

SOUTH WALES GROUP



"LEEKIE'S BLETHER"

OCTOBER 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**



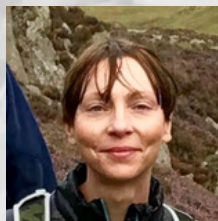
Chair's Update

We are now in the third quarter of the annual seasons, Autumn is here and this brings colour to the trees and bracken, soon the hills will harbour misty valleys and maybe the rare glimpse of a brocken spectre! Autumn has seen a volley of challenge walks across the country, seeing those familiar faces from previous events is a fond recollection of times past.

All this new activity for Autumn has made me think "I'm really looking forward to 2022, a chance to lead ourselves back into how things used to be". I'm planning a new Bothy walk for February and the ever memorable Pudding Puncher on 'Stranger Shores'. I really like the togetherness we have in our club; this whole pandemic thing has brought us closer during tough times, so pack your head torches and flasks, get your adventure head on and let's have some fun!!

Thank you and God Bless.

Jason (Chair)



Walk Secretary's Update

Hello everyone,

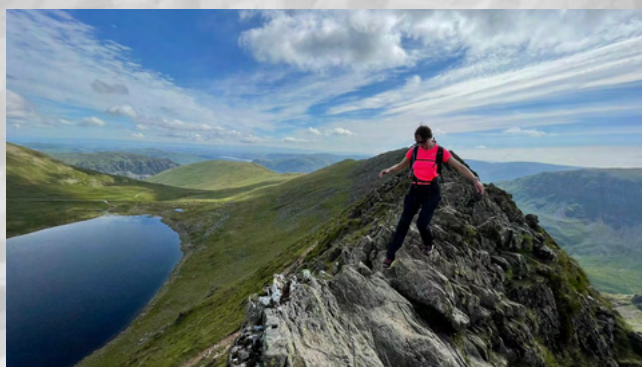
It feels like things are really starting to move forward in a positive way with covid restrictions easing and places and spaces opening up more. I know we still all need to be careful and responsible but I'm keeping my fingers crossed that we're heading in the right direction.

I hope that everyone has been able to make the most of the fantastic weather we've been having. I managed to get to the Lake District in June and achieved one of my walking goals to get across Striding Edge and up to Helvellyn. It was a glorious day, with no wind, plenty of sunshine and totally dry underfoot. I was euphoric getting across the craggy ridge without drama or distress and now have my sights firmly set on Crib Goch (assuming I can keep my confidence and drag Pete along to guide me).

Have any of you achieved an all-time goal this year? We'd love to hear about it if you have.

We have a few walks scheduled on the planner, but we really would like to get more members stepping forward to help out. Please do get in touch if you have a walk that you would be happy to lead for us. I'll leave you with an image of me skipping over the top of Striding Edge and hope to catch up with many of you on a walk very soon.

Sara



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)

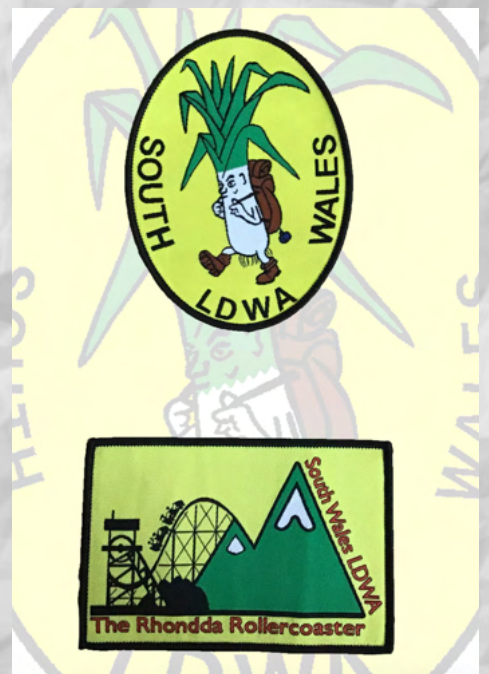
Prices

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.



"SPRING IN LAKELAND - AN ANYTIME CHALLENGE"

By Rob Richardson



Along with several other group members, Jill and I entered the Spring In Lakeland 50 mile challenge walk scheduled for April 2020. The walk consisted of 3 loops from Staveley village hall, a few miles from Windermere. We booked a cottage between Windermere and Ambleside in anticipation of a week's walking in the Lake District following the event.

Sadly, we all know too well what happened, and on 23rd March that year the whole of the UK entered it's first lockdown. The event along with our cottage booking were both cancelled. We took the option of carrying over our booking to the following year and the challenge walk was similarly rearranged.

One year later and things were looking hopeful that the latest restrictions would be lifted just in time for us to visit the Lakes. Unfortunately, the event was not able to take place, but had been changed to an anytime challenge. The route description and gpx files were provided for a small fee and completion times could be recorded in return for a certificate. Any successful completions would count as a qualifying event for the Trans Pennine 100 in 2022.

On 16th April this year we headed off up the M6 with a forecast of fine, dry weather for the week ahead. On arrival the big decision to make was when would be the best time to do the walk. Should I wait until the end of the week after a week of mountain walking or go early with fresh legs? I couldn't do it on the Monday as I had a hospital telephone consultation, so a decision was made, Sunday looked to be cool, cloudy and dry. I wanted to do a recce of the 3rd loop, a portion of which would be in the dark and we could do that the day before.

We managed to park a few hundred yards from the village hall on Saturday morning and set off on the 16 mile 3rd loop in beautiful conditions. The first 6 miles of the route head south from Staveley across flat fields towards Underbarrow where a checkpoint would have been. In the information sent out by the Lakeland group there is a disclaimer that the gpx routes had been generated from a map as opposed to a walked route.

