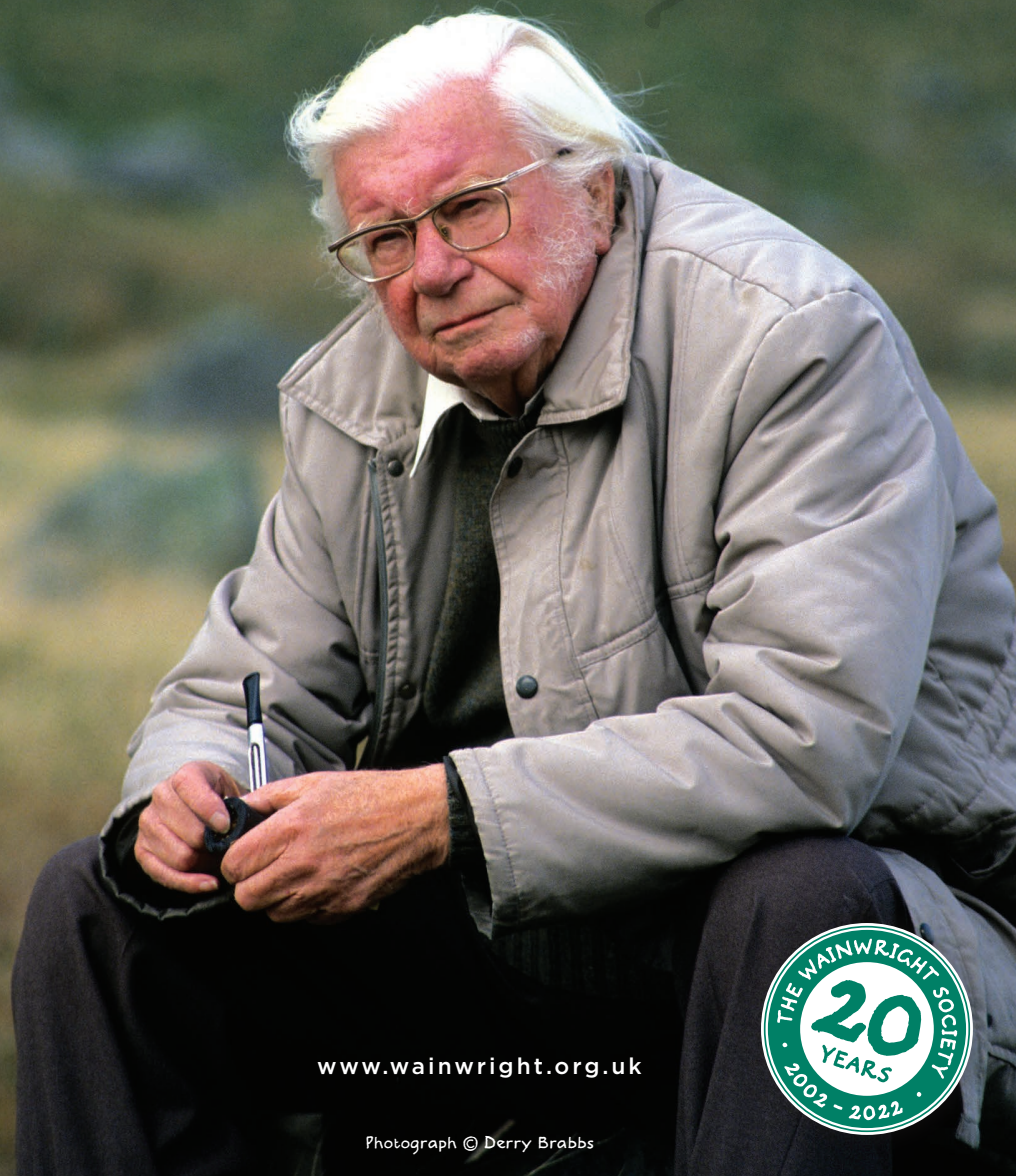




THE FIRST TWENTY YEARS



www.wainwright.org.uk

Photograph © Derry Brabbs



Derek Cockell attended the Society's inaugural meeting in 2002 and was among the first intake of members. Derek took over from Peter Linney as Society Secretary and carried out this role from 2013 until "retiring" in 2020. Derek has continued to be an active Society member. Here he looks back over some highlights of the Society's first twenty years.



