



Consett Hiking Group Newsletter - April 2020

I never thought I would be writing one of these newsletters amidst a global pandemic that would alter the course of all our lives but that's where we are!

I think the realisation has dawned as schools have all but closed, people work from home and the NHS is gearing up for the biggest challenge since its inception.

It goes without saying that I hope everyone is safe and practicing the social distancing and self-isolating measures that are necessary to halt the spread of Covid-19.

I would also like to say a big thank you to all of the dedicated NHS workers and all of the other key services, some unheralded, but vital to sustaining the functioning of our everyday lives. All of those people were in my mind during the moving minute's applause on Thursday evening.

My own take on this is that, whilst staying home is a simple and easily followed instruction, the sense of cabin fever brought on by bouts of inactivity and enforced enclosure is very real. Mental health goes hand in hand with physical health and both must be maintained if we are to beat this virus.

The government is telling us to take exercise once a day. I would advise people to walk during this time. Why? For a number of reasons. Firstly, you can make a slow walk last a long time, it will keep you out of the house at a time when the walls can feel restraining.

Secondly, walking can connect you to nature in a way running or cycling cannot. If you walk slowly you have a chance to see what's around you. From wildlife to woodland, rivers to reservoirs you can experience some or all of it, if you're lucky enough to live in a rural or semi-rural area like we do.

Take a sandwich and a book and explore your local area, take pictures. Invest time and energy into something very healthy and wholesome. Learn a bit about where you live, its history, its heritage.

Aside from that, it will almost certainly help you sleep better and put you in a more balanced frame of mind for the weeks and months ahead.

So, with that said, I'll run you through how Covid-19 has impacted on our plans and what we plan to do going forward.

Steel Town 20 and Consett Walking Festival

Given the spread of the Coronavirus, we had no choice but to postpone the Steel Town 20 and the first Consett Walking Festival. Obviously, this is very disappointing but as I'm sure you can understand, it's out of our hands.

I had initially wanted to rearrange for Saturday September 12th but what I had failed to realise was this is the day before the Great North Run. Obviously, there are question marks against the GNR at this stage but assuming it does go ahead, I know we have twenty or so people who would not take part in the ST20 given they will be running the next day.

So, I have enquired about a few alternate dates in late August and early September. At this point, I don't think I can say anymore than that regarding the date given we do not know how long the lockdown is going to last and how long it will be before mass gatherings are permitted.

Because we are postponing, not cancelling we are not offering refunds at this point. We are assuming most people will still want to do the ST20 and I am also looking at a way by which people who can't do it can 'sell' their place to someone who can.

If this pandemic lasts beyond the summer and into the autumn, we will likely cancel the ST20 and everyone will be refunded by SIEntries.

But at this point the message is that we will arrange the ST20 once it is safe for us to do so.

The Walking Festival has been cancelled. I had set this up to run through the half term so I could support each of the walks being led by our walk leaders, record podcasts and liaise with Delta North who were screening the films. This will be pushed back to 2021.

Walks Timetable

There will be no CHG walks through May.

We will review on a month by month basis in accordance with government guidelines. May I also point out that the Lake District is also closed to walkers therefore the Northern Fells Odyssey trip with Richard Ellis has also been cancelled.

Heritage 100

I would like to finish on a brighter note. Our project to create 100 collectable walks in County Durham is moving forward. I have ordered waymarkers and posts for the first

three walks. I really hope that the CHG get behind this in force once the walks are walkable and take an interest in the story attached to each walk.

I am really pleased with the visuals and I hope people will 'collect' them as they pop up across the County. We have funding for these initial stages but we are open to sponsors/partners for what is essentially, a County wide legacy project.

We have had good support and encouragement from the Durham County Council and other heritage groups. Beamish Museum have also been incredibly supportive and generous with staff time.

I will post the mock ups of the posts and waymarkers in the near future. Work on this project will continue and I'm looking forward to getting the group much more involved.