

A History of Stockton Rambling Club (1952 to 2016)

The Club was founded in 1952, a year in which King George VI died, Winston Churchill was Prime Minister, Britain was at war in Korea, and sugar was still rationed. There was no way-marking of walks, few roadside finger-posts, no two-and-a-half-inch maps, and no breathable clothing.

According to Founder-Member Joan Firth, (née Dresser), the idea for a Rambling Club started with Eddie Boggon and Doris Bronsdon. They worked in the same office at what was then Imperial Chemical Industries` Billingham Division Wages Section (The Billingham Post, April 4, 1975). They decided to start a club and wrote to Countrywide Holidays Association (CHA) and Holiday Fellowship (HF) for a list of people from the area who had been to CHA and HF Centres. Letters were sent to these people proposing a meeting to discuss the idea of forming a club.

On Friday, 31st October 1952 forty-four people turned up at the Newtown Methodist Church Schoolroom, hired for five shillings (25p), to discuss the formation of a Stockton and District CHA and HF Rambling Club. Since there was already a CHA and HF Club at Middlesbrough some people questioned the need for a new one. However, there was support for a new club and a programme of three rambles was compiled. So the first Club walk was around Great Ayton, possibly on the 8th or 9th November. Mr. J.E. Boggon was elected Honorary Secretary and Miss J. Dresser Treasurer. Others present included Doris Bronsdon, Frances Harrison, Connie Johnson, Doris L. Williams, Jean Scott, Gordon Boyd and Cathy Porter.



Newtown Methodist Church Schoolroom photographed by John Fletcher in 2002.

A General Meeting of the Club was held on 21st November 1952 in what was known as “Harland’s Room” (William Harland & Sons, Accountants, of Finkle Chambers, Finkle Street, Stockton). According to Michael Rowntree this room is on the first floor of what is now the Nationwide Building Society. The Nationwide is two doors up (northwards) from Winpenny House, which used to be occupied by E. Winpenny Ltd, a Gentlemen`s Outfitters. The room used was at the back of the building, and looked over the Green Dragon Yard, but the windows are now blocked up. The High Street side had two entrances, one leading to stairs up to the room. The Meeting was chaired by Alec Falconer, the

President of the Middlesbrough Club. Miss Doris Bronsdon, Miss Doris L. Williams, Miss Frances Harrison, Mr. Ken Perks, Mr Eric Hardcastle and Mr Charles Brittain were elected to the Committee, to give an equal balance of ladies and gentlemen. Three further rambles were noted. An Annual Subscription was set at four shillings - 20p - which lasted up to 1968, and reached £1 in 1975. A Club meeting was to be held on the third Friday of each month, with the first on 12th December. At that stage the meetings were probably intended to arrange details of the next rambles and other club matters but in practice turned into socials.

The first Committee meeting was held on 5th December 1952 chaired by Eddie Boggon, the Secretary. Three more fortnightly walks were arranged with leaders Eric Hardcastle, Eddie Boggon, and Ken Perks, the first known walk leaders. Two of these walks were on a Sunday and a third on a Saturday, but it soon became apparent that the Sunday walks were more popular. Nine Club Rules were drawn up. Although the name of the Club was to be "Stockton-on-Tees and District CHA and HF Rambling Club", in practice Club cards etc. were headed "Stockton and District CHA and HF Rambling Club". Five Rules concerned membership, one subscriptions, one forbidding dogs on walks, and one setting the minimum age for members at 14 years. New members would be invited for three probationary walks before admittance. Over the next few years the Committee expanded with more officers, but the Club was apparently run with these few Rules until a Constitution was drawn up in 1960 and adopted in 1961 after approval by the CHA and HF. The 1960 Constitution has been amended from time-to-time but is largely unchanged.

In the early days, club members were in their 20s. Joan Firth said that on walks she wore a cycling cape and sou'wester, and Government-surplus Women's Land Army breeches. There were some strong characters in the Club; Don Ferguson had threatened to damage the juke-box at the Bunch of Grapes, Scaling Dam, if it was played too loud at the Christmas Dinner in 1966 - the Committee decided to take a record-player as a precaution. On a recce he once found that a footbridge had gone, so on the day at the stream he produced a pile of plastic sacks, which were handed back after each crossing the only problem being that the sacks soon got holes in them. He died in 1968 after surgery leaving £75 to the Club.

The New Year, 1953, brought the start of the tradition of the Christmas Dinner Ramble with ten ramblers walking from Swainby to Osmotherley ending with dinner at the Queen Catherine Hotel.

The first Club Annual General Meeting, on 2nd October 1953 at Harland's Room, hired for 50p, was chaired by Frances Harrison. Mr Charles M. Brittain was elected as Chairman, Eddie Boggon as General Secretary, Eric Hardcastle as Rambles Secretary, Joan Dresser as Treasurer and Doris Bronsdon, Frances Harrison, Miss D Rawlings and Terry Firth as Committee Members.

It was agreed to have a social evening each third Friday of the month and to prepare a programme of three walks per month. The more important decision was approval for money to buy a kettle, a teapot (cost 18/6) and 30 cups and spoons (15/-).

