



SOUTH WALES GROUP



“LEEKIE’S BLETHER”

DECEMBER 2020

A NEWSLETTER FOR SOUTH WALES LDWA GROUP MEMBERS WRITTEN
BY SOUTH WALES LDWA GROUP MEMBERS.



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**The South Wales LDWA Group ALWAYS needs walk leaders.
No walk leaders = no walks = ????**

**Please contact Sara Down if you want to lead a walk for
this wonderfully supportive group at: walksec@southwalesldwa.org**



WALK SECRETARY'S UPDATE

Hello everyone, I've just started to support the South Wales LDWA Group as the new Walks Secretary, taking over from Simon's very capable hands, and I have to admit I'm a tad nervous. I've not done anything like this before and would really welcome everyone's help in getting a walk programme together as we adapt and work round the ever-changing Covid regulations.

I know that some of you have already offered and been leading our walks; thank you so much, and perhaps there are others who are still mulling it over and, like me, feel a little nervous at doing something they are not familiar with.

I would encourage you to put your best foot forward (No groaning at my terrible gags!)

I think it's fair to say that if you have a walk in mind that you'll enjoy, there will be others that would enjoy it too.

Please contact me if you have a walk you're ready to lead or even if you're simply thinking about it; it will help me to start to build a programme so that we have something to look forward to each week.

As we have done in the past, it would be great to have a range of walks, hilly and longer, as well as easier with more gentle climbs so that we can appeal to everyone in the group. If we have enough walks, I'll try to help to alternate these so that people can regularly join in and not feel they are skipping several weeks.

With so many seasoned walkers in the group I'm sure that people would also be happy to buddy up for leading or recce'ing. If you're happy to offer your support to others or you're looking for a little extra support yourself, please let me know, I'd be happy to put people in touch with each other.

And don't forget about the fantastic walks archive that we have on the South Wales website. I don't think anyone minds a recycled walk from the database; if you're not confident at creating a new route, you could always re-walk a previous one. Thank you and happy walking everyone, hopefully see you in muddy boots very soon.

Sara



CHAIR'S UPDATE

Welcome to the first in a series of quarterly newsletters from the South Wales LDWA Group. 2020 has without doubt been one of the worst years I can think of, even though through the disruption and chaos, we are managing to continue to do the things we love doing.

Here in the newsletter members are sharing their exploits, experiences and thoughts. It's an excellent idea to produce a newsletter (thank you Dave), something we can read, discuss, share, unite and be proud of.

Best wishes and keep exploring.

Jason



The South Wales LDWA Group has an active WhatsApp community page. Here members share their walking experiences, post inspiring photos and keep up to date with South Wales LDWA news. Want to join? Please contact Simon Pickering at: sec@southwalesldwa.org.uk

TRACKS FOR TRACKS (OR TRAILS, IF YOU PREFER)



By John Roberts



While walking solitary, and missing the conversation, I have been thinking about musical accompaniment, and appropriate songs. Here are some suggestions for music to walk by, and some of the thinking involved in my selection. The sequencing of any playlist is an interesting challenge, and of course very personal. And some songs might suit certain routes, or even certain walk leaders. Hmm... And how would we ever agree on a Group Playlist? Clearly would require a sub-committee to establish the procedures first, election of a music co-ordinator, and then ... no, please! My selection includes no folk music, songs from the shows or classical pieces. And no hymns (though I could have a crack, what with my Methodist upbringing of two doses of Sunday school followed by chapel). However, I can't resist noting that at times we might reach for Lead kindly light, amid the encircling gloom.

For the first leg

The opening track seems to suggest itself – it's lace-up time, so "These Boots Were Made For Walkin'". Gotta say, "Blue Suede Shoes" was a contender here, but who would wear those on a walk? Then, we are optimistic, keen and cheerful at the start, so off we go with "The Happy Wanderer", followed by, I think, by "Walking Back To Happiness". Now we are really going for it, getting into our stride, so it's this one: "I Walk The Line".

