

SOUTH WALES GROUP



“LEEKIE’S BLETHER”

MARCH 2021

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



THE COMMITTEE

Chair
Secretary
Treasurer
Walks Secretary
Challenge Walk Coordinator

Jason Winney
Simon Pickering
Judith Fox
Sara Down
Vacant

chair@southwalesldwa.org
sec@southwalesldwa.org
treasurer@southwalesldwa.org
walksec@southwalesldwa.org

THE OTHER VOLUNTEERS

Facebook
Website
Twitter
Merchandise
Newsletter

Jason Winney
Gerry Jackson & Sara Down
David Morgan
Judith Fox
David Morgan

chair@southwalesldwa.org
webman@southwalesldwa.org
southwalesldwa@live.co.uk
treasurer@southwalesldwa.org
southwalesldwa@live.co.uk

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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**



Chair's Update

Welcome to the 2nd Newsletter, and the first for 2021!

I'm really starting to miss getting together with our club, it's proved how much of an asset the LDWA is to me, and I'm sure you feel the same too.

So much has happened since January 2020; patterns of events are very scattered, but the one thing I'm looking forward to is kick starting the Cambrian Way off again for our walks programme.

The newsletter is another valuable channel for us to tell each other what we've been up to over the last 3 months, even though we're all restricted to a very slimmed down version of our walking, I'm sure you have a tale or two to tell, if you do, let us know.

Keeping the newsletter rich in content will be great for keeping us united and rolling throughout 2021, we are a very healthy club, with a fantastic family feeling ethic, and hopefully with on set of the summer newsletter, we'll have some new news about the social walks we've been leading and attending.

Keep those legs turning; there's so much to look forward to this year when the restrictions lift enough for us to meet outdoors. The one thing I've noticed throughout all of these lockdowns is how much more that I make the most of being outside, knowing that it could be taken away at any moment.

Keep walking, exploring; look forward to seeing you all soon.

My best wishes,
Jason - Chair



Walk Secretary's Update

Hello everyone, hope you've all been keeping as healthy and as active as possible. It's been so good to see what others have been up to on the WhatsApp group; lovely pictures of where you've been walking despite the sometimes challenging weather.

Obviously, we still can't get back to our social walks just yet, but I've already had a couple of people indicate that they have walks they would be happy to lead when the restrictions ease.

If you've been creating your own walks during lockdown and would be happy to share them and lead the occasional group walk when we can restart, please do let me know. In the meantime, keep well and keep walking.

Sara - Walks Secretary



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



EXMOOR IN AUTUMN

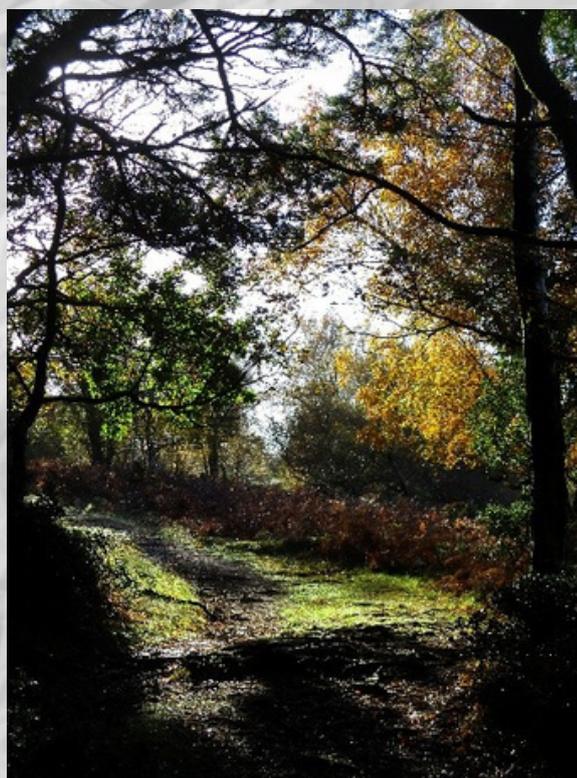
By Andrew Clabon

For a week or so the Met Office had been forecasting a few days of cloudless days and chilly nights. The days just happened to be the days leading up to lockdown 2 for England. I fancied a few days away, so it was to be Exmoor.

Autumn means the tent would be wet with condensation in the morning and the thought of a wet tent all day in the rucksack and then having to live in it again meant I took the easy way out and said to myself just two days and one night. I drafted a circular route based on the National Trust car park at Horner. 19 miles for day 1 then 14 for day 2.

