

Newsletter

Autumn 2024



The start of 2024 hit us hard with the death of our friend, walk leader and group secretary, Mike Holley. After a short illness, Mike died on the 18th February. His passing has left a huge gap in our group, not only was he an excellent secretary, but he was an adventurous walk leader, leading us on many exciting walks each year. Together with co-leader Judy they were a formidable team. We also miss him as a kind and generous friend.

In the same month we lost Margaret Scott. She had been a Rambler's member for over thirty years, joining our committee in 2000 and serving as Chair from 2008 until 2013. Margaret was also an active walk leader during those years and more recently led many local history walks.



Arthur's Stone, Gower with Chris & Lynda ~ June 16th

Our Walking Programme

We have had another great year of walking locally in south Wales with short and long walks coupled with two successful weekends away.

In November on Remembrance Sunday, we visited the Giant's Bite (Abercynon) led by Su. The misty atmosphere was most appropriate as we paused to remember the fallen in wars worldwide. A winter walk in December led by Jeff, from Sigingstone through Llanblethian and Llanmihangel was followed by a very warm welcome in the pub afterwards.



The woods on Remembrance Sunday



Drying out in Sigingstone pub

In spite of a damp start to 2024 on New Year's Day eighteen walkers took to the paths to welcome the New Year, with Sarah leading. Lunch on the pebbles at Porthkerry gave it a special feeling (trying to evoke summer!) and the quick-witted dog who snaffled himself a free breakfast caused much hilarity! I think Shan now carries extra supplies, just in case!



Porthkerry New Year's Day 2024

At the end of February, we held a memorial walk for Mike, when lots of friends and walkers gathered to commemorate him and share their memories. We were privileged to be joined by Mike's family.

In March Chris and Nicki led us up to Fan Frynych with spectacular views all around. This was followed by a relaxing and secluded lunch stop in the Hanging Valley at the edge of the Nant Cwm-du. We could have stayed far longer than time allowed!



Looking into the Hanging Valley from Beacon's Way.

On Easter Sunday we were accompanied by our very own Easter Bunnies on a walk around Ewenny followed by sunny outdoor refreshments in the local pub. And in June Kim led a delightful walk around the Tintern area filled with amazing spring flowers and glorious bird song all the way.



Easter Bunnies, they do exist!



Our walk around the Tintern area.



Judy led a challenging walk from Pen Pych around Blaencwm Edges



The descent from Table Mountain.



We nearly lost Gwenda down a bog hole!

As summer approached our Wednesday evening walks were in full swing. Here are some reminders.



Weekends Away Autumn 2023 and Spring 2024

We enjoyed two memorable weekends away in the last year. Our first was in Llangollen in October led by Gwion and Chris. On our first walk we visited Castell Dinas Brân and Trevor Rocks returning over the aqueduct and joining the canal to walk back to Llangollen. Next day we took in the beautiful Horseshoe Falls and Valle Crucis Abbey. We enjoyed a sunny end to the day as we dawdled in cafés unwilling to bring the weekend to a close. Spring 2024 saw us visiting north Yorkshire for some wonderfully sunny walking. On the first day we visited, in different combinations, Gordale Scar, Malham Tarn and Malham Cove. Our next walk started from the picturesque village of Grassington (of All Creatures fame) and on to Linton Falls with a stop in Burnsall for lunch and ice-cream by the gloriously sunny river Wharf. Walks led by Jane, Jackie, Jeff and Yvonne. Thank you to everyone who supported these weekends.



Horseshoe Falls, Castle Dinas and Trevor Rocks



Longer walking group on top of Malham Cove
Sunday's walkers on the banks of the River Wharf

Litter Picking

Sarah has organised several successful litter picks during the last year in the Vale. She is also making good contact with Keep Wales Tidy in the Vale who record the total bags of litter picked by different groups in the area. We have been clearing litter in Gileston, Barry, Cwm Ciddi, River Ely and Tredogan. And by special arrangement in Barry Community Hospital.



Some of the many bags of litter collected by Sarah and the Litter Picking Team.



We were joined by a friendly goat after path clearing and litter picking on the banks of the Ely River with the Sout East Wales Rivers Trust



The Vale Show

The Vale Show is a good place to showcase walking with the Ramblers as they get a diverse mix of visitors from far and near. The main aim is to get people interested in walking as a healthy activity. Once again Gwenda organised the stall for the Show. She was ably assisted Bill, Ruth and Ian. Jeff and Peter also helped with the initial set up. As we can see from the photo some emergency repairs were necessary, skilfully carried out by Ruth and aided by Ian. They had an active day engaging members and the public.