After elevenses

We're refreshed and still feeling lively, so I'm offering "Walk Of Life".



After lunch

This gets us back into our rhythm - "Walking The Dog"- and very appropriate if Toby is with us (and we could adapt the lyric to 'carrying the dog' if necessary). "Walk Away Renee" has always been a favourite of mine, and it has walk in the title, so there, it's in. "Walk On By" is selected as a sort of mellow, mid-afternoon track. In the same vein, and possibly necessary in some circumstances - "Walk On The Wild Side". Following these, "Walk Right Back" livens us up again. In case of rain we have "Walking In The Rain" and, of course, "Raindrops Keep Falling On My Head". If it's hard going in the later stages, then I suggest "Carry That Weight" along with "River Deep, Mountain High" capture the mood. If it gets really bad then enjoy suffering with "Fool On The Hill". My concluding track, which celebrates getting back to the start, getting the boots off, anticipating refreshment amid a general feeling of triumph (or is it relief?) was originally the "Grand March From Aida", but in the end I thought "When The Saints" was highly suitable.

That's it, so over to you to have a listen, click on the song names and you'll be taken straight to the listed song, fill in the gaps and provide more choice sounds!

“HOWGILL – YES “HOW GILL” DID YOU DO IT?”



By Gill Morgan

As part of David ticking off his 2000ft mountains of England & Wales he has always wanted to walk the Howgills. Knowing how tough this terrain can be I had always successfully managed to persuade him otherwise but with our foreign holidays cancelled this year and a staycation on the cards I had no excuse to delay the inevitable. So in September a cottage near Hawes for a week replaced our planned trip to the Austrian Alps.

As with most walks we go on I only needed to know two things – how far the walk was going to be and how hilly the walk was going to be. 12 miles he said and about 4,500 – 5,000 ft of ascent with 3 climbs. What he failed to add was that nearly all the height ascent was in the first 6 miles.

Parking in a layby just outside Sedbergh the first part along the river and valley floor was very pleasant and we could see our descent at the end of the day coming down alongside Cautley Spout. The first climb took us up to Yarlside, once on top we could look across to the next ascent of Randygill Top but unfortunately there was a steep descent followed by another steep ascent to reach the top, I never relish the fact of losing a lot of height ascent only to go all the way back up again the other side.

At this point I wasn't feeling too bad until it dawned on me that we did in fact have 6 climbs and not 3. We have always had this ongoing debate over what constitutes a climb and we clearly both have differing views. “When we're up we're up” he often says, well on this occasion, it seemed to me that once we were up, we went back down again just like the Duke of York and his 10,000 men! There were no footpaths on the ascents and descents, just short tussocky grass which I thought made them even harder. Another steep descent took us down



to a stream in the valley and a well needed coffee stop.

Supposedly feeling refreshed we started the next climb over the shoulder of Hazelgill Knott. Three steep climbs in succession and the coffee and cake not quite giving the necessary instant boost needed, I was obviously slowing down to the point that David came back to look



for me probably thinking I had keeled over. After convincing him I was fine if not a bit disgruntled we continued up and then descended to a stream which we followed along the valley floor.

Unfortunately, this pleasant flat stretch only lasted for a short while before we started the next climb that took us towards Fell Head. Fell Head is an out and back part of the walk which I deemed unnecessary so I continued along the ridge whilst David carried on to the summit. The idea was that I would find a lunch stop out of the howling wind and he would then catch me up. However, the ridge was very open and it was cold and there was nowhere to shelter so I carried on slowly waiting for David to catch me up. If he hadn't stopped to talk to somebody for 10 minutes this could have happened a lot quicker, but he is always one for talking to strangers and showing an interest in their day. Once he'd caught me up, we stopped very briefly for lunch moving again quickly in order to avoid getting too cold.

