



LONG DISTANCE

LDWA

WALKERS ASSOCIATION

SOUTH WALES GROUP



“LEEKIE’S BLETHER”

MARCH 2022

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

Winter is coming to pass, I've seen many snowdrops this year, crocus, the leaves of the wild garlic appearing, lesser celandines and even some woodland anemone starting to form. Spring will throw in the occasional cold snap, the flowers will duck and dive until it's too warm for Jack Frost, then boom; lots of colour.

Having taken a leaf out of nature's book, we've also ducked and dived the whole two years, and in wearing our T-Shirts, we too come out in colour. I was thrilled to see so many of us have entered the Capital Challenge in April, it'll be great to see each other in a distant land far away from home. Walking the walk is one thing, getting there, sorting out the accommodation is another.

On events' past, we have been described as tribal; I think that's great, a sea of green Leekie T-Shirts upstaging London like the wild garlic that upstages any woodland sounds good to me, and although much has happened over the past two years, in our own perennial way, we are coming up with crazy ideas for more social walks. The common enjoyment is within the experience and difficulties shared.

I'm pretty sure many more adventures will appear in the programme throughout the year. There is a lot of enthusiasm for poking the adventure monster, wake it up and let it loose I say!! Remember, the fruit of everything good in life begins with a challenge !!

Jason



Walk Secretary's Update

Hello all,

2022 is well and truly underway and the challenge events have started in earnest. It's great to see so many of you getting back out there and marching your way through those long miles to the finish. As I write this, I've just completed the, very moderately distanced, Punchbowl Marathon. It was such a great route despite spending half the day stomping through mud and rain. I know that the rest of you are getting the 50-mile challenges ticked off your lists, already with an eye on this year's Trans-Pennine 100, taking place in June. I'll see you there, albeit I'll be stationed at a checkpoint, meeting and greeting, rather than roughing it out over the route. We've had a really strong start to the year with our walks programme, thank you to all our leaders, you have provided us with some real treats so far, including the delightful Circles of Confusion and Dawdling around Deri. I'm looking forward to seeing more of you out and about during this year, and I might even finally attempt my first 50 if I can pluck up enough courage to start one.

Sara





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)

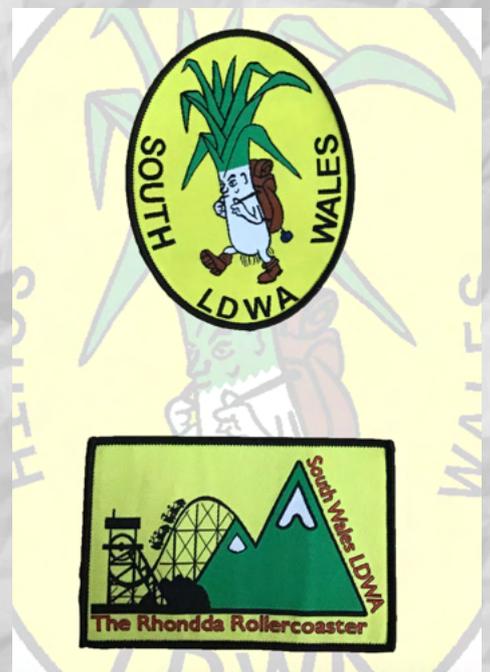
Prices

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.



"BLACK BEAUTY"

By Hugh Woodford



We all have our own favourite walks, areas, mountains, beauty spots, views, etc. Although I did some walking during the 70s & 80s, it wasn't until 1989 that I began to take my walking seriously. In the early 90s I did a lot of exploration in the Blacks using map, compass and intuition as I improved my skills and got to know the area well. Work wise, 1991 was probably my worst year and, although playing loads of table tennis and badminton during the week kept me fit, walking was the great stress buster. After a day out in the mountains I was much more relaxed. The benefits of hill walking were underlined by a GP – I think he worked in Crickhowell – who I met on South Wales Mountain Marathons in the late 90s who, when treating his patients for stress, would give them a Brecon Beacons National Park walks leaflet rather than a prescription for medication.

