



News & Views

January 2021

Welcome to the first News & Views of 2021 from Eden Viaducts

HAPPY NEW YEAR

The pain and suffering that Covid-19 has brought with it is truly devastating and our thoughts and prayers go out to all those affected in any way.

We have great hopes for a positive way forward towards a healthy and happier 2021

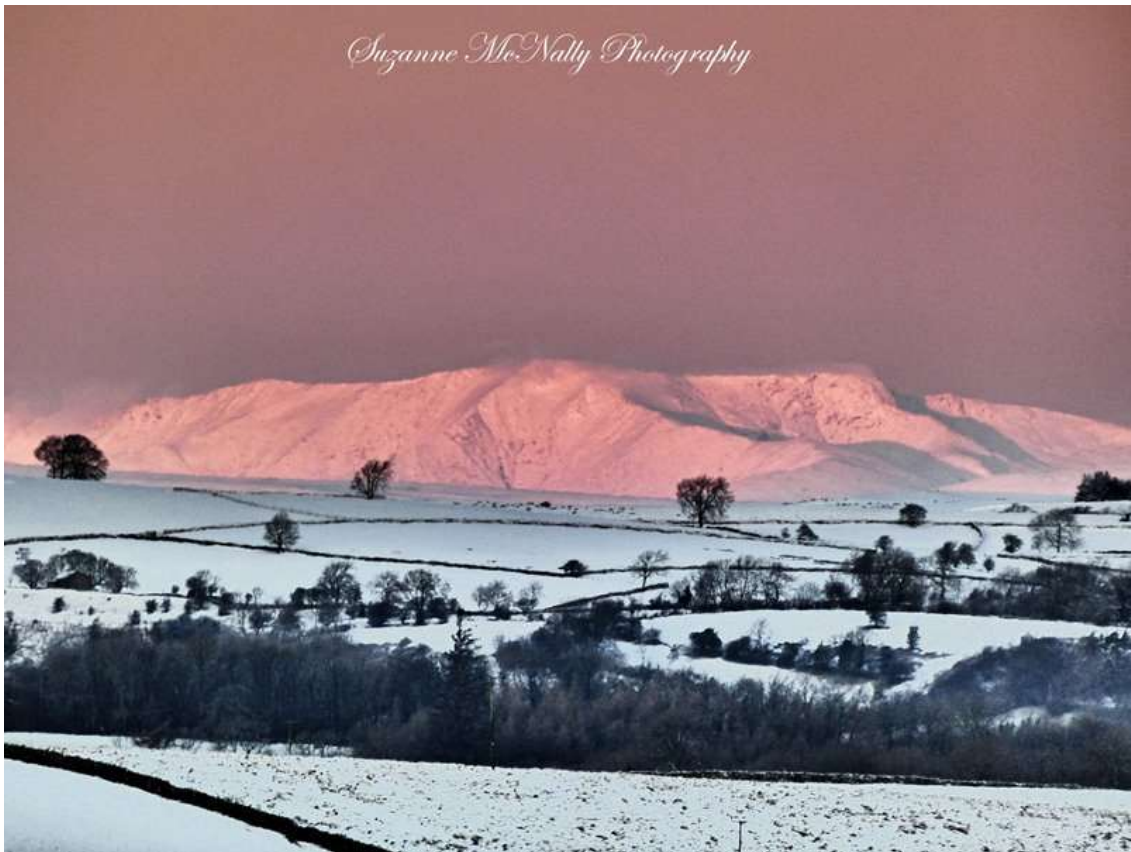
Some images of our January snows:



Ann Eadon – Endless Skies in Mallerstang



Deer in Upper Eden by Ann Eadon January 2021



A view of Blencathra from Kirkby Stephen in January 2021 by Suzanne McNally Photography



Crosby Garrett Fell looking towards Smardale by J Marsh



Kirkby Stephen station on the Settle-to-Carlisle line screen grab



The Eden Valley January 2021 J Marsh



Crosby Garrett Fell by J Marsh

Please Send Us Your Pictures

Our favourite images each month will be tweeted and posted on our Facebook and Instagram pages.

Please email high res jpeg images to office@edenviaducts.org.uk with your email address, phone number and credit line.

