



LONG DISTANCE

LDWA

WALKERS ASSOCIATION

SOUTH WALES GROUP



“LEEKIE’S BLETHER”

JUNE 2021

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**



Chair's Update

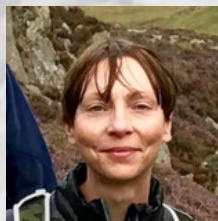
The other day I stole myself away to spend the night in Cwm Isaf, a quiet and hardly ever visited little valley, tucked away in the Black Mountains, here Covid is not in the dictionary, here the only words that exist here are the sounds of the stream, the beating wings of a passing raven and the wind in the trees. It reminds us of how important it is to take the time to get away from everyday life and be somewhere else, somewhere where nothing matters, it's good to park life up in a lay-by and go and be free for a while, and that's just what our club brings to us, especially during these weird times. I call it the LDWA Dynamo.

The LDWA hundred has started off with David and Julian's excellent effort in completing the Marshals', and we still have our time to look forward to as well with the event; fingers crossed for good weather! So many have entered the hundred this year, and what's different this year is that everybody has a different plan, nobody is doing the same thing, but we're all striving towards a similar goal. The event this year is interesting as its much more inventive and you can do what you want, just go and do what you like to do, go and walk. Many will cross boundaries like a new distance, walking in the dark, experiencing that deep feeling of tiredness, and of course the good feeling of competing and completing.

I won't step on Sara's toes but the walk planner is looking good and I have a few walks to put in too, so here's to a seamless transition from lockdown to summertime and I raise a glass to you all for making our local club as brilliant as it is.

Thank you and God Bless.

Jason (Chair)



Walk Secretary's Update

Hello everyone,

At the time of writing this I've just completed my first walk of the year with the South Wales group and what a joy it was to be out with some of you. It was an even greater joy to see a green clad figure on the horizon at one point marching towards us, with someone saying "there's a Leekie man coming this way". I hadn't appreciated until that moment how incredibly distinct and recognisable our branded t-shirts were at distance. If you don't have a Leekie T-Shirt, I recommend getting one now more than ever. And the Leekie man striding towards us? None other than Jason Winney, heading out for an overnight wild camp; it was great to have a quick catch up before we went in opposite directions.

As much as I enjoyed my first full day back in the hills, I have to confess that my fitness has rather slumped over lockdown, tarmac and low-level rambles don't quite do the job and I'll need some slow and steady practice to get my legs working properly again. However, we've got a few walks on the programme already and it would be great to start building up our calendar with both hard and easier walks to get everyone out and about again. If anyone would like to lead a walk, please do let me know.

Hopefully I'll see many more of you over the coming weeks and we'll get ourselves back up to full speed both in terms of fitness and walks to look forward to.

Please email me at: walksec@southwalesldwa.org



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



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)

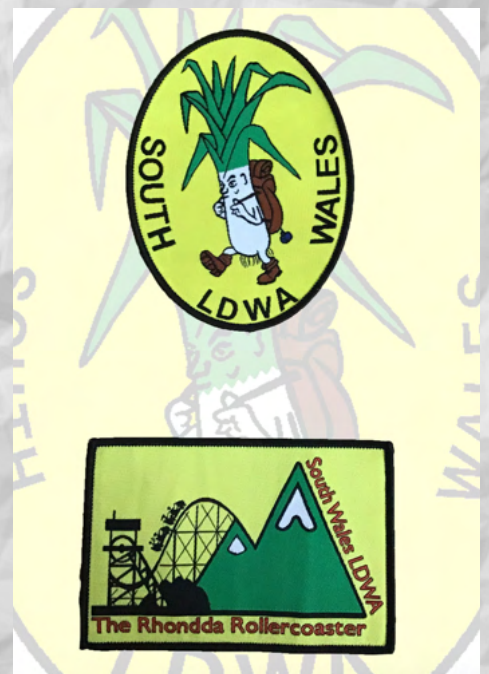
Prices

T-Shirts £12.00 (+£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.



"MOTHER NATURE USUALLY WINS"

By Hugh Woodford



We all like walking in fine weather but now and again mother nature gets her own back on us. Over the years we have all got a good soaking from time to time – sometimes we pay good money for the privilege, as on challenge walks. I certainly have had a few corksers.