This became apparent when we went through a gate and were instructed to turn left and follow hedge on left. The meant leaving an obvious path across the field, but the gpx route followed neither path on the map. After a bit of dithering, we went back to the hedge and followed it as it turned right and then left to a well-hidden stile. Unlike route descriptions we are more familiar with, there were no compass bearings to follow, but it was generally pretty good otherwise.

There is only one climb on this loop and it takes you up and over Scout Scar. This is an impressive limestone escarpment overlooking Kendal and involves a steep 600ft climb through trees on a stony path. From the top it was a gentle descent to Kendal crossing the old Kendal racecourse to a road. Eventually we arrived at the hall in Kendal used as a checkpoint followed by a walk alongside the River Kent. Having seen virtually no one in 4 months, it was a bit of a shock to the system to see so many people in once place.

There was a warning in the route description that sections of the riverside walk may be closed due to ongoing flood prevention work. This was indeed the case and we had to make a detour through an industrial estate, fortunately well signed. The next section caused some confusion when the route description said 'follow road for 2km', whereas the gpx route followed a path alongside the river. We tried to get down to the river, but it was blocked by a metal fence, so we re-joined the road a bit further along to arrive in Burneside. Here we joined the Dales Way and followed it all the way back to Staveley. This is mostly alongside the River Kent which was resplendent in wild daffodils along some sections.

Although the route was reasonably straightforward, I felt much more confident having walked the route in daylight.

We were up at the crack of dawn on Sunday and back in Staveley for the start at 06:40. The plan was for Jill to accompany me on the first loop which was 19 miles.



Having suffered from a bit of a knee problem this would be Jill's longest walk for a while. It was a cool 1C with a ground frost when we started so we had plenty of layers on.

The route out of Staveley follows the Dales Way (again) for almost all the 6 miles Windermere. The path follows lanes, bridleways and footpaths over a continually undulating route. This section was memorable for hearing our first cuckoo of spring. Fortunately, it was still early and quiet when we arrived in Windermere for the climb up to Orrest Head, a Wainwright favourite which I had never visited before.

The view was a bit murky, but we could just about make out the distant Langdale Pikes across Lake Windermere.

Leaving Orrest Head we headed north down to the first checkpoint on the route at some ornamental gardens at Holehird. After a short retracing of steps the route went along Longmire Road which was more stony track than road. This led into Garburn Road (another even stonier track) and the Garburn Pass. At 1500ft this is the highest point of the entire walk. The descent down



to Kentmere was particularly stony and unpleasant, more so for Jill with her dodgy knee trying not to slow me down too much.

Eventually we were safely back on tarmac and after passing Kentmere Church and Hall we headed uphill out of the valley on a slightly less stony track. The route back to Staveley consisted of a bridleway which had a few muddy patches which involved a slight detour to avoid. The last section cut across fields, descended to the main road and back into Staveley. My plan was to finish the first loop by 1pm and we were only 5 minutes behind schedule.

Back to the car which was parked about 150yds from the hall. Whilst eating lunch I cleaned my feet, reapplied plenty of cocoa butter and put some clean socks on. A change of shoes into my favourite Hokas, topped up my water and grabbed a few goodies. Then it was goodbye to Jill who was glad not to be joining me for the 2nd loop. It was a bit like a pit stop in a Formula One race, but I wanted to be back by around 6.30pm in order to minimize the length of time walking in the dark on the 3rd loop. Jill would have to collect me at the end and I didn't want to finish too late.

The 2nd loop was completely different terrain to the first. After leaving Staveley and crossing the River Kent there was a steep climb in Craggy Wood, which is indeed craggy and woody. After emerging from the trees there was a pleasant walk across fields, except for multiple ladder stiles. Of all the variety of stiles, these are my least favourite, going up is OK, but descending backward is not a great experience.

Soon the open fell was reached and an ascending path soon reached Potter Tarn and the oddly named Gurnal Dubs, another tarn. After Gurnal Dubs the route joined a distinct track for a while before turning on to what was described as a 'thin path'. For anyone without a GPS it would be very difficult to find this path, especially without a helpful compass bearing in the route description. The path meandered over a small hill for about a mile and was indistinct in places. Eventually a wall was reached with a supposed wall stile which I couldn't find, but I found a hole in the wall and climbed through to a track. This was followed all the way down to Longsleddale and the River Sprint. The route headed up the valley on a bridleway crossing fields full of lambs.

After a couple of miles the route double backed onto the main valley road down to a hall which would have been a checkpoint. Annoyingly I had to retrace my steps for half a mile to climb out

of the valley onto the open fell. The map calls this area Sleddale Forest, but there are few, if any trees. Eventually a tarmac lane was joined with a long descent back to the River Kent and Staveley.

