have your data shared on the Federated Data Programme and inform them why you do not want Palantir to have access to your confidential info.
3. Join one of the campaigns above.

Helen Murrell

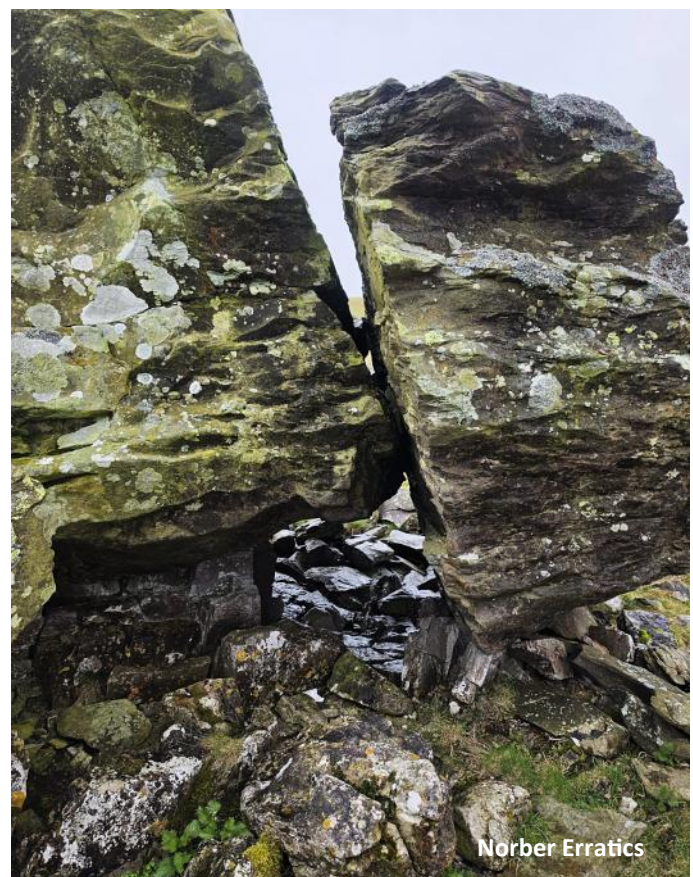


As I have mentioned elsewhere I will be stepping down as editor after this edition. On the left there's a great reason for you to take over – you can include lots of photos of your mates!

This could be a job share with someone having over all responsibility, a picture editor and a proof reader. I took it on partly because I wanted to learn about desktop publishing and having deadlines helped. I have used Publisher and Photoshop. Please get in touch if you want any more info.

I designed the front cover using my own photos and the Photoshop saturation button! The fab photos below are by Debbie Singer from the Lowstern trip.

David Symonds



Top: Ruth robbed in Conwy!
Left: Photo-op after discussing problems with bears in Japan with Rihae. Above: Don smiling



Canvassing could be confusing at times