

LONG DISTANCE

LDWA

WALKERS ASSOCIATION

SOUTH WALES GROUP



“LEEKIE’S BLETHER”

FEBRUARY 2024

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

From The Committee



Dear Members,

Trust you all had an enjoyable festive period (despite the wet weather) and have plenty of walking-related activity planned for 2024.

Having celebrated our 40th anniversary last year, this year South Wales is looking forward to another busy year that will include the unveiling of our new 50-mile challenge event, Cymoedd Sir Fynwy, as well as our busy programme of social walks.

In addition to our own activities, South Wales continues to contribute to the running and development of the LDWA at the national level. As part of this, Sara Down and I attended the Local Groups' Weekend in Dorset in November where a number of themes of interest were put under the microscope. Among them were the structure and operations of the National Executive Committee (NEC), Communications/Marketing, IT and the national website.

The first theme relates to ensuring that the LDWA, which remains entirely volunteer run, is able to respond to the challenges of running a national organisation that is recognised as the governing body for "long distance walking" by Sport Wales, and its equivalents in England and Scotland. In recent years, the NEC has found it difficult to recruit people to the executive posts on the NEC and recent work has examined how that might be addressed. There hasn't been a change to the NEC's structure (yet!), which continues to have 12 members, but as vacancies arise consideration will be given to whether the role is still needed or can be adapted. The NEC is actively looking to build its capacity, with NEC members having been asked to break down their roles to see where further support is needed. In turn, this is seeing the development of supporting volunteer roles.

Communications was another area of focus, where discussions focussed on how we broaden awareness and interest in the LDWA including among younger people. Developing the organisation's social media reach is part of the ambition here, which again will require the support of volunteers.

It was encouraging to hear that the plans to revamp LDWA's website are starting to take shape and funding (on the anticipated budget at least) was available for this to progress. The current website is rather fragile and expensive to maintain, so this project will address those issues as well as introducing new and improved features - there is even talk of an App!

Simon Pickering
Secretary



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!

Mallorca's GR221



by Judith Fox

When my daughter discovered that she still had a week's annual leave to take, she came up with the brilliant idea of searching for some winter sun, and asked if I'd like to join her on a hiking holiday in Mallorca. I couldn't think of a more agreeable way to escape the grey days of November. We caught a cheap flight to Palma, and over the next five days we walked two thirds of Mallorca's GR221, or Drystone Way.

The GR221 travels the length of Mallorca's rugged mountain range, the Serra de Tramuntana, for a distance of just over 100 miles, from Port d'Andratx in the southwest of the island, to Pollença in the northeast.



As we had limited time, we started our trek in the beautiful village of Valldemossa, high up in the mountains. To cover the entire route takes most people 7-8 short days of varied and often very rugged terrain, with significant climbs and descents every day. Route finding was straightforward, and every day provided excellent walking in wild and beautiful scenery, over rocky limestone peaks, often

overlooking sandy beaches and rocky coves of the Mediterranean.

On the trek we stayed overnight in mountain refugis, which furnished very comfortable dormitory accommodation, usually in sympathetically restored rural buildings, up in the mountains, or in picturesque Mallorcan villages. The refugis were very good value - only fifteen euros per night for a bed, with the option of an additional evening meal for ten euros,

sometimes with local wine included, and breakfast for six euros. We booked the refugis in advance as we had read that they get very busy in summer months, although in November, when we travelled, they were quiet.

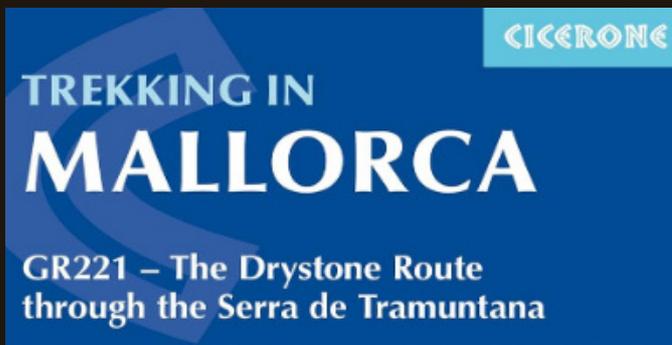


We loved staying in the refugis, and in the evenings we were able to chat with other walkers about the adventures of the day, and discuss what was to be expected on the following day. For me, the only negative to the refugis were the cold showers!!

