



Dales Way Association

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The Dales Way in all its glory!

The Dales Way Association

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Hello to all our members and welcome to this Special AGM newsletter.

It's over two years since we last met in person but we are delighted to invite you to the postponed 2020 -21 Annual General Meeting.

It will be held on Saturday April 2nd in Ilkley. As usual we will have a walk together in the morning followed by lunch and a short formal meeting in the Flying Duck (16 Church St, Ilkley LS29 9DR), finishing at around 2.30pm.

We hope lots of you will make it but in case you can't we have enclosed all the committee reports in this newsletter, the audited accounts are being sent separately. Please let me know if you would like to come. Don't worry if your plans change, it's just to give me an idea of numbers for lunch.

Walkers please meet outside Ilkley railway station at 10.30 am for a steady 3 mile walk through town, passing the remains of the old Spa then following field paths on the line of the old Roman road before joining the Dales Way back to Ilkley. We will finish with a visit to the Manor House and be back at the Flying Duck for 12.30pm. Non walkers please meet us there. The meeting will start at 1pm after lunch.

Hoping to see you on April 2nd.

Regards

Chris Grogan (secretary)

Chairman's Annual Report

When in the summer of 2019, we had those joyous celebrations of the Golden Jubilee of the Dales Way, could anyone have remotely imagined that a little over six months later we would be suffering our worst lockdown and loss of freedoms since World War 2 as the first, frightening wave of the Coronavirus pandemic struck?



And then, over the next two years, there was a constant cat-and-mouse battle with the virus with short periods of freedom when we could go to pubs and restaurants, ending suddenly as another period of lockdown was imposed on us. We well remember the notorious “Eat out to help out” scheme in August 2020 which whilst it helped restaurateurs, is now believed did much to revive the pandemic leading to further severe lockdowns being re-imposed in the autumn of 2020 as the virus returned.

More lockdowns and relaxations were to follow in 2021 – some more to do with politics than medical science. The nightmare for most people, is only now finally ending in Spring 2022, but only if no new variants emerge. But many tens of thousands of people have died from the virus. Many others are still struggling with effects of Long Covid on their minds and bodies. We now know that the longer-term impact of people with chronic illness or undiagnosed conditions is catastrophic for them and for the NHS, and will lead to many more premature deaths.

One crumb of comfort during these terrible two years has been that the Government rightly allowed people to take exercise outdoors, initially in small groups just locally from home, (and involving police patrols if you went to the Peak District or even into North Yorkshire) but gradually, in phases, we were able to stay away further from home eventually including overnights in camp sites, hotels and B&Bs.

That meant that in the first few months of the pandemic you could only enjoy the Dales Way on a day trip from home, perhaps as part of a circular walk. But now, finally, the Dales Way is fully open for business. But whilst it is still too soon to say, we may soon find out which pubs and bed & breakfasts are still open. It is important to book in advance – especially for meals - and to check on the Dales Way Association website for the latest information. Some establishments, closed for all or part of the pandemic, have reopened. Others are temporarily or permanently closed after the end of the furlough scheme as rents and business rates are no longer affordable. In some cases they have closed fully or on certain days of the week because of a lack of young mainland Europeans no longer allowed to work here because of new post-Brexit border and employment restrictions. Whilst this has forced up wages as hoteliers try to attract more UK staff, this has also forced up costs which again means that many businesses may struggle to survive and costs of food and overnights for walkers may increase faster than inflation.

Despite everything, the Dales Way Association is still expecting a bumper year in 2022 as people come back in huge numbers to explore the Dales and Lakeland countryside, for so long so difficult to access for a longer break.

Staycation holidays enjoyed a boom in summer 2021 as holidays abroad were severely restricted and flights cancelled. This has changed in 2022. So we are also hoping that we will see more overseas visitors coming to the UK especially on the Dales Way to offset the loss of more British people taking foreign walking holidays. Overseas visitors contribute much to local businesses and services and also support the wider British economy.