The walking now was much easier along the ridge to The Calf and this wide ridge really was very pleasant. We had fabulous views as to the west we could see the Lake District Hills and David pointed out the two Scafells, Great Gable, the Langdale Pikes and Blencathra to me. On the way David nipped off again for a short detour to Bram Rigg Top which apparently has been reclassified and was no longer an official 2000ft mountain but he did it anyway just in case it were to find its way back onto the list in the future.

Our descent via Calders and then Cautley Spout was for me the nicest part of the walk, a gradual descent on a nice footpath before a stepped steeper descent alongside the powerful waterfall. We could feel the warmth from the valley on our way back down and we soon re-joined our path from the beginning of the walk back to the car.

So "How did Gill" do? Well, Gill was knackered but did admit that the Howgills were beautiful but now I've visited them and ticked off David's 2000 ft mountains, I won't be rushing back to walk 5000 ft of ascent in little over 6 miles! A stop in Hawes at 'The Chippy' on the way back and our evening meal was sorted. A great day out!!





MERCHANDISE

Beat the "Covid Blues" with Leekie merchandise.

Replace that faded, ripped, snagged and much loved T-Shirt!
Wear "Leekie" with pride!

Our items include:

- T-Shirts (large badge)
- T-Shirts (small badge on left chest) out of stock
- Multi Functional Head Tube
- South Wales LDWA Oval Badge
- Rhondda Rollercoaster Badge
- Leekie Mugs (too expensive to post so only available in person from Judith)

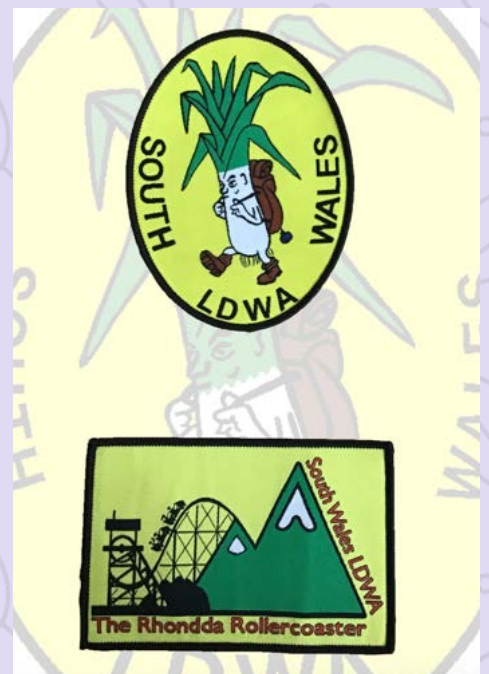
Prices

T-Shirts £8.00 (+£1.64 P&P)

Head Tubes £6.00 (+£1.64 P&P)

Badges £2.00 (+76p P&P)

To place your order, email Judith Fox (treasurer@southwalesldwa.org) and she'll provide details on how to pay.



“THE NARTH FOOTPATH WORKING GROUP”



By Jill & Rob Richardson

Monmouthshire covers a large area, 330 square miles to be exact and is blessed with an abundance of footpaths and bridleways. The job of maintaining these rights of way (ROW) is reliant on a small council team of three who work part time. Priority is given to Offa's Dyke Path and the Wye Valley Walk, since these are the most widely used paths in the area.

Monmouthshire County Council (MCC) encourage the formation of volunteer local groups to manage ROW's in their area. They provide training and insurance for groups under their guidance. Jill and I joined The North Footpath Working Group shortly after moving to Trellech in 2017. We usually meet

once a month and have tackled a number of bigger projects as well as routine clearance of vegetation.

As MCC volunteers we are restricted to working on public ROW's and we are not permitted to use power tools for insurance purposes. Although we take our own tools along with us, such as loppers and secateurs, the council have provided us with a wide range of tools. We also received a grant from the community council for new equipment.

