
Tameside Ramblers - Issue 20 - October 2019

Chair Talk

This summer's weather has been a real mix of the *hottest* and *wettest* day/month/bank holiday meaning that, for good or bad, records have been broken. We have not seen, anything like the horrendous moorland fires of 2018 but there was the potentially devastating situation with the damaged Toddbrook Reservoir dam at Whaley Bridge, which many of us will have passed on a walk or spotted in the distance. Thankfully, the situation was saved and repairs are now underway.

The two Basic Navigation training days, which were organised and run by Jason Johnston, were very successful so much so that Jason organised a third for October.

Talking of training, there seems to be a lot of it about: Ramblers have arranged training events for volunteers that include Walk Leader training and First Aid training. The First Aid training was given by St. John Ambulance and designed specifically for our needs as walkers in open country. Several of our members attended one or both of these events. I attended one of the first aid courses and it was excellent. One of our walk leaders attended both courses and an account of them is given in this newsletter.

If you are a volunteer with Ramblers (committee member, walk leader, etc.) make sure that you are registered as a volunteer with Ramblers – this can be done via your profile on Ramblers website – to ensure you do not miss out.

Finally, don't hesitate to contact me or any of the committee, with your suggestions for walks, social events or articles for this newsletter – and we always welcome new contributors (contact me in the first instance).

Stewart Ramsden
Chairman

The Greater Manchester Walking Festival 2019

The GM Walking Festival was, as usual, held in May and was generally blessed with good weather. Until this year, the festival had been organised by Transport for Greater Manchester but this year, the 5th such event, it became the responsibility of **GM Moving**. The purpose of GM Moving is to positively change the lives of people across Greater Manchester through physical activity and sport.

There were 429 walks or walking activities included in the 2019 festival and it is estimated that approximately 5,800 walkers participated. The analysis of the registers for all the walks showed an average attendance of 13.67 walkers per walk whilst the Tameside Ramblers walks had an average 18.25 walkers.

In previous years, Tameside Ramblers included all of its May walks in the festival; however, because details for the walks have to be submitted to the festival organisers well before we would normally start compiling our summer walks programme and coupled with the additional paperwork involved for our walk leaders, we decided this year to include just four of our May walks (two Saturdays and two Wednesdays) in the 2019 festival.

On two of the walks, we were fortunate enough to be joined by Caz Whittle, one of the festival organisers, and on one of those walks Caz's husband Tony also came along. Tony is a qualified drone pilot and he undertook some drone filming along the walk – this was posted onto our Facebook page and showed the group as they walked along Cown Edge.



LEADING TO A MOUNTAIN - The quest to become a mountain leader by Jason Johnston.

I have been hill walking and mountaineering for some 20 years plus and have always had a passion for the outdoor environment from my studies in Geology.

So where did the journey start to become a mountain leader, well it started when I was with a group of friends on Kinder in very poor weather conditions and we got lost, very lost. Starting in Hayfeild and ending up in Edale!

I promised myself to get some navigational training and booked onto a two day mountain skills workshop in the Lake District, this was the start of what has become a yearly challenge for me. Each time increasing my skills base to become more competent in the mountain environment.

At this point I was introduced by the instructor to the Mountain Leaders Award. This scheme is designed for people who want to lead groups in the mountains, hills and moorlands of the UK and Ireland. It was established in 1964 to promote safe enjoyment of the outdoor environment. The scheme is run and administrated by the Mountain Training Association (MTA) of which candidates have to be a member and register prior to starting.

So after returning from the Lakes and a quick chat with my beloved for the support I was going to need I took the plunge and booked on, the start of a four year period of which I now look back on with enjoyment and to be honest miss since I qualified.

Stage 1 – Working my way to book onto training.

Well you book onto the scheme, get a copy of the handbook and start to realise what you have to complete even before getting ready to book on the training week.

You have to log twenty “Quality Mountain Day” as a prerequisite to training. What the hell was a quality mountain day I asked myself a subject that would become the basis of many a debate with the mountain leader training friends I would make over the next few years.

To prove competency and experience you have to log on the MTA website all the days you spend in the mountains making sure you meet the requirements of the syllabus. This is done by using skills like off path navigation, leading a group and working in poor visibility, all this in the mountainous areas of the UK (The Peak District & Yorkshire Dales are not included).

So the weekends and any spare time was spent in the Lake District, Wales and trips to the Scottish Highlands to bag myself the summits and log the twenty needed and finally it was achieved.

On the 29th December 2016 after passing a NNAS Gold Navigation assessment (another journey I have been on) I decided it was time to book the mountain leaders training.

Stage2 – The training week.

Training can be completed in a block of 5 days but some providers run a split weekend course and this fitted in with work commitments. I booked the training with a company based in the Peak District called Outdoors Adventures.