The great news is that Americans are beginning to return in good numbers as restrictions ease, but we may see less mainland Europeans because of greater travel restrictions between EU countries and the UK. The Dales Way Association is a truly non-political body and we hope that Sun newspaper readers will be sending lots of ideas to Mr Rees-Mogg about how better things are in Brexit Britain (answers on the back of a postage stamp please), but in terms of one of the biggest markets for walking tourism in the British countryside, including our many Dales Way friends in the Netherlands, Germany, Austria, Sweden, Italy and France, new bureaucratic restrictions on travel and expensive extra red tape are damaging.

But Yorkshire people are nothing if not resilient, and the message must be that we have some of the most magnificent countryside in the world in Northern England, and the Dales Way is a wonderful way of discovering two of our most iconic National Parks. So, if the barriers are there, we must make

the welcome we give to overseas guests on the Dales Way, who contribute so much to the Dales and Lake District economies, even warmer.

And the Dales Way is always there. As you will be hearing from colleagues, our committee has managed to continue to meet, usually by Zoom, and work on repairing, signing and improving the Dales Way has gone on even during the most restrictive months of the pandemic. National Park staff and Rangers have been brilliant as have footpath officers and volunteers in both Cumbria and Bradford District. And so too has the Bolton Abbey Estate who, by moving the parked cars at the Bolton Bridge Staithes (which forced Dales Way walkers into dangerous streams of traffic on the B6160), and creating a new path behind the “bund”, a safer and pleasanter section of Dales Way has been created. The Estate has faithfully promised to continue this for another vital 60 metres or so into the adjacent wood to eliminate another unpleasant section of roadwalking.

So every reason to hope and expect that as life returns to what people now call “the new normal”, the Dales Way will be there to offer new generations of walkers, as well as older ones returning, a special sense of new or renewed pleasure to ramble or even run along the ever-changing length of what is now widely regarded as one of Britain’ best loved and most popular walking trails.



- Colin Speakman

Accommodation Report

Fingers crossed, we're gradually emerging from the shadow of the pandemic. Two, long years where some of our accommodation providers; B&Bs, hotels, pubs, hostels & campsites, have struggled to keep their businesses afloat. Coupled with this, there is uncertainty about recruiting enough staff.

Dales Way walkers are so important to local businesses, such is the fragile state of rural economies. Also bound up with this is the intense uncertainty farmers face, post Brexit and the introduction of the government's new Environmental Land Management scheme (ELM). Rural economies are mutually dependent on each other.

So, the question is, how and how quickly can our providers bounce back, to have or create a sustainable future? This situation must be considered holistically with other local businesses, especially farming.

However, despite these concerns, 2022 is looking quite positive. Walkers are booking in numbers similar to pre covid times. Also, and quite importantly, I think that everyone now has a renewed appreciation that our countryside is so important to our well-being and viability as a nation. Public rights of way and access to our countryside allows us the freedom to explore and enjoy some of the most beautiful parts of our country, in a way that is denied in other countries.

Of course, the pandemic has seen many newcomers gravitate to our national parks and rural areas. It has, in some circumstances, created tensions but I also see opportunities here for more people to have a far greater appreciation and 'ownership' of their countryside.

Therefore, it's now up to us, yet again, to find ways to create vibrant, sustainable local communities. Localism is a term coined to suggest devolution of power to individuals and communities. To give them far more ownership and responsibility of many aspects of their lives.

However, this has yet to be developed and delivered in a way that is really meaningful.

We have faced so many challenges over the past few decades. Foot and Mouth disease, flooding, the decline of fell farming and our aging rural populations demand serious attention that must lead to long-term solutions. Add climate change to the mix, and we know we have a job on our hands.

The Dales Way is such an important element in all of this. It connects, or links, communities and national parks in a way that could provide us with a shared vision for the future. The trail also opens up the Dales and Lakes to everyone, from across the world. It's a means in which we can celebrate our past, manage our present more effectively and sustainably plan for the future.

For me, as an accommodation provider, exclusively for walkers, it's an opportunity to welcome everyone, from every walk of life. I can offer an insight to our lives, and challenges, in a positive, inspiring way. Walkers really do want to understand about our rural way of life, our environment and what precisely are the special qualities that have drawn so many of us to live and work here.

