



LONG DISTANCE

LDWA

WALKERS ASSOCIATION

SOUTH WALES GROUP



“LEEKIE’S BLETHER”

JULY 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: southwales.walksec@ldwa.org.uk



Chair's Update

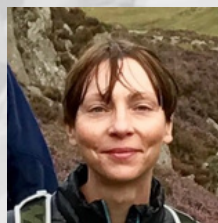
I walked into Philipstown the other evening, it was a lovely sunny evening and I was amazed at how much effort the community had made in getting the bunting and flags ready for the Jubilee Weekend. Preparation is everything if you want to go large, and we have our own event this weekend, the 100. I'm sure that you've all been putting in the miles and research, the preparation is certainly worth it. I'm looking forward to seeing new parts of the Pennines and I really like the night walking and walking into the dawn. I'm hoping for Jelly and Ice-cream when it comes too!

We've had many challenges these past few years, the 100 is one that we're actually looking forward to, but all challenges require the same grit, determination to get us through it, and I think it's these qualities that have helped see us come through to the otherside of all that's gone on over the past two years.

Whatever lies ahead, we can still walk, still see our friends and still listen to the birds and see the flowers. I wish you all the best for the 100 and look forward to seeing you there.

Best wishes

Jason



Walk Secretary's Update

Hello all

I'm writing this just before the Trans-Pennine 100 takes place, so I truly hope that the weather was kind and all those who entered had a fantastic walk.

The walks programme has continued to provide us with some outstanding days in the hills. At the time of writing the epic Spring Loosener (albeit the last one) and hugely popular 7 Peaks of Abergavenny have both taken place, thank you Mike Batt! I'm now personally looking forward the Taith Torfaen walks in celebration of the LDWA's 50th anniversary, which will have come and gone by the time this newsletter lands. I hope to have seen many of you there.

As always, thank you to our walk leaders for your time and effort in leading for us. If you ever fancied leading a walk but felt a little unsure about it, read on to David Morgan's article on 'How can we help you lead your first social walk'.

I seem to remember mentioning in the last Blether that I may attempt my first 50 mile walk this year. There is nothing quite like making a public announcement to spur one into action. I have now indeed completed my first 50 and it was the toughest thing I've done to date (not surprisingly). The last 20 miles were so hard. I'm definitely not yet a convertee to the 50 plus club, but I may try another one just to see how it goes next time...

It's also so good to see so many people taking part in different challenge events and long distance trails this year; I'm loving Leekie's travels and seeing what others have got up to. I've just completed the Isle of Wight's 'Round the island in three days' walk (so much more civilised than the straight through version in 36 hours or even the 24-hour option, which I didn't even know was a thing until I got talking to the walk leader). I can thoroughly recommend the 3-day option for those who haven't tried it yet.

And a small note to self before I sign off... I must remember not to pull silly faces on camera in case I end up in a caption competition!

Hope to see you outside in the sunshine soon, happy walking one and all.

Sara



South Wales LDWA has an active WhatsApp page. Why not get involved and keep up to date with local matters? Email southwales@ldwa.org.uk and join!



MERCHANDISE

Gear up for the summer "Challenge Walk" scene with Leekie merchandise.

Replace that faded, ripped, snagged and much loved T-Shirt!

Wear "Leekie" with pride and be smart for Leekie's Travels!

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)

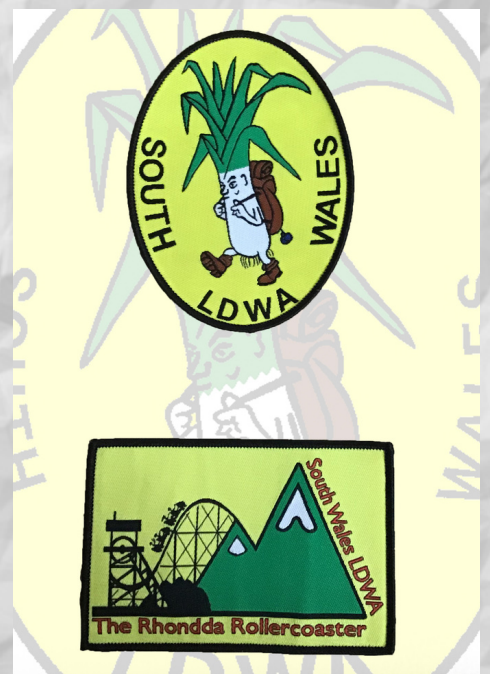
Prices

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.



The Trans-Pennine 100



Congratulations to all South Wales LDWA members who successfully completed either the marshals' or main event. Particular congratulations to David Morgan for successfully walking his 20th LDWA 100 and Gerry Jackson for his 25th. And, to those who were unsuccessful this time, our commiserations and "Pob Lwc" in 2023! A video of the marshals' event can be seen by [clicking here!](#)

And, to those South Wales LDWA Group members who travelled to South Yorkshire to run Checkpoint 14 at Tankersley Welfare Hall, Pilley, 85 miles into the event, thank you for giving up time to support the entrants, particularly as your checkpoint was open from 07:30 on Saturday morning through to 01:54 on Sunday. All agreed that it was wonderful to enter the checkpoint and be looked after by friends. So, a big thank you to:

Ferne Davies, Colin Knight, Peter Lamont, Sara Down, Rod Hollands, Andrew Clabon, Shirley Hume, Rhys Pippard, Angela Pippard, Hannah Brown and David Morgan.



