

Chairman's Chat **Phil Guest**

To everyone's surprise we have just experienced a record breaking summer. We needed this after last winter when so many walks were held under freezing conditions.

As a consequence of this years bountiful conditions we have enjoyed many of our walks under blue skies. It's been a good period for the group, some members providing their first led walk, always with scary thoughts 'Will anyone turn up?' 'Will I get lost and go the wrong way?' However none of these fears have resulted and it's good to see the result, Kath Adlard smiling happily at the walk programme meeting holding a surfeit of new walks.

I have just been reading a fascinating history of the Ordnance Survey 'Map of a Nation by Rachel Hewitt'. It's a heavy tome but full of the most interesting insights into how it began and the issues the early map makers faced. I suspect that most walkers take for granted the information and accuracy of the maps we rely on, to facilitate our rambles, but when you read that it was the Jacobite Rebellion that generated the initial need for maps in the UK and the difficulties faced in creating accurately measured distances that we have to be thankful for what is now available. I can recommend it.

Happy Rambling.

Our Local Footpaths **Graham Taylor**

Many members of the group have joined me on explorations of our local footpaths and several of the walks have appeared in our program.

Ours is a varied and interesting patch which we are lucky to have on our doorsteps. Now that the Ramblers have set about holding a Walks Library it seems like a good idea to preserve all our findings for all eternity on the web.

The intention would be to repeat the walks, bramble bashing as we go, document the walks and upload them in the RA format. No doubt we could provide a link from our website.

I would also upload the routes to the mapmywalk website to access a wider audience armed with a GPS.

Please contact me if you would help in doing this, probably on a weekly basis.

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Snowdon Weekend

A full report on the weekend in Snowdon, by Kevin White can be found on our website. Here are some personal reflections on two of the walks:

Carry On Climbing Paul Boniface

August Bank Holiday Ascent of Snowdon

I have often found that there comes a point during a challenging climb when you look up and think to yourself “No, I just can’t carry on; it’s too daunting; it’s too risky”. Physically, your thigh muscles are screaming “STOP!” You pause and turn your head around to view your only other option and think “OMG, there is no way I’m going back there, I’ll kill myself”. Another pause. And then the inevitable conclusion. There is only one choice. Carry on climbing.

I first experienced this feeling as a young man half way up a Swiss mountain in the wrong footwear with the weather changing and more recently on a seemingly simple coastal walk in Ibiza.

And there was a point on the Miners Track when I looked up and saw the summit of Snowdon high in the sky and once again doubted my ability to press on. But the great thing about walking in a group is that you have friends around you. Some of them are forging ahead giving you the feeling that “If they can do it...” Others are overtaking you, bringing out your competitive spirit and there are fellow climbers behind you to whom you certainly don’t want to give any discouragement by seeing one of their own turning back. So you carry on climbing.



Why do we do it? Well for many of us it’s about the challenge and the views. Our ascent of Mount Snowdon on a sunny August Bank Holiday Sunday gave us both. The look of achievement on the faces of the successful team of ten who stood proudly at the summit for a photograph told its own story and the views on the way up were absolutely stunning.

We made the ascent in near perfect conditions without needing the services of Owen the Mountain Rescue volunteer who had given us some precautionary advice and demonstrations the night before (including embalming Vicky in a ‘concrete’ sleeping bag!).

The subsequent descent down the Rangers Path was a succession of meandering paths and unfolding picturesque views. We even had a bit of mist to add to the atmosphere and remind us of the potentially treacherous nature of mountain climbing.

I notice in the walks programme that there are more trips to Welsh Mountains planned. Good luck if you go along. I’m sure you will feel the same sense of satisfaction as we did; and don’t forget - when the going gets tough... carry on climbing!

Abergynolwyn Walk – A Long Walk for an Ice Cream

Lorna Astle

This delightful walk was led by Eileen and Bev on Sunday 25th August with six fellow ramblers. We started from the Nant Gwernol Station which once transported slate from the nearby Bryn Eglyws quarry. We took advantage of the café at the station for refreshments but managed to resist an ice cream as it was still quite early in the morning. Then it was time to board the steam train for the eight minute journey up the valley to the picturesque town of Abergynolwyn.