We have worked alongside MCC to replace steps, stiles and a boardwalk, as well as providing new waymark posts and signs. On one occasion we spent 2 days working in Colonels Wood near Whitebrook. There were several paths and bridleways of which no trace could be found on the ground. I had the job of finding the routes with my GPS being followed by a team clearing a path behind me. It was then a case of marking the route with new posts and waymarkers.



“The North Footpath Working Group” continued



Depending on the soil, installing a new post can either be straightforward or a right pain. The hole needs to be about 2 feet deep and finding a large stone in the way can mean several attempts are required. It's then a matter of inserting the new post, making sure it's perpendicular and facing the right way before filling the hole again.

We also worked on a project alongside Gwent Wildlife Trust in Margaret Wood. This is a small nature reserve between The North and Whitebrook famous for its display of wild daffodils. The field was becoming overgrown with bracken which had been cut back, but we had the back breaking job of raking up the bracken. Our work was rewarded earlier this year by the best showing of daffodils for a long time.

We both enjoy our voluntary work. It is very satisfying to walk a path knowing that you helped to create or clear it. We get lots of positive feedback from locals who appreciate our efforts. There is a social side to our work and have met and made friends with similarly minded people in the area. We also have an annual Christmas walk to celebrate our efforts with plenty of mince pies and mulled wine.

As part of the Wye Valley River Festival this year, Brian Mahoney, our group's leader, made a short film about the group called 'Volunteers in action - The North Project' which can be found by clicking [here](#):

Anyone interested in volunteering should contact their local council to find opportunities in their area.

VOLUNTEER





COUNTING FLOWERS

By Jason Winney

I've always liked flowers and often wondered what variety I've been looking at when out on the hill, and the lockdown has allowed me to take some time to explore this more.

I didn't know there were so many varieties of flowers from families like the cabbage family and the daisy family. I've developed some kind of additional eyesight during this period where I have managed to spot even the smallest flower in the densest of grasses like "Milkwort" which is a tiny purple flower that grows up on the uplands of the Brecon Beacons. It's also good for boosting memory, but for me its probably been about a 2% boost!!



The image on the right is of the milkwort flower (from near to 471 trig point on the Black Mountain), which is from the family of milkworts. They are usually hard to find as the flowers are normally eaten. Some flowers can have colours that follow the level of nitrates or alkaline, acidity in the ground as well. Here the milkwort can thrive in wet conditions or rather drier conditions. Milkworts are pretty common place but you need a beady eye to spot them.

Another flower that is common is "Rosebay Willow Herb". It's also known as "Fireweed" or "Bomb Weed" as it's known to inhabit places that has been recently cleared by fire or surface land movement. The photo below is of the "Rosebay Willow Herb" in flower and it's commonly mistaken for "Himalayan Balsam". It gets the name "Bomb Weed: due to the fact that it was



seen to be invasive where areas had been bombed in the war. This plant is very adaptable, that it can grow just about anywhere and at most altitudes; it does like a dryish footing though. It grows in large patches and spreads by using the wind to sow seeds far and wide. It's invasive but not as bad as "Himalayan Balsam". This flower comes from the willow herb family.

Some flowers can look like orchids. On the right is a flower from the dead nettle family called the "Marsh Woundwort". It's a pretty flower that grows in banks or edges of fields or in meadows where it's wet. It's easily mistaken for an orchid because the flowers look like orchid flowers. The dead nettle flowers don't sting and a popular and common version of dead nettle is "Mint".



“Counting Flowers” continued



Orchids are quite common place in the UK; they tend to like a wet environment. The "Common Spotted Orchid" is the UK's most familiar; it's called "Common Spotted" because the leaves have spots on them.

On the left is the "Southern Marsh Orchid" and I found this orchid along the old Fochriw Road; they grow here in great abundance as it's wet and soil conditions are good. In fact I have found many flowers along this stretch of road. The reeds that surround it are called "Soft Rush", an upland grass that is commonly known as a tussock and it grows only in wet areas. But, that doesn't mean that where there's "Soft Rush" you'll find orchids as the ground needs to be of a certain type. Here, where these orchids grow, the ground is quite alkaline due to the limestone beds found here. The most common you'll find of the orchids are

"Common Spotted", "Southern Marsh" and "Early Purple". Identification of orchids is usually best by examining the actual flower.