Details of walks were circulated on duplicated sheets and distributed to attract new members with the first Club "Card" issued for the Summer 1953 programme. The Club also used a noticeboard at Elmwood (Hartburn) to give details of walks, socials, etc. A further noticeboard was later mounted on railings outside the offices of the Northern Echo; the building since replaced by the Northern Rock - now Virgin Money - offices just off Stockton High Street towards Dovecot Street. The most important detail of the walk was the Service bus number- occasionally a train - its starting time and place. Most Service buses were double-deckers so there was no problem with seats for a dozen or so ramblers. It was a little different for walks in the Swainby/Osmotherley area which had a Crowes bus service. The bus was a single-decker of the "Heartbeat" vintage, and return buses would be crowded with walkers even if it meant a dozen or more standing. Early Club members to a man recall that Crowes "never left anybody behind". The record for the maximum carried was sixty-one.

Stockton Rambling Club - Walks Programme

This Card for the Summer 1953 programme of walks is the first card of walks. In the previous, the first, year of the Club a few walks were arranged at a time, and probably announced at socials. But by the end of 1952 the Club had got around to organising a complete season of walks. In the first year or so there appear to be no winter walks - the card for "Winter Programme 1954 -5" appears to be the first time for winter walks to appear on the programme.

RULES

1. The name of the Club to be the Stockton and District C.H.A. and H.F. Rambling Club.
2. Members are not allowed to issue personal invitations excepting to visitors to the district.
3. Applicants for membership must apply to the general secretary, who shall invite them to three rambles, after which they shall notify the general secretary of their wish to continue. Special consideration will be given to C.H.A. and H.F. Members.
4. Membership to be limited at the discretion of the committee.
5. Members who have notified their intention to be present and are not, will be responsible for any expenses incurred on their behalf.
6. Membership terminates with the Annual Meeting in September and must be renewed by 31st December of same year, otherwise membership expires.
7. All members shall pay the Annual subscription of 4/-.
8. Dogs shall not be brought on rambles.
9. The age limit for members shall be 14 years.

OBJECTS

To stimulate a love of the open country ; to foster the spirit of comradeship and to further C.H.A. and H.F. ideals generally.

J. W. Baker Ltd., Stockton-on-Tees.

STOCKTON & DISTRICT C.H.A. & H.F. RAMBLING CLUB

Committee :

Miss D. E. BRONSDON	Miss F. HARRISON
Mr. C. BRITTAIN	Miss D. WILLIAMS

General Secretary :

Mr. J. E. BOGGON,
6 Cross Street,
Norton-on-Tees

Rambles Secretary :

Mr. E. HARDCASTLE,
17 Elmwood Road,
Eaglescliffe.

Treasurer :

Miss J. DRESSER,
29 Grange Avenue,
Stockton-on-Tees.

Summer Programme 1953

Membership in the first year of the Club was 45, with a total Club income of £18.67, but the following year membership fell to 21 with a total income of £13.87. So, following the 1954 AGM the Committee worked hard to recruit members and put on an attractive social programme. Winter 1954-55 was the first winter with a weekly rambling programme. Membership increased to 49 the next year, to 81 the year after, and to 112 in 1956-57 with total income climbing to £85, giving a secure foundation for the Club.

Having turned the corner in 1954-55 the Club “celebrated” in September 1955 its first Club Wedding. Treasurer Joan Patricia Dresser and General Secretary Arthur Terence Firth were the happy couple, who emerged from the church under an archway of rambling boots tilted to dispense boots full of confetti; Terry sold his old banger Ford for £90 for the deposit on their first home. In October the 1955 AGM agreed to a theatre party to the Empire Theatre, Newcastle (notable for leaving the late Walter Dobson behind who just made the last train back to Teesside), a holiday to Austria, and to hold a contest to design a Club Badge. Cathy Porter made an appeal for the Goodwill Fund and it was agreed to make a collection at social evenings, extended the next year to collections on rambles. The contest for the badge design was won by Miriam Flowers, who was rewarded with Life Membership. Her design consisted of Roseberry Topping above a rucksack against crossed walking sticks, all on a gold diamond, with letters SRC at the top and CHA & HF at the bottom. The badges cost 3/- and were sold for 2/6 and later dropped to 1/-. At one time badges for clubs, Lyke Wake Walk, etc. were sewn on walking jackets, but with the advent of breathable fabrics this stopped. Maybe for this reason, or the changing membership of the club, the badge was forgotten. Over the years there were various calls for a “club badge”. For the 50th anniversary of the Club Pat Lawrence came up with a device, approved by the Committee, which was sewn into sweatshirts. This device was based on Roseberry Topping, but by having “Stockton Rambling Club 1952-2002” emblazoned the Club association was easily recognizable to non-members. The wording was later changed to “Stockton Rambling Club – founded 1952.”

