

## Nature notes

# Holder of keys to Alfred's treasures

## Engineer the archivist for Wainwright books

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A lifelong love of the outdoors and the walks of Alfred Wainwright has led to a Yorkshire-born engineer becoming the famous author's archivist and curator.

Christopher Butterfield said he has been an outdoor enthusiast since leaving school, spending most of his early years exploring the countryside around his home in Bradford.

"In my late teens I moved to Mytholmroyd near Halifax. This is where I discovered the rugged, but equally beautiful South Pennines. One afternoon I stumbled across a trail called the Pennine Way.

"I was intrigued and did some research using a second-hand copy of Wainwright on the Pennine Way. I had no idea who this Wainwright fella was, but as far as I was concerned, he had written an excellent book.

"The walk was nearly 270 miles long but being a student, I didn't see how I could find the time and money to take on a trail of that magnitude. It was a challenge I had to shelve until later."

Mr Butterfield built up a successful career in engineering which eventually took him away from his home county but he did fulfil his ambition to walk the Pennine Way in 2013 accompanied by his wife, Priscilla.

"We completed this mammoth trail in 19 consecutive days of glorious sunshine and it was a life-changing experience for us both," he said.

"There were many highlights during the walk, but my favourite time was spent in my beloved Yorkshire. We didn't see a soul for days, but it mattered not, the Dales were our faithful companions. After a few days, the North Pennines were looming ever closer and I remember dragging my heels," he said.

The couple decided to take on Wainwright's Coast to Coast in 2015 and Mr Butterfield



**BEAUTY SPOT:** Main picture, Alfred Wainwright in Langdale. Top, Christopher Butterfield and, above, with his wife Priscilla at Wainwright's Inn, Langdale.

described the route as "pure genius" prompting him to look further into Wainwright's work. Discovering his *A Pictorial Guide to the Lakeland Fells* series sealed his fascination with the fell walker and author.

"I was amazed at how he had managed to accomplish this amazing body of detailed work decades earlier and was determined I would discover everything there was to know about Wainwright."

Mr Butterfield's collection of books slowly increased and he attended an auction of memorabilia from Wainwright's biographer, Hunter Davies, as well as a later opportunity to own a signed copy of *The Eastern Fells* from

book published by the *Westmorland Gazette* in 1988, *Fellwalking with a Camera*. And with his primary focus on Wainwright's books, Mr Butterfield got in touch with Andrew Nichol former book publishing manager for the *Westmorland Gazette* who worked directly with Wainwright.

Through this connection he was introduced to David Rigg, the owner of Titus Wilson printers which handled the Wainwright books.

Impressed by Mr Butterfield's dedication, Mr Rigg said he wanted him to become the custodian of all the existing Wainwright book printing material.

"I was speechless," Mr Butterfield said. "It was an honour to be chosen to take care of this historical Cumbrian printing material."

He and his wife spent weeks sorting through the original material which had been lying in a loft for decades. "The task of finding it all was not an easy one, we had to pull out and examine every piece of printing material Titus Wilson had ever produced."

But the couple now have what is probably the biggest collection of Wainwright material in private ownership and it continues to grow.

"I am still in the process of cataloguing everything. The material includes negatives, positives, artwork, blocking, dust jackets, cases, manuscripts, proofs, documentation and more.

"Together with my ever-growing book collection, they form an historical archive of Wainwright's publishing history that I hope to keep in good order for years to come. Maybe in the future, there can be a way of displaying this work for the public to see."

In addition to a growing social media following, Mr Butterfield will soon be launching a website dedicated to Wainwright and he is the official Wainwright blogger on TV presenter Julia Bradbury's *The Outdoor Guide* website.

"Although Alfred Wainwright has been gone nearly 30 years, everything still feels fresh to me, as though he is still around. Through Wainwright's writing, I discovered the natural beauty of both Yorkshire and the Lake District. If I can encourage just one person to discover Wainwright and the places he loved, then my work has been worthwhile."

*"It was an honour to be chosen to take care of this historical printing material."*





# Shaun McKenna

## *Living the dream*

“ It only started as a tickle, but soon enough it had become a full and hearty, yet still tickly cough. There was no high temperature and I felt perfectly fine other than the irritating cough which came and went and if I’m honest I felt a bit of a fraud, but all the same, isolation was calling my name.

I contacted work, explained my symptoms and as a result the three of us at home have been indoors and in the main behaving ourselves. After a couple of days all tucked up we decided that we’d venture out to get some fresh air.

Now when I say out, I don’t mean that we headed for Scarborough front or any other tourist trap which has been inundated by so many over recent days, but in fact we’ve been able to get out to places where we’ve not seen a soul, which as you’ll probably already know is the way we like it anyway.

On each occasion we’ve been rediscovering some of the quieter parts of the Yorkshire Wolds Way and there are many. We were able to take the dogs with us and let them run free, fill our lungs with fresh air and once again drink in the beauty which we are so blessed with here in Yorkshire.

On one of the days I was reminded just how much the Wolds change throughout the seasons of the year, as the last time I walked this particular path, the fields were almost chest high with rapeseed and a generous helping of scarlet red poppies, but not today. The rolling hills were a picture in themselves through the meandering valleys, but with the newly ploughed fields all meticulously neat and precise, the blossoming trees and the budding hedgerows bursting into life, it really was just a continual feast for the eyes which continued

on and on around every corner.

With all the madness going on around us in today’s world and the impact a virus is having on society, it could be a great time for us to consider life itself, what we have and what really is precious to us.

It can be very easy for us to get caught up in activities and pastimes which take us away from the important things or people in our lives and maybe during all this uncertainty we can re-establish relationships, resolve to get ourselves back on course with what’s really important and can help us to focus once more on those around us whom we love, rather than seeking out the material possessions of the world.

Maybe over the months to come as things hopefully return to some sort of normality, we can be reminded once more of those days when caring for our neighbour was second nature and talking face to face was

always the best route to take.

Whilst escaping from our four walls this week, I was reminded once again that we are so very blessed with all that we have and although we are enduring a growing uncertainty and currently have to cope with so many changes in our lives, we can and will overcome.

But how can we do this, I hear you ask. Well my view is – and it is just my opinion – we can do this by looking out for each other, sharing everything, but our germs, striving to do our part for the greater good and by

fostering a positive attitude of gratitude whenever possible.

*‘I was reminded once again that we are so very blessed with all that we have.’*