Lots of purple flowers

If you find yourself looking at lots of purple flowers on the ground, in amongst the rocks and growing in patches, it's likely to be "Wild Thyme". It's common in the Brecon Beacons, but mainly in the southern end where limestone is present. "Wild Thyme" has a herby smell to it and grows in dry areas well drained. It likes a high alkaline soil so look where there are limestone deposits. "Wild Thyme" belongs to the dead nettle / mint family.



Scabious flowers, mainly "Devils Bit Scabious" are quite common also. They are related to the teasel and this grows in wet areas. In the photo below, water draining off of the field provides a wet environment for the "Devils Bit Scabious". There are a few flowers that look like the scabious, and careful checking of the flower head and leaves is important. The name scabious comes from the connection to use the flower to treat scabies which is the Latin word for scratch. The devil part to the name was about the devil being angry at the flowers ability to cure scabies so he would bite off the root in temper as revenge!



**TO BE
CONTINUED...→**

“Counting Flowers” continued

"Silver Weed" is a plant that gets confused with the buttercup. The plant gets its name from the silver sheen found on its leaves. The plant creates runners across the ground and other plants grow from these runners. Quite often when you see this plant in large numbers you are looking at one plant that has lots of runners.

The plant is part of the rose family which also has "Strawberries", "Tormentil", "Rowan" and "Crab Apple" in its family.



Garden Escapees

Sometimes something truly spectacular can be found somewhere remote. Here is a photo of the "Oyster" plant which is usually found in Portugal. It's usually found in people gardens and grows very large indeed! This oyster plant is what's known as a garden escapee.



Really Rare Flowers

Once in a while you'll find something scarce or critically endangered. In the photo below right, the pink flowers are from a flower called "Seaside Centaury" of the gentian family. This plant was declared as in critical danger of extinction in 1985. I found this particular plant on the Ridgeway in Rudry.



There are so many flowers and trees in the UK, I found around 98 different flowers this year, and it gave me a focus during the difficult times that we've experienced during the lockdowns.

Hopefully next year I'll break 100!!

GET INVOLVED!

Want to do more with the Group? Contact members of the Committee to see what you can do to help the Group flourish!

WALKING IN THE LAKES

By Sara Down

"Calling in on the Old Man (of Coniston)"

How can I call myself a walker when I've never been to the Lake District?!

I know, I know, it's shocking – why did it take me so long? This situation has finally been rectified by a wonderful autumnal (aka wet, wild and windy) trip to Windermere at the end of October. We had two good days of walking, with the first day seeing us walk up the Old Man of Coniston.

We started from a very small, unmarked parking spot on the west side near Seathwaite; probably only space for 3 or 4 cars on the side of a rough track. You always know you're going the right way when the signpost to your destination says: "Unfit for cars, cold dark north"!



This was a good starting point as it was away from the crowds and meant that we had most of the day to ourselves on the hill. Lunch was taken beside Goats' Water, a beautiful little lake tucked down within a gully. A lovely spot to shelter from the wind and with marvellous views down the valley. The busiest part of the day was naturally on the top of the Old Man and the walk down to the main car park, where we peeled off onto the Walna Scar Road, back round the side of the hill, over the top and a final drop down to the car.



I'd recommend this route if it's been wet. It's mainly on good tracks and paths, not too steep or slippery, except the route down from the top of the Old Man – which is the main tourist path and has uneven steps and is a bit rocky – it can be slippery in the rain.



The views were incredible, particularly with looming grey clouds scudding above us, dropping rain and hail in equal measure before rushing past to reveal sunshine and rainbows. Proper Lake District weather, I finally felt initiated into the Lake District experience!