1956 was an eventful year. Terry Firth organized a fortnight’s holiday in Austria for about 15 members. A bus was hired for the first time for a ramble for the first daffodil walk to Farndale which became a regular event from 1968. A Club card for “Summer 1956” printed at a cost of £5.5s. is probably the first card printed in the format that lasted up to 2001. Interestingly it included details of six Rambling Association walks at Ravenstonedale, Wooler, Flamborough Head, Malham, the Roman Wall, and Lastingham. Earlier, in the Spring, the Club paid for the first time affiliation fees of 12/6 to the Rambling Association, although the affiliation was never noted on Club cards until 2002. The R.A. walks would have emphasised the need to hire a bus for walks in more distant parts. The Club hired a bus with a “fare” of six shillings (30p) for a walk at Blanchland on 1st July 1956. Thereafter the Club hired a bus for the occasional distant walk, using Service buses and trains as before. As an experiment it hired a bus for weekly walks for a couple of months in the summer of 1964. This was a financial success but it was not until 1966 that the Club routinely hired buses for Sunday walks. For walks on Wednesday and other days, a mixture of service buses, trains, and hired buses was used until June 1983.

The Summer 1956 programme was varied to say the least. In late June there was a “Midnight Feast and Moonlight Saunter” led by Terry Firth starting with the No.73 bus at 10.18p.m. with return home “approx. 7.30a.m.”, but at least ramblers were fortified with a barbecue on the beach at Saltburn. In August the Sleights to Grosmont walk was reached using the 10.15a.m. train from Middlesbrough with “return home approx. 10.30p.m.” – presumably with ramblers then faced with the journey home from Middlesbrough Station. In late September there was a leisurely “Brambling with Joan” walk led by Joan Firth. Even more leisurely was tea at Guisborough at the end of the following week’s walk. The next walk finished with a redeeming Evensong at Osmotherley Church.

The 1956 AGM was notable in that there were several nominations for Social Secretary requiring a vote. Also, there was a “large” number of nominations for the Committee! Terry Firth was elected as President for a year, the only time the Club has had one.

Terry had already been General Secretary and a Committee Member, and later went on to fill the posts of Chairman, Vice-Chairman, General Secretary, Social Secretary, Treasurer, Committee Member, and for many years Goodwill Secretary, giving 23 years of service to the Club.

The first Club Weekend was held in March 1956 at the CHA Centre at Scarborough, with a return visit in the Autumn. This set the pattern for two Club Weekends a year, mainly at CHA Centres. The March 1958 Weekend at Scarborough cost £1.72s with members making their own transport arrangements, becoming £2.50s in October 1958 for a Weekend at Grasmere including transport. Weekends at CHA and HF Centre were becoming expensive so in 1992 the Club switched to using Youth Hostels. Generally, one Weekend was held each year in the Lake District. In 1993 the Club ventured out into Scotland with a successful Weekend at Melrose. Some Members found YHA accommodation a bit Spartan (the weekend at Ilam YHA for May 2009 had to be cancelled through lack of support), and began to use B & Bs. As more members turned to B & Bs it became increasingly difficult for Excursion Secretary Pat Lawrence to organise Weekends. Costs at YHA were increasing anyway, then Gideon Wheater, Lorna's son, arranged a hotel booking, which with the group discount he obtained made the Weekend costs comparable with the YHA but with greater comfort and keeping the group together. This first 'hotel Weekend' was at Disley in Derbyshire in October 2011; subsequent hotel Weekends have been very popular.

By 1957 the Christmas Dinner Ramble was firmly established with dinner and tea at the Queen Catherine, Osmotherley, for the princely sum of ten shillings (50p). After dinner AND the Chairman's annual speech there would be party games, dancing etc. - for a period there was a second ramble in the afternoon - ending up with tea. In 1965 the dinner moved to another venue and later a series of other venues. This tradition continued up to at least the mid-70s. Probably after this period the event started with a walk led by the Chairman, then dinner, then the Chairman's address, then off home. The last Christmas dinner in 2013 was at the Hardwicke Hall Manor Hotel, costing £23. However, on 9th December 2007 the 'normal' Sunday walk finished at Great Ayton followed by dinner at the carvery, Fox and Hounds, Slapewath. This has continued as an annual event, but with walks finishing at Slapewath; this has to some extent replaced the Christmas ramble but without a Chairman's address.

In March 1957 there was the first Concert, which could involve 20-odd people, with Trevor Stephenson, and George Wilks acting as the main producers. Trevor also composed the music, as did Ken Mathews. One of Walter Dobson's many talents turned out to be a dab hand at writing lyrics, which he did with his friend Don Ferguson. These concerts were performed pretty well annually up to 1971, and formed the basis of concerts that were performed at the Marske HF Centre. The ability to put on the concerts well illustrates the energy and high level of participation of Club members in the social programme. In May 1958 the Club put on its first concert party at the Marske HF Centre. Unfortunately, some of the party were involved in an accident on the return home when a loose horse shied and smashed its hooves through the car window. Joan Firth and Molly Rowlands were cut by glass but Len Holliday was badly injured with concussion and fractures, never really making a full recovery. The following year two concerts were held at Marske, in May and September, and this programme of concerts continued to September 1966.



“Tramps Supper” – 2nd November 1957. Persons appearing are: - Front Row: left to right: Hilda Addison, Joan Firth, Ethel Holliday, Olive Jones, Maureen Elder, Joan Poyner, and Arthur Harrison.

