



'Wainwright gave us guidebooks, TV shows and the Coast to Coast. But his final gift to walkers has been sitting in a vault for 30 years.'

Archivist Chris Butterfield has amassed a colossal treasure trove of Alfred Wainwright's writings – including the closest thing to a 'new' Wainwright book...

IN PRIDE OF PLACE on Chris Butterfield's bulging shelves is something remarkable: a new book by Alfred Wainwright.

That seems an odd idea, given that Britain's favourite guidebook writer died in 1991. But there it is: the stapled bundle, pasted with hand-written text, that constitutes the full, unedited version of *Fellwalking with a Camera*, the final book that 'AW' ever penned.

"A version of it was published in 1988, but it's far from the full story," says Chris. "Something like 40% of the manuscript was not included in it, the reason being that his eyesight was failing and his camera skills were being lost with it, so a lot of his photos couldn't be reproduced.

"Fair enough – but the publishers also cut the *writing* that went with those photos, and there is absolutely nothing failing about the writing.

"This has been sitting in a vault for almost 30 years. When you read it, it feels like a completely new book."

Chris is giddy with enthusiasm. From his home in Edinburgh he has spent the past four years tracing, researching and securing every fragment of AW's writing, from five-line letters to first-edition guidebooks. He owns a prodigious collection of memorabilia,



'Wainwright' watches over Chris Butterfield's incredible collection.

right down to a bashed-up tin of Three Nuns tobacco, from which Wainwright would light his legendary pipe.

It's a remarkable journey for a man who had barely heard of Wainwright prior to embarking on the Coast to Coast Walk in 2015.

"I knew a bit about him, mainly from the coffee table books that he did in his later life," Chris explains.

"But as I was preparing for the Coast to Coast, I watched the old BBC TV series that Wainwright did with Eric Robson in 1989. That was where the obsession began. Here was a guy who thought, spoke and above all *wrote* about walking the way no-one else ever has."

After walking the Coast to Coast and loving it, Chris made contact with Eric Robson to thank him for the inspiration.

He did the same with photographer Derry Brabbs, who provided the images

for the coffee-table books. Through these two experts, he began to discover the man himself: the relentless attention to detail, the exquisite artwork, the near-poetical turn of phrase that characterised his seven-part *Pictorial Guide to the Lakeland Fells*.

"I went out and bought the whole set. Then I started talking to collectors and hearing about the rarity of first editions, and that really ignited something in me.

"Someone was selling a set of mint condition first editions on eBay. He'd found them in his uncle's loft: *Coast to Coast*, *The Outlying Fells*, *The Pennine Way* and *Fellwanderer*. So I drove down to Blackburn to get them. Then I thought, I need first editions of all of them now."

Since then, Chris has amassed an extraordinary collection: not just multiple first editions (many of them signed), but first drafts, updated editions, and letters to friends and fans. "Wainwright loved the written word," says Chris. "He was a very private man, and he expressed himself better in writing than he did in person.

"But he didn't give himself away freely. Only people who really knew him would see the full picture. He says things in his letters that he never said in the books. They are packed with fresh insight into how he thought about things."



FELLWANDERERS
Alfred Wainwright, left,
and Chris Butterfield.

Chris has also been gifted huge treasure troves from people who knew and worked with Wainwright. Benefactors include Andrew Nichol, Wainwright's publisher; Chris Jesty, author/editor of the updated Second Editions of the guidebooks; TV producer Richard Else, and the late Percy Duff, who succeeded Wainwright as Kendal Borough Treasurer.

He also runs a thriving social media group connecting hundreds of other fans: search on Facebook for 'Alfred Wainwright Books & Memorabilia'.

Chris admits that "the rest of my life has taken a back seat" to his research, but says his crusade isn't a selfish one. "In ten or 20 years' time we will have lost most of the people who actually knew Wainwright. My aim is to record their experiences so we can all understand him better," he explains.

"It's a publishing story unlike any other, and I want to help ensure it can be preserved and retold. I'm not yet sure what format it will take, but this is a

collection that is for everyone's benefit, not just mine."

Chris also loves tackling long-distance paths. He and his wife Priscilla walk one per year, though his favourite remains their first one, the Pennine Way (which, ironically, Wainwright had a difficult relationship with).

He is also chipping away at the Wainwrights: the 214 Lake District fells that AW profiled in the Pictorial Guides.

"I do them when I can, and because I'm so familiar with the books, I hear his voice as I climb them, urging me to try this route or that route," he laughs.

"But they aren't my priority. I figure they will always be there, but if there's information about Wainwright to be had, I have to grab it before it's lost.

"Every time I think 'right, that's it, I've got everything', the phone goes and there's something new to chase..."

▶ WALK THE COAST TO COAST!
Discover Alfred Wainwright's greatest creation: starts on page 30.

The View

Meet our RidgeWalker!

A few issues ago, we invited adventurous writers to become our special guest blogger ahead of the epic **RidgeWalk** challenge event, taking place in June. This month we're thrilled to announce that we've found our winner: the wonderful and intrepid **Vicky Welsh** (below).

Vicky will now share her training and fundraising journey as she prepares to walk a 52-mile stretch of the historic Ridgeway through Oxfordshire and Wiltshire in 24 hours. She'll be among hundreds of walkers taking on the challenge in aid of the deafblind charity Sense, which organises the RidgeWalk each year.

You can read Vicky's first blog post here at www.livefortheoutdoors.com/ridgewalk

And if you'd like to join Vicky on the ultimate walking challenge of 2019, search online for 'Sense RidgeWalk' to sign up and get 50% off your registration fee when you use the code **SAVE50**.



RESTING PLACE

"Wainwright's ashes were scattered at Innominat Tarn but only five people know exactly where," says Chris. "I feel incredibly honoured to be one of them."

WAINWRIGHT: THE ESSENTIALS

Alfred Wainwright was born in Blackburn in 1907. As a lad, he walked in the Pennines and Bowland fells. But in 1930 he took a trip to Windermere and fell in love with the Lake District (the big moment happened on the modest height of Orrest Head).

In 1941 he moved to Kendal to be nearer the fells, eventually taking a job as Borough Treasurer, and

resolved to begin work on a comprehensive guide to the fells. In 1952 he started work on the first page of his *Pictorial Guide to the Lakeland Fells*, and continued the seven-volume compendium over the next 13 years, at a rate of one page per evening.

As Chris puts it: "These weren't like any other guidebooks. They didn't just say 'turn left, cross stile'.

"They brought the hills to life, made them almost like people – like friends."

Wainwright's later books included guides to the Pennine Way, the Howgill Fells and his own creation, the Coast to Coast (or as he called it, **A Coast to Coast Walk**).

He was dismayed by erosion, disliked sprawling conifer plantations and large groups of walkers, got around

using buses, and almost always walked alone. He died in 1991, and had his ashes scattered on the shore of Innominat Tarn on Hay Stacks, his favourite fell. In his 1966 book *Fellwanderer* he wrote: "And if you, dear reader, should get a bit of grit in your boot as you are crossing Hay Stacks in the years to come, please treat it with respect. It might be me."