Footpath Matters

Recently we have joined forces with the South East Wales Rivers Trust to do some footpath clearing, balsam bashing and litter picking around the River Ely and St George's. The footpath in that area is now fully cleared. We continue to work with the Vale of Glamorgan Council to part fund the replacement of stiles with pedestrian gates. There are two routes currently being considered where stiles are dilapidated or difficult: north of Cowbridge, Mount Pleasant Farm to Newton Moor, and Little Frampton, near Llantwit Major. The Council regularly holds User Meetings, attended by ourselves, Valeways and Penarth Ramblers where we discuss footpath maintenance, and Public Rights of Way diversions.

Social Activities.

In January we had a good turnout for our 'festive' meal which was held in the Duke of Wellington in Cowbridge. Our summer meal was at The Farmer's Arms, St Bride's, the varied menu was enjoyed by all. John and Chris Duxbury hosted a great barbeque in their home in Colwinston in June. We enjoyed a lovely afternoon chatting and eating in the garden.

Walk Leaders

A big thank you to everyone who has led walks for us during the last twelve months. Thank you for your time and commitment in keeping the walks programme varied and full. An extra word of thanks to Phil and Shelly who have stepped in on many occasions to lead shorter Sunday walks for us. Jane has done a great job keeping the programme up to date and we appreciate Su's work in sending the weekly emails.

Website

We are finding that there are still many issues with walks transferring from Walks Manager to the app. We are continuing to liaise with HQ on these issues. Many visitors now find walks through the app, therefore it is important these glitches are resolved soon. We continue to use the app to register our walkers on our walks with the encouragement of The Ramblers.

Changes from last Year

We have had a number of 'situations' vacant in the last year. Despite appeals to our membership we are still looking for volunteers for the following positions: **Group Secretary, Membership Secretary and Minute Secretary**. Presently, the committee are trying to fill the gaps! Please speak to a committee member if you are not sure what is involved. We need help as our group depends on volunteers to keep us operating effectively! On a more positive note, Chris Westoby has taken up position as treasurer and Hywel Gravell has agreed to be our new Auditor. Our gratitude goes to Patrick for undertaking this role for such a long time and many thanks to our two new volunteers, we appreciate your stepping forward.

Our membership is presently at 148.

AGM October 2023

Last year the AGM was held on 27th October in the Duke of Wellington, Cowbridge. The committee were re-elected for a further year. With the official business of day completed, Ruth ran a raffle with the proceeds going to Children in Need.

Our next AGM Thursday 31st October 2024

Watch your emails for more details. We are planning a short morning walk, then the AGM followed by lunch in the Prince of Wales Pub, Kenfig. Please, if you can, support your committee and be there.

This newsletter acts as the joint yearly report from the Group Secretary Gwenda and the Group Chair Jackie.

Jackie Brett ~ Chair

September 2024

A Little Extra!



Pen y fan

This piece of writing has made me think a great deal about the places that walking has taken me over much of my life. Why do we do it, challenging our own limitations, and what keeps us repeating it, whilst others may think or say, Why? The great writers and thinkers have also applied themselves to this subject, with surprisingly similar conclusions. Achievement, health, friendship, peace, and something else that words can't tell. A day or more accurately night, that occurs to me, was in the late June of 2019, before the great pandemic struck. On reflection such a day would not appeal to all. It requires imagination, curiosity, wonder, a sense of the 'why not', when the idea was floated by the inspirational Del Rees. 19 members felt the same and this led to us arriving at Storey Arms at 2am on 20th June that year. It was the first time that I, for one, had commenced my walk in inky darkness, wearing a poundshop head torch. My body told me I should be in a cozier place than at the base of the highest point in Southern Britain. I can only imagine what others thought, in spite of the camaraderie and laughter. We found out a couple of hours later that we were not the only ones undertaking the climb. I remember thinking that my body is not used to starting a physical demand at a time when it normally is totally still and relaxed. The laughter and excitement of what could lie ahead soon displaced those doubts and we were under way. The gradient is between challenging and mild, but although the summit remained out of view, we all knew how it looks in day time. The sight of bobbing heads with the mini searchlights whirling around into the blackness of the Beacons, as the area was then called, was a unique experience. The ascent to the top was achieved without incident. The high expectations of a special sunrise were muted as cloud cover did not promise the expected moment of glory we held in our imagination. 4.20am was our arrival time at Pen Y Fan. Our hopes began to rise. We noticed several figures silhouetted against the golden orange dawn that was rising. The cloud was thinning a little. We strained our tired eyes easterly. The first glimpse of the Sun was of a tiny orange oblong in an inky, then golden aura. There were cries of delight from unseen walkers, a guitar sounded and discordant singing began. Midsummer was here... and now! The joy was overwhelming when we realised where we really were. The excitement led to people randomly shouting to all around. A moment we will hopefully never forget.

Keith Morgan