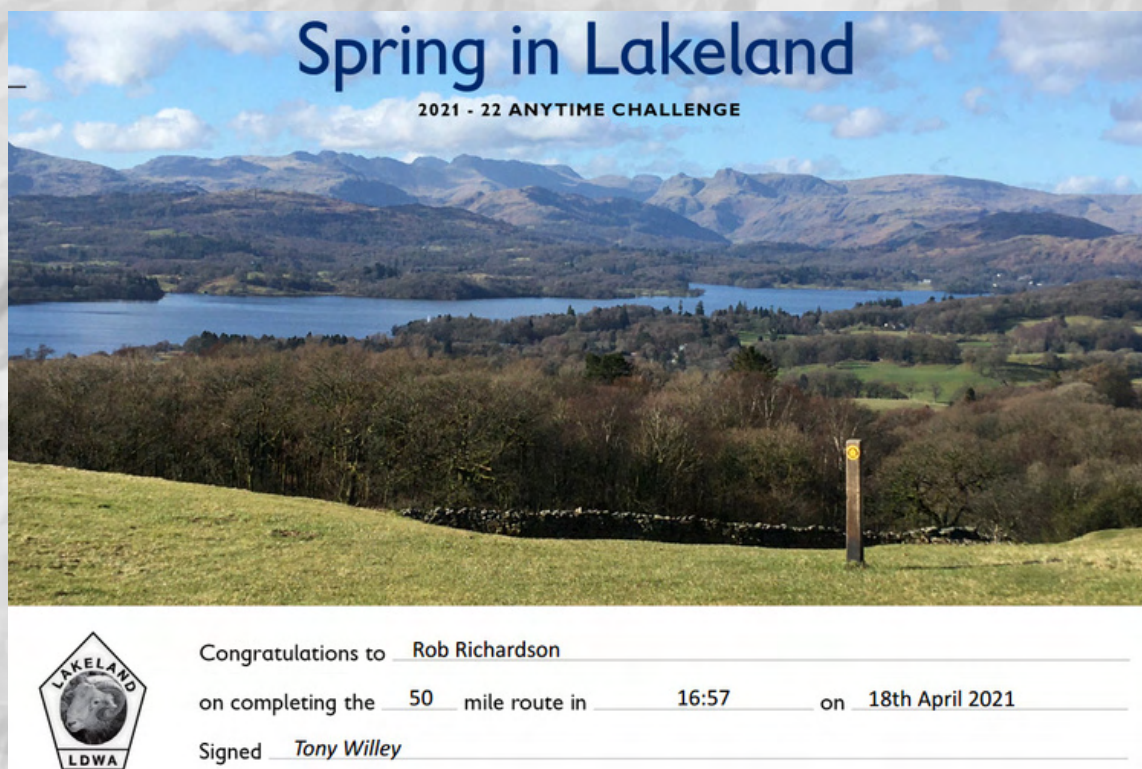
I got back to the hall at 6.30 to see Jill driving round the corner to meet me, perfect timing! I refuelled again, changed socks and back in to my original shoes and was back on the road again for the 3rd loop 20 minutes later. We agreed that I should finish around 12.30 based on the previous days recce.

It was a very good feeling to know exactly where I was going without referring to the route description and I calculated that I had 2 hours of daylight left which should get me the 6 miles to Scout Scar. This was correct and I had to don my headtorch just as I entered the trees at the base of the Scar. I didn't enjoy the steep climb at all and stopped a couple of times, but once at the top felt fine again.

I had a break sat on a bench in a park in Kendal near the checkpoint and enjoyed a can of Coke and some salted cashew nuts. It was about 10pm and there were few people around. The final part of the walk along the River Kent was not as picturesque as the day before. In the dark it was not easy to see the river bank and I kept a safe distance from it, there were also lots of tree roots easy to trip over.

There were a couple of ladder stiles on this loop which were interesting to negotiate in the dark and I took extra care when crossing them. I was back in Staveley a bit earlier than I estimated at 12.15, but fortunately my lift was ready and waiting for me.

Interestingly my total distance, as measured on my Satmap GPS was 49.2 miles, fortunately my 6 trips from the car to the hall made up the extra 0.8 miles. My walking time was 16:57 and the total time including stops 17:40. This was my first 'Anytime Challenge' and I really enjoyed it. Thank you to the Lakeland LDWA Group for organising it and an even bigger thank to Jill for supporting me throughout the day.



Answers To June's Leekie's Brain Teazer

Rins Wool Dish = Rhossili Down

Hary Gill = Gray Hill

Harl Light = Garth Hill

Aint Nout Blame = Table Mountain

Wammy Niddy Cilly Miker = Mynydd William Meyrick

Reen Glob = Blorengel

Guar Foals = Sugar Loaf

Derry Waggl = Garreg Lwyd

Faan Chuw = Waun Fach

Nany Pef = Pen y Fan



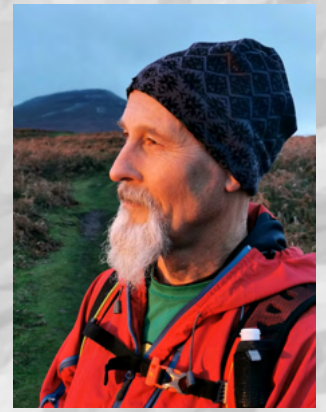
One South Wales LDWA member entered the competition.
Congratulations to Gerry Jackson for sending the correct set of answers!



A socially distanced
presentation of a
coveted Leekie Mug
by Brain Teazer
creator,
Andrew Clabon
to winner,
Gerry Jackson!

"LOCKDOWN WITH A PENCIL"

By Tony Alcock



The drizzle begins to subside as I drop down through the hollow of a hill, past some resting sheep towards a small group of mounds among the beech trees. Though it has been raining for most of the morning the ground here doesn't seem to be particularly wet. It is sheltered and relatively dry and so a good place to stop.

The grey morning clouds are beginning to scatter and the weak sun is trying to push through the gloom. It isn't particularly cold but neither is it time for T-shirts only so the fleece stays firmly put. I sit down and take the flask from the rucksack along with my sketchbook and pencils. The coffee is hot and warming and I just look around for a while as I sip the welcome heat. There are plenty of sheep on the hill and a group of horses are grazing further on down the slope. Once my hands are warmed I pick up the sketchbook and begin to draw.