During the past 30 plus years I have walked extensively in the Blacks and have my favourite locations and views, many of which are in quieter spots and often off the beaten track. I have always taken loads of photos. Up to 2011, when I went digital, I took slides (transparencies) and amassed a collection of just over 7900 from nearly 30 years of using an SLR camera. My parents always looked forward to viewing my latest batch of slides and one of my late father's favourites was taken on the descent from Bal Mawr towards Sychtre in the Llanthony valley, with a view across to Trevelog farm on the opposite side of the valley.



Starting from Bal Mawr, the path can be difficult to follow in places but lower down it becomes clearer as it heads down to the valley. A large rock about half way down provides a good platform from which to sit and take a photo. The path is steep and stony but the views are great.

The bothy at the northern end of the Grwyne Fawr reservoir is well used, as indicated by the number of entries in the visitors book on the table inside. My favourite entry, seen on my first visit there in the mid 90s may not be totally PC by today's standards, but still makes me laugh.

Mary had a little lamb
She tied it to a pylon
1000 volts went up its arse
And turned it into nylon

Although I don't condone animal cruelty, I can confirm no sheep were hurt in the writing of this limerick.

The 2 mile walk from the car park at Blaen y Cwm to the reservoir is well frequented and the dam looks impressive as you near it. The reservoir serves Abertillery and, originally estimated to take 40 months to complete, it took nearly 18 years between 1910-1928. Stone & steam in the Black Mountains by David Tipper is a well written book which tells the story of the reservoir, from planning to completion. There are now hardly any signs of the village at Blaen y cwm, where up to 400 people lived during the construction period. The bothy is a further half mile from the dam. I have always wanted to spend a night there - who knows, one day? It sleeps up to 3 upstairs. Originally built for the waterworks company it is the smallest of the 9 bothies in Wales and possibly the UK.



One of the most picturesque spots in the Blacks is Tal y Maes bridge. Many small streams flow down the slopes of Waun Fach and Mynydd Llysiu into the Grwyne Fechan river which then flows under the bridge. On the underside of the bridge there is a missing stone which, when I was there recently, could house a pair of nesting dippers as one was flying up and down the river and appeared to stop at that point. A great refreshment or lunch stop, the sound of running water is quite relaxing.



My favourite walk in the Blacks is my Grwyne Fechan circuit. I devised it in the mid 90s, leading it twice for both South Wales LDWA and Gwent Mountaineering Club, and have probably walked it a dozen times over the years. Because sections of it are off the beaten track and follow sheep tracks I probably never walk the exact same route on each occasion. Approximately 18 miles, more than 4000 feet of ascent with plenty of ups & downs, it can take up to 9 hours. In good clear weather there are a

number of excellent viewpoints. A mixture of rights of way, sheep tracks & contours, but no summits, it starts & finishes at the t-junction outside Llanbedr, where there is room for a few cars.

A hidden gem along the route is a small waterfall on the lower slopes of Pen y Gadair Fawr. Leaving the tramway known as McNamara's road at the corner of the top field, descend to the Grwyne Fechan, cross it and ascend very steeply to Maen Llwyd standing stone. Stop for a while to get your breath back before following a good track eastwards on a bearing of approximately 90. It takes about 5 minutes to reach the waterfall. Although small it is certainly attractive and unexpected at this altitude.



Further along the route is my favourite view in the Blacks. Again, not easy to locate, it requires following sheep tracks to reach the viewpoint on Gelli Boeth, a western spur of Crug Mawr. From Blaenau Isaf, follow the right of way uphill. In the Summer, once on open hillside, the bracken is usually at head height and can take some getting through. Higher up the track, shortly after a hawthorn tree, turn right and follow sheep tracks around the spur which will eventually lead to an outcrop on Gelli Boeth, from where much of the route can be seen.



We're always looking for members to contribute to the Blether. So, why not share your walking exploits with your South Wales LDWA Group buddies?

