



Newsletter, Winter 2022



Winter Roosts – Ken Sanderson

Red Kites roost communally, something which is not common in raptors. They gather just before dusk to roost in trees, usually in the border of a large wood. In the depth of winter, when nights are at their longest, red kites can spend up to sixteen hours at roost which does not give them a lot of daylight hours to forage for food to survive.

I never tire from seeing red kites coming into roost: whether it's a lone bird flying in late and diving straight into the deep cover of a conifer, or a "squadron" of upto forty of these majestic birds in the sky together, gliding effortlessly from the pre-roost to their final resting place for the night. This "show" takes place daily, just before dusk, and it never disappoints. Those who have witnessed such spectacles have always gone away waxing lyrical about the kites.

Kites tend to use traditional sites to roost so these are the locations which are checked out in early autumn. The roosts have now formed and, with 42 chicks known to have fledged in the summer, expectations for high counts of birds at roost are once again rising. At a recent monitoring session in the Derwent Valley early season numbers look promising with 28 kites being counted dropping into roost in, and around, the Gibside Estate and 36 birds were noted roosting near Hamsterley. Numbers will continue to increase as it gets colder and usually will peak in January.

Good places to view red kites roosting are from the Nine Arches Viaduct and Lockhaugh Farm, overlooking Gibside. Higher up the valley, the Pontburn Viaduct is the best place to watch the pre-roost gathering. The best time to observe the kites is from an hour and a half before sunset until sunset itself.

On Sunday January 8th, the Friends of Red Kites will take part in the annual National Survey of roosting red kites. Last year's January kite roosts held a record number of 94 birds with 74 of these being counted at the roost near Hamsterley Mill.



An Ode to the Long Health Walk (Souter to Tynemouth) – Glenn Dawson

A walk all together and we wanted good weather
A large group of friends
Set off on the bus, everyone happy, minimum fuss!

To Souter we went, with such good intent
To have a good day is what it all meant.

We got off the bus and walked for a while
Some people tired, some with a smile
We stopped for a drink at the Marsden venue
Then came instructions of just what to do.

Try to stay together.
Don't wander too far.
It's not like at Christmas and 'follow the star!'
The pairs were decided before we departed
Some of the group had hardly just started.

When we got to the chip shop
Most people were there
We'll wait for the others and save them a chair.
Arrive at Coleman's however you can
you might catch a bus or a car or a van.

Fish for some, chips for the rest
Choose your own meal whatever is best.
Full up with lunch, a drink and a munch
Let's get on our way and enjoy the day.

We wait for the ferry to cross the Tyne
Have you got a bus pass, 'cos I've got mine?
Cash is the key, but not on the boat,
You must use a card, no coins or a note.

Got off in North Shields
Over the water
Keep on walking
You know you ought to.

Walk on the flat, no hills to ascend
Walk by the Tyne and talk to your friend.
We walked and walked to the mouth of the river
The weather was calm
no need to shiver.

Approaching the end, sat down for a drink,
Time to reflect and time to think.
Is everyone here?
We'll wait till they are
Where have they gone, they can't be far?

Got back on the bus.
It's been a good day.
For some it was easy.
For some a long way.

Back to the Tennis Club and farewell to all.
See you on Monday was the general call.
We'll do it again sometime in the Spring
But think really carefully, if this is our thing.

Fellside Church Coffee Morning – Sylvia Jones

On October 29th, Fellside Methodist Church hosted a coffee morning with most of the proceeds (£184) going to the Friends of Red Kites (FoRK). We were well represented by the committee and friends to serve the coffee and cakes. Jackey Lockwood coordinated the serving instructions.

There was a wonderful selection of cakes. Many FoRK members (mainly health walkers) kindly supported the event. A big **THANK YOU** to everyone who attended and also baked for the event.



Winter Members' Night – Harold Dobson

After an absence of two years we held our Winter Members' Night on Monday 21st November at Little Grandma's Café, Little Ollie's Garden Centre, near to Newburn Bridge.

32 members attended and were warmly welcomed by Sylvia Jones and given a brief red kite roost update by Ken Sanderson (Chairman & Kite Officer). We enjoyed a lovely pre-selected two-course meal which was followed by Ken, Quiz Master, running a 20-question quiz. A raffle was kindly organized by our Treasurer, Hilary Johnson.



Winter Seascape – Jim Third

When asked to submit a poem for the Newsletter I was inspired by our recent Coastal Walk from Souter Lighthouse to Tynemouth and watching the sea breaking on the beach at Marsden Grotto. With the approach of winter, I think the following poem "Winter Seascape", by Sir John Betjeman, is appropriate:

*The sea runs back against itself
With scarcely time for breaking wave
To cannonade a slatey shelf
And thunder under in a cave.*

*Before the next can fully burst
The headwind, blowing harder still
Smooths it to what it was at first -
A slowly rolling water-hill.*

*Against the breeze the breakers haste,
Against the tide their ridges run
And all the sea's a dappled waste
Criss-crossing underneath the sun.*

*Far down the beach the ripples drag
Blown backward, rearing from the shore,
And wailing gull and shrieking shag
Alone can pierce the ocean roar.*

*Here where the cliffs alone prevail
I stand exultant, neutral, free,
And from the cushion of the gale
Behold a huge consoling sea.*



Image courtesy of stock.adobe.com/uk/

Angel Award for our Health Walks - Jackey Lockwood

We were delighted to learn that our health walks had been nominated for one of Liz Twist (the MP for Blaydon)'s Angel Awards in recognition of "our outstanding contribution to the Community". Our Secretary (Harold Dobson) & I attended the Awards Ceremony on the afternoon of Saturday 19th November at the Metrocentre Community Hub.

Along with 20 other local organisations, we were individually presented with a framed Certificate from Liz Twist and each given an Angel shortbread biscuit.

Following the presentation, we were offered a light tea and then, individually, had a formal photograph taken with Liz (see below) which subsequently appeared on her Facebook page.

Our framed Certificate is now on display at Thornley Woodlands Centre.



Pictured above (L-R): Liz Twist (MP), Jackey Lockwood (FoRK Health Walk Co-ordinator), Harold Dobson (FoRK Secretary)



As this is our final Newsletter of 2022, we would like to wish you and your family a Merry Christmas and a happy & peaceful New Year.

www.friendsofredkites.org.uk