“Walking In The Lakes” continued

"Two Gables and a Glaramara"

On our second walking day we did Green Gable, Great Gable and GlaraMara. This was very much a day of two halves.

Parking was again on the side of the road near another Seathwaite. (I found there are many repeated names for locations across this area.) Our route started beside a lovely waterfall, ascending a short scramble and then an easy



walk to the top of Green Gable and onward to Great Gable. There is a second short scramble to get you up onto the top of Great Gable, which I wasn't expecting, and I was rather grateful for the heavy cloud which hid how high up we were. The top of Great Gable is a big flat plateau, a bit rocky and easy to walk over. Sadly, we had no views due to heavy drizzle.



Our route down was a rather slippery stone pathway, easy to navigate but slow going in the wet.

As we neared the bottom the weather started to lift and dry out and for the second half of our day, we had sunshine and views all the way.

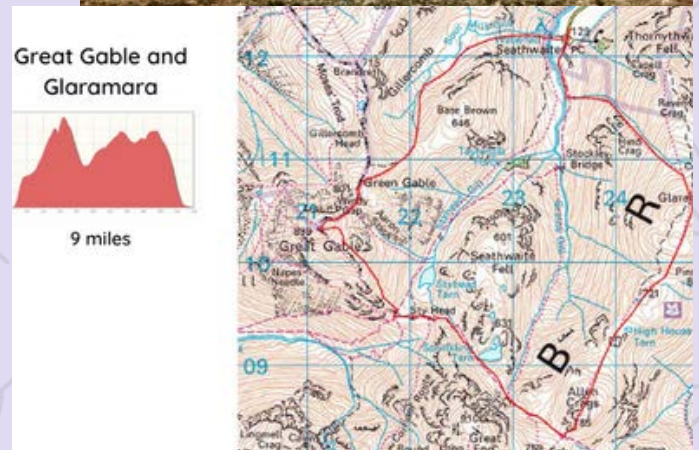
We headed over to Sty Head and then Sprinkling Tarn – a beautiful body of water nestled into the hillside. We made it up to Allen Crag and then turning left to head up to GlaraMara. This was a fantastic section of the walk, 360-degree views and wonderful weather. The top is deceptively further away than it looks (isn't that always the way), but it was an easy, undulating route to the peak.

The walk down was not such fun. We took the route that goes past Hind Crag and, I'd recommend a different route down if anyone tries this when it's been raining. It's very, very steep, treacherously slippery and a bit rocky in places. I slipped over at one point, which was enough to take me down the hill a short distance. Luckily no injuries and just mud to

contend with.

We also had a small adventure on this downward section when we met a family; the daughter had badly twisted her ankle and was going very slowly and gingerly to get off the hill. Not wanting to leave them there without support we suggested that Pete walked with the mum and daughter and I would go and get their car with the father, to bring it closer to the finish point, so they had less distance to walk. With this plan all agreed we put things into action.

Two hours, 10 minutes later, Pete managed to get everyone safely off the hill. It was getting dark, but luckily it had stayed dry the whole time. It had been a very good day despite meaning we didn't get to revisit Keswick on our return drive as originally planned, which was probably a good thing and saved us a quite a few pennies.



"Walking In The Lakes" continued

Recommendations

Bowness-on-Windermere:

Don't miss a visit to the brilliant "**Stuart Sports**" shop. This is an independent outdoor shop with great kit and very competitive prices.

"**Dr Brew's Coffee**" – excellent coffee and cake, and wonderful customer service. (It's No. 1 on TripAdvisor for this little town for a reason.)

Ambleside:

"**Gaynors**", a must-visit shopping destination. They have sales of ex-sample kit. For women this is only in size 12 or medium, however I thoroughly recommend a good rummage through the racks as the sizing is often bigger or smaller than a medium and you might just find yourself an amazing bargain (like I did, several times!).