Figure 1 - Training Team.

The training was split between 3 weekends in April, May and June of 2017. Starting with two days of navigation in the Peak District, two days in the Lakes with a wild camp and finally two days in Snowdonia looking at steep ground, rope skills and safe crossing of a river.



Figure 2 - The Summit of Bowfell.

Training was a blast I picked up so much from the instructors Jules and Darren. You start to realise how much knowledge you need to become a mountain leader. The navigation section in the peak district was easy to take in but now I had to start contemplating safety on steep ground, group management and environmental factors. After a weekend in the lakes around Crinkle Crag and Bowfell, a wild camp and a further weekend in Snowdonia looking at safety rope work and river crossings. The training was completed and now the consolidation period began.

I met eight great people on training all who pulled together and gave each other support and all who have remained great friends.

Stage 3 – Consolidation.

Now it was back to disciplining myself to extend on the learning from training and meet the requirements to book onto the assessment.

I had to get another twenty quality mountain days completed, a minimum of ten camps, five of which have to be wild and a number of group walks in of which being a walk leader for Tameside Ramblers helped out enormously.

Weekends and any spare time was spent either in Wales, The Lakes or crossing further North to Scotland. I was up mountains in all weathers from wind, rain and the occasional sunshine. Wild camps when all the stars were out in all the glory and at time in conditions you would not leave a dog out in.



Figure 3 - Wild camping.

I had put the time in and completed the miles, got all my QMD's and more, I felt ready for assessment. It was time to book and I decided on something different.

Snowdonia Mountain Skills run an assessment on the Isle of Rum in Scotland, this was the place for me, excited I completed the online booking form and the countdown started to September 2018.

Stage 4 – Assessment.

The assessment was five days on Rum and I was excited about spending time on the mountain ranges known as the Rum Cullins.

We already had a social media group for the candidates and team BBQ was formed from this. Four of us managed to book into the BBQ Hut in Kinloch for two days prior to three days camping wild in the mountains. This made life easier as after a day out in the rain and wind allowed us to dry out our sodden kit.

We arrive mid-morning on Rum and after checking in to the hut and sorting out kit, it was straight out on assessment. Nerves were running high and the four of us departed for the mountains above Kinloch with our assessor for the day. Navigation was on the agenda for today including the night navigation session. The day had its highs and lows and after wandering around Askival in the pitch dark we got back to base just past 1.30am, time for a rest as the following day was emergency rope work, route planning and mountain leaders back pack.

Day two and the heavens had opened up with the wind blowing at

around 30/40 mph. We headed out for the emergency rope work assessment. The conditions were more than challenging for this, trying to confidence rope a client and belay over steep ground whilst it was driving with rain and blowing you over was verging on impossible. This got to me and I needed to thread my rope through an anchor and failed miserably. My mind went blank and I completely forgot how to do a figure of eight knot. I did complete the task but on the route down the assessor took me to one side and stated that he needed to see me complete this before the day was out. Glad to say that on returning to the hut a knot was completed and signed off, job done.

The afternoon was spent in the social centre / café / shop in Kinloch where individually you had to plan and demonstrate two mountain days and go through what you carry in your pack as a mountain leader.

We then had some time to reflect and prepare for the three days we would be out for camp craft, micro-navigation, group management and environmental aspects assessment.

Up early on the third day with a heavy pack ready all the candidates met at the campsite in Kinloch where we were given our assessor for the next couple of days. We ended up with Graham Umey, for those of you not aware Graham is one of the top mountaineering professionals in the UK. His skill and knowledge knows no bounds. We were going to be tested and I was at the time not looking forward to it.

We headed for the west of the Rum looking at camping next to the bothy at Guirdil. The day was spent navigating with the 1:50,000 scale map around the peak of Fionchra. It was raining with low visibility so we were being tested to the max. Camp was set and I collapsed in my tent with some warm food, I needed rest.

The following day was spent on the peaks of Orval and Bloodstone Hill again micro-navigation was being tested along with group management. Result the sun was out and to top it all off Golden Eagles were high in the sky, this was an awesome sight.

For the second and last night camp was set on the beach and I sat just watching the sun lower over Canna (the next Ireland), the final day was upon us, feedback was good, just river crossing and the walk back to Kinloch.



Figure 4—Team BBQ Hut

We broke camp and set off back, team BBQ volunteered to complete the river crossing, which we completed to everyone's amusement. On the hike back it would be a one to one with the assessor for feedback and results. Anxiety and nerves kicked in, I held at the back of the group for my review, wanting to be first. Steve, the course director call me back, the result and feedback was given, I had passed assessment, and it felt awesome. All the effort over the last 4 years had paid off. It was now official I was a Mountain Leader.