The Black Mountains Roundabout (BMR) in 1995 was a bad one, as described by Peter Clark in Strider number 72 in August 1995. His event report is spot on and well worth a read if you are able to obtain a copy or still have one. (Ed - Click [here](#) for Strider 72) Walking along the lane towards Llanbedr I could see rain heading my way. By the time I reached the first checkpoint on Crug Mawr the rain had turned to sleet. Further along the ridge it turned to snow, blowing horizontally into my face and forcing me to look down rather than ahead. The forest before Pen y Gadair Fawr was welcome shelter, where everyone stopped to put on spare clothing and have a hot drink before deciding to turn back. The return was much the same and my boots filled up with water as I slogged my way back to Crickhowell. Upon reaching the school I emptied the water from my boots, reported in and had an early shower. In total I had walked 12 miles, as had most of the entrants. Of the 380 starters, only 30 completed the event. I later heard tales of 7 walkers linking arms on Mynydd Troed for safety. It really was that bad. As Max Boyce says: "I know, because I was there."



South Wales LDWA on Cadair Idris in better weather: Sept 2012.

The Mid Wales Mountain Marathon in 1998 was also unforgettable. I consider it to be the toughest of the regular Welsh events and it has encountered various weather problems over the years. On one occasion Dave Bingham cramped up badly on Mynydd Moel; another year I did likewise descending Cadair Idris; my exhaust blew on the drive up one Friday so I had to get it fixed on the Saturday in Machynlleth and miss the event. In 1998, after the first checkpoint it clagged in and was raining. On the slopes of Maesglase I got separated from Caron & Terry, my partners that day, and carried on, unaware of the drama about to unfold behind. The heavy rain was not draining away and progress was slow. By the time I reached the road checkpoint Nev Tandy, the organiser, was on the verge of a nervous breakdown as he had heard an unconfirmed report of a fatality. As it turned out, one of the entrants had had a fatal heart attack on Maesglase. With it clagged in a helicopter evacuation was out of the question. Nev had no alternative but to stop the event and somehow ferry people back to the start. I got a lift back and agreed to help ferry people while I waited for Caron & Terry. As I started my third trip I met Caron & Terry, together with Terry's wife Del who was his transport. At that point we decided we had done enough and headed for home.

1999 saw my first attempt at the Welsh 3000 foot peaks – approximately 29 miles and over 12,000 feet of ascent. Dave Bingham and I based ourselves at Cae Gwyn campsite in Nant Peris and went for a north-south crossing. We took a second tent to the roadhead above Aber and left a car there while we walked. The Carneddau passed without problems but by the time we were ascending Y Garn and Elidr Fawrin the Glyders the weather had changed. Reaching Nant Peris around tea time we both felt tired and the weather worsened again. End of the attempt! This time it was strong winds as well as rain. To have risked Crib Goch would have been foolish in the extreme as we would probably have been blown off the ridge. The wind was howling down the valley and the lower end of the campsite flooded, causing some campers to re-pitch their tents further up the field. A shame as we had been going well early on. I finally completed the challenge on my third attempt, , in 2004, in a time of 17 hours 2 minutes from start to finish.



Hugh & friends on the Glyders after the worst of the weather.

During my time as Torfaen Council's Canal Warden I led a few walks linked to the canal. Whilst doing one recce I was crossing a fairway on Pontnewydd Golf Club when I got caught in a downpour with thunder and lightning all around me. With any tree cover too far away I stood underneath a thin holly tree which offered no shelter. This was probably the most scared I have been as the thunder and lightning were almost overhead and I was getting soaked. When it eased and I managed to return to my van my rucksack had water in it and my works phone, which had been switched on, was hot and humming. Time to head home, dry off and have a nice warm shower.

August Bank Holiday weekend in 2009 was spent, as usual, camping in north Wales. On the Sunday morning it was chucking it down and 6 of us wanted to get a walk in. Rather than wait for it to stop, 3 of the group decided to go up into the Glyders while Heather, Kay and myself would happily have stayed put down in the valley.