The Trans-Pennine 100



The Trans-Pennine 100



Offa's Twisted Wye Kanter - 24.04.22



On Sunday 24.04.22, South Wales LDWA Group hosted Offa's Twisted Wye Kanter. The event attracted 127 entries and after a number of no-shows, 99 entrants started on one of the four routes. Interestingly, because the South Wales LDWA Group partnered with Chepstow Walking Festival, most of the entrants were not LDWA members and consequently we were able to advertise the benefits of LDWA membership. Hopefully some will go on to join the LDWA.

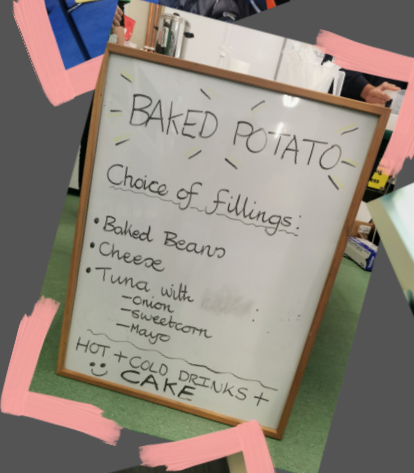
Thank-you to the following South Wales LDWA Group members who ensured that the day was a success.

Andrew Clabon, Jason Winney, Nisha Szmocki, Guido Szmocki, Stuart Bain, Enrique Santafe, Simon Pickering, Ang Williams, Norma Lloyd, Ferne Davies, Tony Alcock, Jamie Lewis, Valmai Lewis, Gill Morgan and David Morgan.

You can view the results by clicking [here](#).

A short video of the event made by Simon Pipe can be seen by clicking [here](#).





"WHAT CAN WE DO TO HELP YOU LEAD YOUR FIRST SOCIAL WALK?"

By David Morgan

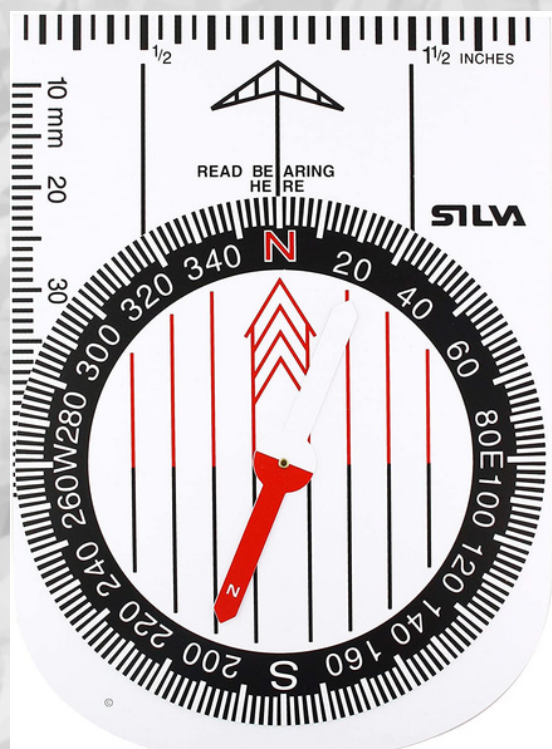


"What can we do to help you lead your first social walk?" This was a question asked of me when I had been an active member of the Group for a few months. I guess it was a valid question at the time as in the early noughties when I was first getting involved, the pool of potential walk leaders was very small, and I was being encouraged to join in and become an active part of the Group. I was happy to get involved as I was competent at navigation, regularly put walks together for my own consumption and I therefore knew that I had the skills to deliver a walk that I hoped others would enjoy.

But, what if I wasn't competent at navigation? What if I hadn't put a walk together before? How could I obtain the necessary navigational skills or overcome any apprehension about leading a walk for others, and what could have been done to help me lead my first social walk?

So, let's turn this article and ask you the question? What could be done to help **YOU** lead your first social walk?

The good news is that there is a lot of support from the experienced walk leaders in the South Wales LDWA Group. After all, everybody wants each other to succeed as it's in all of our interests to see the Group thriving and presenting a varied walks programme. So, for starters, you're not on your own and indeed, it is probably a really good idea to link up with an experienced walk leader so that the whole process can be enjoyed with another.



The first question you might be asking yourself is 'where could I lead a walk?'