On entering the town we stopped briefly to admire the craftsmanship of the old stone quarrymen's houses, which once housed the workers from the nearby quarry. At the end of the town, known as Y Cwrt (The Court) we crossed a bridge leading into a beautiful valley. The views were breathtaking and the weather made it all the more enjoyable. Walking along the top of the valley, we came across small iron rings embedded in a rocky outcrop. Eileen informed us that these rings were once used by local women to tether the cows for milking.



At the end of the valley we walked a short way along a country road before entering the farmyard of Caerberllan farmhouse, which was built in 1590 and has an infamous history of murder and family feuds. We ambled on through a couple of fields until we came across Castell y Bere which was built by Llewelyn the Great in 1221 and was captured by the English in 1283. A gentle climb to the top of the castle was rewarded with commanding views over the valley. This was where we stopped for an enjoyable lunch despite the attentions of some over friendly wasps.

After leaving the castle we headed towards Ty'n y Ddol and visited St Michael's Church where we viewed Mary Jones's bible. The story goes that Mary was a local girl who walked 25 miles from Ddol to Bala in her bare feet to collect a copy of a Welsh bible. When she got to Bala the bibles hadn't arrived and she had to wait, but her patience was rewarded with not one, but three bibles.

Across the road from the church, we picked our way along a winding path past a lovely waterfall and beyond through a valley with views over the Bala fault line. The photo on the right shows our mid walk map reading lesson from Eileen and Bev to check our bearings before we began our descent down a steep winding track through a forest of mountain oak woodlands known at Coed Cedris, eventually arriving at a stone bridge called Pont y Cwrt (The Court Bridge). By now most of us were looking forward to a well-deserved ice-cream in the town, only to find that the shop had shut just minutes before we got there. We then summoned up the will power to pass a lively public house with many customers enjoying a drink on the chairs outside in the sunshine, safe in the knowledge that we only had a further half a mile to cover to finish the walk with an ice cream at Nant Gwernol Station. To our dismay, the Café at the station had closed just before we got there. So although Wales may have changed from the old days when all of the public houses were closed on a Sunday, the ice cream shop opening hours still need to be sorted out.



Temples, Tea and the Tsunami

Robert and Judith Spowage

Early February and the weather is cold and damp, but not for us; we are off to Sri Lanka and some winter sun. Yet another Ramblers holiday, categorised as being a sight-seeing and walking of an easy grade. Of course what we did not realise was the effect of the temperature and humidity on us until we arrived at Colombo Airport at 5.30 am, their time. Very hot, very humid. The next thing was that even as it was so late or early everywhere appeared to be open. A longish drive to our first (of many) hotel. Air conditioning was very welcome. Welcome to Sri Lanka.

The itinerary set out stops in some ten towns and cities, including, Colombo in the west; Anurhadapura and Polonnawara in the north; Kandy and Nuwara Eliya in the central highlands; Haputale and Embilipetiya in the south and ending up in Beruwela in the southwest. Thus our journey of nineteen days took in a wide spectrum of the country with a strong emphasis on its religions, geography, culture, geology, economics and industry. However some aspects were more dominant than others. In particular in the northern triangle of Ancient Anurhadapura, Polonnawara and Kandy was full of Royal Palaces and estates that were copiously dotted with mainly Buddhist temples and monasteries. Some were still in use whilst others not so, but all required bare feet (ouch!) and no head cover. Ancient Anurhadapura provided a working Buddhist temple including the oldest known tree with a written history along with huge stone lined earth mounds known as 'Stupas'. Additionally a visit was made to a disused monastery for Buddhist monks and well known statute of Buddha (Samhadi). Ancient Polonnawara was set in another royal park but this possessed amongst many other features including the remains of the royal palace, both Buddhist and Hindu temples, multiple statues of Buddha, many being very large and the remains of a monastery complete with hospital capable in its day of housing upwards of 5000 monks.

En route from Anurhadapura to Polonnawara we called in to Dambulla to see the cave temples (10 in all), each filled with statues of Buddha. Perhaps the highlight of the day however was the visit to and climb up to the ancient royal palace of Sigiriya (Lion Rock) which was situated on the top of a rock outcrop some 200 metres high. Access was achieved via flights of stone steps initially then up steps and slopes carved into the side of the rock face and finally up several flights of steel steps. Very challenging, but what views when we reached the top!

