

Celebration Of Volunteers

Ranger Jim Celebrates a Quarter Century of Helping People Enjoy The Great Outdoors

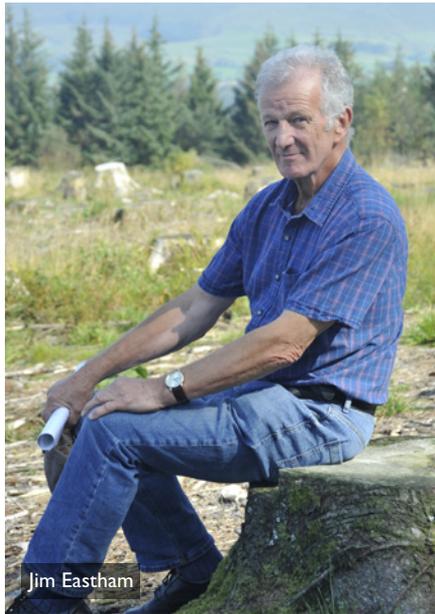
From capturing escapee iguanas to stealing lunch from a stroppy stoat, Jim has seen it all during 25 years of volunteering as a park ranger

A IRCRAFT fitter Jim Eastham first started volunteering as a park ranger in 1993 as a change from his day job. Now aged 70, Jim is still a very active member of the volunteer ranger team based at Beacon Fell Country Park and Visitor Centre near Goosnargh.

"I was looking for something outdoors and this just appealed. We got some training under supervision before we were let out on our own. I started out at Clougha Pike and Crook o' Lune and now I'm now based at Beacon Fell.

"We do general maintenance round the fell and try to make sure people don't get lost. We help find lost dogs, lost children and even lost cars – as people quiet often seem to forget where they have parked.

"This is totally different to my day job, when I was confined in a factory. When you get up here, the stress just melts away and no matter what jobs you are doing, it's always pleasurable.



"I love open spaces and meeting like-minded people in the great outdoors. When it's quiet, you can often just get on with the work, but if you do bump into a hiker or dog-walker, you always have a chat – people always seem to be more friendly when you're out in open country.

"It's surprising what you encounter up here. I was giving three local ladies a bit of a tour one day when we came across what looked like a rather plump rabbit who had got stuck in the entrance to his burrow.

"The ladies wanted me to rescue the poor creature, but when I grabbed hold of it, the

rabbit was stuck fast and something seemed to be trying to pull it deeper into the hole. After a bit of a tug of war, I managed to retrieve the rabbit, which was swiftly pursued out of the hole by a furious stoat, who was keen to know who was attempting to steal his lunch!"

"Another time, we were called out to deal with a 4ft-long iguana that had been abandoned on the fell. There had been various sightings of it, but we didn't really believe them until we saw it basking in the sun one autumn morning.

"Once it had warmed up, you couldn't get near it, but as the weather got colder, it became more and more sluggish. We cornered it one morning while it was still cold and called the RSPCA who caught it and took it away.

"Myself and a friend also enjoy looking after some of the promoted routes in the area. These are local walks which people can download from the AONB website or the

Viewranger App. We walk it two or three times a year and if, for example, we find a fallen tree blocking the path, we will report it. We also carry a few tools with us to do bits and pieces of basic maintenance to keep the access clear and make sure the footpath signage is in place.

"Until I started doing this job, I really didn't get out walking much, but this makes sure I get out on a regular basis and it really helps with keeping fit. I love just being outdoors, but there are some especially rewarding occasions when you get the opportunity to really make a difference.

"A couple of years ago, we organised a ride in a Trumper for a 90-year-old gentleman who was able to join his family on a short walk up to the summit. Once the path levelled out, he hopped off the Trumper and walked the last few yards with his children and grandchildren and he was absolutely thrilled to bits to be able to see the views he hadn't seen for almost 20 years."



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Pendle Radicals Volunteer On The Trail Of The ‘Two Toms’

Mid Pennine Arts’ pioneering Pendle Radicals research project is unearthing a secret history that volunteer researcher Bob Sproule is eager to share with a wider audience

The population of this corner of East Lancashire has a strong history of cultural diversity and the area has a reputation for nurturing original thinkers.

Working class solidarity forged in the mills and factories nurtured new ways of thinking about employment, women’s rights and access to the countryside for leisure and recreation.

From George Fox’s vision from the summit to Ethel Carnie Houldsworth’s poignant poetry and the post-war battle for the right to roam, Pendle has more than its fair share of visionaries, reformers and campaigners.

And it’s the lives of this disparate band – known collectively as the Pendle Radicals – which a team of volunteers from Mid Pennine Arts are revisiting from a fresh perspective.