Smardale Gill Viaduct – On-Going Works

The survey of Smardale Gill Viaduct, including ground penetrating radar, started in January. This was a bit later than planned due to Covid but we are now on track (excuse the pun!). We have also taken on a Project Manager and Principal Designer – Ramboll - to manage this process for us and work with the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority and Historic England. This important development work and planning work will be going on for the next two months during which we will also be issuing a tender to sort out the drainage on the track-bed and re-surface the top of the viaduct. The next priority will be to restore the stone of the viaduct and get rid of any unwanted damaging vegetation.

As you can imagine this is an expensive process so when we have an estimate of the whole estimated cost we will be embarking on a crowd-funding campaign as well as seeking substantial funding.

Please help us save Smardale Gill Viaduct and keep the footpaths open for future generations by making a donation on our website www.edenviaducts.org.uk

Smardale Gill Viaduct – Interpretation Panels

You may recall that prior to Christmas we were going to have an opening ceremony of the viaduct and our new interpretation panel. Covid prevented that going ahead so this is a sneaky peak at the new panel. We love it and hope you do as well.

Eden Viaducts

WELCOME TO SMARDALE GILL VIADUCT

Designed by the Cumbrian engineer Sir Thomas Bouch as part of the **South Durham and Lancashire Union Railway (SD&LUR)**, the line crossed the Pennines to carry coal and coke from eastern mines to west Cumberland blast furnaces and iron ore to the markets in the opposite direction. It carried about 1million tons of coke a day.



A built 4MT under stream Smardale Tidy
County of West York and the Yorkshire Dales

Built in 1861 by Henry Wrigg at a cost of £11,298 – about £1.2m today – the viaduct carried the railway 90 feet (27m) high above the valley. It has 14 arches of 30 feet span, and a total length of 553 feet (c170m).



By Little River county of West York

It was constructed of sandstone from trackside quarries – which are visible along the walk – by itinerant labourers known as navvies, who lived in rough huts by the side of the beck. Despite harsh conditions, the navvies achieved an amazing feat to construct the viaduct with little more than gunpowder, picks and shovels.

The line was closed in 1962. In 1985 it was acquired by Northern Viaduct Trust – a charity established for this purpose. Its restoration was completed in 1992 and the permissive path across the top was opened to the public.

As a result of the construction of the railway, the landscape has been carved out allowing natural woodland to grow, flourish and be preserved, creating a wonderful reserve for wildlife.



Actual Smardale Gill Viaduct

The walk passes under Smardale Viaduct (a national monument) of the former Midland Railway, on the Settle-Carlisle line it is the highest viaduct on the line with 12 arches of 45 feet span and a maximum height of 130 feet. You also crossed Drygill Bridge – a perfect viewpoint for Smardale Viaduct.



Things we love:

Spotted flycatcher

14 cm in length, a beautiful elegant bird that flies from a high perch to catch insects.



Scotch Argus

Smardale Gill is one of the rare locations that this butterfly can be found in England. It likes tall, damp grassland.

Red Squirrel

Native to the UK, this is one of the rare locations that red squirrels can be seen.



Red Squirrel by Andrew Maitland (North's Best)

Harebells

Harebells flower between July and September; loved by bees as an autumnal source of nectar.



Smardale Gill Viaduct framed by Harebells by the lake



For more information and a host of historical images see www.edenviaducts.org.uk

The viaduct requires regular substantial restoration. Please help us maintain this iconic Victorian viaduct by making a donation. Your help is gratefully received

With thanks to the following for their kind and generous support:



With thanks to Cumbria Wildlife Trust, Sarah Harvey Design
©NorthernViaductTrust2020



Wheelchair friendly



Please help us by taking your litter with you.



Pick up after your dog

www.edenviaducts.org.uk



Films That We Love

We love this film by Martin Zero of his explorations of Belah Viaduct with clips of Podgill and Merrygill – thoroughly entertaining. Thank you to Martin for allowing us to embed this on our website. Keep them coming Martin!



[The missing viaduct - Eden Viaducts](#)

A Day In The Life

Each month a guest writer will tell us about A Day in Their Life. This month's guest is Mark Sandamas the owner and CEO of Coast to Coast Packhorse based in Kirkby Stephen. Mark spoke to us in December at the end of a long day following back-to-back meetings in this 'new normal' of Covid19.



