

Naturist Ramblers Newsletter - A Special Edition



Richard Hope O.B.E.

Richard sadly passed away in October 2019.

SOC (Singles Outdoor Club) walks started in 1993, the core team being led by Bill Haynes and supported by Michael Pusey, Barbara Gerrard and Tony Baldwin who was a former chairman. Bill was the walks organiser and devised many of the walks himself. Sadly he passed away in December 2012. He ran his own naturist travel agency, [Chalfont Holidays](#), which is still going strong.

Richard Hope took over from Bill as Walks Organiser in 2005 until 2014, so he did it for ten years.

He ran the group with military style precision with his clip board and check lists, and that legacy still exists today. He was a keen railway man, and his attention to detail can still be seen in our current walks programme when it comes to the station pick-ups! In the few photos that we have of him, generally he is seen either clutching his clip-board or munching an apple!

During the 2005 season, he actually went on all the walks, and even in 2014 he was still leading four walks!

It was early in 2014 that he was diagnosed with dementia, and on the first walk of that season (Ashdown Forest), realising that his health would at some stage start to wither, asked Peter to take over as group leader.

He continued to come on the walks up to and including the 2015 season, but by the end of 2015, his health was visibly starting to fail. We almost lost him on Red Shoot when he was determined that he knew the correct route – unfortunately he was wrong!

The last walk he came to was Mereworth in October 2015, although he still attended the Annual Dinner, which was then held at The Oxford pub in Kentish Town.

One of his main 'claims to fame' was in 1963 when he was editor of the Railway Gazette. It was about the time of the Beeching railway cuts, which proposed the closure of about half of the UK rail network. According to Richard it was intended to put the proposals to Parliament just before a bank holiday so that the news would hopefully get lost. However, the news was leaked to the national press, which caused great consternation at the time. Richard never said who leaked the report, but he always recounted the story with a wide grin on his face!

He was awarded an OBE in 1991 for services to railway journalism.

Richard might possibly have been aware to the split from SOC in 2016 and the formation of Naturist Ramblers. Certainly Nat Ram's style and method of operation owes much to Richard's meticulous attention to detail. We would like to think that he would be proud of what SOC has turned into, with the continued pleasure that it gives to hundreds of people.

Richard was reluctant to be photographed, but a few photos do exist. Past and present in 2011 – Peter far right, Richard next to him and Bill Haynes in the shades, 5th from the right.

Peter Whiston



You can read more about Richard and his work with the Railway Gazette here:

<https://www.railwaygazette.com/people/richard-hope-obe/54836.article>