The GR221 was a really brilliant trek. We enjoyed amazing scenery on our travels between sea level and mountain tops, including drystone cultivation terraces, snowpits, lush flowers, and olive and citrus groves. The sun shone for us all week, and we finished our holiday with two nights in a boutique hotel in Palma (expertly sourced by Miranda), eating fresh seafood and drinking aperol spritz.



As a short and budget friendly walking holiday, I can thoroughly recommend the GR221.



The 40th Anniversary Celebrations!

In September South Wales LDWA Group celebrated its 40th anniversary! Our Group had been created in September 1982 and the 40th Anniversary September edition of Leekie's Blether celebrated and documented how our Group had been formed with stories about some of the activities members had enjoyed, particularly during the early years.

So, it was with some excitement that South Wales LDWA Group members looked forward to being a part of the history of our Group during the weekend's activities in September.

Our friends from West Yorkshire LDWA Group travelled to South Wales to join us for the weekend. Prior to Covid, South Wales LDWA Group had travelled to West Yorkshire where we were taken on a selection of wonderful walks and royally entertained in a beautiful pub in Skipton. A decision was taken to invite West Yorkshire LDWA to join us and be a part of our 40th anniversary celebrations and it was wonderful to see so many friends travel south to join us on a weekend when the weather behaved and great walks were enjoyed.

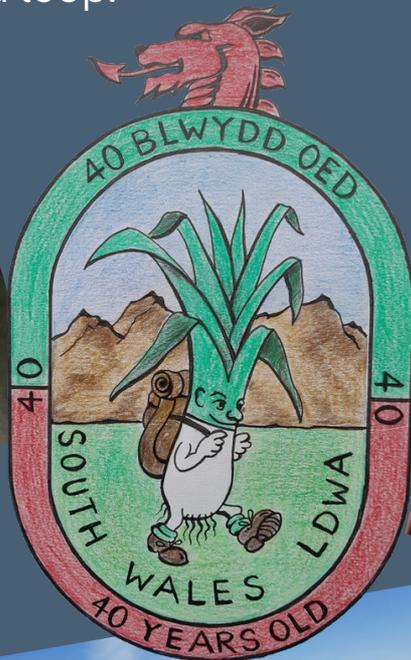
On the Saturday our walk started in Abergavenny and we enjoyed wonderful weather and far reaching views on a route that saw us visit Sugar Loaf, Crug Mawr, Partrishow and Deri.

In the evening our West Yorkshire friends joined us for a meal and light entertainment in the form of a LDWA quiz at St Michael's Church Hall. With a backdrop of photographs taken during our 40 year existence, our Chair Jason Winney thanked everyone for coming and presented our two founding members with wonderful paintings of themselves in the Welsh landscape. The paintings, made by Tony Alcock were seen to be of exquisite quality and will be treasured by Andrew Clabon and Gerry Jackson.

A wonderful 40th anniversary cake had been baked and decorated by Norma Lloyd and was widely admired by everyone prior to be it being cut and shared.

Credit and our heartfelt thanks must be given to Simon Pickering who organised the evening in Abergavenny thus ensuring that a wonderful time was had by all who attended.

On Sunday our second walk took our members and guests on two loops of our recently held Three Circles of Monmouth. The iconic Kymin, Newlands and Wye Valley were explored on the first loop followed by a walk through King's Wood on the second loop.





Cymoedd Sir Fynwy

As this article is typed, Cymoedd Sir Fynwy has attracted 181 entries for the full 50 mile event. Our books opened for the 30 mile option at 10am on 02.01.24 and we are hopeful that the additional and shorter distance will attract entrants.