**YOU
ARE**

>>>>>>>>

Needed.

**Have you enjoyed this first Newsletter?
It's been written by South Wales LDWA
members and you can contribute
to the next edition!**

**Send your articles to David Morgan at:
southwalesldwa@live.co.uk**

Deadline for submission is 21.02.21



Leekie Meets Norma



1 How long have you been an active member of the South Wales LDWA Group?

I have been an active member of the group since 2009. I had never walked these distances but certainly love a challenge. My first walk was a 21mile event (social walk they said) that turned into a 23 mile event and I thought the end would never come. I did not have the appropriate rainwear and at the end was one very wet and soggy mess. But, hey ho, I was now confirmed as an official long distance walker and willing to put myself forward for much much more.

2 Where did you hear about the Group?

I heard about the group through a friend and had participated in the Caerphilly Summits Challenge 15 mile event previously. I had caught the “bug” for walking. I then googled the LDWA and found the programme of future walks, and there I was – hooked.

3 What do like best about the Group?

The things I like the most about the group are meeting a variety of people from all walks (excuse the pun) of life, with varying ages and reasons for joining the group. Morale and a positive attitude is a huge contribution to bring with you to a walk as well as a little bit of madness. I cannot begin to tell you how many times I have been called both mad or insane – maybe they are right after all.

4 Where is your favourite walking area in the South Wales LDWA Group area?

My favourite walking area in South Wales has to be the Black Mountains. It holds a very special place in my heart as it is the place my grandfather was born and bred as one of ten children on a farm called Penworlod in the Grwyne Fawr area. The miracle I usually sustain can be getting to the start - often causing me a wee bit of stress at the start of a day – no sense of direction – sat nav not working- or road blocks, among just a few of my misdeameanours.

5 How many LDWA 100 mile walks have you completed?

I have actually achieved seven consecutive 100 mile events so far. For someone (myself) who once thought the 100 mile events were for “mad people”, vowing never to put myself through that ever. (Whatever happened?). Hence I did say to bring a little bit of madness. I suppose I will most probably participate in a few more.

“Leekie Meets Norma” continued

6 What is your favourite challenge event?

The challenge events just add that little bit of sparkle to the walking life, by mixing with even more like-minded people, seeing so many more places that I might not have chosen to visit. Train or plane rides, hotels or B+B's, along with community/ school halls and sleeping bag heaven. Oh the joys of the LDWA.

7 You arrive at a checkpoint and you're offered pasta or chips. What will you choose?

My preference of pasta or chips – I would go with a pasta dish on most occasions.

8 Do you wear shoes or boots?

My footwear choice has changed considerably over the years as have my choice of socks. During summer and drier weather I prefer to wear shoes rather than boots, and have found comfort (no blisters) since using Danish Endurance brand socks. I will just add here that the seventh hundred is the ONLY 100 mile event that I did not encounter blistered feet. I had had my feet measured and bought the recommended size shoes – not a size bigger as in previous events. Got it right at last.

9 What is your favourite sandwich filling on a walk?

Challenge walk menus consist of many varieties of fillings – some may seem a little bizarre, but usually there is something available to tickle the tastebuds. I am not adventurous where sandwiches are concerned and would usually choose a ham, cheese or egg filling.

10 What's your ideal walking distance?

Distances of walks can vary as much as our menus- some you feel like you could just keep going and the more strenuous terrain the end is nowhere to be seen. All can depend on the events of the week leading up to the walk. For me, it's not always about the distances we travel as with the knowledge, interesting stories or the heritage of the people and places we visit that our very dedicated walk leaders take the time to share to keep us entertained on our journeys of life.



The South Wales LDWA "Leekie Blether" will be distributed on a quarterly basis. The next edition will be published in March 2021. Do you want to contribute? If so, send your story to

David Morgan at: southwalesldwa@live.co.uk

The deadline for submission to the March 2021 newsletter will be the 21st February 2021.