Along “skyline” from the left: Eric Fleming (in front of him Phyllis Colpitts), Unknown (partly obscured), Ian Sproates (with hat) (in front of him Dorothy Armstrong), Maurice Tayler (with beard), Ray Powell (hat & glasses), George Wilks (glasses), Alan Brittain, Ken Dodsworth (hat), Dorothy Dodsworth, Don Ferguson (hat and glasses), Unknown (hat), Unknown, Unknown, Joan Fenwick (hat), Walter Dobson, Charles Brittain (hat and pipe), and Audrey Thomas (hat).

Behind front row, from the left: Unknown (with stick), Trudy Wright (white top), Sylvia Collie (dark `coat`), Eileen O`Hara (peeping from behind Sylvia), Ronni Boyd (behind Ethel), Eric Jones (with hat, to the right and back from Ronni). Rest Unknowns.

The photograph shows seven persons that were, or were to become Club Chairman. This is a Gazette photo 2718A. but they published a different photograph (Tramps for the Night) on Monday 4th November 1957. There were two other Tramps Suppers, 11th April 1959, and 9th November 1963. There were a couple of stories in relation to the Suppers; in the first incident Terry Firth was “moved on” by the police, and in the other the “tramp” was not allowed on the bus.

Walter Dobson achieved fame when he held the title of Mensa Brain after winning the BBC “Supermind” title in 1976. See “Remember When” on 1st May 2014 in the Gazette. He died in 2002 shortly after the Club’s 50th Anniversary.

1957 – 1961



From the left: Molly Rowlands, Sylvia Lynas, Betty Stockton, a Doris, Tony Harwood, Phyllis Colpitts, (At the back Audrey Bryan), Dorothy from Gt Ayton?, Bill Webb, Unknown, Unknown, (lady in front of him Unknown, but the lad in front of her is Michael Rowntree, 14 when he joined the Club in April 1957 and led a walk on 25 January 1959 as a 15-year old; but Gideon Wheater led a walk on 19 August 1984 as a 13-year old), Ian Sproates. From the dates of Farmer's Wife and Hole in the Wall, with a young Michael Rowntree this is obviously of the same period. i.e. approx.. 1959.



“The Farmer`s Wife” The leader, Sylvia Collie, had met the farmer`s wife, at Kirby Sigston on the recce and she had invited the ramblers to drop in for a cup of tea. Probably 29-11-1959.

From the left: Ken Dodsworth, Dorothy Armstrong, Ian Sproates, Bill Webb, Mike Rowntree (behind Mike is Joan Fenwick), Molly Rowlands (in black), (hidden behind her, with glasses is George Wilks), Arthur Harrison (at the back), Phyllis Colpitts, Pauline Smith, with glasses, (became Webster), Dorothy Dodsworth, Hilda Addison, Farmer`s Wife, Audrey Conway (crouched), Connie Johnson (in white), Trudy Wright.

At the 1957 AGM Hilda Addison was elected Social Secretary, later twice becoming Chairman and taking up five other posts.



“Hole in the Wall” Walk on 24th April 1960 lists “Hole in the Wall” on the card. Given the Farmer’s Wife photo dated as 29-11-1959 the dates fit with a young Michael Rowntree.,

From the left: Sylvia Lynas, Ronni Boyd, squatting Norman Addison and Sylvia Collie, Bill Webb, Arncliffe “Andy” Brown, and Michael Rowntree. Michael was 14 in April 1957 and led his first walk on 25th January 1959 as a 15-year old. (Gideon Wheater led his first walk with Harry Morter on 19 August 1984 as a 13-year old, then a walk on 3rd February with Lorna Wheater, and then solo on 27th October 1985).

In the autumn of 1957 a ramble ended at Runswick Bay. A Harvest Festival Service was about to start at the Chapel, so the ramblers left their rucksacks at the entrance and joined the few parishioners. Afterwards, the ramblers met Mr James Clarke, a retired seaman who was the Chapel Steward. They made arrangements for a visit the next year. So started the tradition of the Runswick Bay Harvest Festival Service, after which the ramblers trooped down to the Village Hall for a supper. Mr Clarke presented a carving of a boat to the Club which initially was held by the incumbent Chairman, but has since been lost. Another year a storm had led to damage to the Chapel roof and the Club made a donation to help in its restoration. After Mr Clarke died the congregation fell and the Chapel closed, the last Harvest Festival walk to Runswick Bay being in 1977. The Harvest Festival tradition of a ramble and tea continued for a couple of years at Osmotherley, at Lealholm for four years, at some other places ending with Reeth 1990-95. The lady preacher at the Reeth Methodist Chapel in 1995 gave a suitably rambling sermon to the assembled ramblers and parishioners.

For the first few years, rambles were typically 10 to 12 miles and described on the cards as “Fields”, “Moors”, “Hills” or “Cliffs”. In 1958 Grades A, B, and C were introduced for distances, and “r”, “m”, and “f” to describe the terrain; but Route numbers did not follow until June 1974, although Billingham did not have a pick-up point until December 1971. For many years there was only one walk each Sunday, mainly B walks with the odd C walk, and even rarer, an A walk. There was also the occasional C walk on a summer Wednesday evening, becoming an established walk twice per month from May 1962 with the last in June 1995. June 1969 saw the first Sunday with a B and an A walk, but there were only two more similar days that summer.