To close I find I always need to be personally challenged, so what next? I am a sucker for punishment so have planned to become a winter leader in the next three years and have embarked on trying to achieve the Rock Climbing Instructors Award, never really rock climbing until this year. I must be mental but a whole new outdoor world as just opened up to me.

New App's for your Smart Phones

FLASHLIGHT

If you are walking late at night and get lost, why not let your Smart Phone flash out SOS to aid your rescuers

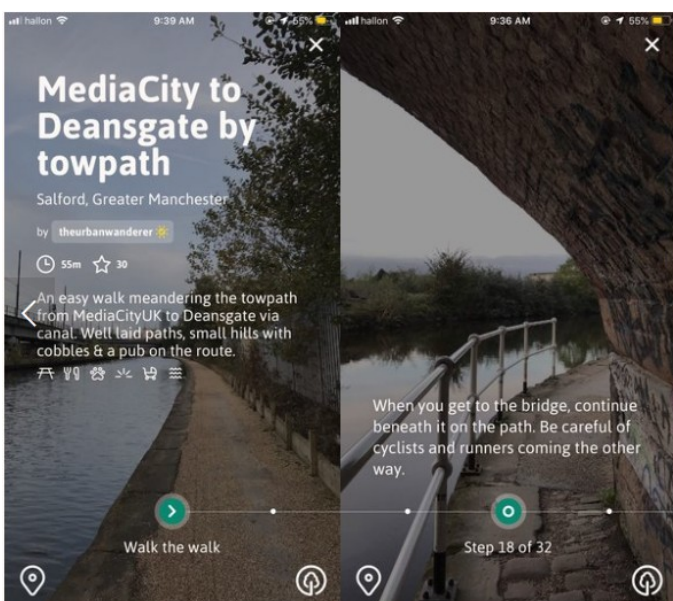
Free version at www.snipca.com/32737 for Android and www.snipca.com/32738 for IOS.



LOCAL WALKS

Check out an App and website at <https://www.gojauntly.com> for a host of walks with images on your device highlighting your walk.

Simple photo guides help you navigate while nifty tips point out things of interest and places to eat and use the loo.



ON THE SOCIAL SIDE

Over the summer months, there have been just 2 social events, which are detailed below.

BBQ: as usual, the event was held at 19 Poplar Grove, attended by 15 members. The weather was dry and warm for a change (no need for Pam to bring her blanket) and was all the better for the good food and drink available. The punch again proved very drinkable, so thank you for all who provided drinks. The BBQ in 2020 will be on the same weekend at the same venue.

Manchester Ship Canal Cruise: on Sunday 21st July, 23 of us (should have been 25, but 2 people got their timings wrong) enjoyed a cruise from Salford Quays to Liverpool on the Ship Canal. The weather stayed fine and warm, so most of us enjoyed the trip from the outdoor deck. Unfortunately, we were held up for 1.5 hours at Eastham Lock to let 3 container ships pass through, so on docking at Liverpool, had no time to have a quick tour round as we headed straight for the coaches back to Salford.

On a smaller scale, 5 of us ended our walk along the Bridgewater Canal in August with a meal at Home. Thanks to Jo, we were able to get a 10% discount. May be worth another visit after a future walk ending in Manchester.

Future Events:

Christmas social: this will be at the Smithy Fold in Glossop on Thursday 12th December. See current walks' programme for more details.

New Year meal out: details will be in the current walks' programme as the venue is still to be agreed (possibly Pinocchio's in Ashton on Thursday 9th January).

Weekend Away: we are organising a weekend away at Haworth youth hostel in 2020, probably on the weekend of 4th April. An e-mail will be sent round to members with details and prices in the next few weeks and more details will be included in the March to June walks' programme..

BBQ: details will be included in the March to June walks' programme..

We are always open to new ideas, so please put forward suggestions to any Committee member so we can consider at future meetings.

Pete and Ruth Summers

Social Secretaries

Feedback on official Ramblers Courses held recently in the North West

Courtesy of Mary Brown



St Johns Ramblers First Aid Course August 9th

I recently attended an afternoon First Aid Course in Oldham for Ramblers members, and unbeknown to me Stewart went on the morning training that same day too! The course was led by Sally, a trained and highly experienced St Johns Ambulance First Aider.

Each session has up to 12 ramblers, from local groups, ours had seven.

We all gained useful knowledge, whether inexperience beginners with no previous first aid training or having previously attended other courses.

We covered:

- the role of the First Aider on walks
- contents of a first aid box
- incidents that may happen - mainly trips, falls, bites, cuts, grazes, broken bones and things more serious
- how and from who to get help

We practised skills including resuscitation, splinting, bandaging and even if we didn't get expert results (yes my bandaging was a bit odd!) we all had a go (some laughs too). Everyone felt more confident in being able to react positively to an unexpected incident by the end of the afternoon.