Mark Sandamas By Chris Ord

It has naturally been a season like no other. After a few years of sustained growth and expansion in the business, Coast to Coast Packhorse was suddenly faced with the likelihood of having no business for the year. This meant resilience, change, flexibility and creative approaches.

The business quickly shifted to working from home, with a good IT platform and the daily team meeting keeping everyone in contact and demonstrating the usual can-do positivity. Although they couldn't operate holidays, they wanted to keep in regular contact with their customers who were equally uncertain over what was likely to happen but remained very keen to do the Coast to Coast walk. So, giving that reassurance, moving bookings to new later dates, giving refunds when occasionally requested and coming up with regular Facebook posts became the focus whilst new bookings dried up.

Mark was also busy leading campaigns across the sector pushing for government support, not just for tour operators but also the independent family-owned Bed and Breakfasts which had fallen through the gaps in initial government programmes. It was great to see the Chancellor recognise that and amend the programme.

Like most businesses, Coast to Coast Packhorse was helped by the various government support schemes to weather the financial hit. Then, when it became reasonably clear that there was going to be the opportunity for holidays to operate later in the summer (from end of July), they made a big promo push for domestic customers – normally these make up around 55% of their business but with no international travel their importance became even stronger. Coast to Coast Packhorse started to get quite a few short-notice bookings too as customers took the opportunity to get active, be in the great outdoors and away from any crowded spots.

Early in lockdown Mark produced effective operating procedures to minimise any risk of Covid-transmission. With driver visits to accommodations to collect and drop customer luggage being one particular touch-point of risk and the other main bag mover on the Coast to Coast (Sherpa Van) being faced with the same, it was a logical move to approach them about a collaboration. Despite having different systems, the willingness to make it work overcame any technical challenges and a very effective operation was formed. This was very well received by customers, accommodation and the other tour operators as a fantastic example of working together to make all safer from Covid.

As a result of his efforts lobbying government and forming the collaboration with Sherpa Van Mark also met Chancellor Rishi Sunak in Richmond for a chat and photocall in August.

It was a terrible time for anyone in tourism and hospitality, but Mark did not let the grass grow under his feet and has been busy making plans and developing new exciting programmes for 2021. He can't go public about some of these yet but keep an eye on their website.

Mark is originally from the Surrey/London border. He has been in event management all his life and set up his own event company, Pennine Events, 18 years ago. In 2016, Mark bought Coast to Coast Packhorse as a natural fit to his existing business. Prior to Mark's acquisition, Packhorse was run from a home-office in Upper Eden. Pennine Events works nationwide as an events company so, as the Packhorse infrastructure was in Upper Eden, Mark moved to Cumbria. 'I love the countryside' Mark said, 'I love fell running, cycling and the outdoors so Coast to Coast Packhorse was the perfect opportunity for me to work doing what I love full time'.

Coast to Coast Packhorse provides logistics, package holidays and events along Wainwright's Coast-to-Coast walk - all along the route from St Bees to Robin Hood's bay. The business is about giving people once-in-the-lifetime fantastic experiences – 'it is not just about moving luggage' he said. It is the premiere Coast-to-Coast holiday company in the UK and Mark is rightly proud of that accolade. Customers come from across the world for personal achievement and charity sponsored walks.

The Packhorse and Pennine Events teams are now busy working toward an exciting and hopeful year ahead, with real and virtual events planned including a new charity bike ride in Scotland for Social Bite; the Official Coast to Coast Cycling Festival in April 2021, as well as great new projects in development and still to be announced.

A typical day in Mark's life involves an early start with a run across the fells. The route most run is up on to the Westmorland fells – from Crosby Garrett Fell looping around Smardale – taking in our fabulous viaduct - and back. Although a quick and experienced fell runner, Mark always carries his phone. Not just to take work calls but to take time to stop and capture the beautiful expansive views and striking moments and images. He loves Cumbria and feels the strength of its natural beauty. 'When you get to a certain stage in your life, the experience is more important than the pace' he said. On one run up to High Cup Nick he was lucky enough to spot a hen harrier – the joys of living and working in Cumbria!

In the summer season, after his morning run, Mark meets the Coast to Coast Packhorse drivers and gives them their schedule for the day (collecting and taking the luggage of the Coast-to-Coasters from one B&B on the route to the next so that the luggage is waiting for the walkers at the end of the day). He then meets his customers over their breakfast in Kirkby Stephen to ensure that they are happy and enjoying the experience before he stops for a spot of breakfast himself - freshly ground coffee, locally baked bread and honey or smashed avocados.