The C walkers had to wait until August 1975 to be paired with the B walkers, but this pattern did not become established until May 1977 and then only for the summer months, extending to winter months in November 1981. There was the odd special event, like a Lakes Day when there were all three walks, but they became regular on Sundays from the summer of 1981, and increasingly regular in winter from November 1995.

At the AGM in 1959 concern was expressed about continuity in the Committee. This led to the election of the Club's first Vice-Chairman who would automatically become Chairman at the following AGM, a procedure that was maintained up to 2001 when the Chairman and Vice-Chairman both became subject to election every year.

There were opportunities for three church services on walks in 1960 with an Easter Service at Whorlton, a Rambles Church Service before the walk at Guisborough in June, and the Harvest Festival Service at Runswick Bay. Norman Addison led the first of a series of annual Lyke Wake Walks at a time when there was not a well-established route, and there were stories of people lost on the moors in the dark. Walter Dobson was elected Auditor at the 1960 AGM and served continuously in that role until 2001, except for his year as Chairman in 1969/70.

At the 1960 AGM Joan and Terry Firth volunteered to be Goodwill Representatives. For Terry this was to be the start of fourteen years of devoted service as Goodwill Representative. Joan and Terry went on to sit on the National Committee to select guests, as well as to sit on Committees for the Marske HF, Filey CHA and Whitby CHA Centres for many years. That year, 1960, the Club sent 7 guests for Goodwill holidays. Over the next few years Goodwill activity increased with some events such as a Scottish Dance (raising £22.60) and coffee evenings being held specifically to raise money for Goodwill. In July 1964 a donation of £20 was received from the Stockton Ladies Circle. In September 1964, 14 Stockton families, including 36 children, had goodwill holidays at Filey, the Club's support providing a toy for each child. Thirty people were sent on Goodwill holidays in 1967. By 1968 Terry was making over 100 home visits a year to find people in need for holidays, with the Club supporting five Goodwill weeks at Marske, Filey and Whitby. However, by 1970 it was reported that it was increasingly difficult to find suitable people for holidays. By the end of the 1990s it was very difficult indeed to find suitable candidates, so that in 2002 it was agreed to donate “Goodwill” money to the YHA's “Give us a Break Scheme”, and to abolish the post of Goodwill Representative. In 2005 it was decided to split Goodwill between YHA (75%) and Cleveland Search and Rescue (25%), later adding the Air Ambulance to the list.

In its early years the Club had a reputation for marriages. It was reported that within the Club “CHA” stood for the “Catch Husbands Association”. This is not too surprising given the young age profile of the Club, with group photographs of the period showing many attractive young ladies. In due course the raising of young families led to loss of some members. So in May 1962 Terry Firth led the first of the “Wagon Train” walks with eight adults and seven children (9 months to 5 years` old), with push-chairs hitched, braving the windy conditions from Osmotherley to Swainby.



Joan Firth on the left, next to husband Terry with Chris between them. At the back on the right is Norman Addison

There were two more Wagon Trains in '62 and four in '63. The weddings kept coming with at least five in 1964 when Club membership was 133, and about 60 attended the Red Riding Hood panto at Hutton Rudby.

In 1966 the Club obtained its first two-and-a-half-inch maps, with more in 1967 when the Rambles Secretary reported that "rights-of-way have been marked on them" which must have kept him busy. On the other hand, he would have had some spare time with only one walk a week to organize! 1967 was the year of foot-and-mouth when walks were suspended for three months, although the Ugthorpe Christmas Dinner Ramble in 1968 was unaffected. Also in 1967 leaders went free on buses for the first time, and bus pick-ups were extended to Billingham for more distant walks. Occasionally an A Group would form with a group splitting off from the B walk. On the social side the Club made a strenuous effort to organize a national HF reunion for 350 members with a dance held at the Jubilee Hall, Leeds Street, Stockton-on-Tees. Club membership climbed to 175, but only 40 to 50 were regular walkers.

Christmas 1969/New Year 1970 provided an absolute orgy of socializing with Christmas Faith Supper (13th Dec), New Year's Eve Dinner at the Queen's Hotel, Stockton (31st Dec), Christmas Dinner Ramble (4th Jan), and then the New Year Social (17th Jan). They managed to keep that programme up for three years! Less hectic was the first of five trips to the Farne Islands in June 1970.

Fifteen-year-old Chris Firth, the fruit of the Club's first marriage, and the survivor of Wagon Trains, was elected to the Committee in 1972 to represent young people in the Club. He was followed in 1974 by Stuart Jarrett who became Rambles Secretary the next year as an 18-19 year-old. The following year appears to be the start of annual long distance walks starting with The Three Peaks (of Yorkshire), followed by the White Rose, NYMROD, Shepherd's Round, Bilsdale Circuit etc. These catered for the

hard walkers until 1991 when a supported annual walk of 18-22 miles was started. Many C walkers regularly completed these walks which were done at a moderate pace, finishing with a restorative meal.

The Club's Silver Jubilee was celebrated with a dinner-dance at the Dragonara Hotel – now Jurys Inn - Middlesbrough on the 30th September 1977.

Photos taken by Billingham Post 2nd March 1975 of walk led by Jim Brownless.