I left the car at 09:20 and initially felt cold enough to put hat and gloves on in addition to the jacket I put on as soon as I got out of the car. The climb up through the birch and oak towards Webbers Post soon warmed me up though and that was the last of the gloves and hat until sunset. The path through the woods was a delight often being covered by a carpet of golden foliage.

On past the car park at Webbers Post and after a short road section I joined the 'Boys Path' towards Dunkery Beacon the highest point on Exmoor. Initially the path was undulating through the woods but after a left turn it became open, steeper and stony. The jacket came off become the summit was reached. The view from the beacon was amazing, Weston-Super-Mare up the coast then across the channel to Cardiff and everything down to the Gower. I'm not even sure if I could see Carmarthenshire.



My route then went westwards for many miles following the Macmillan Way West. I knew the path didn't exist across Exford Common so I was prepared for a half a mile of bogussocking (a combination of bog hopping and tussock crossing). It was hard but worth it as I came

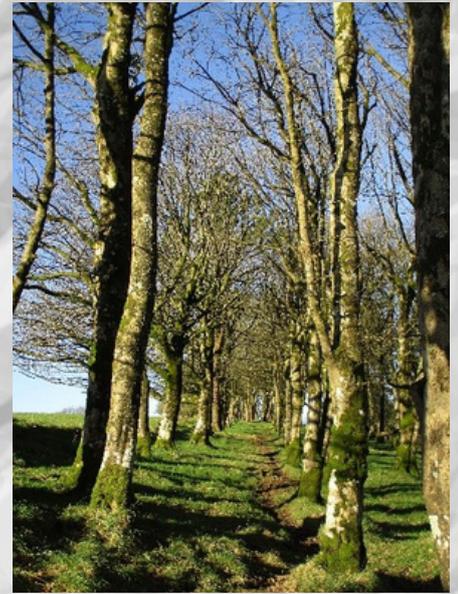


across a herd of around a dozen deer. I couldn't get too close but did manage to video them as they ran off across my path.

I eventually descended to Warren Farm and a supposed nearby footpath crossing over the infant River Exe. I assumed wrongly there would be a footbridge. All that existed was a horizontal rotting telegraph pole and a single strand of wire below it. I tried it. The wire swung about under my weight and the pole had fungi growing from it. With no guarantee it would support me I opted to pass. More bogussocking

along the bank before I found a suitable wading point. At least my trainers were clean now! Alas the path on the other side was non-existent for the next third of a mile before a small ascent and descent to Simonsbath. Now even worse the tea shop was closed!

A long 2 mile trudge uphill partly between rows of trees now brought me to the source of the Exe at Exe Head which meant I was now nearing the end of my day. A descent northwards into a narrow shady valley meant it was time for the hat and gloves again. Disappointment upon reaching 'Hoar Oak Tree' as I was expecting some spectacular oak tree. Not an oak in sight just a line of beech trees.



Onward and northwards crossing Cheriton Ridge towards my earmarked camping spot. On the ridge was superb. The dying grass and bracken were already yellow and brown but a peach hue was now everywhere courtesy of the setting sun. With no



sound other than my feet in the soggy ground it was a great way to end the day.

A short steep descent off the ridge through dead bracken and my camping spot at the crux of a Y junction of streams was reached. Tent up and a brew before dark.

I knew it was going to be chilly overnight following yesterday's cloudless day. I was not disappointed. My alarm woke me at 07:30 and the temperature was minus 2.7 degrees. The beauty of temperatures that low is the condensation on the inside of the flysheet freezes. This means when you open the tent door to get out you don't get showered with fluid condensation.



It was an absolutely gorgeous morning and I set off heading south east on an unmarked path often not seeing where I was going due to the blinding sun before me. Later I turned east for nearly 3 miles via Brendon Two Gates (guess how many gates there are) and along the north side of Holcombe Water to reach Badgworthy Water. Fortunately, there was a footbridge for the crossing here.

I now had a bizarre 3 miles across South Common where there were loads of tracks on the ground but none coincided with the tracks shown on the map. The tracks on the map simply didn't seem to exist. I did spy another herd of deer and a fox though. Eventually I arrived at Oareford before a delightful climb up through gorse and birch to the A39.

It was here my route changed dramatically from moorland to forestry. I now followed tracks via Smalla Combe, Pittcombe Head and Hawkcombe Woods to eventually reach the outskirts of Porlock. The path through Hawkcombe Wood was well defined and stoney but covered in wet brown leaves so care had to be taken. I had to wade the main valley stream a few times before reaching a footbridge which I was particularly glad of.

I arrived back at the car about 3pm feeling slightly tired but very happy. Now for the drive home. Booooooo.