You might wish to lead a walk in your local area for the first time as you are more comfortable on your 'doorstep'. In addition, the South Wales LDWA Group has, over many years, and due to the outstanding work by Gerry Jackson, (**see article on page 14 by Gerry**) created a database of past walks. These walks can be viewed on maps, GPX files downloaded and photos viewed. So, if you don't want to create a walk from scratch, have a look at the '**Past Walks**' section on our local website or visit the '**South Wales Section**' on the main LDWA site for inspiration.

For many walk leaders, the walk recce is often the best part of the whole walk leading process. But, it's possible that you're not completely confident at map reading or navigating across different types of terrain on your own. This is where the support and friendship in the South Wales LDWA Group will reap dividends and there are experienced walk leaders who will be more than happy to help

you with the planning stage and then join you on the walk recce itself. Personally, I have enjoyed some wonderful days out with others as we have either checked my routes or I have supported others in checking theirs. On your recce you will want to ensure that your chosen route is safe, you will want to look for places that the Group could have its breaks, where you might take alternative paths if the weather on the day is challenging, and also have an idea about how long the walk is going to take. In addition, you might wish to identify local facts that you can share with the Group at various stages in order to add interest.



So, your route is now sorted and it's now time to advertise your walk. This can be done digitally on the South Wales LDWA Group '**Walks Planner**' but you might also wish to contact our Walks Secretary, Sara Down, and have a chat about what you're planning. Sara can be **emailed** and she will be very happy to provide advice and support. The Walks Planner asks you to grade your walk and experienced walk leaders can provide advice on how this should be done. It's really important to pay attention to this part of the walk description as if you advertise your walk as 'easy' but it is fundamentally brutal, then attendees will be in for a shock and their expectations affected.

And, then you are ready to lead your walk. So, let's reassure potential new walk leaders now; South Wales LDWA Group is a very, very easy Group to lead for.



People will be extremely grateful that you have volunteered to enable them to have a walk and if you get things slightly wrong (it happens to the best of us) then so be it. They wouldn't be out on a walk if it wasn't for you, and secretly, some of us are grateful as the extra mileage is all noted in the diary!!

But, to ease your apprehension, why not jointly lead the walk with the person who might have helped you with your planning? You might have seen Group walks being jointly led in recent months (29.01.22 & 05.03.22) and the advantage of joint walks is that the walk leader can take time away from the front and enjoy the social side of the process whilst the partner takes the lead.

Honestly, leading walks for the South Wales LDWA Group is so rewarding; people are always grateful, will appreciate the effort you have gone to in order to provide them with a day out and **YOUR** contribution will lead to a sustainable and varied future for all of us!

Leekie's Blether always needs articles written by South Wales LDWA Group members. Please submit your articles to southwalesldwa@live.co.uk by **15.09.22** for inclusion in the October edition!



The Return Of Leekie's Travels



When our Facebook page was active, a popular feature enjoyed by members was 'Leekie's Travels'! Well, with so many new members having joined our thriving club, it seemed like a good idea to reintroduce Leekie's Travels. So, promote "The Leek", send in photos of yourself wearing Leekie when on your travels and we'll collate a montage of them here in the Blether!



Leekie on the Elbe,
Hamburg



A collection of Leekies
at The Scoop, City Hall, London
at the start of the Capital Challenge



Leekie on
Walla Crag in the
Lake District as he pursues the
Wainwrights!



A duo of Leekies in Madeira!



Leekie with
Mini (LDWA Member 35644c)
on Rhinns of Kells, Dumfries



A pair of
Leekies at the
start of the Yorkshire Wolds Way



Leekie enjoying the Cleveland Way

Leekie is a resourceful character! Here they are keeping a pot of tea piping hot!

Two Leekies on the Snowdonian Slate Trail

A pair of Leekies on the Lycian Way, Turkey above the town of Kas

Leekie In the warm climate of the Samarian Gorge, Crete

Leekie trekking in Romania

South Wales LDWA Features on BBC Radio Wales "Country Focus"

South Wales LDWA Group members Shirley Hume and David Morgan were asked to meet a journalist from BBC Radio Wales 'Country Focus' radio show where they discussed long distance paths in Wales and long distance walking as a sport.

It featured on BBC Radio Wales at 7am on Sunday 1st May '22.

To listen to the show, click [here!](#)



"THE SOUTH WALES LDWA WALKS DATABASE"

By Gerry Jackson



Introduction

Over the last 14 years the South Wales Local Group of the LDWA has amassed a database of walking routes derived from the group's walks programme. These take the form of GPX[1] files recorded during the walk by GPS devices such as those sold by SatMap and Garmin. Currently[2] the database holds 527 walking routes, albeit with some duplication when a walk is repeated. This note describes the history and evolution of the walks database into its current form and acceptance of the idea by the LDWA and incorporation into a national LDWA walks database.



Initial Steps

The initial idea of recording routes was due to Alun Jones, a long standing member of our local group, who bought a SatMap GPS in 2008 and started recording routes as he walked with the group. Sometime later he asked and received permission to use our website to hold the recorded routes. He subsequently wrote software to display routes on an Ordnance Survey (OS) 1:50000 map on a computer display using the free OS

OpenSpace service. He also made that accessible to all group members via a form that searched the database for walks returning a list of walks that met the criteria entered into the form. At the same time he used a free website gallery program to save photographs taken by group members during group walks[3].

