

**The 21st Annual General Meeting
of the
Dales Way Association
held at 2.30pm on
Saturday 26th Oct 2013
in the
Riverside Hotel, Riverside Gardens,
Bridge Lane, Ilkley LS29 9EU**

AGENDA

1. Minutes of the AGM of Oct 27th 2012
Matters arising
2. Chairman's Annual Report
3. Treasurer's Report
*Presentation of 2012-13 Accounts
Appointment of Accountant*
4. Membership Secretary's Report
5. Website Report
6. Footpath Officer's Report
7. Election of Officers and Committee
8. Any Other Business

Chairman's Report 2012-13

2013 was the year we went electronic, and turned the Dales Way Association into a purely web-based organisation. It was a brave decision, forced on us by necessity – we no longer had the resources to produce paper minutes, agendas and newsletters, nor pay ever escalating postal charges, and felt that it would be quite wrong for us to spend most of our members' subscription income just on servicing the members.

But in practice, the changeover, whilst it might have upset our more traditional members – and very sad for that very small number not yet on e-mail – the result has been a resounding success, better than anything we had hoped. Far from being the beginning of the end, it has proved a new beginning, with in fact far greater and more frequent contact with ordinary members than in the past, a retention of old and recruitment of new members and a feeling that we are now living and working in the 21st century when IT is now the standard mode of communication for any organisation.

And yet our achievements this year, which I shall ask colleagues to report on in a few moments, have happened through the work of what by other organisations standards, a tiny Committee – just six people. Where we differ from most bodies we have no sleeping players who just turn up every 3 months or so to a meeting and snooze quietly at the back. Everyone has a job and does it supremely well.

Chris, our very efficient Secretary, keeps us all on our toes and ensures that communication between officers and the outside world works smoothly and well. Donald is an able Treasurer who maintains our accounts and pays our bills with quiet efficiency, but also doubles as our man in Cumbria, a vital watchdog at the top end of the Dales Way. Our youthful and energetic Footpath Secretary, Alex, has been tireless in his work on the Dales Way, as his detailed report will confirm. We've had so many improvements on the Dales Way this year, new footbridges and signage, gates and stiles, and ever better waymarking. The website thanks to Tony has got better and better and is now the main public face of the Association. And finally our newest member Kath has already made a very positive on the team with her lively contributions and it is clear from her first e-newsletter she has done for us that she is likely to make a key contribution to our work.

My role has undoubtedly been the lightest – to chair a few meetings and give a little advice – but hopefully can continue a little whilst longer, whilst our President Frank, remains a paternal figure in the background. Even though his health and mobility problems now make it difficult for him to attend meetings, he is there for us with advice, experience and wisdom – and lots of useful contacts in the background.

It is difficult to suggest what has been the most important events and developments in 2013, but perhaps we should start by recalling our delightful farewell walk with one of our founders and our Vice Chairman Douglas Cossar, on his favourite part of the Dales Way between Staveley and Bowness in April, ending with a memorable meal, arranged by Frank and with Mr and Mrs Sanderson very much in attendance.

I would also highlight too, the continuing excellent working relationships that we have with not just the National Park Authority whose Rangers are now powerful allies

and advocates for the Dales Way, doing a huge amount of maintenance and improvement work with their teams, but also the two highway authorities at each end – most notably Bradford and Cumbria, with particular excellent support from the Cumbria people.

I will leave Alex to fill in the details of many of the specific outcomes that have been achieved on the Dales Way in the last year.

There were two disappointments however. The first was at Cam Fell when we lost the battle for the Cam High Road to remain a green lane rather than a heavily metalled forestry track used by huge timber waggons, plus the problems, now resolved at Gearstones ford. On the positive side we finally look like getting the path through Cam Forest sorted, and the new owners seem to be more caring of the Dales Way and its environs. Nevertheless, the Association must give serious thought to whether or not we look to what we have called the Watershed Alternative between Cam Houses and Dentdale.

The second was the decision of the National Park Planning Committee, by the Chairman's casting vote, to approve the development at Town Head Farm, Grassington of a diary processing factory. The consequent visual blight and traffic will damage the environment of Grassington.

But these are small issues to set against the continued popularity of the Dales Way as one of Britain's finest long distance walking routes, and the achievement of my colleagues in making the Dales Way Association such a success story. Long may it continue.

