

## Feature



Alfred Wainwright's Yorkshire archivist, **Chris Butterfield**, recalls the day he received the author's first publications.

The waitress had barely stepped away before a large brown folder was slowly being pushed across the table towards me. You could cut the atmosphere with a knife as I gently lifted the flap and slid out the contents.

There was a pile of black-and-white photos with the *Westmorland Gazette* copyright stamp on the reverse, several Lakes & Lune annual reports, and a few leaflets.

These were all early examples of work by guidebook author Alfred Wainwright, produced during the days when he worked in Kendal Borough Council's treasurer's department, some years before he made his name as the author of Lakeland's most revered walking guides.

To many people, it might just be a collection of old pamphlets. To Wainwright's many devoted fans, however, this was a veritable

treasure trove. Then I spotted a small bag.

"What's this?" I asked.

"Open it up and you'll see." I slid the contents out of the bag and into the palm of my hand. It was a Three Nuns tobacco tin.

"Surely it's not?"

"Yes, Chris. The very one. In fact, it was the very last tobacco tin he used as borough treasurer before he retired in 1967."

I was speechless. I then spotted the final envelope. I tipped it up, and three small brochures popped out.

"Oh, my goodness," was all I could say. These were the Kendal holiday

week brochures I had read all about. I was now the new custodian of all these items, wonderful pieces of Wainwright history.

We were in a café in Kendal after a fabulous morning. Mike and Paul – the sons of Percy Duff, who succeeded Wainwright as Borough Treasurer – and Mike's wife, Sandra had given Priscilla and I a private tour of the mayor's parlour in the town hall during which we learned much about the history of Kendal and seen the original drawing of Wainwright hung on the wall.

The history behind the Kendal holiday week brochures is

fascinating. They were produced a decade before Wainwright began his now famous *Pictorial Guide to the Lakeland Fells*, and very few people have seen them in recent times. He was proud of this earlier work, and he always acknowledged what they did for him.

Wainwright moved from his hometown of Blackburn to Kendal in 1941 as an accountancy assistant. In those days, people from outside Kendal were regarded as offcomers.

However, Wainwright's period as an offcomer was to be short lived. In 1942, just a few months after his move, he was approached by

the council to organise a Holidays at Home programme. Holidays at Home was a government scheme to discourage people from travelling and from using scarce resources in the holiday season during the war period.

Wainwright was given free rein. He formed committees to help prepare a multitude of activities, including dances, sporting events, competitions, concerts and Punch and Judy shows.

He recruited the services of well-known local people, and that's when his social status started to rise. He prepared the brochures and even adorned the front covers with some of his very early drawings.

The Holidays at Home week took place every year until the summer of 1944. Wainwright would often boast about the kudos these annual events gave him, and they obviously played a part in his rise through the ranks to the borough treasurer in 1948, a position he would hold until his retirement in 1967.

Percy Duff proved to be Alfred Wainwright's natural successor. Born in Kendal in 1922, he was a junior clerk when Wainwright arrived in 1941 and became Wainwright's

# A Wainwright treasure trove

## Bounty that included Alfred's tobacco tin



## Nature

## Ponds can bring in the wildlife

Sara Booth-Card

@YorksWildlife

From the simplest bucket pond to one that takes up the whole garden, our ponds are awakening from their winter slumber ready to continue their amazing role as one of our most crucial habitats.

But despite their importance, around half our UK ponds were lost in the 20th Century and of those ponds that remain, 80 per cent are in a poor condition.

But this doesn't need to be the case – ponds are relatively easy to maintain and are such an important habitat for freshwater wildlife like frogs and dragonflies, and plants like water lilies.

In fact, according to the Freshwater Habitats Trust, two thirds of the freshwater species found in the UK are supported by ponds, as well as more than 100 UK Biodiversity Action Plan priority species, such as great crested newts and water voles.

Ponds can range in size from just 30cm in diameter to five acres and anything in between.

As well as their importance to wildlife, some ponds also have a significant role to play in local drainage and therefore potentially providing some protection from flooding.