Thanks so much to ALL South Wales LDWA members who have volunteered to help marshal on the event. As so many of you have committed yourselves to the weekend, it does mean that very few are going to have to work on the event for the full 24 hours. Most of you will have one job and will then be free to go home once your role is complete. So, from the organising team, A HUGE THANK YOU!

Don't forget, the event is on Saturday 13th & Sunday 14th April and the event starts at 10am and the entrants will head off into the Black Mountains on a tough 30 mile loop. The second loop is 20 miles long and explores the UNESCO World Heritage Forgotten Landscape above Blaenavon.

Our marshals' walk will take place on Saturday 22nd and Sunday 23rd June 2024!



A Dartmoor Backpack by Numbers

by Andrew Clabon



230 mile round trip drive
77 miles walked in total
25 new tors visited
21 A4 map print outs
17 miles was the longest day
10 miles was the shortest day
6 hours of rain on day 4
5 days walking
4 nights wild camping
2.5 days of dry feet
2 cafes plus 1 closed 😞
1 red deer sighted
1 hare sighted
1 brewery visited
0 Greggs sausage rolls!!



The Travels of Leekie

In this section of our Blether, photographs of members wearing our Leekie merchandise in various places in the UK and beyond are featured.

Do you have a photo of you wearing Leekie with pride? If so, then send it to southwalesldwa@live.co.uk



Leekie on two wheels in Portugal



Leekie at the start of the Cleveland Way



Leekie in South Lawson Park
New South Wales Australia



Leekie on the circuit of the
Valle Gran Rey in La Gomera



Leekie taking a well earned rest on Gratspitz
just above Alpbach



Leekie on safari in South Africa
complete with elephant!



Leekie at Bennet's Cross on Dartmmor



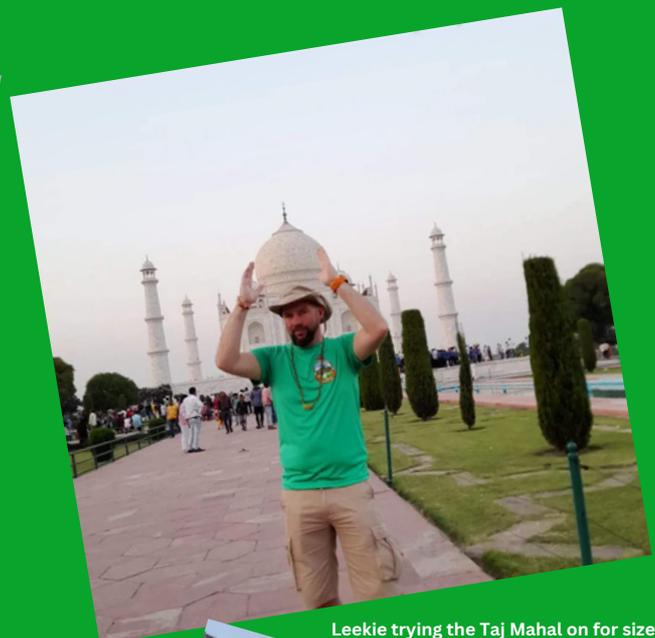
Leekie near the summit of La Gomera with Mt. Teide, Spain's highest mountain on Tenerife in the background