The 20th Anniversary of The Wainwright Society

(this article is reproduced from the Autumn 2022 Issue of *Footsteps*)

How do you cover the achievements of the Society over twenty years, in a single *Footsteps* article? Many newer members will not know the full history of the Society that, in boxing parlance, punches above its weight. This article describes some of the key events from the last twenty years to illustrate how the Society has sought to meet the objectives that were articulated at its inaugural meeting in 2002.



Eric Robson chairing the inaugural meeting of the Society

The Society came into being at Ambleside Youth Hostel on 9 November 2002; this was an apt date, being fifty years to the day that Wainwright penned the first page of *The Eastern Fells*, the ascent of Dove Crag from Ambleside. This followed a suggestion by John Burland (who had met AW and became the first editor of *Footsteps*) to Betty Wainwright that a Society be formed to keep alive the memory

of AW and his desire to encourage more people to walk upon and care for the hills. Betty indicated that she would support the idea, and this was agreed by the ninety-eight attendees of an inaugural meeting at Ambleside. Officers were elected and a list of aims, together with some activities that might further them, was compiled. And thus, The Wainwright Society was born ...



In 2005, it was the 50th anniversary of publication of *The Eastern Fells* and, to mark the event, a Challenge was devised. Named The Great Lakeland Challenge, it entailed the climbing all of AW's 214 Lakeland fells and 56 Outlying Fells during May, by individuals choosing a fell. This was also seen as a way of drawing in new members as the Challenge was open to all and the £10 entry paid by non-members gave them Society membership for the rest of the year. The idea proved to be a success, with many new recruits and publication of the Society's first book – a compilation of members' accounts of their walk. The Challenge became an annual event from 2011, with funds raised being donated to a nominated beneficiary.

The idea of producing a Society calendar to raise funds for charitable purposes came from discussion in 2009 on the Society Forum and a small team volunteered to do the work. Members' photographs taken in the Lake District were selected and, to give it a unique Wainwright flavour, these were accompanied by an appropriate sketch and quotation from his books. The following year, there was a presentation of £3,800 to Fix the Fells near Stake Pass to help pay for the footpath repair work at that site. The calendar continues to raise thousands of pounds for nominated charities every year. So far, over £150,000 has been raised for charity by the Society from calendar sales and other activities.



The cheque presentation to Fix the Fells at Stake Pass



Society members meet the mayor in Blackburn

In 2010, it was eighty years since AW's first visit to the Lake District, an experience that changed the course of his life. To mark this seminal moment, the first day of his holiday was recreated by Society members dressed in period clothes and travelling from Blackburn to Windermere in a vintage bus before ascending Orrest Head,

as Wainwright and his cousin had done on 7 June 1930. The event attracted considerable media interest and was covered on local radio and newspapers in Blackburn and Windermere. A large group of members, together with pupils from the Windermere Elleray School, listened to speeches by John Nicoll, then the publisher of Wainwright's guides and Jane King, daughter of Betty Wainwright. A DVD (*Remembering Wainwright*), showing many scenes from this successful day, was produced.

It was the 10th anniversary of the Society in 2012 and the occasion was marked in Parliament by local MP, Tim Farron, who tabled this Early Day Motion: 'That this House congratulates the Wainwright Society on the eve of its tenth anniversary; applauds the Society's tireless efforts to keep alive the traditions started by Alfred Wainwright through his guidebooks and his many other publications, such as the walk to the summit of Dove Crag; praises the many thousands of pounds the Wainwright Society has raised in its ten-year history for causes which Wainwright himself would have supported and appreciated; notes that membership is now close to 1,000 and includes many notable members such as Julia Bradbury, Sir Chris Bonington, Stuart Maconie and Doug Scott; and calls on others to celebrate this significant milestone.' Quite an accolade!