Encouragingly, new businesses are opening up, across the trail. With it, there comes a sense of renewal. New people can bring new ideas, energy and a different way of looking at things..

What's abundantly clear is, we can't go back, we must forge ahead with resilience and determination. It's what communities across the globe are doing. Some with considerable success. It's all about nurturing people and communities, protecting and enhancing the environment and wildlife. Producing local food and products. Mitigating the effects of climate change. And, of course, providing a warm and memorable welcome to everyone who visits us.

- Tony Hill

Outershaw accommodation

A welcome new addition to walker-friendly accommodation along the Dales Way is due to open this summer.



In 2015, when walking the Dales Way themselves, Louise and Graham Smith fell in love with a curious building, abandoned and unloved, in Oughtershaw at the very head of Wharfedale. By 2016 they had purchased the Victorian schoolhouse and began dreaming of a future for the building and their family.

Six years of tears, sweat and mud later The Ruskin Hostel is almost ready for visitors. The listed building has been completely renovated and extended and offers one double and one family room, both ensuite with wifi, tea and coffee, for bed and breakfast guests. Packed lunches and pre-ordered evening meals are available and bookings are being taken now. Email Louise and Graham at ruskinhostel@gmail.com or take a look at their website www.ruskinhostel.co.uk We wish them luck.

News update

Awesome Achievement

The 2nd ever Dales Way Ultra Marathon took place over the weekend of 14th and 15th August. Chris Grogan, Dales Way Association secretary, went to the



end to congratulate the runners. Here she is with Steve Dillon, the only runner to complete the 2019 and 2021 Dales Way races AND the brutal Dales High Way Challenge.

'I'm in awe of their fitness and stamina,' she said. 'Most people walk the 82 mile Dales Way in a week. These runners did it in a day or less.' Winner Greg Judges arrived home in just 17 hours 11 minutes and is pictured here accepting his medal from Ryk

Downes, event organiser and DWA committee member.



FOOTPATH REPORTS

Old Bridge, Ilkley to Bolton Bridge

Stakeholders: Bradford Council, North Yorkshire County Council and Yorkshire Dales National Park

Since the last newsletter in June 2021 a quiet eight months for this stretch of the footpath with the majority of work in the Bradford Council area.

Bradford Council

Identified in June/July 2020, a number of stiles, steps and fencing were in various states of disrepair between Olicana Caravan site, Addingham and Farfield Hall. In discussion with land owners over the past 12 months Bradford Council and their Countryside Team have made safe stiles as well as changing rickety and big ladder stiles into new accessible metal kissing gates.



In addition, proper steps and a secure handrail have been added when the footpath drops from the fields above Olicana to the River Wharfe. We have received good feedback from local people who have been able to get out and enjoy their local stretch whilst feeling safe.

Not reported previously and not part of Bradford Council work.

Following the riverside walking towards Farfield Hall, the footpath approaches Sheepwash Cottage by the B6160. There has been extensive renovation to this property during 2020/21 which has included footpath improvements climbing past the property to cross the B6160.



North Yorkshire County Council

The short section of permissive path behind where there were piles and piles of road chippings, replaced with piles and piles of earth 12 months ago on the Bolton Road Chipping Staithe, Bolton Abbey Estate continues to provide safer walking for all.

The Bolton Abbey Estate had plans to move the remainder of the path off the busy B6160 road with work possibly starting in 2022. No news at the time of writing and the matter is ongoing in consultation with the National Park and discussion with Bolton Abbey Estates.

Compiled by Kath Doyle and Gordon Tasker

Footpath Officers - 20 February 2022

Yorkshire Dales National Park

I have been out and about along the trail at various times, pandemic permitting, and have found few problems over the last year or two.

Fortunately the Dales Way footpath through the National Park is perhaps the best looked-after section, with the Park Rangers busy keeping on top of work as it arises.

After a 2-year gap due to the pandemic, last October National Park officers once again met with representatives from the Dales Way Association in Grassington. These annual meetings are essential to ensure our ongoing co-operation on all matters to do with the Dales Way.