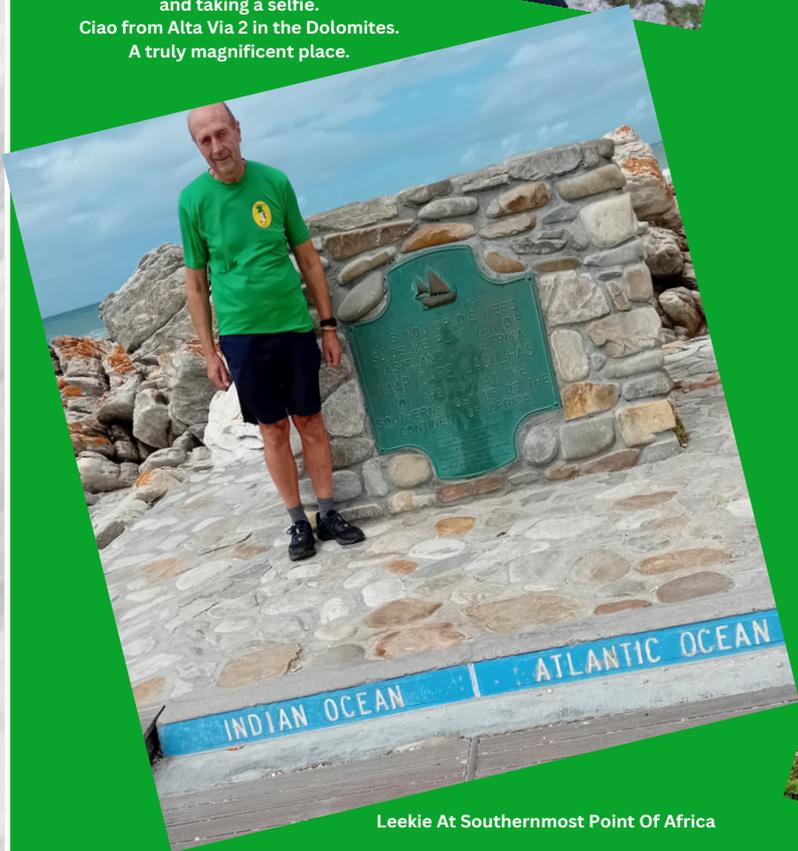
Leekie in The Lakes



Leekie hanging from a steel cable and taking a selfie. Ciao from Alta Via 2 in the Dolomites. A truly magnificent place.



Leekie trying the Taj Mahal on for size!



Leekie At Southernmost Point Of Africa



Leekie at Leather Tor on Dartmoor



Leekie at the summit of Goat Fell on the Isle of Arran



Leekie at Glacier Rock, Caravonica, Queensland, Australia



Leekie at the Cape of Good Hope

Please send your 'Travels of Leekie' photos to: southwalesldwa@live.co.uk
If you simply put them in WhatsApp, then the editor might not see them as he is not in the South Wales LDWA WhatsApp group.
Thanks very much in anticipation of receiving more great photos!

The Leekie's Blether can only survive if members are willing to write and submit articles so that they can be added and shared for your walking friends and associates to read.

No article is ever refused.

Articles are particularly welcome if they relate to walking trips, holidays or indeed anything that is likely to interest and enthuse others.

Please send to: southwalesldwa@live.co.uk



Leekie Meets Enrique Santafe



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

I joined the LDWA at the end of 2018 and had my first walk with South Wales beginning of 2019. It was difficult during Covid as I wasn't allowed to cross the border (I live in England). But once restrictions were lifted I was back like a shot.

2 Where did you hear about the Group?

A work colleague mentioned the LDWA but I must admit that when I looked at the website and saw 20-22 miles and 4000 feet ascent on average it felt a bit daunting. During the first 6 months I joined walks with various groups in my "vicinity", that's how I found the SW one.

3 What do like best about the Group?

The people are the best asset and of course the geography also helps.

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

Uhhmm it's like asking a father for his favour son. Every area has its uniqueness and beauty so I love them all equally. How about that for a diplomatic answer.

5 How many LDWA 100 mile walks have you completed?

None and don't have plans to enter them in the foreseeable future. Needless to say my colleagues have tried and failed to talk me into it. Ask me the question again in a few years.

6 What is your favourite challenge event?

A combination of significant ascents and descents keeping the flat to a minimum, no canal towpaths or urban areas involved.

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

Carrot cake always.

8 What is your favourite piece of walking equipment?

Salomon Quest 4D boots.

9 What is your favourite sandwich filling on a walk?

Sardines and tuna.

10 What's your ideal walking distance?

22 miles 4000 feet.