The year was also memorable as a unique Wainwright artefact was sold at auction. This was a Notebook detailing AW's plan for producing his 'love letter' to Lakeland, the Pictorial Guides. I remember receiving a press release from the auction house with details of the sale and a study of the photographs convinced me that this was a very important document that the Society should seek to purchase for the Wainwright Archive in Kendal. The Archive had been set up following the deposit there, by the Wainwright Estate in 2011, of all of Wainwright's papers. A consortium of partners was formed, and the available funds allowed a maximum bid of £7,200 (the valuation was £2,000-3,000). But on the day, the bidding went far beyond what



The Notebook – photograph by
H & H Auction Rooms, Carlisle

anybody was expecting. John Bewick was bidding by telephone on behalf of the Society and realised that he had gone way beyond his brief when the bidding exceeded £8,000! The hammer fell at £8,600, with the Notebook having been secured by the Society, with John having used his discretion bravely and wisely. The Notebook resides in the safe care of the Kendal Archive Centre.

A resolution to campaign for National Trail status for the Coast to Coast Walk was agreed at the 2007 AGM. The Society began to meet annually with representatives of all the local authorities on the route of the walk with the common objective of having the Coast to Coast marked on Ordnance Survey maps as a first step. The main issues were that, in a few places, the route was not on open access land or public rights of way. The Society was designated the Responsible Organisation and in 2013 it was agreed that the route could be waymarked on the ground on public rights of way. The campaign was given fresh impetus in 2016 when the newly-elected MP for Richmond, Rishi Sunak, contacted the Society with the news that he was starting a National Campaign to have the route designated as a National Trail. The campaign was launched in Swaledale, with me representing the Society and meeting Rishi Sunak. It was one of those days of 'four seasons in one day'. The walk began at Surrender Bridge in blizzard conditions and ended at Reeth in warm sunshine. The plan for National Trail status was included in the Conservative manifesto at the 2019 election and, as you can read on page 30, the Government announced in August that this will now go ahead.

Possibly the most significant project undertaken by the Society has been the successful publication of four of Wainwright's books that had been out of print for some years. Discussions with the Wainwright Estate began in 2017 after the current publisher relinquished its publication rights for most of AW's books. It was agreed with the Estate that four books would be republished by the Society, beginning with *A Pennine Journey* in 2019. Where possible, the Society hoped to add new material to the book, all of which was unavailable to the time of the original publication. For *A Pennine Journey*, copies of the postcards sent to a colleague in the Blackburn Treasurer's Department were included as well as a spoof review written by Wainwright under the name of Frederick Hornby. The other books published were *The Outlying Fells of Lakeland* and a companion set, *Walks in Limestone Country* and *Walks on the Howgill Fells*. The latter two books included extracts from letters that AW had sent to Betty outlining his plans for the books. This project meets the Society's principal objective 'to keep alive the fellwalking

traditions promoted by Alfred Wainwright through his guidebooks and other publications'.

This article has detailed only a small selection of the work that has been done by the Society to further its aims of keeping Wainwright's memory and his love of upland landscapes alive for future generations. All the achievements of the Society would not be possible without the help of a small army of dedicated volunteers who work tirelessly on behalf of the members. Self-evidently, the longevity of the Society will depend on future generations of members being willing to devote some of their time to sustain the success of the last twenty years.

A RETROSPECTIVE

Below in a little more detail is a brief overview of some of the activities and events the Society has organised, or been involved in, over the past 20 years. For reasons of space, it's not an exhaustive list but it serves to illustrate how the Society has sought to involve members and to meet our principal objects as well as raise money for good causes we believe Alfred Wainwright would have supported.

FOOTSTEPS – John Burland produced our first regular member communication in January 2003 for our, then, 200 members. It took the form of a simple four-page A4 size Newsletter. Later that year Society member Andrew Stainthorpe, a professional graphic designer, offered to redesign the Newsletter and the first issue under Andrew's format, now entitled *Footsteps*, was sent out in March 2004. The new design, with the striking Footsteps banner, was a big improvement.