Bowing to peer pressure, we set off from Llyn Ogwen, up through the Devil's Kitchen and on up to Glyder Fawr. Approaching the summit, the wind must have been 50-60 mph. It was almost impossible to stand upright let alone walk so Heather held on to Dave while Kay held on to me to reach the top. Further along, on the descent between Glyder Fach and Bwlch Tryfan, we met a father with his daughter who looked about 10 or so years old. She was in tears because of the conditions and we told him what it had been like further up. He seemed to be intent on fulfilling his own ambition, without regard for his daughter's safety or state of mind. Not being able to do any more, we reluctantly bade them farewell. Later that evening, as we sat in a hotel in Capel Curig, father and daughter appeared. Thankfully both were ok.



Hugh at Ogwen

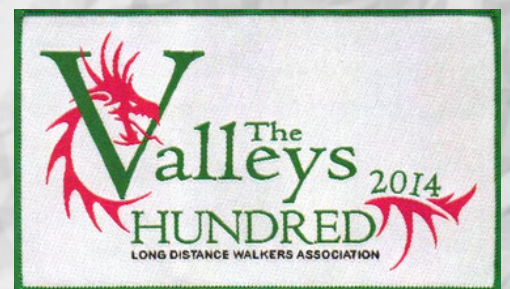
This last tale of atrocious weather, on Thursday 22nd May 2014, did not actually involve me. At that time a few of Torfaen Council's teams, including myself, were based in Police HQ, Croesyceiliog, following the demolition of County Hall. At about 2.30 pm everyone in our room looked out of the window as monsoon-like rain of biblical proportions that you only see on TV documentaries was coming down. Immediately my thoughts turned to poor old Rodders! A few hours earlier he had started his double attempt of the Valleys 100. By my reckoning he would be somewhere near the Maesycwmmmer checkpoint and probably drenched to the skin. As we know, he was successful in his first double hundred completion and, by a stroke of good fortune, he had not been hit by the monsoon.

Try as we often do, taking on mother nature is not always advisable, as she usually wins. One good thing is that, sometimes, any such attempts can provide an interesting story.



Above:
Rod Hollands being welcomed back to Walk HQ after walking 200 miles.

Left
Rod looking, well, perhaps a little tired, but really, really happy!



Leekie's Blether relies upon articles written by South Wales LDWA members!

Why not share your stories regarding your experiences with the South Wales LDWA Group?

Members are particularly interested in inspirational stories and reading of how either the Group or LDWA has inspired you!

For the next edition, articles on Virtual Y 100 Sir Fynwy would be most welcome.

- Why not tell us about your 100 mile experience?**
- Or, did you support somebody? Why not share your story for all to enjoy?**

Please email southwalesldwa@live.co.uk and share your story!

"A LITERARY GUIDE TO THE BLACK MOUNTAINS AND WYE VALLEY PART 2"

By Simon Pickering



A continuation of an article written by Simon Pickering. Part 1 of 'The Literary Guide' was published in the June 2021 Blether.

Sheer Beauty

The power of the Black Mountains to inspire creativity continues into the present day, as exemplified by the work of one of Wales' leading contemporary authors, Owen Sheers. Raised in Abergavenny, the town's distinctive surrounding hills have inspired much of his work, both prose and poetry. Like Raymond Williams before him, Sheers attended King Henry VIII School, often passed on walks to the Sugar Loaf, the southernmost of the Black Mountains peaks.



Sheers' first novel, *Resistance*, has again used a valley below Hatterall Ridge as the setting. This time the backdrop is the Olchon Valley, crossed on route from Llanthony to Longtown, with its isolation serving at the basis of an alternative history novel set in the latter days of WWII. The novel tells of an encounter between a group of German Wehrmacht soldiers and the women and children who have become the sole occupants of the valley after its men have left to join the British

Resistance. Like *On the Black Hill*, the novel has also been made into a film.