The wildlife that lives within ponds goes far beyond fish. From almost invisible insects such as the water flea to the large and territorial dragonfly, and amphibians such as the toad or plants like the marsh

marigold, ponds are also a vital lifeline for visiting wildlife that need a safe spot for a drink or rest, including hedgehogs, bats and bees.

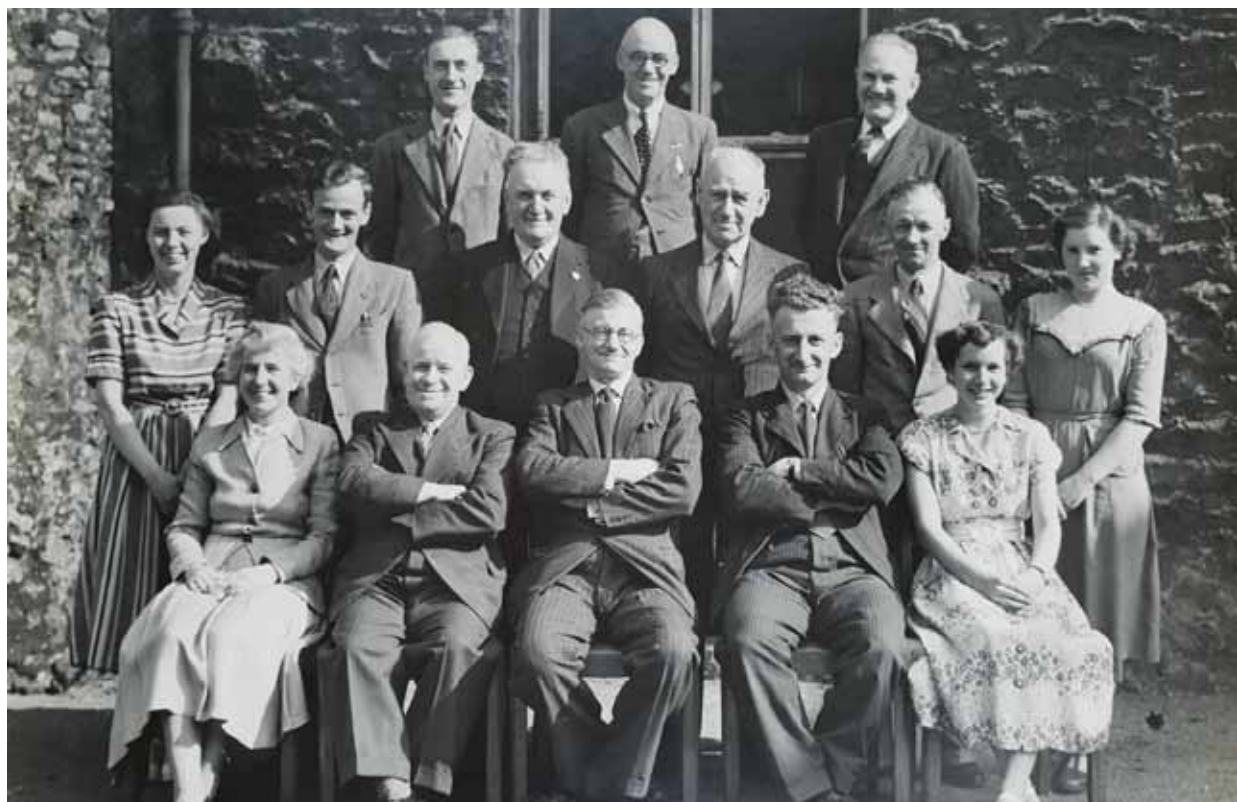
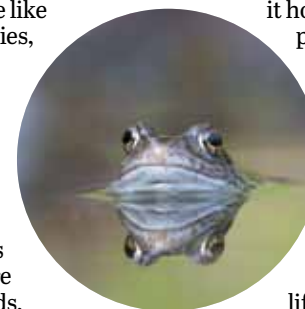
Pond creation, conservation and restoration are fabulous ways to encourage wildlife in to the garden and is an activity that can be done simply and safely. First, earmark some space in a suitable part of the garden; somewhere quiet, with shade and sunlight, away from overhanging branches.