Sheep are accommodating models. They graze, occasionally look up to acknowledge your presence, then continue grazing. They move slowly and are not particularly concerned whether you are there or not as long as you don't disturb their day. The lambs are a little more energetic but, apart from the occasional rush and jump, they do not stray far from their mothers. The flock seems orderly and contented and very little happens in this field of winter grey.



The first few sketches tend to be a bit clumsy but, once into the rhythm, they become more natural and believable. With little movement going on amongst the ewes there is plenty of time in which to put down the essential lines and shadows of sheep on white pages. A shape of a head, the curve of shoulders, the spongy fleece, the skinny legs and the ragged tail. Bit by bit, the parts come together and a scribble becomes a drawing that breathes a more convincing story. It takes time but I have plenty on my hands.

The 19th century British artist, John Constable....he of The Haywain...would sit and draw for hours in his native Suffolk countryside. He filled his sketchbooks with the animals, trees, fields, hedges and skies that would later fill the paintings he created in his studio. In all weathers and in all seasons he noted the colours and moods of a landscape that he inhabited all of his life. Many of those books can be seen in the Victoria and Albert Museum in London where they remain as fresh and vivid as the day they were first sketched all those years ago. They are a lasting reminder of the continuing power and beauty of that same nature that exists to this day.

George Stubbs, the 18th century painter (look him up) feted for his pictures of horses owned by the landed gentry, spent days in stables and fields studying the anatomy and movement of horses. Cameras were still in the distant future and the only way to understand the make-up of a horse was through observation. Studying how a neck bends, the way the back muscles tense, the sheen of the coat, the look in the eye. Horses in motion and horses at rest. Observed and noted in the many sketchbooks that are a testament to a working life.



And of Leonardo de Vinci? I don't think I need explain much there. A scientist, an artist and a naturalist amongst other things, he was probably the original man of many talents who took the time to study and note the workings of the world around him. At the time, his numerous drawings were possibly seen as the workings of an amiable crank rather than the notes of an incredibly enquiring mind. His observations were years ahead of their time.

My own enquiring mind does not have the capacity or genius of a Leonardo but at least it notices that several horses have strolled up the incline to where I am presently seated. Curious, they stand and stare for a while before moving on to continue grazing. I happily take advantage of an opportunity that has presented itself to quietly turn the page and begin sketching once more.

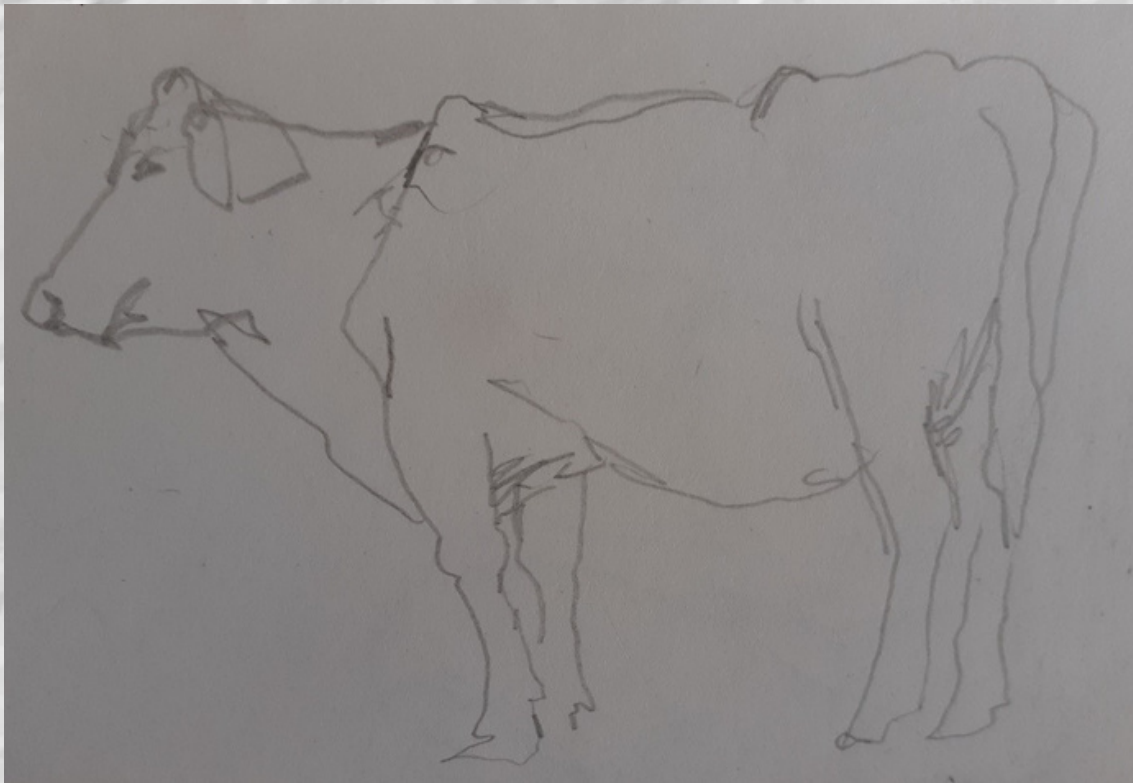


An hour later, I put the sketchbook aside and slot the pencils back in their place. I pour the last of the coffee, sit back for a while and just relax. I flick through the pages of the sketchbook, smiling at some of the drawings and wincing at some of the others. As my Art Tutor once said, you win some, you lose some. It's nice to think that there a few more wins than losses this time round, but of course, I am biased.

It begins to drizzle so I finish the warm coffee and pack my bag. Time to move on.

Lockdown has proved incredibly difficult for some people, especially those living in big cities, where Covid 19 restrictions have been felt most acutely. Living in high-rise homes with little access to greenery, parks and countryside, has meant a difficult time for many families. Their lives have been touched in quite a profound way. Far more than mine.