At the same time the main website carried on independently of Alun's efforts to include other items such as listing the walks programme, both past and present in list form. Another independent item introduced by the group's Walks Secretary at the time was an online planning spreadsheet where members could enter future walks into the group's programme which subsequently appeared in Strider and on the national website.

2021	Barry Island to Llantwit Major , 14 miles, Saturday 19th January 2008, Location , Details
2020	Wentwood Winter Wander , 18 miles, Saturday 2nd February 2008, Location , Details
2019	Over The Edge With Wendy , 17 miles, Sunday 17th February 2008, Location , Details
2018	4 Ravens, 3 Mountains, 2 Rivers and 1 Silent Valley , 16 miles, Sunday 2nd March 2008, Location , Details
2017	Epynt Way - Third and Last Stage. , 22 miles, Saturday 15th March 2008, Location , Details
2016	Cwm Cwareli and Tor y Foel , 23 miles, Saturday 12th April 2008, Location , Details

[1]A GPX file is a standard file format that can be loaded into all GPS devices or displayed on a map

[2] Probably more when you read this.

[3] This is another story that, with suitable arm twisting/bribes/blackmail may appear in a future Leekie's Blether.

Development of a New Website

By about 2013/14 the website was looking rather dated and increasingly difficult to maintain, so a decision was made to re-develop the website. After a survey of possible systems and some experimentation we settled on using a free website infrastructure called WordPress to build the site. WordPress was chosen because it was free, suitable, used worldwide by millions of websites, well supported and hence likely to be around for the foreseeable future. Also we wanted to integrate the four aspects of the website which are: the main website, the walks database, the photograph gallery and creation of the ongoing walks programme. The latter evolved into the Walks Planner[4].

The new website that, with Alun's agreement, integrated the above four aspects went live in January 2015. The way the integrated system works is:

- A group member books a date in the Walks Planner, entering details in an online form.
- Walk details are saved in the database and can be updated as required.
- To meet Strider publication deadlines the Walks Secretary copies[5] walk details into the LDWA database for later publication in Strider.
- After a walk has been completed the Walks Secretary uploads the GPX file and photographs if these have been submitted.

The screenshot shows a web browser window displaying a form titled "Create or Edit a Walk". The form is part of a WordPress website, as indicated by the URL and the navigation menu. The form fields are as follows:

- Walk Title:** Bad Rain (74)
- Date:** 19-11-2022
- Area:** South Wales
- Status:** Provisional
- Distance (miles):** 18
- Start time:** 08:30
- Location:** Llanthony Free Car Park
- Grid References:**
 - Meet:** SO289279
 - Start:** SO289279
 - Finish:** SO289279
- Description:** Exploration of one valley in Black Mountains. Will visit ridges as well as side valleys.
- Maps:**
 - Explorer:** 13
 - Landranger:** 161
- Walk Grade:** ***
- Ascent (feet):** 4300
- Other Notes:** Good paths except for circa 1 mile of rough ground. Poles very helpful in one part of walk. No need to book; just turn up.
- Contact/Leader:** David Morgan
- Telephone:** (empty)
- Email:** southwalesldwa@live.co.uk
- Stop Press:** Any updates, cancellation etc
- GPX file:** (empty)
- Photographs:** (empty)

Buttons: Save, Copy, Reset, Calendar

Access to the walks database and photographs was initially via the annual walk lists but, with later software development, could also be searched by distance or selection of Leekie markers on an OS map.

LDWA Database

After the walks database was successfully used for some time the national LDWA IT Manager decided to develop a similar system for the LDWA. So the company maintaining the LDWA website was tasked to develop it and the Walks Planner for the LDWA. Unfortunately they failed to complete it before the LDWA IT budget ran out – so development was suspended. Subsequently in October 2019 development resumed without our involvement when a simpler walks database was developed that could be used by all local groups. The LDWA Walks

[4] Yet another story to be told.

[5] Unfortunately the Walks Secretary still has to manually upload the walks programme into the LDWA database.

Planner was abandoned.

With the number of GPX files that we had it was hoped that an automatic bulk upload of our GPX files could be done to make them available on the LDWA website. Sadly this did not happen due to a freeze on further development of the LDWA website.

A Setback

After being used successfully for several years the OS OpenSpace service was closed down in August 2021 and replaced with OS DataHub. So we had to withdraw the display of walking routes on a map and consider an alternative using OS DataHub. However it appeared that there could be a significant financial cost that we weren't prepared to risk. So, in keeping with the longer term aim of moving the South Wales website to the National LDWA server, it was decided to use the LDWA website's map display facility that was described above.