A very useful course led by friendly and skilled First Aiders. Check Ramblers website for future dates up to December.

Ramblers Leadership Course 31st August 10-4pm

James and Diane from Ramblers staff were wonderful and knowledgeable course leaders.

The morning session was packed with information - We started with some Ramblers statistics including -

The oldest walk leader is 89, and the longest time a leader has led walks is 40 years! Apparently not the same person.

55% of leaders are women and the average age is 64

We then looked at the ethos of Ramblers, (there is a Ramblers Parliament too), guidelines, best practice, how to find/plan a route; ranging from local knowledge, apps, guide books, 'borrowing' from other groups, and so on. Grading walks was covered and what makes a good walk, from the skills of the leader to points of interest and views. Good weather scored highly of course but outside the leaders control sadly!

A very important part of any walk is the initial briefing where expectations are set and information provided on the walk: route, when the breaks will be and maybe any toilet stops or lack of them.

Safety, safeguarding, insurance, first aid, back markers and communication were all discussed. Possibly a middle marker too if a larger group of over 20. Naming and describing your walk well to sound inviting was looked at to encourage new walkers as well as existing members to participate. And so, so much more...

In the afternoon - we put some of what we'd covered into practise on a walk round Debdale Park - fortunately the heavy showers had stopped by then. We each took turns at leading and were presented with different scenarios to react to - mine was what would I do if the visibility was getting very low. Very supportive and thorough information was provided to build on all our responses.

We had fun but learnt a lot too. Highly recommend this course to anyone who is thinking of leading a walk or would like to gain more confidence or brush up on skills if they already do. As a bonus lunch is also provided.

Technology Update : “what3words”

A couple of worst case scenarios for a walk leader are;

- a) Getting lost and having to ask for help,
- b) A walker getting hurt and having to ask for extraction assistance.

The solution for a) may be to phone 999 and ask for MRT (Mountain Rescue Team) support. They will likely ask for a grid reference to come and assist, which is possible by the “OS locate” App. But there is a chance that grid numbers may get transposed giving the wrong coordinates ?

The solution for b) may also to phone 999 and ask for ambulance support, but as the vehicles are restricted to “roads” they may well ask for a Post Code for their Sat Nav ? – not easy in the middle of a field.

In both case, the important information required is that similar to a well-known TV programme - “Location, Location, Location”.

In a slightly tenuous link, this title is reflected in a new App / system being widely adopted called “what3words”.

What3words uses a grid of the world made up of 57 trillion squares of 3 metres by 3 metres. Each square has been given an address composed of three words. What3words differs from most other location encoding systems in that it displays three words rather than long strings of numbers or letters. For example a response of “kite, chats, dine” will take you to a precise spot in a field next to the River Ouse in York.



If you were to require assistance (whether walking, driving, boating) and you contact the emergency services, they can request you look up the 3 unique words on your App and thus pin point you to a 3 m² location. There are today 55 UK emergency services (including Coast Guard for sea rescues) who have confirmed they are using and accepting 3 word addresses.



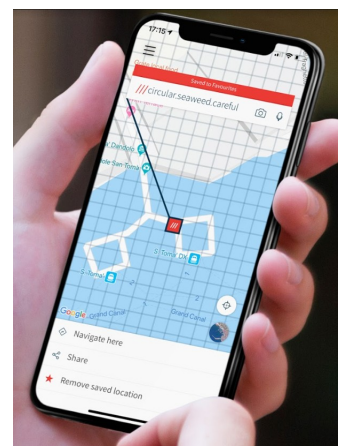
NW Motorway Police

45 mins • 🌐

Do you need Police assistance but do not know your exact location? If you have GPS, **#What3Words** can pin your location down to 3 metres, and can be used online or via the official app. Find out more about the app at: <http://socsi.in/7M5aG>



What3words have a web site along with free Apps for iOS and Android. As the system relies on a fixed algorithm rather than a large database of every location on earth, it works on devices with limited storage and no Internet connection.



Alan P James

Thank you to Miriam Frank / What3words for her input to this article.

The Committee

Chairman : Stewart Ramsden

Email : chairman@tamesideramblers.org.uk

Group & Membership Secretary : Prue Ramsden

Email : secretary@tamesideramblers.org.uk

Treasurer : Jo Manning

Email : treasurer@tamesideramblers.org.uk

Footpath Officer : Vacant

Email :

Walks Coordinator : Christine Harrison

Email : walks@tamesideramblers.org.uk

Walks Coordinator : Lynda Chandler

Email : walks@tamesideramblers.org.uk

Committee Member : Alan Lowe

Committee Member : John Harrison

Social Secretaries : Ruth & Pete Summers

Email : social@tamesideramblers.org.uk

Web Master : Alan P James

Email : webmaster@tamesideramblers.org.uk

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