That I have been able to sit and draw and wander quite freely along the coast and the countryside surrounding my home during this period is something I am very grateful for. That I can still go and produce sketches at will is something I am thankful for. Even for the bad ones.



The next edition of Leekie's Blether will be published in December '21. Please would you be so kind as to send your articles to southwalesldwa@live.co.uk by 21.11.21.

"A STUBAI FAVOURITE"

By Hugh Woodford



My favourite and most visited foreign holiday region is the Stubai Alps in Austria's Tyrol. I have been there 9 times to date, and have come to know and love this beautiful area. One of my favourite walks there involves travel by bus and cable car, 2 mountain huts, plus plenty of interest throughout this linear route.

Timing of buses at the start and finish is important, especially at the end of the day. The bus from Fulpmes shortly after 9 a.m. is always full and takes nearly 50 minutes to reach the cable car at Mutterbergalm 1721 m at the head of the valley. The valley narrows as nearly 800 metres of height is gained between Fulpmes and Mutterbergalm. On a rest day, it is well worth taking the cable car to the top – Eisgrat 2900 m – to look around at the year round ski slopes, ice cave and viewpoint.

Throughout the Alps, in particular Austria & Switzerland, waymarking is very good in the mountains, and the timings on posts are accurate for strong seasoned walkers. The standard time for this walk is up to 3 hours from Dresdner Hut to Sulzenau Hut, then around 2 hours back down to the valley road, plus stops.

The walk commences from the Dresdner Hut 2308 m, half way up the cable car ride. It soon crosses a footbridge and an open area of grass and rocks before starting to climb. There are fixed wire ropes on an exposed section, after which there are rocks on which to take a short breather before the remainder of the ascent to the col, Peiljoch 2676 m, where a stop is mandatory. The views from here are magnificent – 3000 metre peaks, the Sulzenauferner (glacier), loads of stone cairns reminiscent of sacred ground in the Himalayas.



On one occasion I was lucky enough to see some wild mountain goats resting and taking in the warmth of the sun.

Suitably refreshed, it takes about 1.5 hours to descend to the Sulzenau Hut 2191 m, which is the lunch stop. The hut was entirely rebuilt between 1976-78 after being completely demolished in 1975 by an avalanche off the glacier. Photos in the dining room show the devastation it caused. The current hut has a sloping roof, in case of

being hit by another avalanche. Perched above a hanging valley, views from the terrace and bedrooms are spectacular. It is a very popular hut, both with day walkers and mountaineers. I have stayed there overnight on 2 occasions in the 1990's when doing a hut to hut tour. As in all the mountain huts, the food is good, in particular the brunenkuchen (pear flavoured sponge desert) Heather and I ate there a few years ago.

The descent from the hut is steep and takes about 1 hour to Sulzenaualm 1847 m, which is another mandatory stop. This cafe is the quirkiest in the region, with wooden carvings everywhere. The gate handle has an old man, all chairs have peoples faces, and there are various other carvings all around the place. Well worth a stop and to take plenty of photos. The hanging valley is fairly flat here and, looking back, the Sulzenau Hut can be



seen peering over the top of the rock face 340 metres above. There is also a waterfall which seems insignificant, in spite of having such a large fall. It doesn't compare with what awaits in the valley at the end of the walk. Austria, along with other Alpine countries, certainly utilises nature well. Wood is plentiful and used in construction plus all sorts of other things, and water is also well harnessed.



The steep descent, through forest, to the valley road takes about 1 hour. If I have half an hour to spare before the bus comes, it takes 10 minutes to walk down to Grawawasserfall, the most spectacular waterfall in the region. In recent years a viewing platform has been installed, plus seating. If time is tight, leave it for another day, perhaps linked in with a ride to the top of the cable car and lunch at the cafe near the waterfall.

The bus stop is nearby and the journey back to Fulpmes gives a relaxing end to a fabulous days walking. By this time, I'm always chilled and enjoy gazing at the widening valley and very steep mountain sides on the journey back to the hotel. Back in Fulpmes, it's time for a shower before the evening meal, perhaps followed by a well earned beer.



Inspired to travel to the Alps having read this article?

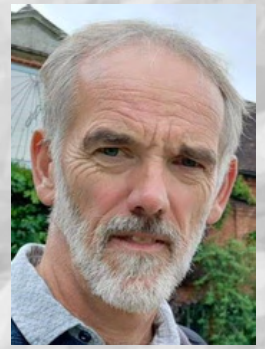
Have you walked in the Alps and are willing to share your experiences?

**If so, please email
southwalesldwa@live.co.uk**

"IN SUPPORT OF HUNDREDEERS"

By Andrew Clabon

Sod that, I'm not getting up in time to be at Usk for when Ramon, Lerchy, Pony and Foxy start their hundred. They can cater for themselves as far as Abergavenny and I'll meet them there. So that was the plan.



Well the plan went out of the window as they messaged me at home to say they started 7 minutes late. You can't even reply on some people to do the simple things can you.

Abergavenny - 11:28 - It was decided not to use the Guide Hall car park as that would be busy with bank holiday traffic. Instead, I chose the football ground car park which was a little further up the route. Now Mrs Pony and I can't even rely on Google Streetview because the grassed area next to the car park shown on the PC was no longer accessible as a fence had been constructed. So, the dusty car park was used and the few spots of rain weren't enough to settle the dust. Ramon had to put a heel pad on at this point which was not a good sign. Gena, a local popped up to give us a hand. This was particularly useful as she took the dirty crockery home to wash because I couldn't find the washing up liquid that I knew I had packed.