Here is the rangers' area updates, to give an idea of just how much work they do for the Dales Way:

WHARFEDALE: (Phil Richards)

Work undertaken in Wharfedale 2020-21. (Access Rangers Rob Wilson and Richard Mainman)

- *Gabion basket work to stabilize footpath, Hubberholme.*
- *Flood damage repairs to Hebden Suspension Bridge including new support cable ties.*
- *This year we will be re-surfacing 250 metres of footpath from Burnsall village to Wolf Scar.*
- *This year we will be doing more flagging work at Kettlewell village and Buckden riverside.*
- *Replacement of handrails on steps at Appletreewick. Some more work planned on left side.*
- *Replacement pedestrian gate, Grassington Bridge.*
- *Flood damage repairs to pedestrian gate between Grassington and Hebden.*

RIBBLESDALE: (Rob Ashford) (Access Ranger Nathan Allen)

- *Replaced two step-over stiles above High Gayle.*

CUMBRIA (Calum Stott)

Sedbergh Parish (Access Ranger Graham Pye):

- *Gate rehung on new post – near High Oaks, Sedbergh*

- *Decking repaired on two bridges – below Beckside, Howgill*
- *Fingerpost – High Oaks, Sedbergh*
- *Gate rehung on new post and stile repair – Garths, Sedbergh*
- *Kissing gate post and fence replaced – Akay Wood, Sedbergh*
- *Waymarking – Crook O’Lune, Howgill*
- *Gate catch replaced – High Oaks, Sedbergh*
- *Walled around ladder stile – Croosedale beck, Howgill*
- *New gatepost – A683, Marthwaite*
- *Akay Wood – revetments built / subsequent closures and monitoring of subsidence*
- *All lengths strimmed.*

Dent Parish:

Calum Stott has now been appointed Area Ranger for Cumbria, we are currently advertising for a new Access Ranger to cover this area.

- *Summer 2021 - resurface approximately 550m of path along the riverside below Dent*

There is an ongoing issue to correct the routing as shown on Ordnance Survey maps of the Dales Way footpath into Grassington, but it is hoped that this will be resolved shortly.

- Tony Grogan

WEBSITE REPORT

Our website (**dalesway.org**) remains a crucial starting point for new walkers tackling the route. It also provides a wealth of historical information to Dales Way Association members through the *members area* - including copies of every newsletter and all the committee reports we have produced since the Association was formed.

This last year, despite the pandemic restrictions, more people than ever have accessed the site. In the 12 months to February 2022 over 125,000 **visits** have been made to the site - a 20% increase since October 2020 (see Newsletter 56).

Summary by Month
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Summary by Month										
Month	Daily Avg				Monthly Totals					
	Hits	Files	Pages	Visits	Sites	KBytes	Visits	Pages	Files	Hits
Feb 2022	2495	1800	513	294	4014	2778189	6190	10793	37809	52398
Jan 2022	3217	2386	631	342	6954	5299793	10606	19580	73992	99729
Dec 2021	1980	1307	440	253	4663	2796102	7863	13645	40539	61391
Nov 2021	2039	1323	467	271	5029	2838070	8153	14017	39713	61194
Oct 2021	2614	1791	542	304	6090	4395320	9451	16830	55549	81051
Sep 2021	3149	2303	601	366	7389	5817374	10980	18037	69090	94483
Aug 2021	3557	2586	647	396	7963	6603635	12291	20080	80190	110285
Jul 2021	3498	2517	650	393	7626	6304246	12199	20170	78034	108448
Jun 2021	4076	2919	780	440	8127	7167546	13219	23429	87593	122280
May 2021	4364	2803	858	435	7834	6557628	13515	26616	86899	135301
Apr 2021	3240	2117	603	378	6306	4889475	11349	18109	63512	97214
Mar 2021	2914	1804	581	331	5361	3778097	10261	18024	55926	90335
Totals						59225475	126077	219330	768846	1114109

Generated by [Webalizer Version 2.23](#)

Likewise, our **Facebook Page** (facebook.com/daleswayassociation) now has over 2,800 followers, almost double that from October 2020. Thanks especially due to **Chris Grogan** for keeping it lively and informative.

- Tony Grogan

Membership Report

We currently have 268 members. 34 of these are coming to the end of their 3 year membership and will be invited to renew in April. Everyone else has taken out an annual subscription which we very much appreciate. Thank you.