Recovery

In February 2022 we formed a small team of five (David Morgan, Simon Pickering, Andrew Clabon, Rob Richardson and myself) to share the job of uploading all the GPX files to the LDWA website. This was completed in April this year. We also took the opportunity to upload a link to the photographs on the Flickr website. This gives LDWA members the ability to select, view and download routes of walks held in the database and to view any photographs taken on the walk.

Accessing the LDWA Database

This is available from the LDWA website by using the following menu items and links:

In the horizontal menu of the LDWA home page select **Local Groups > Walks Database**
·In the Social Walks Database page select **Wales >South Wales**

In the Walks Database page you can read an Overview then choose either **Select Walk via Map** to display a map with markers or **Select Walk via List** that displays a form to enter various search options.

Selecting an individual walk takes you to a page that displays details and, after scrolling down, other information about the walk including a Photographs link and a link to view and/or download the GPX file if any. The route is displayed on a map – unfortunately not an OS map.

To download a GPX file you need to login with your LDWA membership number and password to download a GPX file.

That is the current situation and is likely to remain that way until the new LDWA website appears. In the meantime GPX files will be uploaded to both the LDWA and our own databases.

South Wales LDWA Features On Weatherman Walking!



In October 2021, South Wales LDWA member, David Morgan met Derek Brockway as he walked a short section of the Monmouthshire Way from Trellech to Monmouth.

The episode was aired in May and can be viewed on BBC iPlayer. So, if you want to see the episode where the South Wales LDWA Group is mentioned, then click "[here](#)" and you will be taken to the episode!



"MY VISIT TO THE 2022 AGM"

By Sara Down



As a relatively new member to the LDWA, when I first heard that an AGM was held each year, I felt a bit removed from it. It felt like an event for long standing members or for people who had something to say.

I attended the 2019 AGM meeting (but not the full weekend) when it was held in Gloucester, it wasn't too far to drive for a day trip, and I wanted to see what it was all about. This AGM took place during the logo consultation process, and it was interesting to see the level of passion, and also discord, that this topic generated.

I didn't really give the AGM much further thought over the following years until I became a committee member with the South Wales group (I'll share a bit more about my role in another article, watch this space!) and thought it might be a great chance to connect with people from other groups and get a bit closer to how things work, so I signed up for the full weekend.

Day 1 - Arriving and the workshop

Turning up on the Friday evening I felt a little overwhelmed. I had gone alone and although I did know a few people who would be attending, it felt a bit daunting arriving and seeing groups of people all chatting animatedly with each other and not having someone to automatically gravitate towards.

I found my room and dropped off my bags and headed downstairs for the evening buffet. Happily, I met someone I know from the Dorset group and then two more people from the Isle of Wight and joined their table for supper (thank you John, Jill and Jim!). The food was very good and I certainly felt more settled with people to chat to.



I then headed off to the workshop. It was about the Strider consultation. There doesn't seem to be any question that Strider will continue, but the consultation and review process is to check that it's content and format is still the right fit for its audience. What do people want from Strider now?

We were given an update about the consultation process and then split into smaller groups to discuss if the questions they were asking in the survey felt like the right ones, and did we have any other questions that we thought should be included. Our group came up with a couple of ideas, which were duly put forward when we re-grouped.

A quiz followed the workshop but I'm afraid by this time, after a full day at my normal job and a two and half hour drive, I'd hit the wall and bailed out, heading up to my room for an early night. I learnt the next day that the quiz had been excellent, with a fair bit of competition between the groups. It sounded like everyone had fun with a few people staying up much later to carry on with their evening.

Day 2 - The social walk and after-dinner talk

After a large (delicious) cooked breakfast, I joined the 'A' group at the front of the hotel for an 8am start on the 24 mile walk led by Anne Wade, from the Heart of England group.



It was such a good walk, full of history and interest, varied landscapes, town and fields, tracks and footpaths, a bit of everything thrown into the mix. The weather held too, so that was a great bonus.

But the biggest enjoyment for me was meeting people. As we all know, on a long walk you really get to connect with people. I had some great conversations, met people

that I have emailed but never met in person, talked about the meetup trial that some of the groups are taking part in and made many new friends over course of day. That evening at supper I had so many new people to talk to, so many more names and faces that I now knew.

The after-dinner talk was by Mary Mansfield on her walk across the Pacific Crest Trail. It was brilliant and inspiring. If you'd like to know more her walk, or about Mary, have a look at her [YouTube](#) channel.

I highly recommend watching some of her clips, the journey was breath taking.

(Editor - I agree. I watched all her Vlogs as she walked north along the PCT and recommended that she be the next AGM speaker! Pleased it went well!)



Day 3 - The AGM

On Sunday the AGM started at 10am, which meant a more leisurely start to the day. Some of my new friends joined me at breakfast and I felt like I'd gone from being on the very edge of the event to the heart of the event in just two days. Some more South Wales members turned up too, so our South Wales representation quadrupled that morning.