Cwmyoy - 13:55 - Another gravel car park for Mrs Pony, Gena and I, this time not so dusty. Ramon was a little late arriving as she was begging sponsorship money from some passers-by. It was warm and sunny by now so the only people who enjoyed Ramon's sausage rolls were Mrs Pony and I. If you wondered what the back of a supporter's car looks like with the rear seats folded down here is an example.



Llanthony - 15:50 - Very busy here so ended up in the overflow field car park. Can't even reply of strangers to leave me a parking space near the toilet block. Out came all the support kit for the third time and some stranger asked me if I had brought the kitchen sink! Nothing to do but people watch in my shorts and shirt. One grandpa took his jumper off to reveal a thick woollen shirt. Bet he was sweaty inside. Gena left us here to return home.

Longtown - 18:30 - The four made good progress on this section which was pleasing to see. At this point out came the ginger beer. Pony opened a bottle which promptly sprayed Foxy. You just can't reply on people to open fizzy bottles facing the other way. By now the breeze of the day had dropped and just before we left, Nisa's hubby arrived doing his supporting bit. Mrs Pony left me here to fight the night alone.

Pandy - 20:45 - The four posed in front of a sign for a selfie as evidence. To me they looked as they were in a Miss World line up. Pony had often been giving his route description to one of the others and then sometime later asking "anyone seen my route description?". I put that down to old age. This was my last meeting point in the light that day and it was the last one for Nisa's hubby who arrived again before I left. I christened this photo, drink no evil, eat no evil, lost no evil and text no evil.

Treadam – 23:58 - I parked in a gravel gateway as that was all Google Streetview could find me. It was getting cold now so tracksters and hoodie were the order of the day. The stars were coming out and I listened to an owl before the four arrived.



Llanfihangle Ystum Llewern – 02:02 – The moon was now an orange ball and as the four exited the churchyard Ramon was shaking her head. I knew this

was her way of telling me that Pony was suffering. He felt exhausted and was having trouble staying awake. At this point he decided to call it a day. According to my mileage chart he had done 48.5 miles so we managed to persuade him to go on to the next road section where I could meet him and by then he would have done a little over 50 miles. Just as the four set off Nisa arrived so the four were now five.

Monmouth – 04:49 – Having picked up Pony we arrived at Monmouth just as it was beginning to get light with the sky a misty pink. The way they walking I wondered if a disabled badge might be applicable for them. Pony was fast asleep in the car and after the four had been and gone he woke and asked “have they arrived yet?”.



Redbrook – 06:50 – At last something to rely on. Free parking on a Sunday!! Nisa was now ahead of the three who were still in good spirits. From here they had a tough section to Trellech. This gave me time to take Pony home (sleeping most of the way, him not me) and get back to Trellech before the three arrived.

Trellech – 09:05 – The sun was hot now as I arrived at La Maison Richardson just minutes before the three. It was here that Cycleman (Foxy's husband) joined me. The three and us enjoyed the hospitality and a long stop here, something they couldn't get when meeting me in the middle of nowhere. It was great to rely on Rob and Jill for their place.

Tintern – 11:25 – Tintern was very busy and we felt somewhat out of place amongst all the day trippers. The hall car park was empty so we did have some unexpected space and shade to ourselves. We were not accosted by a local for using the car park which Ramon had been when supporting Dave earlier in the month. One in one out at Abbey toilets caused quite a queue especially as Nisa decided to get changed here.

Chepstow – 14:02 – Cycleman and I found a shady grass spot in the busy Leisure Centre car park. On the way the three had dared each other to walk on the edge of the path next to the steep drop in the woods. Whatever keeps you awake girls. It was also here that during their stop Foxy and Cycleman emerged from behind a hedge. I'll leave you to your imagination.

Black Rock picnic site – 16:51 – We had a visit from Dave so we all had to be on our best behaviour. The site was busy but again we managed to find a shady spot. The three were hoping they could reply on a sea breeze along the next section. Lerchy who is famous for not feeling well on day two of a hundred did manage to eat some tinned peaches and custard here to supplement her cans of cold coffee. Sun out, hats on.



Rogiet – 18:33 – We used the quiet car park next to a field rather than the village hall amongst houses. The sun was out and Cycleman and I enjoyed the early evening sunshine. One bonus for supporters that you can't always rely on. The three stocked up on ginger beer and Lerchy on more cold coffee. After the girls had gone Cycleman also left me to my own devices.

The Cayo – 20:02 – A quick stop where the route crossed the A48. Bruce Springsteen played 'Born to Run' in an attempt to suggest the girls get a move on. It worked their quickest stop of the event. Great to be able to reply on someone.

Foresters Oak – 21:33 – Various others noisy groups were in and around the car park having a BBQ and putting up tents for the night. I felt really out of place with my table, chairs, food etc. I was glad to pack up and leave once the trio had left.

Llantrisant – 00:53 – I started to become a bit concerned for the three. They were so overdue I actually phoned them. The first time I had done so all event. They had managed to loose an hour in a five mile leg. They blamed the difficult route finding. I was basically parked at the bottom of somebody's drive as there was nothing else available. You think the council could have built me a lay-by in the village. All four of us were very quiet there for obvious reasons. Having lost so much time so close to the end the girls were not in the mood for another marathon navigation session. I quickly devised a road route to Usk that was sufficient to give them well over the 100 miles in total.

Usk – 02:47 – I can assure you I was very glad and relieved to see 3 torches come into the car park. We had a quick sort out and return of kit to the correct owner and we all went to sleep in our cars. Ramon was up in an hour and off. I was not far behind. Foxy woke freezing and drove home with the car window home to make sure she stayed awake. I've seen Lerchy since so she must have made it home too.