Virtual Y 100 Sir Fynwy - calling South Wales Members

Y 100 Sir Fynwy has been cancelled (see article on page 10) and in its place the Virtual Y 100 Sir Fynwy is being organised. LDWA members are encouraged to walk a 100 mile route of their choice (subject to COVID rules permitting). South Wales LDWA members might decide to walk the route of Y 100 Sir Fynwy for example. The walk must be completed during the weekend of 29-31 May and

members will be expected to provide evidence that they have successfully completed the walk. The evidence could be a GPX file, evidence from witnesses, time stamped photos or receipts of items purchased along the way. The virtual event will be promoted via social media by the National Executive and Y 100 Sir Fynwy Committee members during the weekend of the event and it will be wonderful to see photos from members all over the country taking part in this unique and 'one off' event. Any member who completes 50 miles in 24 hours or under will be qualified for Trans-Pennine 100 in 2022. Any successful 100 completion within 48 hours will be added to the member's overall 100 total, so there are lots of reasons to enter!

Are you up for the challenge, then enter the event for £20 [here!](#)

"THUNDERBOLT & LIGHTNING - VERY, VERY FRIGHTENING"



By Jill & Rob Richardson

It was June 2016 and the third day of our Coast to Coast walk. The previous day we had walked from Ennerdale Bridge to Stonethwaite, taking the 'high level' route via Red Pike and Haystacks. As a result we had arrived at our B&B (the wonderful Knott's View), a bit later than anticipated and were given a later breakfast slot than the earlier arrivals. Since we only had a short walk of 9 miles to Grasmere the following day, we were not unduly concerned.

After a comfortable night and a late breakfast, we left Stonethwaite at around 10am in perfect weather. We opted for another 'high level' route via Calf Crag and Helm Crag, rather the easier route down Easedale Gill. The climb up Greenup Gill to Greenup Edge was delightful with several stops to take some photos.

The weather was still fine as we headed towards Calf Crag and Gibson Knott. As we passed Gibson Knott the clouds began to gather rapidly and we could see lightning in the distance towards Helvellyn, but by counting the time between flashes and hearing thunder judged it to be several miles away. Midway between Gibson Knott and Helm Crag the sky darkened suddenly and it started to rain.



This was no ordinary rain. It was not a case of a few drops to warn of what was coming to get waterproofs on. It was an instant deluge and by the time we had stopped to put waterproofs on, we were drenched. Then there was a flash of lightning followed instantly by thunder and we realised we were in the middle of a thunderstorm and on the highest ground for miles around.

We had to make a decision and quick. Do we carry on and hope that we don't get struck by lightning or do we find somewhere to shelter? Places to shelter were non-existent on the exposed ridge and we were not even close to the route down. We carried on a short distance to Helm Crag and found a small depression to lay down in away from and below the crag itself. Jill's walking poles were discarded some distance away as we thought anything metallic close by would not be a good thing.

The depression we were laying in soon started to fill with water as the rain hammered down around us and the paths turned into rivers. After what seemed an age the electric storm abated, but the rain continued. We decided it would be safe to leave our rapidly forming mini lake and get down to lower ground.

The path down was flooded in places and the last mile or so into Grasmere was difficult as the roads were flooded. We managed to find a bus shelter in Grasmere to stop and survey the damage. We were soaked through, Goretex 0 Storm 2, although to be fair we were very wet before we could get our coats on. The worst thing was the death of my GPS. In the panic I had stupidly put it in my coat pocket, unlike the camera which had gone into the liner of my rucksack and survived.

We later learnt that 2 people had been struck by lightning on Striding Edge that morning, thankfully both survived. Some of our fellow Coast to Coasters who had taken the 'low level' route down Easedale Gill reported wading through water up to their waist in the flash flood.

If only we had been able to have an earlier breakfast and leave Stonethwaite an hour earlier, we would have made it to Grasmere before the storm. With the benefit of hindsight, I can only assume we were unknowingly walking into the storm. Fortunately, our hosts in Grasmere kindly dried all our gear for the next day's walk to Patterdale and an expensive trip to the Cotswold's outdoor shop in Grasmere provided me with a new GPS.

We survived to tell the tale, but did we do everything right?

The following guidance is taken from mountainsafety.co.uk website:

- Check weather forecast and avoid hill walking if thunderstorms are predicted.
- Do not shelter under a tree.
- Do not shelter in cave or old mine.
- Place metal and electrical objects at least 20 metres away (walking poles, GPS, mobile phone etc).
- Sit on rucksack, provided it is emptied of electrical equipment and metal objects.
- Sit away from rock outcrop or crag, move downhill off ridge, if safe to do so.
- Do not sit close to standing water.
- If storm is close, sit it out rather than trying to out run it.



Grasmere from Helm Crag in better conditions.