DALES WAY ASSOCIATION
INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT
for the year ended 31st March 2013

	2013	2012
INCOME		
Subscriptions	1,952	2,386
Donations	509	753
Bank Interest	8	9
Retail Sales	290	868
Less Cost of Goods Sold	<u>111</u>	<u>135</u>
Donation in memory of Roy King	<u>2,000</u>	<u> </u>
	4,640	3,881
EXPENDITURE		
Newsletter	540	1,179
Dales Way Expenditure	2,000	863
Members' Handbooks	275	401
Travelling Expenses	549	271
Postage & Stationery	435	656
Room Hire	192	79
Subscriptions & Donations Paid	478	-
Accountancy	258	252
Web Site	<u>55</u>	<u>176</u>
	4,782	3,877
(SHORTFALL) EXCESS OF INCOME OVER EXPENDITURE	£ <u>(134)</u>	£ <u>4</u>

BALANCE SHEET

at 31st March 2013

	2013	2012
CURRENT ASSETS		
Debtors & Prepayments	588	-
Stock	10	285
Bank	<u>12,826</u>	<u>11,273</u>
	13,424	11,558
Less: Creditors	<u>2,000</u>	<u> </u>
	£ <u>11,424</u>	£ <u>11,558</u>
REPRESENTED BY:		
ACCUMULATED FUNDS		
Balance at 1 st April 2012	11,558	11,554
(Shortfall) Excess of Income over Expenditure	<u>(134)</u>	<u>4</u>
	£ <u>11,424</u>	£ <u>11,558</u>

Footpath Officers Report for the AGM on 26th October 2013.

Footpaths

This year I have managed to walk from Bolton Abbey to Bowness in various stages. It was made easier by using the excellent Dales Bus, www.dalesbus.org Not everyone is fortunate enough to live within driving distance of the Dales Way footpath, enabling them to walk various sections on day trips, but for visitors, it is possible to base yourself in Ilkley, or any of the villages along the route, and walk the Dales Way in sections up to Buckden. A 12 mile walk will get you to Oughtershaw and then back to Buckden. It is possible to do the rest of the Dales Way using public transport from Ribbleshead, but it is not as simple or as cheap as this first 32 mile section.

On my travels, any problems along the path were reported to the various authorities, and damaged or missing way marks were replaced. The photo record was brought up to date. Electric fences, dogs and cattle were the common complaints reported by walkers, which were duly reported and dealt with. The first 5 gates at the beginning of the Dales Way leaving Ilkley after the Tennis Club, were photographed and reported. They all showed various states of stress, not a very good first impression for visitors.

Around the Areas

Yorkshire Dales National Park

Crosdale Beck bridge

The official opening, 'cutting the tape' on the new bridge took place on the 28th June with Paul Wilkinson, YDNPA Ranger, Chris and Tony Grogan and myself. A significant improvement to the footpath, when our normal wet weather returns.

Cam woodlands

In March 2012 the North East corner of Cam woodlands began to be felled. The cut timber was then removed via Gayle and Hawes. This proved difficult and expensive. In September 2012 a planning application to upgrade Cam High road was submitted to YDNPA, to enable the road to carry 40 tonne wagons destined to remove 60,000 tons of timber over the following 5 years. Despite many objections the proposals were passed and work commenced on upgrading the road in March 2013. At the beginning of June 2013, work started on the foundations of the new bridge to be built over Gayle beck, robust enough to carry the 40 tonne wagons. On Friday 28th July walkers were allowed to cross Gayle Beck on the newly constructed 'wagon bridge', Cam High Road having been re-engineered to take the wagons. A further road had been constructed from Fell Gate down into the woodlands. A path has been cleared between the stumps on the original right of way through the corner of the woodlands. The Agents from Cam Woodland Trust put down hard core at the beginning of October on this path.

There should be no problems now for walkers on this section of the Dales Way from Cam Farm to Gearstones. The Watershed Alternative is available should walkers object to the new appearance of this part of the Dales Way. Photographs and a video of this work are available on our web site.

Hebden suspension bridge

Work started in September to replace the worn footboards and is expected to be finished by December 2013. This renovation of a memorable 30 yards of the Dales Way walk, has been possible due to a generous donation from one of our members.

Footpath by the A683

Discussions are in progress with YDNPA to see if improvements could be made, to get walkers off the busy A683 road. This has been a long standing objective for the Association.

Annual liaison meeting.

The Association continues to meet annually with Officers of the YDNPA during the first week in October.

Cumbria County Council

We are now into the second year of the improvement plan for the Dales Way footpath within Cumbria.

A meeting was held at the Bull in Sedbergh on 28th June 2013 with CCC Rangers and DWA representatives.

The Survey report was discussed item by item, and many deficiencies have been rectified. However, the main complaint, on record **since 2005**, has still to be resolved. i.e. the condition of the farm access road at Green Head Farm in wet weather. The concern is that no practical solution has been found that is approved by the landowner in order for it to be rectified, even though £3000 has been earmarked to solve the problem. Continued improvements will take place during 2013-2014.

A new standard way mark was produced with a circle in the middle to indicate a specific walk. CCC plan to use a team of volunteers along their stretch of the footpath to remove the present Dales Way way marks and replace them with the new ones. My concern is that there may be fewer way marks after this initiative.