Events described above are a true record of events but names have been changed in order to protect the identities of those involved. Well unless you look at the photos of course!

Congratulations girls, a great effort.

"REVENGE IS A DISH BEST SERVED COLD....."

By Shirley Hume



Although, to be fair, I didn't expect Chris to take this quite so literally [to be continued].

When I did my first LDWA 100 in 1982 it never crossed my mind that nearly 40 years later I would still be entering, participating in and recovering from these events as a pensioner, but they do say that truth is stranger than fiction. One thing that certainly never crossed my mind is that I would one day be taking part in a virtual 100 mile event and what follows is a cautionary tale of the highs and lows, mud, sweat and swearing, that accompanied this 'unprecedented' [sorry] undertaking.

So what's not to like? You get to choose your own route, your own food, how many checkpoints you want to have, your checkpoint staff [well there has to be at least one downside I suppose] and the time you start within the 3 day limit. All of which sounds like the easiest of easy options, no travel to the event unless you want to, no expensive accommodation, no worrying about the kit check, potentially no complicated logistics – I could go on. So why, I ask myself, did I end up spending an inordinate amount of time and energy trying to decide on a route, even more on the food selection [most of which returned home uneaten] never mind the usual '100' doubts about footwear, clothing etc? The only thing absent was the angst about the contents of the breakfast bag, since even the kitchen sink was available this year.



I won't bore you with the ever-changing ideas about the route caused by uncertainty about travel restrictions for Wales [which changed at different times to England], the boredom factor of walking from home and the unfortunate fact that, until the DVLA staff sort out whatever it is they think needs sorted out and get back to work, my support team [i.e. Chris] was going to be static. In the end rules on self-catering cottages led me to Winchcombe and the plethora of long distance paths that pass through the town – 9 of which I actually walked on or across during my 100 attempt. So I worked out 3 loops, each to be completed twice, with subtle differences for each time I did the loop.

Saturday morning and after a wet day Friday I was relieved to wake to dry, if dull, conditions. I didn't have a fixed time in mind for starting but at 6.45 I decided to just get on with it – although the 'supporter' was only prepared to stagger to the bedroom window to wave me off. It was quite special to think of other LDWA members round the country either starting, preparing or already launched on their own version of Sir Fynwy [virtual] 100, but the task in hand soon took precedence and I rapidly discovered that the rock hard, cracking paths of the recce had been replaced by some prime Cotswold mud.

The first loop was just over 20 miles and the only obstacle encountered was a group of about eleven billion DOE hopefuls being released from a bus and staggering off down a narrow enclosed footpath that I was planning to use. Given they were carrying loads that even an experienced Sherpa might have balked at, I made a quick decision to bypass that section of the Cotswold Way with a speedy dash down an adjacent road to join the route a mile further on ahead of them.



Back to base, where the CP staff appeared to have regained consciousness, for a 20 minute refuelling stop and a sit down. The staff had been instructed to throw me out after a maximum of 20 minutes for the first two stops and instructions were fully heeded [although I'm not sure I was expecting him to comply quite so enthusiastically]. The second loop was far muddier than the first and by now it was getting very warm and humid, although very little sun. I had arranged a water stop at 13 miles round this loop, with Chris using his bike to reach me on a suitable section of lane. I walked 13 miles while he cycled 6 but I was still in sight of the rendezvous before he rode into sight – he claimed that my instructions to turn left out of the cottage, take the next left and then the first right, were overly complicated.....



Under threats of instant death should he fail to get back before me [leaving me locked out of the CP] he was indeed there for CP2, where I got to fully appreciate the delights of a bottle of cold, flat, diet coke on a walk – not something I have ever really indulged in before. This was the first time, approaching 40 miles, when I started to feel I might actually finish, as I was feeling much better than I usually do at this distance and especially as I knew

that Rob would be arriving to walk the night section with me. Loop 3 was the shortest and easiest of the 3 and, as the air started to cool a bit, I cracked on to make the most of daylight, extending it a bit with a loop of Sudeley Castle grounds to get me up to over 50 miles before dark.

Back at CP3 I decided to change into three quarter trousers, grab something to drink before Rob arrived and have my 'evening meal' – which is where we come to the title of this article. In short, on Christmas Day 2000, for reasons too mad to explain [but honestly if the Titanic had taken as long to sink in 1912 as it did in the film, everyone would have been rescued], I excelled even my own high (?) standards by serving well burnt pizza for Christmas dinner. Over 20 years later revenge was exacted with cold burnt pizza to set me up for the night section of the 100. Chris is still trying to convince me there was no connection, but I have my own ideas on that.....

Rob and I set off in the deepening dusk to try and get a couple of miles under our belts before torches were required. He was sensibly wearing boots, whereas for comfort I was in trainers with very little grip [I had been thinking rock hard paths]. Approaching the top of the climb out of Winchcombe, and in pretty dark conditions, I managed a full length 'face plant' on a section of enclosed path full of liquid mud, liberally laced with sheep shit. Bad choice of footwear and lack of a torch that was actually switched on, were paid for good and proper, and I was still looking decidedly the worse for wear in Winchcombe the following day.

Other than having to change the route to avoid an isolated farmyard with large numbers of dogs housed beside the path, plus a second house, with a guard dog where the path went up the side of the house, Loop 4 was very similar to Loop 1, except for a couple of diversions to avoid a monumentally awful cow field and a long enclosed muddy path, plus some isolated properties. An extra little loop at the end got me up to over 70 miles as dawn broke and, with the dawn chorus going at full throttle around us, we found ourselves back at the CP for the 4th time after what seemed to me like a short leg, with good company and chat to keep me going.