The AGM is a mix of formal proceedings (albeit not run in a formal way) and recognition and celebration of people's commitments and achievements. Some of the committee members were stepping down, so they got special thanks for their work on the NEC. The AGM meeting itself is quite quick and the conclusion to the weekend. However, the big highlight for me was connecting with people. I had such a good time that I'm now looking further afield to see if I can join some of the other groups on their social walks soon.

If you haven't been to an AGM before I would highly recommend going to the full weekend. It brought home all the things I love about being an LDWA member: people and connections, while doing an activity that I love.



"PICOS DE EUROPA"

By Hugh Woodford



For more than 20 years I had wanted to visit northern Spain's Picos de Europa. One of the lesser walked and, therefore, quieter mountainous regions in Europe, it has some rugged mountains, which always appeals to me. A handful of the summits are over 2500 metres. The highest, Torre de Corredo, is 2648 m, while the best known is Naranjo de Bulnes at 2519 m. In May 2018, on the day of the Royal wedding, Heather and I headed off to Stanstead airport for our breakfast-time flight the next morning. After a sleepless night spent trying to find a space on the airport floor we departed on the flight to Asturias. Our EXPLORE tour leader, Juanjo, met all of our group at the airport and drove us in his minibus to the pretty coastal port of Llanes, where we ate and spent a pleasant couple of hours before driving to our first overnight stop.

After the first night we were driven to Juanjo's small Hotel Rural Casa Cipriano in Sotres, at 1045 m the highest village in the Picos. Sotres is a quiet little village with more houses than residents. Over the years the permanent population has declined and is now around 65-70. Apart from the Hotel there is a gift shop and very small general store, but not much else.



The EXPLORE holiday gave us 6 days of walking. Of those, 3 days stood out.

Day 2 - Vega de Urriello refuge at the base of Naranjo des Bulnes.

Juanjo drove us in his minibus down to the valley floor, across the river, and up to our start point, passing the

tiny hamlet of Pandebano where, in AD718, a battle took place between the Visigothic Christians and the remnants of a somewhat depleted Moorish army. We walked up to a saddle at 1212 m, from where the huge monolith of Naranjo des Bulnes (Pico Urriello) came into view.

In places, the path was narrow. Nearing the refuge there was snow to negotiate. Some of us were ok, but others struggled, even though it was straightforward enough. Somewhat naively, I had expected to be able to summit Naranjo des Bulnes. Wrong! It is, in fact, a huge slab rising almost vertically for approximately 400 m and only accessible by climbing. The first 120 m is a climb, then there is an easy scramble of 250 m, taking 2.5-3 hours in all. Never mind, it still made for some good photos from near the refuge, which is at an altitude of 1953 m. On the descent, not far from the finish, we stopped at the tiny de la Terenosa refuge (1315 m), where Juanjo had a chat with some of the locals while we rested or wandered around taking more photos.



Day 4 – Tresviso, Urdon.

It was a short drive up the road to a deserted village at Jito de Escarandi at 1395 m. Here a metal sculpture commemorates the finish of a stage of the 2015 La Vuelta a Espana, one of the 3 biggest annual cycle races in Europe (Tour de France and Giro d'Italia being the other 2). The road we had just been driven up has a maximum gradient of 24% near the finish! The walk followed an old shepherd's path through Valdediezma beech forest and pastures to Sobra valley, then up to the tiny village of Tresviso (population 59 in 2020) at 925 m, where we stopped for lunch. Being so remote, the road to the village was only completed in 1991. Until then, the postman made the weekly delivery on foot, starting from Urdon, only 6 km away but more than 800 m lower down in the valley floor.



As we started to descend, we got a view of what lay ahead. The footpath looked ridiculously steep (maximum gradient 30%) and zig-zaggy. Sections have good quality rubble and the views were fantastic. I still think it is the most spectacular footpath I have ever walked on. About half way down we stopped at a level spot to wait for the slower walkers to catch up. Looking up at a vertical cliff face, we could see a couple of vultures and their nest.

One of our group had a good magnification on her camera, so we were able to get a closer view of them. Once re-grouped, we carried on down to a bridge over the Rio Urdon, from where we could dip our hands and faces into the cold refreshing fast flowing water, before taking more photos. A short walk took us to where the minibus was waiting to take us back to Sotres.

There is an annual race, from Urdon to Tresviso, and the fastest time is 38 minutes 47 seconds. To get some idea of how good and steep the footpath is, check out this [YouTube video](#) to watch it.

Day 5 – Cares Gorge.

The minibus took us to Puento Poncebos at 218 m, where a medieval packhorse bridge spans the Cares river. This was the start point for the walk through the dramatic gorge of Garganta del Cares – a cleft over 1000 m deep and 12 km long. The path cuts into the cliffs in places and only with the aid of tunnels and bridges is it possible to traverse its entire length. After a bit of up and down in the early section it was relatively easy on a good wide path. At one point we looked down to the river some way below us and could see a number of vultures feeding on the carcass of a cow or goat which had, presumably, fallen to a nasty death. The small village of Cain at the end of the gorge was our lunch stop. They were preparing for a gruelling mountain race, Picos de Europa Ultra Trail, El Cainejo, due to take place within the next few days.

