

Autumn update

Hi Folks,

I am attaching the minutes of the AGM for those of you not there. We are very pleased to welcome new committee members – Carole and Phyllis, who will gradually take on the tasks currently performed by me as your secretary and Geoff who is going to help us with the IT work on the web-site and advise us on using our cloud-based system to handle files, e-mails etc. We were also very pleased to see our national Chairman, Ray Stockall, who is a great friend to the branch having been one of the people in the South West Branch responsible for our foundation in 2008. He actually missed the SW AGM in order to visit us. (I think he likes our cakes!) We spent the morning up at Goulds hill and managed to get another section completed but it was very wet and soggy underfoot.

Phyllis and I then went up to the Wallathon in Reeth where 2.5 miles of walls had been demolished by floods back in the Summer.

Reeth is right up in North Yorkshire (Swaledale) and has some very spectacular scenery although it wasn't the best weather to see it whilst we were there.

We joined well over 100 others to rebuild some 225 metres over the weekend.



We were split into groups under the direction of a professional in each section. We were assigned to a garden wall boundary with a field. The owner had heard a whoosh as the wall went over and she rushed upstairs to see 5 foot of water in the garden. I'm not sure they were back in the house yet. It was interesting to use the rather blocky sandstone and very hard river stone which was very rounded. They also have the throughs sticking out and as ours were rather thin but with quite a large area it took a bit of fiddling around to get them to sit properly on all the underlying stones.

The main body of work was on the approach road to the village. It looked a very sorry sight as we arrived at dusk on the Friday and must have been a nasty reminder on a regular basis to the residents of what had happened. By the end of the weekend this was all restored and looked so much better.

The locals were very appreciative of what we were doing. They gave us tea and cakes on Saturday followed by sweet and sour or curry chicken. Then Sunday morning someone arrived with a trailer in which they had gas burners to provide drinks and delicious bacon baps. There were more filled baps and soup for lunch. The farmer who was co-ordinating it came to the evening supper and after Ray had thanked everyone and mentioned we had come from Dorset and others from Scotland he added his thanks and then came over specifically to thank Phyllis and me for coming so far to support the effort. I saw him again at the end of Sunday when he introduced me to his colleague as the lady who'd come from Dorset and proffered more thanks.



The whole atmosphere was lovely. We met up with Billy whom some of you may remember from our Wallathon last year. He was accompanied by someone I'd met at a course at Crooklands. Then George (Alison, our National Secretary's partner) was walling with us on Sunday (he was at our Wallathon too) and Ray also came and joined in. I was also confronted by someone who said 'hello Sally, it's Brian and Wendy'. Frantic brain searching, I recognized him and also the names but it took a few moments till someone else came up and Brian introduced me as someone whom he had accompanied on a walk last year at the National AGM. Ah! problem solved and I was able to make more sensible small talk. The Association is quite a small organisation when you think about it.

We stayed in a very cosy static caravan which had felt distinctly chilly when we arrived but soon warmed up with the gas fire on and enabled us to dry our wet kit. We also had some great pub meals. Between us Ray, Phyllis and I tucked into what seemed like half a cow on Sunday night – very tender and only a fiver each. They are thinking of doing it all again next May – possibly for a week. I can thoroughly recommend the experience.