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Our items include:

- T-Shirts (large badge)
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- 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)

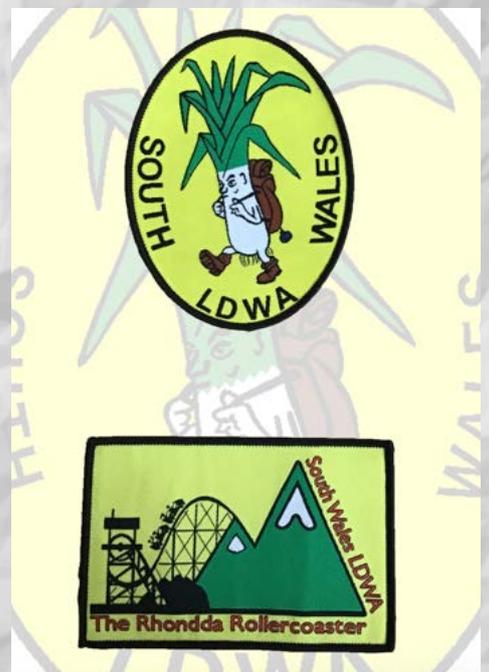
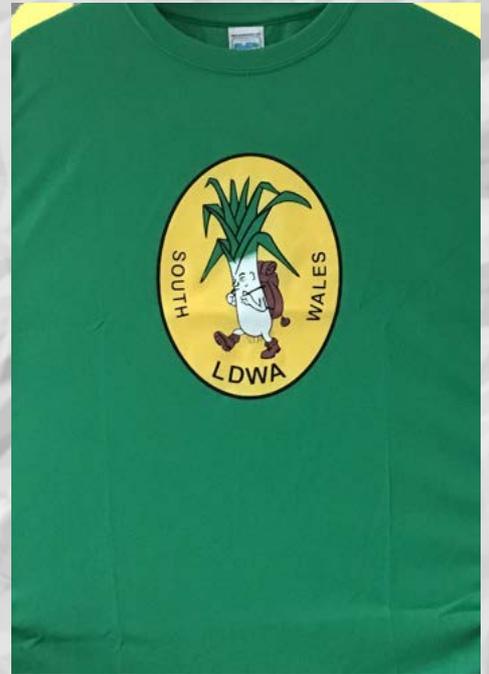
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To place your order, email Judith Fox (treasurer@southwalesldwa.org) and she'll provide details on how to pay.



"FAREWELL Y 100 SIR FYNWY"

By David Morgan



In December 2019, having worked on Y 100 Sir Fynwy for nearly four years, the organising committee overwhelmingly agreed that it was time to bring down the curtain on what should have been the second LDWA 100 to have been organised by the South Wales LDWA Group in 6 years and the third in its history having co-hosted the Brecon Beacons 100 in 1989.

The decision to cancel the event was communicated to the South Wales Local Group members and other LDWA event volunteers on the 14th December and on the 15th December a statement was released to the LDWA family. The overwhelming feedback was of support, sympathy and gratitude that the South Wales LDWA Y 100 Sir Fynwy Committee had tried its very hardest to keep the event alive.

The hard facts are that there was just too much uncertainty and the Committee concluded that it was simply impossible to plan with any confidence. Furthermore, with less than half the number of required entrants to break even having entered, and with a need to spend money in advance of the event, it would have been irresponsible to have forged ahead not knowing if the event could ever have been held.



I was asked how I felt when the decision was made to cancel the event. I described the feeling as similar to a bereavement after a long illness. Huge sadness that we couldn't showcase our area of South East Wales whilst experiencing huge relief that the decision had been taken. If the event had gone ahead it would have been the 33rd event that I have organised and one that would have been highly satisfying due to the many glitches that we as a Committee experienced from the very start. We had always wanted to host the event in Abergavenny, but we couldn't secure the school, we then experienced numerous issues with National Resources Wales who couldn't guarantee that the route would be passable during the weekend of the main event and to cap it off, we had to plan for a staggered start due to the fact that we'd have had to purchase an expensive road closure that would have brought the entire town centre of Chepstow to a standstill on a Bank Holiday weekend.

So, that's it. I won't organise another '100' again and I wish to thank Shirley Hume, Andrew Clabon, Jason Winney, Alwyn Nixon, Simon Pickering, Gerry Jackson, Alan Warrington, Gwyneth Littlejohn and Rob Richardson for the work that they undertook for all of us over four years. I wish to thank other South Wales LDWA members who supported the Committee and when a South Wales LDWA member decides to organise a future '100', I'll be there to support them.