The rest of the day is spent in the office working on holiday packages, bookings, staff rotas, planning, creating new visitor opportunities, checking in with the Pennine Events team and trouble-shooting. Occasionally Mark visits accommodations across the whole route (and often manages to stop for a quick run in the vicinity!) or goes out to move a few bags himself.

The end of the day comes when the last customer walking arrives at their evening stop. Although this should be at about 18:00 although occasionally it can be later – whether they got a little lost, or stopped for supper before heading to their accommodation - it is Mark who tracks them down and ensures everyone is OK. 'I don't see the need for any differentiation between work and non-work as I love everything I do. My day therefore starts when I wake up and finishes when I go to bed with lots of fun in between' says Mark.

It is clear that Mark loves his company and loves his job. Every day is a challenge and every day brings a new adventure. 'The people that I meet are endlessly interesting with illuminating backgrounds. From the South African explorer who presented me with his book of adventures at the end, life-long friends I have made from Australia I've been able to visit, to the regular repeat customers who are in love with the Coast

to Coast, the charity walkers and video-bloggers like West-End star actress Aimie Atkinson who did the trip with us this summer with her 3 gorgeous dogs'.

Notes:

Coast to Coast Packhorse www.c2cpackhorse.co.uk

Wainwright's Coast to Coast is considered one of the finest walks in the UK from St Bees on the Cumbrian coast, through the Lake District National Park, Yorkshire Dales National Park, North Pennines AONB to Robin Hood Bay on the east coast of the North York Moors National Park. Kirkby Stephen marks the mid-way of the 190-mile walk [AW's Coast to Coast](#) | [Wainwright Society - for lovers of fell walking in the Lake District](#)

A walk worth doing is to High Cup Nick in the North Pennines of Cumbria
https://www.nationaltrail.co.uk/en_GB/attraction/high-cup-nick/

[Crosby Garrett Fell – wainwrightwalking.co.uk](http://CrosbyGarrettFell-wainwrightwalking.co.uk)

History Of Eden Viaducts And Railways

Just to remind you that we are collecting memories, stories and images of Eden Viaducts, the South Durham & Lancashire Union Railway and the old Eden lines.

Please do email us or tweet us your memories images and videos etc.



Disused Tebay, image by Bernard Mills <https://bernardmillsphotographics.weebly.com/>

February News & Views

We had planned to publish a physical newsletter in February but due to Covid and resulting difficulties in distribution we have decided to postpone that publication and will let you know our revised plans shortly. However, as some of our supporters have been expecting a physical edition, we will print the February

News & Views and mail it to those not on email. The print-out won't be as high quality as our normal standards but we wanted everyone to be aware of our plans. Your support is hugely appreciated.

View From The Chair



Happy New Year and welcome to our first newsletter of 2021.

This time of year is usually an opportunity to look ahead to the coming year with anticipation. Whilst there is the positive news of the vaccine, there is still the uncertainty of knowing when we will be free to resume something like our normal lives. For me, much as I enjoy the short local walks with my wife, it will be travelling further afield to meet up with old friends for day long walk with a leisurely pub stop (or two) along the way.

Every spring for as long as I can remember, I meet up with a far-flung bunch of pals I've known since the late 80s to walk and argue about politics, football, questionable 'fashion' choices and just about anything we can find to dispute. We all occasionally miss a year due to other commitments, but last year's cancellation was keenly felt. Fingers crossed for May!

What else? Test cricket, live concerts, theatre, meals out and visiting crowded bustling cities (fun for a few days!). I'd like to think there's a prospect of travel to foreign sunshine, but that's probably for 2022. Still, there is plenty to look forward to.

More parochially, I am looking forward to seeing progress on the restoration of Smardale Gill Viaduct. The survey work I mentioned in December was slightly delayed by bad weather before Christmas and the latest lockdown has slowed things down a bit, but we still hope to know the scale of the work required by the spring. We are also working on plans to waterproof the deck of the viaduct, again I hope we'll have more to say about that in the coming months.

Let's hope we all get a chance to spend some time with friends and family. Here's to a more sociable 2021.

Whatever your plans for the New Year, stay safe and follow the guidance for a little while longer.

All the best
Neil Cleeveley
Chair



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