Bob Sproule is one of the researchers who has unearthed some fascinating insights into Tom Stephenson, whose passion for the great outdoors led to the creation of England’s first long distance footpath: The Pennine Way.

His regular walks on Pendle inspired a passionate belief in a universal right to walk the hills in search of health and happiness, giving rise to access campaigns whose legacies flourish to this day.

Stephenson, a Sabden lad who ended up working as a Government press officer in Whitehall, used his influence to persuade the post-war Labour administration to push the necessary legislation through

Parliament in 1949 before going on to write the first official guide to the newly opened Pennine Way.



Bob Sproule

Until the second half of the 20th Century, the hills and moors were the sole preserve of wealthy landowners leading to repeated confrontations on the uplands of Lancashire like the Mass Trespass on Kinder Scout.

Bob who has deep roots in Burnley, but now lives in Ilkley, has uncovered accounts of similar confrontations closer to home.

In 1856, the Burnley News reported that the Rector of Burnley blocked a right of way by installing two heavy gates. The local footpath committee mustered a vocal crowd who paid two local blacksmiths to smash down the obstruction. The blacksmiths were later charged with vandalism, but the route remained open.

Bob uncovered a similar case a decade later, involving Capt Royle's closure of access along Carr Hall Road in Barrowford – a popular walking route to Nogarath Top thence onward to the Clarion House at Barley.

Now 68, Bob wandered all over the area as a lad with his dad, who assured him that nowhere was any further than 'a couple

of miles yon' – even if the journey in question involved a return trip to Skipton.

"Dad used to take me to the Clarion House and I developed a real affinity for the place and I saw the Pendle Radicals project as a way to give something back.

"Mostly I work alone, but I have met some of the other volunteers and forged a strong friendship with Nick Burton; it's almost like we were separated at birth.

"Nick and I came up with the idea of the 'Two Tom's Trail', a walk from Pendle to Colne that traces the footsteps of Tom Stephenson and Thomas Arthur Leonard, another Pendle Radical, who founded the Holiday Fellowship – a provider of affordable walking holidays for working class folk.

"The landscape of Pendle shapes people's personalities and temperaments and while the story of George Fox opens the door, I've always had this sense that our history hasn't really been properly told," added Bob. "The Radicals project has inspired me to go looking for it and share it with the audience it deserves."



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Margaret's 'Adopted' Seedlings Ensure Bowland's Wild Flowers Are Blooming

A committed group of green-fingered foster carers is nurturing vulnerable plant species in their own gardens to help regenerate wildflower meadows

HayTime Rescue is a new project funded jointly by Lancashire Environmental fund, Yorkshire dales Millennium Trust and Forest of Bowland AONB.

By harnessing the support of farmers, land owners and volunteer 'foster carers', the project aims to bolster the population of some of the scarcer plant species in the Forest of Bowland by 'rescuing' seeds and extending and managing the areas where they are currently found.

The work is focussed in the species-rich hay meadows and pastures – such as the Coronation meadows at Bell Sykes Farm in Slaidburn. Focus species include bird's eye primrose *Primula farinosa*, globe flower *Trollius europaeus*, melancholy thistle *Cirsium heterophyllum* and saw wort *Serratula tinctoria*.

Seed is collected from sustainable local populations and together with the resources at Kew Millennium Seed Bank, local volunteers propagate and foster the seeds into plug plants, which are then transplanted into suitable sites across the AONB.



Margaret Breaks is one of several 'foster carers' who grows plug plants for the scheme at her farm above Newton-in-Bowland. Margaret specialises in globe flowers, which love slightly damp, boggy corners of her fields.

"It took us a while to get the hang of it, but this year, the seedlings have really taken off and we've grown about 50 really strong plants from scratch," said Margaret. "It's great to be able to

put something back into the environment. Someone has to stick up for nature and step in to stop species loss and we're

lucky in Bowland that we still have some traditional wildflower meadows to enjoy.

“By working together with local landowners and literally getting stuck in and getting our hands dirty, we are hoping to have quite a profound impact on the local landscape, by ensuring that these endangered species are able to thrive in the meadows where local farmers are encouraging their regeneration.”

Haytime Rescue Project officer Carol Edmondson said: *“Local knowledge is key to the project: from identifying the local sustainable populations, to the help from Lancashire Environmental Record Network and local botany groups enabling us to gain*

a fuller picture of the species distribution, their decline, and hopefully a list of additional re-introduction sites at historically recorded locations.

“This year more than 10 hectares of species poor meadows have begun their transformation into beautiful wildflower-rich hay meadows. Over the past eight years more than 300 acres across 65 sites of semi-improved grassland have undergone some restoration work: either in the form of green hay from the SSSI meadows, seed, or plug plant addition, continuing to extend this important wildlife resource and visual asset across the AONB landscape.”