Next, think about the pond itself: anything from a small washing up bowl sunk into the ground to a fully formed pond liner can be used as long as it holds the water. If possible, allow rain water to fill it up (using water from the tap can result in algal blooms which will cloud up your pond and can be harmful to aquatic life) and wait for the wildlife to appear.

Adding some gravel and rocks/logs can also help visitors such as hedgehogs get out if they fall in, as well as providing some hidey-holes for aquatic insects.

If you can get hold of some native oxygenating plants, like hornwort, water violet and flowering rush, they will help with water quality. For more advice go to [ywt.org.uk](http://ywt.org.uk) and download your free *Wild About Garden Ponds* booklet.

■ Please note it is inadvisable to transfer insects, spawn and amphibians between ponds and native amphibians are protected from harm under law.



**MEMORIES:** Main picture, Alfred Wainwright in Langdale. Above, the Treasurer's Department in 1951 with Wainwright in the middle of the front row. Left, his tobacco tin and, right, Chris Butterfield.

PICTURES: CHRIS BUTTERFIELD/THE DUFF FAMILY



trainee. Before Wainwright left the town hall, clearing out his desk, he gave Percy many of his possessions. Among the items were two sets of Wainwright's Kendal holiday week brochures, which had remained in his drawer for years.

His last tobacco tin was also handed over, and Percy would keep these items for the rest of his life.

As the decades rolled by, Wainwright had not forgotten the projects he had been involved in.

One of his later books, published in 1987 to commemorate his 80th birthday, was *Ex-Fellwanderer*. It was quite controversial: he was outspoken in his opinions of modern society but forbade anyone from changing his narrative. In one section, he spoke of his love for the Holidays at Home project.

In 1994, while working on the Wainwright biography, Hunter Davies interviewed Percy Duff about his relationship with Wainwright. Percy's priceless contribution would feature in the biography, along with a scan of a Kendal holiday week brochure given to him by Wainwright.

Richard Else, producer of the original Wainwright BBC TV series,

## HISTORY LESSON

■ Yorkshire-born engineer Chris Butterfield has always been an outdoor enthusiast, developing an admiration for Wainwright's guide books and walks.

■ As his interest in Wainwright's history grew, he got in touch with the author's publishers and through them met the printers who had worked with Wainwright.

■ Chris was given all Wainwright's archive material and he is currently curating all his memorabilia.

■ Alfred Wainwright wrote a guide to the Peninne Way.

remembers that Wainwright borrowed the brochures from Percy for a day, during the production of the first TV series, and was delighted when they were shown to him.

Percy died in 2011, after a successful career. A proud and respected resident of Kendal, he was awarded an MBE in 1986 and was the

only surviving Honorary Citizen of the town. As well as being a treasurer to many local charities and an author of four books, he was the president of the Westmorland Motor Club, and honorary vice-life president of the Northern Centre Auto-Cycle Union.

Mike and Paul Duff inherited all their father's possessions, including several unpublished pen and ink drawings produced by Wainwright as wedding presents for Percy and Margaret.

Among all the items were the Kendal holiday week brochures. Everything was equally split between Mike and Paul.

While researching Wainwright's story, I discovered that Percy, Paul and Mike had accompanied Wainwright's wife, Betty, to Haystacks to lay his ashes to rest beside Innominat Tarn in 1991.

I contacted the brothers, who were more than happy to speak with me and share many stories about Percy and Wainwright's lives, including their meetings with Wainwright.

A good friendship developed, and I am grateful to them for teaching me so much about Percy Duff and Alfred Wainwright during those early years in Kendal.



**PONDLIFE:** Ponds can attract all sorts of wildlife including the common frog, and are a great way to help nature.

PICTURES: MARK HAMBLIN