After leaving Polonnawara we discovered the limitations of Sri Lankan roads. After several miles on what we would consider to be a cart track we were transferred from our comfortable coach to a pair of well worn mini buses as the road we were to travel was unsuitable for the larger vehicle. We travelled up into the Knuckles Range climbing for several hours on narrow winding roads to the Rivington Plain where we disembarked and went for a ramble on a rough track, through a pepper vine plantation and over a terraced hillside paddy field. Great care had to be taken to avoid acquiring members of the local blood sucking leeches community. Yet it was an interesting and challenging walk for all that. At the end of the walk there was our comfortable bus to take onto Kandy via a stop at a Spice Garden.

Kandy is the second largest city in Sri Lanka and sits in the central hills of the island. Here we visited yet another temple; this one being almost being the most famous - The Temple of the Tooth. The tooth in question is allegedly one of Buddha's. It was smuggled into Sri Lanka many years ago by a prince and princess to avoid it being taken by a marauding king in India. The tooth is greatly venerated and is only brought out once a year for public display.

Other places visited were the Elephant Orphanage and the Botanical Gardens.

For many of us tea is a fundamental part of our lives and that Ceylon (Sri Lanka) is fundamental to tea. Our journey now took us into the southern hills and lots of tea plantations. Nuwara Eliya was our next destination but on route we stopped at a tea factory to find out more about the nature of tea and its manufacture. We learned that there are different types of tea that depend on where the leaves were harvested on the bush. White tea came from the young leaves at the tips of branches whilst black tea comes from leaves in the main part of the bush.

We also learned that the tea pluckers were mainly Tamils from India as locals preferred not to carry out this rather back breaking work. They lived in little shanty towns on the tea plantations. Plucked leaves were taken to the estate factory where it was dried processed to remove unwanted stalks, sorted and packed, for mainly export. Most of the machinery was very old: early part of 20 century.

British colonials ran the plantations and as ex-patriots they sought to recreate the UK . Nuwara Eliya was one of those places; often referred to as Little England and was set out as a mock Tudor village. The hotel we stayed at could have been transplanted from pre war Surrey.

For the next few days it was tea plantations all the way. This was particularly so on our train journey to Haputale, a town set above the clouds (for the most part) with views to the southern Indian Ocean on a clear day. Everything that has been said about Indian sub continent trains is true. Overcrowded and of indeterminate age but do run to time; mostly. Railway tracks are used as paths for the local population as well as for trains. Perhaps it was good that trains were rather infrequent!

Haputale saw us walking up Mini Adams Peak. The other Adams Peak was too far away and is usually climbed at night. Having descended into the local village and after lunch – with views to die for!, we went on another railway walk along a rail track for some miles to see a nine arch bridge. This included walking through a tunnel as well. As with most of these things the railway was British built. At this point, although it was the dry season, a monsoon rain storm descended on the group. We were well soaked.

Our next walk took us through another tea plantation that was set on a hillside with the Tea Leaf Plucker's village spread below us. Clearly they were very poor; except for the TV dishes on the roofs. It rained again. A truly tropical downpour.

From Haputale we had a long drive down onto the Southern plains. Our destination was Embilipetiya and a hotel by a Tank (reservoir). Oh and more heavy rain. The following day we went on an elephant safari in the Udawalawe National Parkwe. On route we visited a local market –all noise and spices, an overflowing river dam complete with fruit bats, a local primary school. The children knew all the English nursery Rhymes. As we entered the park there was thunder in the air and puddles under Landrovers. This was the dry season?

Copious elephants and Water Buffalo along with a wide variety of hawk type birds.

Our next and final overnight stop was Beruwela, with accommodation in a beach based hotel facing the Indian Ocean. From here we went on a trip to Galle which lies close by the southern tip of Sri Lanka. There was considerable evidence of the 2004 tsunami. All down the coast it was evident that the huge wave had penetrated deep into the coastal strip and caused massive destruction of homes and vegetation alike. At one place we stopped by a memorial to those who perished or lost homes and family. This was an evocative statement of grief. Despite this terrible event the locals still built close by the beach as they used the ocean as a source of income. In one instance a turtle conservation project was swamped and the baby turtles spread across the countryside. However it is now back in operation with baby turtles being protected from predators before being released back into the sea. A remarkable undertaking that is financed purely by public donations.

In Galle it was reported that although the citadel acted as a breakwater the wave split and engulfed the town without notice.

Finally we took our last bus ride back through Colombo to the airport and an overnight flight back to the UK to a temperature of 3 degrees centigrade.