Photos given in The Billingham Post on April 4, 1975.



From Left to Right:

Jim Brownless, behind him sideways on Keith Ormandy, Unknown, Anne Raw, Glenys Hadley, Terry Firth (with glasses), Harry Ball (in background facing left), Rose Fixter, Unknown, Patricia ("Patsy") Hatton, Unknown, Josh Quayle (with white hair), John Wood, Unknown's back, Dave Elliott, Bob Vipond (in white).

Photos taken by Billingham Post 2nd March 1975 of walk led by Jim Brownless.

Photos given in The Billingham Post on April 4, 1975.



From Left to Right:

Anne Raw, Terry Firth, Rose Fixter, Jim Brownless, Pam Webster, Unknown behind her, Patsy Hatton, Unknown, Josh Quale (white hair) Dave Elliot, and three Unknown.

In the 1970s leaders had not only to find their own route, given the starting and finishing points, but also to find a pub for the lunch stop. So on the recce the leader would check out with the landlord that it was okay for walkers to eat their sandwiches in the pub. On the day most walkers went into the pub for a drink and to eat their food. At that time the Club evidently had a bit of a reputation for hard-drinking members, the more inveterate imbibers managing a couple of pints. So in May 1975 Leader John Fletcher was distraught to find on his recce there was no reachable pub on the route. The only solution therefore was to bring the pub to the walk, so on the Friday before the walk he hiked out to deposit some cans of beer in a stream, largely covered by overhanging heather. They were refreshingly cool by Sunday. The pub lunch stop ended with the advent of Pub Grub.

In 1984 the Rambles Secretary, Frances Prior, introduced the “suggested route” to leaders of walks. Up until then leaders were given the starting and finishing points, and the walk grades, and left to pick their own routes. This considerably increased the work of Rambles Secretaries, especially with the advent of three walks each week. This culminated with Bill Wilson collecting all the various walks and computerising the information in the mid-1990s. In 1986 it was decided that all walks be completed within six hours. Up until then walks would take as long as necessary at the then “normal” pace, resulting occasionally in long waits for C party walkers. The six-hour rule made it necessary for A and B parties

to increase the walking pace to complete the required distances. However, the convention was still that when the last group arrived everybody got onto the bus, with walkers summoned from the pub and teashop. Then around 2003 the convention changed to “we can stay in the pub up to the end of the six hours” with some leaders quickening the pace to give enough time for end-of-walk sustenance. Ron Caygell was amongst those leading the charge.



Fortieth Anniversary 14th November 1992

Back Row, from the left: Eric James (half shown), Stella Wells, Thelma Shephard, Sylvia Addison, Margaret Earnshaw (in white), Mrs Chris Firth?, Chris Firth, Unknown (in red), unknown, Derek Wells, Jim Bell (with beard), John Hood, Carol Holliday (in white), Unknown (in white), Lorna Wheater (in blue), Bob Whattam.

Middle Row, from the left: unknown, Joan Enwright, Molly Rowlands (in white), Walter Dobson, Neil Mollard, unknown, Michael Rowntree (slightly forward, out of line), Tony Atkinson (to the right and further back from him, in blue, Trudy O'Connor).

Front row, from the left: unknown, Connie Johnson, unknown, Terry Firth, Joan Firth, Dorothy Williams (behind and between these last two is Sylvia Colley), unknown, Rose Fixter, --Jennings (sister), Ann Jennings (became Mason) -Photo from John Wood.

By the late 1980s many of the Founder and early Members who had joined the Club in their 20s had now retired and preferred a gentler-paced walk. So in 1989 Chairman Brenda Heard introduced monthly Thursday day-time walks, to be “leisurely-paced” and accessible by public transport. Hopefully the walks would be old-style “rambles”. In 1999 the number of Thursday walks was increased to two each month, and by 2003 there were regularly three Thursday walks each month. Also in 1999 Wednesday evening C walks in Summer were resurrected but as a weekly event. For many years the Thursday and

Wednesday walks were organized by the late Malcolm Conway, Margaret Platts and George Taylor. Details of Wednesday and Thursday walks were initially distributed on sheets until Rambles Secretary John Carter issued the “Card” for January to June 2003 in a new 8-page format, thus bringing all the walks together. In 2014 the “Card” was first put onto the website after Mike Collins did some rocket science stuff to prepare it electronically to be published and transferred to the website.

The next development in the walks programme, instigated by Carole Pattison in January 2005, saw the start of a monthly daytime Wednesday walk as a D walk of up to 5 miles. The Wednesday walks have proved useful in providing short walks where a Member could try their hand as a walks Leader. The weekly evening walks inevitably led to support for the local hostelry, leading Chairman Frances Prior to comment in June 2002 “Almost by accident the Summer Wednesday Evening walks have become weekly ‘social events’”.



Christmas Lunch Ramble 9th January 2005

Front Row (Squatting) from the Left: George Taylor, Martin Helm, Roger Blackstock, Herbie Rogers, Mary Tims, Danny Tims, Norman Leslie, Kath Horn, Clive Graham.

