

REDSPEARLANDS FOOTPATH GROUP

Newsletter #10 - November 2005



There's nothing to beat walking our local footpaths on a wet afternoon - especially when in good company and with plenty of cake and liquid refreshment when it's all over

RFG/IFG Combined Walk and Celebration Tea Fifteen 'drowned rats' - no other description is remotely adequate - arrived at Thackwood Nook on 22 October, thus completing the final walk of the season having endured two hours and forty-five minutes-worth of semi-gale, drenching rain, soaking grass, mud and slurry, obstructed paths and footbridges, all in the pursuit of pleasure! And judging from the smiling faces as we tucked into tea, cake and a celebration glass or two of sparkling wine, we could not have chosen a better day to end RFG's first year. Thanks to everyone for making Year 1 the success it has clearly been. Also many thanks to Judy and Bill Hogg for their warm hospitality, and to John Stronach of Ivegill Footpath Group for his most eloquent toast to RFG's future. He appeared slightly bemused by our 'Redspears' moniker, so for John's benefit - and for anyone else similarly puzzled - a brief explanation is given towards the end of this newsletter.

The Lost Ways Project - Stage Two By mid-November, volunteer surveyors for the Lost Ways Project will have walked or ridden over all of Dalston's footpaths, bridleways and byways that appear on the definitive map of public rights of way. The written survey reports are sent to the Lost Ways administrator for checking and analysis, with copies sent to the County highways authority as part of a county-wide input into the Cumbria Rights of Way Improvement Plan, due in 2007..

Our volunteer surveyors have completed an important task, but that doesn't spell the end of the project. Stage Two, which is already underway in Wiltshire and Cheshire, will also need volunteers. This time they won't have to be walkers or riders, but people interested in researching records, digging into archives, and having a liking for old maps and documents. Leading this part of the Lost Ways Project is the Archive Research Unit (ARU), a team of professional researchers set up under contract to The Countryside Agency in 2004 to collect evidence of 'lost ways'. From July 2005 to June 2007 the ARU, with the assistance of volunteer researchers, will complete research for a further eight historic counties; Cornwall, **Cumberland**, Dorset, Lancashire,

Lincolnshire, Nottinghamshire, Shropshire, and Westmorland. **How volunteers get involved** The ARU will encourage its volunteers (experienced and new researchers) to carry out research in several ways:

- 1 Undertaking preparatory work such as indexing and cataloguing prior to the ARU starting work in a particular county;
- 2 Assisting as regular volunteers during the ARU's stay in a County Record Office
- 3 Continuing research once the ARU has worked through the primary source documents, and;
- 4 Undertaking research in other archives.

The main focus of volunteer input is likely to be continuing research once the ARU has examined the primary source documents, and they plan to provide standard forms and equipment so that volunteer researchers can submit evidence to the ARU for inclusion in the Project's database. Volunteers will be given guidance and training to assist in the research and provision of evidence to the ARU.

Critical to the success of Discovering Lost Ways is the maintenance of a consistent standard of recording of evidence; this will be extended to the volunteer contribution so that this important strand of the research can operate to the same required high standards as the rest of the Lost Ways Project.

Those wishing to register their interest in volunteering for this aspect of the Project may do so by contacting the Countryside Agency's Information Line on 0845 60 50 148; or by Emailing dlw@countryside.gov.uk ; or by visiting the website at www.countryside.gov.uk/dlw Would members who make contact and eventually become a research volunteer please let us know; we'd like to have your names as potential archivists for recording our own history.

Funding Alan Jackson (Treasurer) reports having received a Cumbria County Council cheque for the grant of £500 awarded to us by Dalston and Cummersdale Neighbourhood Forum. This will be going towards the purchase of tools and insurance so we can back up the work carried out by East Cumbria Countryside Project by undertaking light maintenance and under/over-growth clearance. If there's an RFG or IFG member who knows how we can bring down the insurance quote of £210 obtained via the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers, please contact a member of RFG's executive committee.

Alan Lyne (Secretary) is preparing an application to Awards for All (a National Lottery fund) for a grant towards developing the proposed Redspear Trail; general administrative expenses; and more money for tools and protective clothing for the volunteer work parties.

What's in a name? Rita Blake, a member of Hesket Local History Group, has passed on the following information- *On 11 June, St.Barnabas Day, the Red Spears met at Hesket in the Forest (now known as High and Low Hesket) to attend the Swainmote Court, or Court Thorn, which was held under a thorn tree beside the Penrith-Carlisle turnpike (once an important Roman road and later to become the A6 Great North Road). There were ten Red Spears, all owners of larger properties in the Leath Ward, mainly within the Parish of Castle Sowerby, principally the Raughton Head area (Thackwood is known to have been a Red Spear manor) but including Hutton in the Forest. The Court was held to enable a variety of dues to be paid by the tenants, and was in being as late as 1817. Until early last century the table was still there - two slabs measuring 426cm long x 120cm wide - through the middle of which passed the thorn tree. A tree now growing at the side of the A6 near Court Thorn Surgery is said to be an off-shoot of the original, but anyone who believes that is recommended to step across the road for an early appointment with Drs Sutton or Young!*

Winter Meetings We hope to continue having occasional Friday evening meetings during the winter months, with speakers on countryside issues, perhaps even a visit or two to a place of

interest. We do, though, need a decent sized audience for these events, particularly if the speakers are coming some distance or charge a FEE! Members of RFG or IFG are welcome to suggest topics, speakers or venues they would like to visit.

Alan Lyne
Hon. Secretary / Newsletter Editor

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