The staff wandered down, half asleep, and Rob departed for Wales and his checkpoint duties at Trellech, while I hit the inevitable low point wondering how I was ever going to get myself off the chair and out the door for 30 more miles. In the end I was persuaded to eat something and the greasiest, least healthy sausage sandwich in the history of unhealthy sausage sandwiches, drowned in tomato ketchup, acted like a shot of adrenaline and I was out the door and running off in less time than it takes to restart your Garmin device – which sadly I forgot to do and so missed recording about 2 miles of Loop 5, which I regretted at the end. This was Loop 2 in reverse, with a couple of diversions to miss the worst of the mud, and all was going well until I decided to top up my energy supplies with a Mars bar, which was slightly soft and getting softer in my rucksack.

Next thing I knew I felt myself biting into what appeared to be nuts [had I got a Snickers bar by mistake I wondered?] and soon realised that something was amiss. In fact half of one of my back teeth had broken off and, slightly worried that this might cause a few problems later, I cut the loop short and headed back to the Final checkpoint – surprising the CP staff at my apparent speed. Luckily the filling was intact and bizarrely it was just tooth that had come away, so while irritating it was pain free.

Now, at over 80 miles, I did something I have rarely [if ever] done on a 100. I took a 40 minute break, had something to eat and drink, washed my feet in a basin of cold water and reapplied a thick layer of sudocreme to my feet, topped with a clean pair of socks. I then headed off for a 2 mile loop to give Chris time to get himself organised, coming back past the cottage to collect him so he could do the last loop with me. My distance organisation had been put in disarray, firstly by forgetting to switch the Garmin on for 2 miles and secondly by cutting Loop 5 short. By the time we got back to Winchcombe, after a few suitable extra bits, I was 2.5 miles short of 100 miles. I sent Chris back to the cottage to prepare a suitably over the top welcome [optimistic I know] and started to randomly walk the paths and streets of Winchcombe on what was by now a hot and sunny Bank Holiday Sunday, less than a week since restrictions were eased.

Still covered in mud and wearing a Tilly hat, I reckon I must have looked like a mad woman as I walked as fast as I could while being blocked at every junction by wandering tourists, small children and dogs. I even did a circuit of a slightly dodgy housing estate as there was nobody much around there. Finally, sensing I had made it, I headed back towards the cottage at a half jog, realising that I might just get in under 32 hours – as if anyone cared, myself included!! Triumphant entering the garden I was greeted by – NOTHING!! No Chris, no dancing girls, no ticker tape, brass bands or rapturous crowds.



As Alan Sugar would say – ‘You’re Fired’.....

Epilogue:

Much more enjoyable than I expected. Fewer checkpoints worked much better for me, sudocreme and Sealskinz socks left me with no blisters, no sore feet and not a single lost toenail. Would I do it again? Maybe if I had to – but it felt very flat afterwards without the usual banter and exchange of experiences. And, in case you are wondering, I have only put the staff on a verbal warning because I really can’t afford a decent bike mechanic and there is no space in my kitchen for an automatic dishwasher.....

Leekie's Brain Teaser

Long Distance Trails in Cymru

1. Safe Fodky
2. Swag Wyndly
3. List Wand Soon Teal Air
4. Eup Who Ayes Oh
5. She Firewall Alteration
6. Anstice Icy War
7. Allard Bladders Nonstriker
8. Wager Yow
9. Peaty Wyn
10. Intrascrotal Wealthless

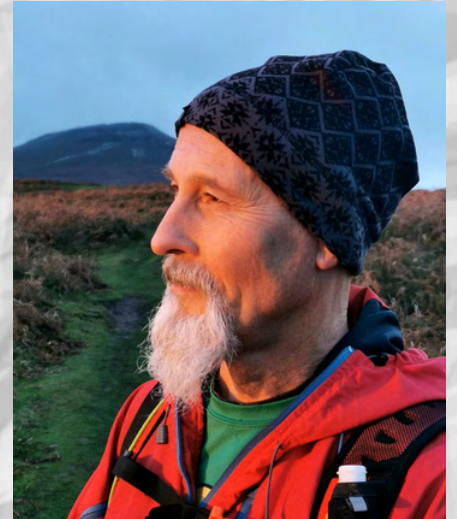
The first South Wales LDWA member to send a correct set of answers will win either a Leekie Buff, a Leekie mug or a Leekie badge.

Please send answers to:
southwalesldwa@live.co.uk

You might find the LDWA LDP section useful for this Teaser!



Leekie Meets Tony Alcock



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

I joined the group in 2014 and have become a more active participant in the past couple of years.

2 Where did you hear about the Group?

I first heard about the LDWA while listening to the radio in my workshop. There was a programme on the Camel Teign 100 and I subsequently looked up some information on the LDWA.

3 What do like best about the Group?

It has to be the variety of interesting characters that make up this Group. The specific and general knowledge held by individual members is simply inspirational. And the humour is often priceless.

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

The Black Mountains.

5 How many LDWA 100 mile walks have you completed?

Four.

6 What is your favourite challenge event?

I have a softspot for The Rhondda Rollercoaster, whether as a participant or in helping out. I always find the industrial heartland of the Valleys endearing and on a sunny Spring day the walk is a delight.

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

Pasta.....tagliatelle with olive oil, fresh tomatoes, black pepper, basil and shaved parmesan. I live in hope.

8 Do you wear shoes or boots?

Shoes wherever possible.

9 What is your favourite sandwich filling on a walk?

Egg and cress is a good staple favourite though a nice piece of good ham and mustard can hit the spot.

10 What's your ideal walking distance?

35 miles on a cool summer's day suits me fine.