Standing, from the Left: Margaret Platts, Dave Kennedy, Brian Hood, Vira Hood (behind her George Keld, Sheila Todd, Moira Keld, Pat Thynne, Pat Icton, Lynne Trattles, Margaret Smith, Denice Partington, Brenda Tooke, (behind her Lynda Redhead?), Sue Quinn, Jill Long, (Joan Redhead half hidden), June Howells, Norma Marshall, Malcolm Conway, Jim Cattermole, Gordon Peacock, Jim Thwaites, Doreen Riches, Ilene Yeates, Margaret Barrow (half hidden), Jo Blair, Margaret Leighton (behind her John Fletcher), Pauline Ryder in pale blue (behind her Sue Rigby, but in stitched version white-haired Trudy O'Connor peeping out to left of Sue), Barbara Brand (mauve “collar”), Barbara Wood, Marjorie Conway, Gillian Spensley, Helen Chilvers, Frances Prior, John Wood, Stan Radcliffe, Bill McTimoney, John Carter.

Photograph by John Carter

In 1995 John Fletcher prepared a draft Custom & Practice (C & P) document at the request of Chairman Lorna Wheater. At that time, at the AGM the Vice-Chairman became the new Chairman, and without any guiding document it took a while for some new Chairmen to find their feet in the role. The C & P document was not a rule book, but set down the way the Club was currently run, so as things change the document is revised from time-to-time. In 2010 the revised edition was put on the Club website. The initial draft was partly provoked by the impending move of Doreen Makin to Scotland, and the loss of considerable experience and knowledge of Club matters.

In July 1999, after recovering from a very prolonged illness, Terry Firth was back to leading walks for the Club. On the 16th July 2000 Terry led a walk from Scaling to Runswick Bay. Living then at Moorsholm he got off the coach, with a cheery goodbye, on the Whitby Road. The Club was devastated later to learn that in crossing the road Terry was knocked down by a car and instantly killed. It was a very saddening end for someone who had made such an enormous contribution to the establishment of the Club, and to the work of Goodwill.

The Club Card for January/June 2001 was sent out with a letter from Chairman Frances Prior, the first of the “Chairman`s Letter”, which usefully keeps Members up-to-date on Committee matters etc. In her June 2001 letter Frances mentioned that an outbreak of Foot-and-Mouth had occurred, but a few members came up with local walks so the Club was able to carry on. It was the only club in the area to maintain a programme, which attracted a few walkers from other clubs. Also at the 2001 AGM the Constitution was changed to allow a Member to be elected successively Chairman for three years.

On the 23rd October 2002 the Club celebrated its 50th Anniversary with a Dinner at the Parkmore Hotel, Eaglescliffe. The Dinner, (£20), was hosted by Chairman Frances Prior with about 110 past and current members present. The Club was delighted that Founder-Members Joan Firth and Jean Slater were present, together with a good representation of early members. The address was given by John Fletcher covering the start of the Club and significant developments; this history started as an expanded version of it. (Joan Firth and Michael Rowntree in particular, were very helpful.)

In late-2000 Bill McTimoney joined the Club. Being a bit overawed by the skills of the people leading walks he did a map-reading course, leading his first walk on the 17th February 2002. Bill clocked up 100 walks as leader by May 2008, and 200 by July 2014, his walks being notable for unscheduled extensions on occasions. Meanwhile, he joined the Committee in 2001, becoming Vice-Chairman in 2002 and Chairman the following year. As Social Secretary from 2008 to 2013, he organized many trips to places of interest followed by an optional short walk (not included in the 200). Bill is currently (2016) in the third year of his third three-year term as Chairman, an extraordinary record for a latecomer to the Club.

In December 2003 Philip Barker added Addendum I as follows:

“The more recent history of Stockton Rambling Club is marked by the introduction of various forms of `computer` technology into the organisation, administration and publicity of the club`s activities.

In 1999 the club launched its first Web site. The site was designed, created, hosted and maintained by Philip Barker. The site gave details of the programme of walks and the locations of the `pick-up` points for the coach. It also gave details of the various SRC

committee members, social events and other items of potential interest to the club's members.

At about this time, GPS-based personal navigation systems were introduced into the club by Tony Brennan. Many members of the club showed `resistance` to the use of this type of technology – after all, what was wrong with an ordinary map and a conventional magnetic compass? Nevertheless, since this introduction of GPS devices, a number of club members (mainly A-walkers `led` by Phil Barker) started to use them both for the navigation of walks and for recording walk statistics (distance covered, walking speeds, and so on).

In about 2001, `electronic maps` on CD-ROM started to become popular. Philip Barker obtained a complete set of 1:50,000 OS Landranger maps on CD-ROM from **Anquet Maps**. This set of maps gave complete coverage of the whole of the UK. He used these to `plan` his walk routes using his computer; he could then download his walks to his **Garmin eTrex Venture** personal GPS navigator (as a sequence of 10-figure grid references). The navigator could then be used to navigate the route of a walk he was to lead – and also track the details of the actual walk on the day it was done.”