Progress on the way back seemed quicker. Heather had got up a real head of steam and was way out in front. After a slow start, I decided to try and catch her, but no chance, she was well out of sight. Towards the end I suddenly saw a vulture fly past just overhead. No time to take a photo

as it glided effortlessly and silently past me. As it dipped below me I got a great close up of its beautiful brown and golden wing feathers. What a truly spectacular gorge – quite rightly claiming to be the highlight of the 6 days walking holiday.

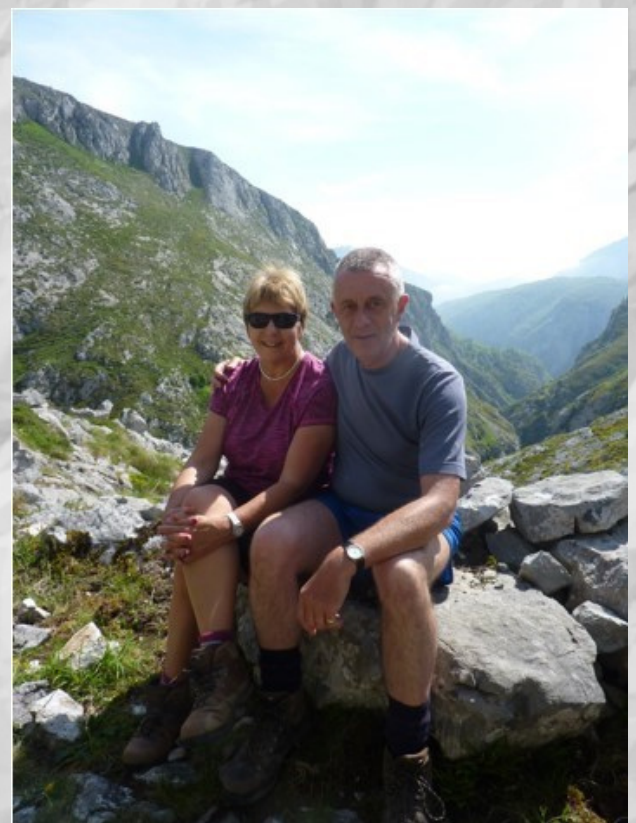


Our final evening meal at the hotel was different from usual, giving us a taste of the varied local cuisine. Afterwards, we retired to the bar, where I had my last couple of glasses of the smoothly delicious Grembergen – a dark brown Belgian bier that was on tap. The Champions League final between Real Madrid and Liverpool was on the tv so we sat and watched the second half. Although not necessarily a Liverpool fan I naturally wanted them to win. Unfortunately it was not to be, due in no small part to one of Wales' finest ever players. I think everyone was astounded by Gareth Bale's wonder goal – a goal worthy of winning any match and especially fitting for one of this magnitude.

The return home was fairly uneventful. Our flight was delayed by nearly a couple of hours. We were not told the reason why. The flight was very smooth and we landed at Stanstead in glorious hot sunshine. I had deliberately booked our coach so that we had a couple of hours in which to get through customs and have a meal before the journey home. Because of the delay we had bought sandwiches at Asturias airport to eat back in England. A mad dash through baggage collection and customs meant we were just about on time for our coach. It was, thankfully, slightly late and we eventually arrived in Newport at just about the due time. Back at home, while I was in the shower, Heather was watching the 10 o'clock news. What she saw made us both glad our flight back was delayed. That morning, thunder and lightning had knocked out the fuel supply at Stanstead and loads of flights were delayed as a result. Had we been flying through that it would have been nightmarish and frightening. Luckily, we had missed the bad weather that those on the Cinque Ports 100 had to contend with.

What was our verdict on the weeks holiday?

It had surpassed our expectations and I would thoroughly recommend the Picos de Europa. It is rugged in parts, the scenery is superb, it was quiet in May with very few people around, some of the roads are steep and winding but good fun. Our leader Juanjo was excellent and knew pretty much everything about everything local, having lived there all his life and is an all round mountaineer. Just a couple of hours flying time from the UK makes it an ideal destination, although EXPLORE now fly to Bilbao instead of Asturias.



Leekie's Blether will be next published in October 2022. If you have an article for publication, please submit to: southwalesldwa@live.co.uk by 15.09.22



Leekie Meets Cheryl Lewellyn



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

My first walk with the SWLDWA was the “Bluebell Walk” in April 2008. I officially joined in August that year.

2 Where did you hear about the Group?

I joined The Ramblers in 2007 and met George Baugh who told me all about the LDWA which he also belonged to. Despite the most dreadful weather forecast in March 2008 for the day of the Abergavenny 3 Peaks challenge, the night before the event, we managed to persuade George by telephone (and his friend Rod Hollands who we didn't know at the time) to navigate us around the route which we just about managed to complete. The weather was so bad all day and not an enjoyable experience, but exhilarating at the same time and I knew thereafter I wanted to do more of the same thing and decided long distance walking was the way to go for me. So thank you very much George and Rod!