In mid-2010, *Footsteps* moved to its present full-colour 32-page A5 format, enabling it to become a fuller and even better magazine. David Johnson became the Editor later that year. The Autumn 2022 issue of *Footsteps* was the fiftieth in the new format.



SOCIETY CALENDAR –

Since 2002 the Society has produced a calendar to raise funds for good causes the Society believed AW would have wanted the Society to support. All pictures are taken and submitted by Society members and the calendar has been ever popular with members and non-members. Our beneficiaries have included Animal Rescue Cumbria, the Blencathra Centre, the Great North Air Ambulance Service, Fix the Fells and Lake District Mountain Rescue to name just a few, with the total amount raised since 2002 amounting to well over £150,000.



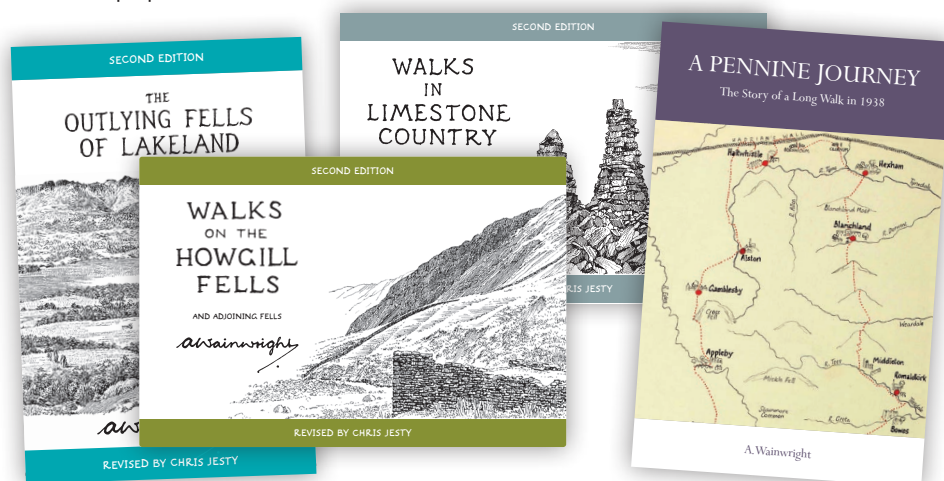
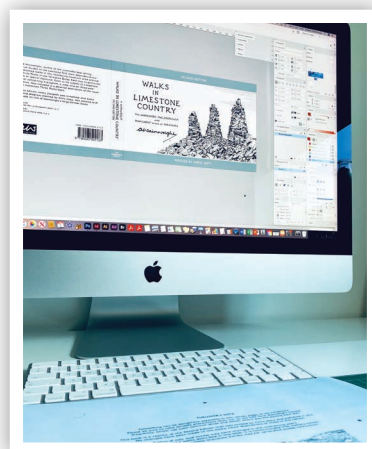
ANNUAL CHALLENGE – Every year since 2005 the Society has organized an Annual Challenge for members to raise money for good causes while walking in areas AW so loved. The first Challenge in 2005 invited members, collectively, to climb all the Wainwrights and the Outlying Fells, while the most recent Challenge focused on Book Five *The Northern Fells*, in its 60th anniversary year. Every year since 2009, excluding 2020, we've produced a book to mark the Challenge, containing members' stories and illustrated by their photographs.



THE WAINWRIGHT MEMORIAL LECTURES – The first Wainwright Memorial Lecture was held in 2003, when the speaker was the Patron of the Society, Hunter Davies. The first two lectures were held at the Theatre by the Lake in Keswick before moving to its present venue, the Rheged Centre, near Penrith. The majority of our lectures have had attendances of over 200 members and guests. There has been a wide range of excellent speakers since the first lecture was held.