In July 2009 Philip Barker added Addendum II as follows:

“In December 2006, the club ventured into the use of `**social media**` when it started its first of two weblogs. This was hosted within the *Moveable Type* (MT) authoring package within the TS20 postal code umbrella provided by the *Evening Gazette* newspaper. The system ran smoothly for about two years but in late December (2008), the problems that were encountered during an upgrade to a new version of MT caused a significant disruption to the quality and continuity of the services that we could offer our members. Bearing this in mind, a second weblog was created using *Google's Blogger* system. The two weblog systems are now run `in parallel` with each other - so that one acts as a sort of `backup` for the other. Naturally, this offers a continuity of service in the event that one of the systems `breaks down`!

Over the last three years the weblogs have been used to document details of upcoming events and provide descriptions of some of the events that have actually taken place – and achievements that various members of the club have realised. The weblogs provide access to walk descriptions (including tracklogs and route statistics), maps of relevant areas and collections of photographs relating to particular events. The `blogs` also provide a forum for the exchange of comments and views about our activities. In many ways, the weblogs document the developing history of the Stockton Rambling Club.”



The “A” party beside Blackton Reservoir, September 2016

Left to right: Lorraine Matthews, Julie Simpson, Phil Barker, Barbara Addy & Roger Blacklock

Phil has been the mainstay of the A Party for many years, and also makes an enormous contribution to the Club in running the website.

From the Club`s beginnings minutes of Committee meetings and Annual General Meetings were written up in manuscript in “Minute Books”. The last manuscript entry was for the Committee meeting held on 12th December 1990, heralding the advent of the Word Processor into wider use in the home. The Club`s first computer was obtained in the mid-1990s as a result of Stockton Borough Council lending out its old computers to charities, etc., and was used by the General Secretary and the Rambles Secretary.

Use of e-mails was also becoming more widespread, with Chairman Frances Prior`s letter for 2001 headed with an e-mail address, and by end-2003 all Committee correspondence was by e-mail. When Clive Graham started in November 2004 collecting e-mail addresses about a third of Members had one, and by 2010 Chairman Bill McTimoney noted that most Members had one. Bill set up a register of e-mails to enable up-to-date notices of socials and last-minute changes in the walks programme. Phil Barker has written above about the introduction of computer technology, to which can be added the use by the Rambles Secretary of Memory-map in 2008 to measure walks from the map. In 2015 Steve Alewood created a Facebook page for members to post photographs of club walks and events.



60th Anniversary Party 15th February 2013 in Linthorpe Village Hall

Kneeling front row (from the left): Clive Graham, Norma Hornby, Joan Coulson, Joan Carter, John Fletcher, Monica Coleman, Pam Bainbridge, Pauline Kirby, Sheila Blackburn, Chairman Mary Tims (in front), Fionnuala Hatem, and Margaret McNichol. Row behind the kneelers (from the left): Norman Leslie, Liz Brunton, Barbara Wood (in pattern top), Janet Hall (in blue), Marjorie Conway, Anne McGovern, Pat Thynne (yellow collar), Mary McCourt, Pat Lawrence (with pashmina), Pat McTimoney (in pink), Moira Keld (horizontal bars), Margaret Platts, George Taylor, and photographer John Carter.

Remainder behind the above (from the left); Lynne Trattles, Grace Busby (largely hidden), Terence deBourg, Joan Hornby, Margaret Barrow, John Wood (almost hidden behind Barbara Wood), Lenny Bateman, Austin Bradley, Fred Hall, Jeff Hunt, Peter Cull in mauve (and behind him unknown), Ged Portland (partly behind Chris Little with check throat), hidden Carol Jackson, hidden NK4 peeping behind Janet deBourg in red, Les Cull, John Barchan (above Pat Thynne), Dave Kennedy (in blue), Danny Tims (and behind him Eric Suddes), Mike Blackburn (partly hidden), Doreen Bateman (and behind her John Begley), Pauline Bieniasz (partially behind her Malcom Conway), Kath Horn (in yellow) and behind her Berry Knowles, Bill McTimoney, Pat McTimoney in pink, and behind her Martin Helm, Margaret Knowles, Phil Jefferies, George Keld, Maggi Aird (in yellow), Jackie Brooks hidden behind Margaret Platts, and Fiona Taylor. Tom Bainbridge attended but is not in the photograph.

Photograph by John Carter

As stated above the first Honorary Member was Miriam Flowers in 1956 for designing the Club badge. Mary and Harry Morter were later made “Hons” for leading many walks for the Club in the Lake District. The apparent absence of further “Hons” for some time may be due to many Members purchasing Life Membership, with currently five on the books. (Life Membership could be purchased for three guineas from December 1968, jumping to £6 in December 1972, and ending in November 1975.) The next “Hon” was the late Jim Cattermole in February 2008 after finishing a five-mile walk at the age of 90; Jim was a veteran of Dunkirk and a Chindit in the Burma campaign. To prevent her resignation Margaret Barrow was made an “Hon” in November 2011; Margaret had served as Chairman, and was Goodwill Secretary for nine years. Mary Tims and Pat Lawrence were made Honorary Members in November 2014 on leaving the Committee: Mary serving 14 years including four as Chairman, and Pat serving 21 years including 19 as Excursion Secretary. In October 2016 John Carter was made an Honorary Member for his services as Rambles Secretary for the past fifteen years.

The first edition of the History was updated by John Fletcher in 2016 with photographs added by John Carter