3 What do like best about the Group?

Our group is full of friendly and talented people and over the years the friendships I have made have become as important as the walking itself. Long may they continue.

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

This is a difficult one, but I think it must be the Carmarthen Fans. It was one of the earliest walks I did with the group and the views were spectacular. Also, it's where I met the legendary Bob Smith who was leading!

5 How many LDWA 100 mile walks have you completed?

I've completed 8 100-mile challenge events - hopefully 9 by the time this issue of Leekie's Blether is sent out!

6 What is your favourite challenge event?

I don't do many challenge events, but I always look forward to our own The Gwyn Matthews' Rhondda Rollercoaster because of the route itself, my involvement with it from the beginning and the memories of its co-founder.

7 You arrive at a LDWA checkpoint. What cake would you like to eat?

Although not available on any challenge event other than our own, ideally I would love to be offered one of Norma's custard slices or Judith's sticky ginger cake.

8 What is your favourite piece of walking equipment?

My very old Paramo Alta jacket which comes out every winter and still keeps me warm and dry. That and nurofen plus - especially on a 100!

9 What is your favourite sandwich filling on a walk?

Egg Mayonnaise.

10 What's your ideal walking distance?

20 miles. Home by early evening - perfect!

Caption Competition



The following suggestions were received from South Wales LDWA Group members.

"We're going over the edge - save yourself Jase - undo the straps"

"yikes Jase I hope your straps hold!"

"Oooh Jason. Too many baked beans for breakfast!"

And the winner submitted by Hugh Woodford,

"Don't dive Jason-someone's pulled the plug out!!!"

Photo Competition

A different type of competition this edition!

South Wales LDWA members who are Hadrian Hundredeers will definitely be at an advantage for this competition!

But, to give all a fair chance, I can advise that one of the hills in this image is called Viewing Hill.

Your task, if you are willing to accept it, is to identify the **six figure grid reference** from where this photo was taken and the closest will win a 2 finger Kit Kat! Never ever say that I'm not generous!!!

Answers to: southwalesldwa@live.co.uk by 30.09.22



Leekie's Blether Has A New Home

Thanks to Sara Down, historical editions of Leekie's Blether are now stored on the South Wales LDWA Website under the 'Leekie's Blether' menu. They can be accessed by clicking [here](#).



FORTHCOMING EVENTS

South Wales Group Social Walks

Saturday 2nd July 2022 - "Wilder vs The Wilder" - 20 miles

Saturday 23rd July 2022 - "Not So Gazonked" - 24 miles

Saturday 20th August 2022 - "Three Circles of Monmouth Marshals' Walk - 27/22/18/14/13/9/5 miles

Saturday 8th October 2022 - "In Search Of Colour" - 26 miles

Saturday 19th November 2022 - "Bad Rain" - 18 miles

More social walks will be added to the walks planner as walk leaders advertise their walks. For a full update on what is available, please click [here](#) to view the walks programme.

LDWA Challenge Events – Take Leekie On Tour!

Click on the name of the event to enter!

Saturday 2nd July 2022 - "[Ulfkil Stride 2022 Challenge](#)" - 24 miles - West Yorkshire LDWA

Saturday 9th July 2022 - "[High Weald Walk](#)" - 27/20/15 miles - Kent LDWA

Saturday 16th July 2022 - "[A Foot in Two Dales](#)" - 50 miles - Irregulars LDWA

Saturday 23rd July 2022 - "[The Summer Poppyline](#)" - 31.5/18 miles - Norfolk & Suffolk LDWA

Saturday 13th August 2022 - "[Open to Offas](#)" - 23/15.5 miles - Merseystide LDWA

Sunday 14th August 2022 - "[Birmingham Canal Canter](#)" - 26/18 miles - Heart of England LDWA

Sunday 21st August 2022 - "[Dorset Duddle 2022](#)" - 32 miles - Dorset LDWA

Saturday 27th August 2022 - "[33rd Smugglers Trod](#)" - 25/17 miles - Yorkshire Coast LDWA

Saturday 27th August 2022 - "[Three Circles of Monmouth](#)"

27/22/18/14/13/9/5 miles - South Wales LDWA

Sunday 28th August 2022 - "[White Cliffs Challenge](#)" - 51/20.5 miles - Kent LDWA

Thursday 1st September 2022 - "[Cotswold Challenge 'ANYTIME'](#)" - 26/18 miles - Bristol & West LDWA

Saturday 10th September 2022 - "[15th Tour des Marches](#)" - 26/18/12 miles - Marches LDWA

Saturday 10th September 2022 - "[One Foot In The Gargrave](#)" - 23 miles - West Yorkshire LDWA

Saturday 17th September 2022 - "[Three Forests Way](#)" - 54 miles - Essex & Herts LDWA

Sunday 25th September 2022 - "[Chagford Challenge 2022](#)" - 30/19 miles - Cornwall & Devon LDWA