"CAMI DE CAVALLS"

By Gill Morgan

On a visit to the dentist a couple of years ago we somehow managed to get onto the topic of walking and he asked if I had ever been walking in Menorca. He showed me pictures of his villa overlooking the gorgeous turquoise water, the nearby sandy cove and he told me about a new trail called the Cami de Cavalls, an old mule track which goes around the coast of Menorca and had recently just been completed with new footpath signs. Whilst thinking no wonder dental treatment costs so much a seed had been sown!



I like coastal walking and the idea of walking around a beautiful island in the warm sunshine stopping off for a swim every now and then and finishing every day in a nice hotel with a swimming pool, what more could anyone want.

I found a useful website with an itinerary and based our trip around that. Accommodation was key and whilst this is plentiful in the south and the west it's not in the east and the north. There was some debate on the website regarding distances and so wanting to be sure exactly what our mileage would be David used his mapping software to measure each day's distance (which for once was pretty accurate!!).

Day 1 – Mahon – Arenal d'en Castell (22.7 miles) Our first day and a long day due to the lack of accommodation between Mahon and Arenal d'en Castell. We also knew there was very little refreshment wise on this stretch so stocked up in Mahon for our lunch and water. The walking was easy going taking us through the nature reserve at Es Grau and up to the lighthouse at Far de Favaritx. On the outskirts of Arenal d'en Castell we were feeling hot and sweaty when we saw what was an oasis in the desert, a café at Port d'Addaia. We slumped into the chairs ordering 2 drinks each, the first one not touching the sides. Feeling suitably refreshed we left for the final few miles to the resort and our hotel for the night, which actually turned out to be a fantastic 2 bed apartment. We had time for a quick relax by the pool before finding somewhere for a meal. It was a nice resort if not a bit "British" but we had a great meal, one of the best of our trip.



Day 2 - Arenal d'en Castell – Fornells (7.5 miles)

Today didn't start well, waking to the terrible news that Gwyn Matthews had died, I remember it very clearly. We only had a short day today as we were nearing the north of the island and there is no accommodation at all between Fornells and Cala Morell. This meant that we had to stay at Fornells to enable us to get across to Cala Morell in one go tomorrow. It would mean another long day for day 3

but there was no alternative. After a quick breakfast in a local café we continued arriving in the resort by lunchtime followed by an afternoon relaxing by the pool. Our first and only snake

spotted today on the approach to the resort. We stocked up for our lunch/breakfast and ate in the hotel that evening.

Day 3 - Fornells – Cala Morell (21.7 miles)

An early start today as not only was it going to be a long day it was also the most difficult day. The north coast is very rugged with plenty of ups and downs and rocky terrain. We filled up with litres and litres of water as there would be nowhere to refill on the way and set off in the quiet of the day. We didn't come across many beaches on the north coast but mainly rocky coves with many being inaccessible on foot. Arriving at our accommodation we had time to relax by the pool for a while before finding somewhere for an evening meal; this didn't take long as we could only find one restaurant so thank goodness they were open! There is virtually nothing in Cala Morell so we couldn't get anything for lunch for the next day but this didn't matter as we knew that we were going through several resorts in the morning.

Day 4 - Cala Morell – Ciutadella (13.2 miles)

Another shorter day today which was welcomed after the long day yesterday. Today we were turning the north west corner and were heading south, we had a lovely strong breeze on this section and the path was easy going. We passed several quiet beaches tucked out of the way before we reached a couple of touristy resorts, the biggest being Cala en Blanes which seemed to be aimed at the British but the shops and the ice cream parlours at least gave us the opportunity to get refreshments. We arrived at Ciutadella earlier than we thought so an impromptu late lunch followed at a café on the quayside before we found our way to our hotel.



The hotel itself wasn't the best but it had a fantastic rock plateau at the back with ladders into the sea and the breakfast was the best on the trip. The quayside area in Ciutadella is very pretty so we headed back there in the evening for a meal.

Day 5 - Ciutadella – Cala Galdana (19.1 miles)

Today we were turning the south west corner and passed many beautiful beaches and coves which were relatively quiet. We skirted the lighthouse at Cap d'Artrutx and continued the easy going path through Son Xonguer towards our destination Cala Galdana passing through some wooded areas which provided welcome shade. We walked past one beach where we were distinctly overdressed but kept our eyes on the path! We stopped for refreshments at a beautiful cove called Cala Macarella where the beach bar was just too tempting. From here we only had a short distance to our hotel and it was at this point we started noticing that places were a lot busier.