Alterations to the Dales Way footpath.

1. The Sprint Bridge road **alternative [path]** which passes by Sprint Mill Cottage, has been renovated with the owners' permission. The broken stile and the gate have been repaired. However, no sign has been erected at the Eastern end of the mill bridge, to indicate that an alternative path is available, as the owner has objected to this. The hand written notice, "Dales Way straight on" has been allowed to stay affixed to the telegraph pole. CCC state that the alternative needs to be promoted by other parties. This will appear on our web page. This path allows walkers to avoid the dangerous stretch of road leading into Burneside.

2. To avoid the stretch of road leading to **Thatchmoor Head and down to Beck Houses** the new path crosses the road at **Hardrigg** into the field opposite and exits at the railway bridge. It is well marked and used by most walkers now.

Thursgill.

The new bridge was completed and opened almost to the day that it collapsed a year ago. CCC have opened the **definitive path** which cuts across the corner of the farmers

field. It has been signposted, although walkers continue to use the simple 100yard road option up to the right, then along his farm access road.

Ilkley Tennis Club

The latest plans from Bradford Council – Planning, for the extension of Ilkley Tennis Club show an improvement from the initial plans with a separate walker path [part of the Dales Way] alongside the vehicle road with a designated crossing.

DVD's

Over 100 of our DVD's are now out there, plus the copies for their friends. The first DVD was produced in 2009 after our 40th Anniversary walk. It included sections of the walk and the walkers involved, together with photos of the Duke of Devonshire cutting our anniversary cake when we met up at Bolton Abbey. We have moved on from the 200 or so images to over 500 which are more evenly distributed over the 82 miles. The DVD is constantly being updated. Crosdale and Thursgill bridges are now included, as well as the transformation of Cam woodlands and the new wagon road etc. Recently I was asked to supply title information on the 15 musical items that form the background music. This is now supplied with the DVD.

Available from our Web Page.

Information Boards.

Our information boards erected in 2005, are now worn and out of date and needed to be replaced. Thanks to the generosity of our members' subscriptions and donations, new information boards have been installed along the Dales Way at; Ilkley, Grassington, Buckden, Dent, and Bowness. Also on the link routes at; Harrogate and East Chevin.

Alex McManus Footpaths October 2013.

Membership Secretary's Report

We suspended new membership during 2012-13 while we made the changes to the organisation. Charity status was granted on Feb 5th 2013 and membership opened again. 6 people joined by the end of March 2013.

Update.

Membership has continued to grow slowly but steadily and we now have 418 entries on our database which, with family membership equates to around 600 members. Three quarters of our members now pay their subs by Bankers Order or Paypal and 65 of you have registered for Gift Aid.

Chris Grogan (Membership Secretary)

Website Report

This year the DWA website www.dalesway.org.uk has come into its own – taking on the role as the major communication tool between the DWA and its members. There has been a lot of work involved in getting it up to speed, but so far it appears to be working fine.

There are four main areas that the website covers:

1) Online membership payments

We are moving to an online system for collecting membership payments. New members can now join directly online, with the membership cycle running for three years between fixed renewal dates.

We also offer the option for an automatic annual renewal system, either online through a PayPal subscription, or through a bankers' order. The vast majority of our members use this method.

2) News Section

We've changed the way the news section works on the website, giving the news section its own designated page, using a web technology called WordPress. It allows multiple designated people to upload content (and hence is a popular blogging technology). Hopefully this means that the news section can be kept up-to-date and relevant.

You can also access the news section directly on www.daleswaynews.wordpress.com

3) Dales Way Handbook and Newsletters

We no longer print the popular Dales Way Handbook or Newsletters, due mainly to cost. All the information that the Handbook contained can now be found on the website – including accommodation, facilities, route updates etc with the advantage that it can be updated continually. Occasional e-newsletters can be distributed by email.

4) Members Area

We have been able to add a dedicated Members Area to the website, accessible only by members using a logon Username and Password. This has meant we are able to upload important DWA documents and make these available to all our members, including minutes of committee meetings, financial reports etc.

Web stats

We are now able to monitor the use of the website. Since the revamp we have about 1,400 unique visitors a month. A third are returning visitors, two thirds are new. 87% are from the UK, 3.1% from the US, 1.9% from the Netherlands, with visitors also from Australia, Germany, Canada, France, Ireland and Belgium (in order of popularity). The traffic has grown steadily over this period.

Most people by far come to us via Web Search (61%), followed by direct link (i.e. straight to our web address – 20%), with 17% referred from other sites. 8% of the visits were by mobile device.

We have over 300 “fans” to our Facebook page, which is proving quite lively at times.

Finally, other similar organisations have been taking a close interest in the changes we have been making, including the Pennine Way Association. It may be the only way forward for small, voluntary charities like the DWA.

Tony Grogan (Web admin).