**Please send articles and photos to:
southwalesldwa@live.co.uk**

Offa's Twisted Wye Kanter



A Date For Your Diaries!

Sunday 24th April 2022

Thanks so much to the South Wales LDWA Group volunteers who will be hosting the event! Now that we have enough people to 'run' the day, all other South Wales LDWA Group members are welcome to enter!

Ang	Nisha
Norma	Guido
Enrique	Stuart
Andrew	Ferne
Simon	Jason
Tony	David
Jamie	

For more information click [here!](#)

To enter the event, click [here!](#)

To see what you might enjoy, click [here!](#)

Answers To December's Leekie's Brain Teazer



asymmetric uphill = Caerphilly Summits
foresight sharpen = Three Rings of Shap
adderley lawn weens = Wensleydale Wander
ardour overborne suit = Reservoir Roundabout
arnhem hurt odor = Round Rotherham
aggy cathleen lovell = Goyt Valley Challenge
northern thalamic = Chiltern Marathon
alaska lows screw = Across Wales Walk
bitchy mell shikoku = Bullock Smithy Hike
afghan alcott firm = Gatcliff Marathon



Nobody entered the competition!

Caption Competition



What's happening 'ere then!!?

The best caption as chosen by the editor will win a prize!
Entries to southwalesldwa@live.co.uk by 15.05.21

N.B. Both 'models' (victims) and photographer have provided permission for photo to be used!



Leekie Meets Mike Batt



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

I started walking regularly with the group in January 2015. Once I tried a 30-miler I was hooked. That's 7 years that have passed very quickly...!

2 Where did you hear about the Group?

I heard about the LDWA from a work colleague who had done some LDWA challenge walks. It was a surprise to me - I tended to do my long walks solo and rather presumed that no-one else wanted to do these distances. I picked an easier-looking walk off the South Wales Group website, spoke to the walk leader (Gwyn Matthews) and was very relieved to find that I could keep up with the pace.

3 What do like best about the Group?

There's a lot to like. Walking with the Group has really diversified my walking. I've met some great people and whilst I still walk solo, I do really enjoy meeting and walking with Group members and the eclectic conversations that we have. I've received lots of encouragement and support and try to give a bit of this back.

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

Well, the Vale of Glamorgan is clearly underrated and the best walking area..... I have to believe this as I live here and spent much of lockdown walking around it! However, I do have a soft spot for the Black Mountain in the west of the National Park - a lovely, wild and untamed area. The South Wales Valleys are beautiful and fascinating and come close behind - I'm slowly getting to know them.

5 How many LDWA 100 mile walks have you completed?

I've completed five 100s and I am now signed up for my sixth - The Trans-Pennine 100 in 2022. Strangely addictive... a great event to build my walking year around.

6 What is your favourite challenge event?

This is definitely the annual 100. I'm quite a fan of our local Taith Torfaen too, and do a loop or two of this most years.

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

I'll try for half-and-half.

8 Do you wear shoes or boots?

It depends on the conditions and my mood! I wear shoes a lot and walking with our Group has taught me not to worry about wet feet. But I have finally found some truly waterproof boots (Meindl Bhutans) and combining these with gaiters will keep my feet dry in any conditions - so I will wear these sometimes.

9 What is your favourite sandwich filling on a walk?

Extra-mature Cheddar Cheese, loads of red onion and a smidgeon of pickle.

10 What's your ideal walking distance?

I do like a long day out, and 30-40 miles is generally ideal - even in winter! If I haven't had a long walk for a couple of weeks, I do miss it.



Twitter is being used to promote South Wales LDWA. If interested, our Twitter page can be located at: @SouthWalesLDWA

We now have 290 followers and this number grows every month!

Come along and be a 'twit!'



Do you want to see further editions of the Leekie's Blether?

Should we consign it to the virtual bin?
If we keep it, does this local format work?
If not, what could be done to improve it?

Please email: southwalesldwa@live.co.uk