Day 6 - Cala Galdana – Cala en Porter (17.6 miles)

Leaving Cala Galdana we went through some forestry where we saw lots of wild tortoise along the path and they were a good size too. After stopping for morning coffee on the beach front in Sant Thomas we continued on a path behind the beach which took us slightly inland for a short time before reaching Son Bou where ice creams were in order. The one advantage of the busier south coast is that refreshments are never too far away. After another short stretch inland we reached our hotel at Cala en Porter and were able to spend some time at the swimming pool.



Day 7 - Cala en Porter – S'Algar (16.1 miles)

Today we seemed to go through resort after resort and we particularly liked Binibequer a lovely whitewashed village. There was a fair bit of road walking today but also some inland walking popping out at several beautiful beaches along the way. I last went to Menorca when I was approx 7 years of age and I had a vivid memory of a beach we visited but didn't know



where it was. I originally thought it was Cala Galdana but when we reached there it didn't seem familiar at all. Nearing the end of our day today we came across a beach at Cala D'Alcaufar and immediately I said to David 'THIS IS IT'; the beach I remember with the hotel on the right hand side with steps going up to it - nothing had changed it looked exactly the same. Arriving in S'Algar we spent ages looking for our hotel through its maze of alleyways. Our room was unfortunately the worst of our trip and our quiet

relaxation which we enjoyed at the end of every day by the swimming pool was interrupted by a guy snoring on a nearby sunlounger!

Day 8 - S'Algar – Mahon (5.9 miles)

As today was a short day and we had a flight booked home that evening (rookie error – why on earth didn't we stay another couple of days, won't make that mistake again!!) we stayed in S'Algar for a couple of hours in the morning swimming in the sea before setting off on our final leg. Following a short stretch in the countryside we soon reached the outskirts of Mahon and the final few miles of road walking, finishing with a meal in the square and a bottle of bubbly!

I would highly recommend this trail and with accommodation being easy to come by, as apart from day 1 and day 3, you can choose your own itinerary to decide how leisurely you would like to make it or not, I understand there is an ultra marathon on the Cami de Cavalls too!!

We went in mid June and definitely felt it get warmer every day, although there was often a

nice coastal breeze but I would recommend going in May or early June. We also found that in mid June the peak season is just starting and some hotels would not accept bookings for only one night.

Whilst the trail is not difficult it is very rocky in places and so is tough on the feet, we both wore trail shoes and had no problems. The trail is very well signposted with regular marker posts and information boards after each section. David had the trail loaded on his GPS but only had to refer to it on a couple of occasions in the whole week. It was mainly used to find our hotels!



Have You Been On A Walking Holiday?

Why not write about your trip and inspire others to follow in your footsteps?

Three Circles of Machen



2019 - Crickhowell

2021 - Machen

2022 - Monmouth

The South Wales LDWA Committee has advertised its new challenge walk, Three Circles of Machen, with the LDWA family and wider walking community. Whilst it is unclear as to exactly what will be allowed within the Covid-19 regulations, the Committee is hoping that the event, the second in a trilogy of events, will be allowed to take place.

LDWA members from as far afield as Scarborough have already entered and the Committee asks that South Wales LDWA members put **Saturday 2nd October** into the diary and to reserve the day, in order that there will be enough volunteers available to help deliver the event on the day.

"A LITERARY GUIDE TO THE BLACK MOUNTAINS AND WYE VALLEY PART 1"

By Simon Pickering



South Wales LDWA designed Y Sir Fynwy 100 to show off the landscape, history, geography and culture of a wonderful region. To help illustrate these attractions, I wrote a literary guide to accompany the event - some outstanding writing has featured the Black Mountains and Wye Valley, central to the Sir Fynwy route, as their backdrop. While the event won't be happening as originally conceived, the writing that the area has inspired is still worthy of celebration. So, we are serialising my piece in 2 parts to highlight some of the best literature set in some of South Wales' finest walking country from times past to the present day.

Celebrating The Black Mountains



The majestic landscape of the Black Mountains has been attracting literary admirers for centuries.

Among the earliest, and most prominent of these is Gerald of Wales whose twelfth century ***Itinerarium Cambriae*** ("Journey Through Wales") describes his travels around his beloved homeland while on a recruitment campaign for the Crusades with the Archbishop of

Canterbury. The work remains, in the words of modern critics, "... a very valuable historical document, significant for the descriptions - however untrustworthy and inflected by ideology, whimsy, and his unique style...".

Such a description captures the enduring appeal of Gerald - plenty of intriguing and scholarly observational detail mixed together with local colour and sometimes dubious assertions. His Welsh travelogue includes a number of calling points familiar to LDWA walkers including Llanthony Priory, Usk and Abergavenny - albeit it is believed that his actual journey may not have visited the first two of these (suggesting an underuse of self-clips in the twelfth century).