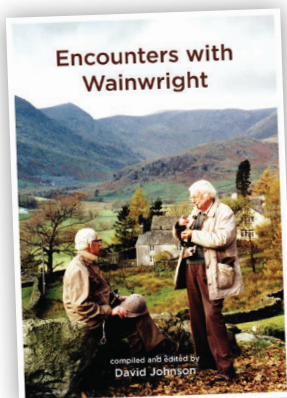
PHOTOGRAPHIC COMPETITION – We've organised an annual Photographic Competition since 2003 and been delighted to receive so many high-quality entries from Society members. We've also had two outstanding competition judges in Derry Brabbs and Terry Abrahams.

OUT-OF-PRINT AW TITLES – Between 2019 and 2021 we re-published four out-of-print AW titles with the agreement of The Wainwright Estate: *A Pennine Journey*, *The Outlying Fells of Lakeland*, *Walks in Limestone Country* and *Walks on the Howgill Fells*. These titles have been difficult to buy in recent years. This project meets one of the principal Society objects: To keep alive the fellwalking traditions promoted by AW through his guidebooks and other publications. At September 2022 we had sold over 3,500 books with *The Outlying Fells of Lakeland* being the most popular title.



SOCIETY WALKS – We've organised walks for members since our very early days, the first being in April 2003 from Grasmere, taking in Dunmail Raise (by 555 bus!) and then Raise Beck, Grisedale Hause, Fairfield, Great Rigg and Stone Arthur. Since then we have had over 100 walks of various lengths and difficulty, all provided free to members. We organised an increased number of walks in 2022 to make up for those lost in 2020!



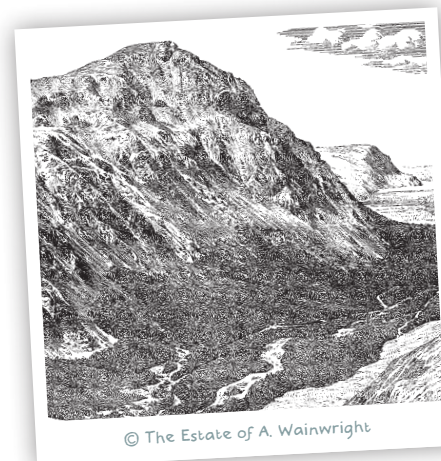


ENCOUNTERS WITH WAINWRIGHT – was the brainchild of Society committee member and *Footsteps* Editor David Johnson. Over three years David gathered information from people who had known or come into contact with AW and produced a full-colour book which included the contributors' stories. All profits are being donated to Animal Rescue Cumbria, the charity that Alfred and Betty Wainwright supported wholeheartedly, with £9,500 being contributed so far.

ORREST HEAD – A new path to the summit of Orrest Head, suitable for all including wheelchair users, opened in September 2021. The Society was pleased to make a substantial donation to the project. Windermere and Bowness Town Council worked with the Lake District National Park Authority on the project to create this 'miles without stiles' path. The project also included improvements at the summit area to prevent occasional flooding and to provide new seating, and new signage/interpretation boards.



SKETCHBOOK PROJECT – The aim of this project, completed in 2018, fifty years after publication of the first of AW's five *Lakeland Sketchbooks*, was to celebrate AW's fine artistic achievement, and to create a contemporary record of the 400 scenes that he drew for the sketchbooks. Members were invited to find the location of any of the drawings, and take a photograph of the scene depicted by Wainwright in his drawing.



BOOK COLLECTION – We embarked on a project to acquire a copy of every one of AW's published items in order to ensure that all of his work was always available for the future. We also included items to which he had contributed in some way. All of the books were lodged with the Cumbria Archive where they can be inspected and also used for research work.

REDESIGNED WEBSITE – A totally redesigned website was launched in 2019 with much more visual content and easier navigation for mobile phone and tablet users. It includes a 'Shop' for our increasing range of merchandise and much more information about what the Society does. Quotes and images from AW's work have been incorporated into the design. Please visit us online at www.wainwright.org.uk

None of the above would be possible, of course, without the time given freely by all our volunteers, past and present, and the Management Committee would like to record its sincere thanks for all their work for the Society.