Sheers is also an acclaimed poet, with his work often featuring the natural world, none more so than his 2005 collection *Skirrid Hill*. Not only does the volume's title refer to one of Abergavenny's famed Three Peaks (Ysgyryd Fawr), but it also features a pair of poems (*The Hill Fort*, and, *Y Gaer*) that would seem to be set on the Y Gaer summit passed on the way to Cymyoy. The words of *The Hill Fort* will hopefully resonant with many of us:

***"... it isn't the number of steps
that will matter
but
the depth of their impression."***

The next edition of Leekie's Blether will be distributed in October and not September as originally planned.

**Please submit articles to
southwalesldwa@live.co.uk by 21.09.21**

Still Black, But Even Darker

Should crime fiction be more to your literary taste, than the Black Mountains also features in Harry Bingham's series of DC Fiona Griffiths' novels. The protagonist is a young Cardiff-based detective whose analytic talents contrast with her limited social skills and a past complicated by mental illness. The second volume of Bingham's now six-book series, *Love Story, With Murders*, takes the reader from their usual surrounds of the Welsh capital to a remote cottage near Capel y Finn, once more a little further north into the Vale of Ewyas from Llanthony (a valley that Gerald of Wales describes as "... an arrow-shot broad, encircled on all sides by lofty mountains"). Griffiths' harrowing journey, in pursuit of clues to solve a series of grisly murders, sees her encounter even more difficulties than will beset even the unluckiest of long distance walkers.



Gilpin, Wordsworth And The Wye Tour

Like the Black Mountains, the Wye Valley, has long attracted visitors and played a key role in the emergence of the concept of the 'picturesque'. In doing so, it ushered in a new type of tourism in the late eighteenth century that brought with it a greater appreciation of the natural landscape.

Beyond its obvious natural beauty, a key reason for Wye Valley's rise to prominence was the publication of ***Observations on the River Wye*** and ***Several Parts of South Wales*** by the Reverend William Gilpin. Regarded as the first tour guide to be published in Britain, Gilpin's 1782 work introduced the 'Wye Tour' with visitors taking to boats to view many of the landmarks that feature on the Hundred route - Chepstow Castle, Tintern Abbey, the Kymin and the Piercefield estate among them. Coinciding with the Napoleonic Wars that ruled out travel to Europe for the traditional Grand Tour, Gilpin's book helped ignite a new fashion for the 'picturesque' - which focused attention beyond classical views of beauty to those that included a greater appreciation of the natural landscape.



The Wye Valley popularised by Gilpin attracted an illustrious roll-call of writers, poets and artists, with Samuel Coleridge, J. M. W. Turner and Alfred Tennyson among them. The Romantic heavyweight that is perhaps most associated with the area, however, is William Wordsworth. His poem, ***Lines Written a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey***, was inspired by the scenery to be enjoyed between Llandogo and Cleddon:

***"... these steep and lofty cliffs,
That on a wild secluded scene impress
Thoughts of more deep seclusion; and connect
The landscape with the
quiet of the sky"***

Some Famous Neighbours

Although not quite in the footprint of Sir Fynwy, it seems inappropriate to write about the literature of South Wales' hills and valleys without mentioning Alexander Cordell and Richard Llellewyn, both of whom have written hugely popular works based in these setting.



Cordell, the pen-name of George Alexander Graber, was a prolific novelist best known for ***Rape of the Fair Country***. Set in the 19th century in the iron-making communities of the Blaenavon and Nantyglo, a few miles to the west of the Hundred route, it tells of growing tensions between ironmasters and workers through the Mortymer family. A prolific writer, some of Cordell's works do cross paths (or very nearly) with the Sir Fynwy route such as ***Requiem for a Patriot***, a retelling of the story of the Chartist John Frost who went on trial and was sentenced in Monmouth's Shire Hall.

Richard Llellewyn, meanwhile, is the author of ***How Green Was My Valley***, that tells the story of the Morgan family and their life in a Valleys mining community (based on the village of Gilfach Goch in the Ogmere Valley) in the Victorian era.

Leekie's Brain Teazer

Set by Andrew Clabom

Solve The Anagrams

The first member to upload the correct answers to: southwalesldwa@live.co.uk will win either a Leekie Buff or a Leekie Mug - The winner decides!

The anagrams are of Welsh hills south of Brecon.

There are clues to each on the right hand side.