Gerald's writings continue to spark literary imaginations as evidenced by the 2019 publication of ***Footnotes*** by Peter Fiennes. Part travelogue and part literary biography, Fiennes book is based on his own travels recreating the earlier journeys of twelve



noted writers - with Gerald joining Charles Dickens, J.B. Priestley and Enid Blyton on the authorial roll-call.

At Home In The Blacks

It is not just visitors who have been inspired to write about the Black Mountains, but some of its favourite sons as well – Raymond Williams being chief among them.

Perhaps better known as an academic and influential pioneer in the field of cultural studies, where his works include the seminal ***Culture and Society***, and, ***The Country and the City***, Williams was born in Llanfihangel Crucorney. His birthplace and its surrounds heavily influenced his literary output that includes ***Border Country*** and the two-volume ***People of the Black Mountains***.



The former is set in the fictional village of Glynmawr and examines many of the themes Williams explored in his academic pursuits. A son returns from his professional life in London to visit his sick father, a former railway signalman, with the two struggling with their memories of social and personal change told via flashbacks that draw upon the 1926 General Strike and

the Great Depression. Originally published in 1960, *Border Country* was re-published in 2006 as one of the first titles in the Library of Wales series designed to celebrate and preserve some of the nation's most important writing in English.

People of the Black Mountains is a more experimental work that tells the history of the folk who have lived in its eponymous hills through a series of sequential short stories. The tales start in the Stone Age and tell of the arrival, impact and influence of Neolithic farmers, the Celts, the Romans and Normans amongst others. Based on archaeological evidence, the historical narrative stretches through to the late Mediaeval period – it was intended to reach modern times but Williams died before he could complete the final volume.

Black In Name, Bleak In Nature

Another celebrated author (and travel writer) to use the Black Mountains as a backdrop is Bruce Chatwin with his bleak tale of human experience, ***On the Black Hill***. The story is told through the lives of twin brothers whose existence is driven by the harsh demands of



of their upland farm, The Vision, that straddles the Wales-England border. The novel explores a range of social and emotional issues as it tells the stories of the brothers lives and how they have been shaped by the landscape that surrounds them. The book won both the James Tait Black Memorial Prize and Whitbread First Novel of the Year Award and has been adapted for both stage and screen.

The novel uses a mixture of real and fictious place names, with the majority indicating it is based around the border of Herefordshire and Powys just south of Hay on Wye. The Vision is a real farm, referenced on OS Maps, located a few miles north of Llanthony, with (Herefordshire's) Black Hill a few miles further north on Hatterall Ridge. An alternative theory, however, suggests the Black Hill of the title may be the prominence between Knighton and Clun (S0326790), as Chatwin is known to have stayed in the area.



Part 2 to follow in the June Blether.....



"GUIDE STONES PART 1"

By Jason Winney

What is a guide stone?

A guide stone is a large or medium sized stone/boulder that was used by early man to mark either a route, or to point in a particular direction over the rugged uplands...

Back 4500 years ago [Early Bronze Age], and much earlier than this, guide stones were commonly used by communities, and knowledge of how to use the stones would have been standard practice, passed down through communities; and throughout time they've evolved into what we are used to today, the right of way markers. But the concept goes back long before the Bronze Age, guide stones have been used as far back as prehistoric times, perhaps even earlier. Below is a photo of a guide stone up on Penwyllt in the western Brecon Beacons. This stone sits up on a large natural pillar of rock, so an 'A' frame would have been used to pull it up onto the top of the plinth which stands around 15ft tall.



This stone is visible from down in the valley, so from the low point, you'd be able to cross open ground to the guide stone, and then be directed to the stone alignment. In the picture we're looking at the front of the stone, so it's pointing towards us. Where I was stood, actually, was on what is part of an ancient route.

So picture the setting; a small community decides to build a stone

up on the mountain; the row means something important to them, perhaps religious, or functional, maybe identifying the beginning of winter for example. It'll be an alignment of sorts for stars (celestial), moon (lunar) or sun (solar). The people have now put the stone row up, and they are very proud of it, but Derek down in the valley says, "Well I don't know how to get up to the bloomin' thing, where did you put it? You know what it's like up there, I always get lost!!", so they put their heads together and say, "Well, we can put some big stones up and mark up a route for you!"

"Good idea" said Derek, so they trawl the uplands looking for stones that are ideal for the purpose of 'pointing'; the stones need to be of a pointy style, so then the point, directs the way when positioned correctly.

Sometimes you can see small rocks underneath the guide stones to help position them. I find it amazing that such attention to detail took place with these people all this time ago. Cognitively we're no different from ancient man; time doesn't set a cognitive gulf between us for sure; if we had to do things now like we had to then, we'd work it all out just fine.

