

Daylight is shrinking fast at the time of writing, energy bills may be soaring, but a moment of inspiration at YHA Borrowdale: "Climb the mountains and get their good tidings" [John Muir] - a plaque mounted above the kitchen sink. Researching the origin of this I found, additionally, "Nature's peace will flow into you as sunshine flows into trees. The winds will blow their own freshness into you, and the storms their energy, while cares will drop away from you like the leaves of Autumn." Or, widening the same theme, Charles Dickens confessed that 'if I couldn't walk fast and far, I should just explode and perish'

Reflecting on this, I realised this is what we are about as Rugby Ramblers, whether on challenging trails in the Cotswolds or the gentle farmlands of Warwickshire, National Park trails or canal towpaths. snow, howling winds or pouring rain, our members still turn out in droves to support their endeavours. 2023 has witnessed all of this, even extreme heat, and while our group have to an extent been 'treading water', new walk leaders are emerging, the programme is gradually returning to something like pre-Covid and printed programme levels. Further encouragement has come via AGM - numbers slightly up again, Ivinghoe Beacon coach trip more or less full and 2024 residential to Coniston and the Elan Valley fully booked within hours. Again, many thanks to all who make these both possible, successful and fulfilling.

Seasonal greetings to all ... and happy walking in 2024.

David Shaw - Chairperson



Elan Valley Wales

Closer to home

- Roland kick started 2024 with a walk from Harbury through Chesterton. Despite unfavourable conditions, 20 members still supported; the 10 a.m start no doubt allowed some of us to enjoy Auld Lang Syne. So no need to explode, perish or climb mountains.
- John Lake leading a full day's walk from Bubbenhall on the 7th.
- Carol Wood leading a 10.5 miles walk from Braunston.
- An exciting development is the return of Janet's Rugby Round conceived during lockdown - section 2 on the 28th is 6.5 miles.

Walk leaders are invited to fill in gaps in the programme. Initial walk details to Roland at rolandnclarke@aol.com for the website; walk leaders advertise their walk through Astrid at astridremboldshimamura@gmail.com. We are immensely grateful to all who contribute.

Safety on walks

At the recent Area Quarterly Meeting attention was drawn to the requirement for First Aid training. Sandra Sutton, retiring Chairperson, thought that every walk leader should be trained in First Aid (a one-day course in essential life support skills). Some courses are run by Ramblers, otherwise St. Johns or the Red Cross can provide them. Walk leaders should carry a first aid kit but paracetamol or other medication should never be administered. Members are expected to carry their own basic first-aid items and be responsible for their own safety. This always assumes the leader has carried out a risk assessment through an initial recce of the route, including 'escape' options.

Residential weekends

Our April 2024 residential [5th-8th] at HF Monk Coniston has long been filled. Walk options are in preparation.

Elan Valley Lodge in Mid-Wales [August 30th-Sep 2nd] was fully booked within hours! The centre staff will deliver the programme on site but tenders are invited from booked members for a Friday walk near Rhayader.



Walk Holidays

Some of our members have travelled far and wide this year, their exploits summarised below.

Roland, much travelled between Scottish adventures, HF walking and Ramblers Worldwide including Santorini, reports below on a Gran Canary adventure in February (2023)



"Organised by the Outdoor Duo web based group, we were based in Las Palmas, the main town and used the very efficient buses to get around. The island, volcanic with mountains rising up to 6000 feet, is very lush and fertile in the north where it is common to see avocados, oranges, bananas and almonds growing; it is much drier in the south."

"There are many well documented footpaths, varied and spectacular on some routes; they originated as old donkey tracks known locally as Camino Reales. I actually led walks on 3 of the 6 days."



Lorna and Joan took off for the Cyclades Islands of Tinos and Andros [September 27th - 11th October], a Ramblers Worldwide holiday with excellent leaders; a holiday with pretty villages, good food at local tavernas and sandy beaches ... time on most days for a swim in the sea or hotel pool.

"Our first walk after landing at Athens included the Marathon battlefield, an interesting place with information boards."

"We still acknowledge the run to announce the defeat of the large Persian army by the much smaller army of the Athenians in 490 BC"

"A 3-hour ferry took us along a rugged coastline into Tinos town, nestling in a bay and dominated by an imposing Church which stands on a hill above the rest of the buildings. The island has had little rain for two years, resulting in parched brown fields dotted with shrivelled shrubs and unused windmills. A few goats nibbled hopefully at the yellow grass. Though severe it was dramatically beautiful."

"The steep paths were sometimes paved and with steps, sometimes rocky with areas of loose scree."

"Some tracks were used by the Venetians as they fled from the Ottoman Empire raiders. The little villages with steep paved streets and white houses were quiet; occasionally a taverna was open, offering a welcome drink and shelter from the sun."

"Andros is a much greener island with streams and a small waterfall. Goats nibble the richer grass. Occasionally there is a small area of cultivated land. Trees offered shade from the sun. The temperature was in the mid 20's with mainly gentle breezes which enabled all walks to go ahead as planned."

"One interesting person we met was a lady originally from the USA who lived in a mountain village. It was her allocated time to open a valve divert the water to her property. The spring water is piped down from the high hills in a complex system of pipes. It's an ingenious system."

[Echoes of Jean de Florette here? - Editor]

They can both vouch for the good food, clean hotels and excellent walk leadership. Anyone for booking? ... actually YES!



A further stretch on the Camino Frances was the autumn goal for **David and Ratree**. No lie-ins on this trail - albergues (pilgrim hostels) in Spain close at 8 a.m., it's still dark and a breakfast cafe likely 5 km hence. It sounds grim, and it is when cold and wet, but camaraderie on this trail is a great restorer of spirits. 120 miles nearer Santiago di Compostela justified the five buses, four trains and one Port-Aven ferry to reach the start point at Fromista, one bus less than on the return. Taxi! They did like the Spanish trains.

Pictures, Soups and Puds

This very popular event returns to its usual format at Bilton Bowling Club on Tuesday March 19th thanks again to Allan Pinder. We love seeing ourselves as others see us! Allan does urgently require member photographs from the past year's walks, including from residential weekends and holidays, so please send asap to a3@alpin2.plus.com.

Area Annual General Meeting

Hosted by Coventry Group, the meeting will be held in Bedworth at the Ex-Servicemen's Club in Rye Piece Ringway, renamed Sergeant Simon Valentine Way, on Saturday February 10th, tea and coffee being served from 10.00. Further details are inside the front cover of the Area Annual Report.

Please support if possible, we had a healthy contingent at the last one in Castle Bromwich. To assist the caterers please book your place by emailing the secretary at jdlockett01@btinternet.com by 1st February.