South Cheshire Ramblers Annual Dinner

Dominique Dufour Jackson

Our annual dinner will be held at **La Perla**, 90, Hospital Street, Nantwich

On 24th January 2014 7pm for 7-30pm

Priced at £20 per person for a 3 course meal

For reservations and any further information please contact Dominique on 07971 603057

Book early as numbers are limited to 40

Please confirm your choice of Starter and Main Course (see menu on back page) to Dominique by the end of December 2013

The OS Maps of “The English Lakes”

Philip Lund

In the Introductions to his guides to the Lakeland Fells Alfred Wainwright paid tribute to the Ordnance Survey maps and acknowledged that ‘these admirable maps are remarkably accurate topographically’: praise indeed from the meticulous AW.

I too have always been fascinated by maps and so, when – in the 1970s – I set out to tackle the 214 peaks in the original 7 AW guides to the Lakeland Fells systematically, I considered buying the set of 4 maps in the OS Outdoor Leisure series which were then commonly sold in packs under the title ‘The English Lakes’. However, on closer inspection, I discovered that the set of four maps failed to cover the more northerly of the 214 fells and the southern ends of Lake Windermere and Coniston Water – so much for their title! This was because each of the maps, in a 2 x 2 coverage of the area, was landscape-shaped (and hence so was their combined coverage) whereas most portrayals of the area are portrait-shaped. I reckoned that, with the same area coverage but a 2 x 2 portrait layout, all of the major lakes and fells could be displayed.

At the time my work brought me into fairly regular contact with staff of the OS. I therefore made the above points to one man who advised me to write to a named individual in the organisation, though without disclosing his own identity. I did this but got a reply simply defending the status quo and making what seemed to me to be a number of irrelevant points. I was not convinced and so, a couple of years later, made the same points to an ex senior manager at the OS. He advised me to write to the very top – to the then Director General! I did this, only to get a prompt reply acknowledging my continuing interest and concern but not conceding any advantage in my proposed re-arrangement of the maps.

I was still not convinced but saw no obvious opportunity to take the matter further. However, by chance, I then heard the end of an interesting talk by someone from the OS. At the end of the talk I approached the speaker and asked about his role in the organisation.

‘Ah’, he said, ‘I have a very interesting role. It’s my job to decide how to fit all the maps in the various series together to cover the whole country’.

Seeing my chance, I began to explain that I was a regular walker in the Lake District but had found a problem with the coverage of the Northern Fells in the Outdoor Leisure series of maps.

‘Ah’ he confided, as one official to another, ‘it’s funny you should mention that. A member of the public keeps writing to us about it. He’s right of course but we obviously aren’t going to tell him that!’

To his embarrassment, I explained that I was almost certainly that person - and suggested that I should have been thanked for my proposal ‘which will be taken into account when we next revise the maps’.

Fortunately the series has been revised and the current set of four double-sided maps of ‘The English Lakes’ in the Outdoor Leisure series are portrait-shaped and together provide a much greater coverage of the District’s lakes and mountains. Quite why the change was made - many years ago - I do not know but I like to dream that my protests may have played some small part!

LA PERLA

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24 Jan 2014 19:00 for 19:30

ANTIPASTI ~ STARTER

FORMAGGIO DI CAPRA ~ baked goat's cheese served on ciabatta bread with mango chutney (v)

INSALATA CAPRESE ~ Fresh buffalo mozzarella, tomato, basil and olive oil dressing served over mixed salad leaves (v)

FEGATINI DI POLO ~ Pan fried chicken livers sautéed in onions, garlic, white wine sauce and chilli

ZUPPA DEL GIORNO ~ Soup of the day

MAIN COURSE ~ LE PASTE~PASTA

LASAGNE AL FORNO Fresh pasta sheets layered with béchamel, Bolognese and mozzarella cheese oven baked

TORTELLINI CON PANNA Fresh stuffed with spinach and ricotta cheese served with ham and onion in a cream sauce

SPAGHETTI MARE Pasta served with a selection of seafood, garlic, olive oil and a touch of chilli in white wine sauce

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POLLO ALLA CREMA CON FUNGHI Pan fried chicken cooked with mushrooms, onion, garlic and white wine cream sauce

IL PESCE ~ FISH

SALMONE CON GAMBERI Oven baked fillet of salmon with crayfish tails, white wine, cream sauce and a touch of tomato

All main courses are served with potatoes and vegetables

DESSERT

Choice will be made on the night along with tea or coffee

Places are limited to 40 so get your order to Dominique, mobile **07971603057**