These stones could have been a fair way off from the stone row, so rocks would have probably been put onto a sled of sorts and hauled over the uplands. No mean feat!! Some of the stones weigh at least 10 tonnes!!!

Below is the same stone; ignore the upright point of the stone, the important pointy bit is looking straight at us but is not really visible.



Much further down the valley another set of stones exist, an early henge, four stones piled on top of each other like a '#' tag with a fifth stone on the top of the hash tag, this fifth stone points to this stone in the photo. The henge itself probably has a stone that points to 'it', but I've yet to find it; I do have an idea though!

Penwyllt is slowly unlocking its secrets, this information is very new, and only in the past 6 years has it come to light. This site is actually more important than Stonehenge, it's much older and the processes learned here may have been passed on to communities at Stonehenge. Stones aren't set in the ground as the ground is predominantly very rocky, they just sit on the surface.

The photo below shows the guide stone pointing towards the forest. If you look carefully, you'll see

just below the trees some large boulders, this is Saith Maen stone row.

There's been some considerable debate on whether this stone row alignment is natural or man made, I believe the jury is still out on this, a lot of weight lies on the man made theory though. More to follow!!



**Did you enjoy reading
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with your mates?**





Leekie Meets Gerry Jackson



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

Since the groups inaugural walk on 25 September 1983 that started from the car park at Caerphilly Mountain. I might be wrong but I think about 15 people turned up and the group has continued ever since with the occasional rocky period when numbers were rather low.

2 Where did you hear about the Group?

The fun running boom started in the mid to late 1970s and at a fun run in 1978 I picked up a free running magazine that mentioned a marathon, the Masters & Maidens. I telephoned the organiser who turned out to be Alan Blatchford, one of the founders of the LDWA, who said it was too late to enter, which was probably just as well, and he mentioned the LDWA. I'd never heard of it and he kindly sent me details that included a Strider and route description for a Downsman 100. I was hooked and joined immediately.

I walked with the Thames Valley group for a year, then the Bristol & West group for about 3 years after moving to South Wales. In spring 1983 Andrew Clabon sent a letter to all LDWA members in South Wales inviting them to a meeting in Caerleon to discuss the formation of a South Wales local group. Four of us turned up, in addition to me and Andrew there were Nick Kaye and Alan Fox. The group was formed, a programme of walks agreed that duly appeared in the August Strider in 1983. In those days Strider was the only way to advertise group walks.

3 What do like best about the Group?

The camaraderie and friendliness of everybody, meeting people from different walks of life. Also the often irreverent attitude to walking and the fact that we do some really tough walks. Altogether the group contains a great bunch of people.

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

I haven't thought about a favourite area before but I think it is the Black Mountain/Fforest Fawr. The area is wild and sparsely populated and you don't see many other walkers compared to the Brecon Beacons that get so crowded.

“Leekie Meets Gerry” continued

5 How many LDWA 100 mile walks have you completed?

25 but unfortunately only 24 count towards 100 completions as two LDWA 100s were held in 1990 and the LDWA ruled that only one per year counted. I hope to complete a few more, I think I'm in denial that I'm getting too old!

6 What is your favourite challenge event?

Excluding our group events I think it is probably the Wye Forest 50. However I have fond memories of the Mor y Mynydd from Borth that was held for about four years and sadly discontinued.

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

Chips of course – I can only remember being offered chips once and, if I remember correctly, that was on the Dorset 100 and went down a treat.

8 Do you wear shoes or boots?

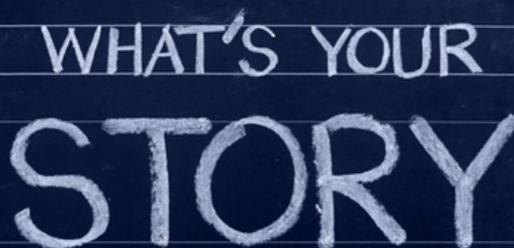
For a long time I always used to wear trainers whatever the weather, now that I'm older and wiser (I hope) I wear trail shoes in the summer and boots in the winter to keep my feet dry.

9 What is your favourite sandwich filling on a walk?

Applewood cheddar with lime pickle for group walks, tuna and cucumber on challenge walks. However on a challenge walk I'll eat virtually anything.

10 What's your ideal walking distance?

About 25 miles in the summer, up to about 18 miles in the winter. But the distance isn't too important, a good days walking with a bunch of friends is always good whatever the distance and weather.



WHAT'S YOUR
STORY

The South Wales LDWA "Leekie Blether" will be distributed on a quarterly basis. The next edition will be published in June 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 June 2021 newsletter will be the 21st May 2021.