- Chris Grogan (Membership Secretary)

Treasurers Report 2020/2021

I have worked with Martin Bairstow, Spencer Wilson, Chartered Accountants, to prepare the Dales Way Association audited accounts to 31 March 2021. These are being sent to you as a separate document.

Key points to note

- Subscriptions and donations collected have been used to cover running costs including some Dales Way expenditure
- Less income received during 20/21 but equally less expenditure with no big outlays like the Dales Way 50th anniversary celebrations.
- We have a healthy balance of over £11,000 in the bank, with an increased net profit compared with 2020.
- Or account shows we are careful with how we spend our monies and would ask we continue due care and diligence with any future spend, and
- Whilst £11K alone may not get us very far, it can go further when applied on projects to which other organisations may also contribute. We are in a much stronger position to argue for improvements to the Dales Way if we can offer a matching or small financial contribution.

Update 2021/2022

As the end of the DWA financial year 2021/22 approaches. I will be working again with Martin Bairstow, Spencer Wilson, Chartered Accountants to have the accounts audited.

A quiet year overall comprising credits of of subscriptions and donations and no big outlays

- Gordon Tasker, Treasurer, 20 February 2022

WALK

A Dales Way round - as it is and as it might have been...

From Grassington the Dales Way leaves the familiar riverside path and takes to the high ground.

Writing in his Dales Way guidebook, Colin Speakman says: "Ironically, the 6½ miles between Grassington and Kettlewell were originally thought of as a temporary diversion loop, pending the day when linear access to the riverside between Grass Wood, Conistone and Kettlewell could be negotiated. Those negotiations never took place because of opposition from anglers and landowners, but most walkers now agree the diversion is even better than the proposed riverside walk."

The lower level route, which includes a long stretch of quiet road walking, is still offered as a bad-weather alternative and includes some wonderful riverside stretches.



So, on a bright, clear December morning we decided to use this abandoned section to make a fine circular Dales Way walk from Grassington.

(Ghaistrill's Strid left)

Walking up through Grassington village, the place was busy with shoppers and sightseers, no doubt keen to see where the current TV version of *All Creatures Great and Small* is filmed.

We turned left onto Chapel Street and right up Bank Lane, following the Dales Way out onto the open fell at Lea Green. We followed the traditional path along a walled trackway, used for many years by locals, but because of a long-standing dispute over its "right of way" status, avoided by the "official OS route" which cuts across fields to the left.

The Dales Way makes its way across Lea Green, a site rich with archaeological interest, after a couple of miles finally approaching a deep gorge ahead - Conistone Dibb.



Beyond the final stile before the Dibb, a clear path cuts diagonally left, leading down into the gorge.



The path down towards Conistone is an easy stroll to start with, but then there's an adventurous mini-scramble down through the narrow limestone gorge at the foot of the Dib.

Care is needed, especially in wet weather, as the limestone can be very slippery.

An easier alternative is to take Scott Lane down on the opposite side of the gorge.

Conistone itself is a quiet little hamlet. Turn left to follow the quiet country lane south. An alternative footpath return route back up to Lea Green via the crags soon presents itself on the left, but we continued on along the road, which though quiet is very narrow in places, so care is need when traffic approaches.

The river can be seen clearly below on the right throughout, where the early pioneers of the Dales Way once hoped to secure riverside access.

Where the road turns right downhill, a field gate leads to a footpath which cuts the corner before taking you back to the road by Grass Wood.

A little further on a fingerpost on the right takes you into the woods towards the river (there is a wall gap before this that serves just as well).

The path joins the riverside along a wide, lazy stretch, which soon becomes a dramatic rush as it cuts a path through a limestone gorge known as Ghaistrill's Strid.



Finally, the path leads across a field as you approach the stone road bridge which leads back up into Grassington town centre.

Total distance: 6.8 miles. Total ascent: 280 metres. Allow up to 3½ hours at an easy pace.

Map taken from "Dales Way - the Complete Guide" by Colin Speakman (Skyware Press 2016).

- Tony & Chris Grogan