1. Rins Wool Dish (Overlooks the sea)
2. Hary Gill (On the Sir Fynwy route)
3. Harl Light (Between Cardiff and Porth)
4. Aint Nout Blame (Not quite flat)
5. Wammy Niddy Cilly Miker (Reach it before Tylors Town Tip)
6. Reen Glob (On the Taith Torfaen route)
7. Guar Foals (This is a sweet one)
8. Derry Waggl (Westerly 2000)
9. Faan Chuw (Very black)
10. Nany Pef (Top of the lot)



"DEAFENING SOLITUDE"

By David Morgan



For 36 years I have been driving to The Lakes, I've studied, read and absorbed Outdoor Leisure maps 4, 5, 6 and 7; I've planned routes that would take me to the higher fells, I've longed for the sound of clinking rock under my feet and to stand and stare at vistas that have become so familiar. In doing so, in 2005, when I stood on Catstycam, I completed my first round of the Wainwrights, a list of 214 fells that were compiled by the late Alfred Wainwright, a list that has become the most popular hill walking list in the United Kingdom, more popular even than the Munros of Scotland.



And, like so many visitors to the Lake District, I still love visiting the higher fells and without consciously trying, I have found that I am 66% through a second round. But, in recent years I have turned my attention to a list of fells that are taking me to remote locations, to places of equally exquisite beauty, and fells that are deserted. The list? A compilation of 541 fells over 1000 feet compiled by Bill Birkett, and what a treat it is walking these beautiful fells. Whilst

the higher fells welcome their Wainwright disciples, I'm ploughing a furrow that often means that I see more sheep than humans. What's not to love?

I could write in detail about the outliers to the south west of the Lake District National Park, Black Combe and White Combe, and where views over the coastline and estuaries to the south and south east is unsurpassed.



I could tell you about the rocky outcrops of Buckbarrow and Great Paddy Crag where hands as well as feet will be

needed to get to the tops, where views of Northern Ireland and the Isle of Man will be enjoyed and where there are so many ground nesting birds due to a lack of human activity, that meadow pipit nests will be found in spring.

I could talk about lonely Devoke Water and its boat house and huge views north towards the Scawfells, Kirk Fell and Great Gable.

Or perhaps the Dunnerdale Fells and their hidden summit tarns, rocky outcrops and valleys full of old slate mines, now softened by the passing of time whilst listening to the enveloping sound of complete and utter silence.



I could enthuse about Upper Eskdale and the craggy fells that so many will walk past as they head north to climb the higher fells of Bowfell, Esk Pike and Scawfell Pike, not understanding or recognising that fells such as Silverybiel Crag provide the solitude that so many of us crave whilst providing views that are arguably unsurpassed in the whole of the Lake District National Park.

But I won't. What I will do in this piece is tell you that if you get away from the higher fells in the Lake District, that if you plot your own routes that take you across the smaller fells, that if you're prepared to walk across what might be described as rougher and uneven ground, if you're prepared to turn left when everyone else turns right, that you will experience what many do not; solitude, time to breathe and absorb what is around you.

Everyone in the South Wales LDWA Group has the ability to read maps, to plan routes, to walk in challenging terrain. You too could be a part of the landscape for just a few hours. All you need is the get up and go, to go out and get.....





Leekie Meets Hannah Brown



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

First joined in 1996. Came back around 2015.

2 Where did you hear about the Group?

I phoned Dan Hadfield when I moved to Pontypridd who first helped me get to walks when I couldn't drive and introduced me to everyone else. It was a much smaller group back then.

3 What do like best about the Group?

I love coming into a Welsh checkpoint on the 100. Always get a boost from seeing everyone. Also love working on a checkpoint.

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

I never get bored of my Pen y fan Cribyn circuit when I need to get some extra training in.

5 How many LDWA 100 mile walks have you completed?

16 plus one unofficial 100.

6 What is your favourite challenge event?

Wenlock Olympian 100. Got major bragging rights on this one as only 25 people finished.

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

Pasta.

8 Do you wear shoes or boots?

Shoes.

9 What is your favourite sandwich filling on a walk?

Cream cheese and beetroot.

10 What's your ideal walking distance?

50 ish miles.