



The Poly Rambler

Members' Newsletter of the Polytechnic Rambling Club

www.polyramblers.org.uk

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Chairman's message

By the time you read this, the days will be getting longer and there should be some signs of Spring. There's been some serious mud underfoot during the winter months and so thanks to those of you who have led the winter walks and those that have supported them.

On March 3 we hold our AGM and I hope that as many of you as possible will attend. This is when you elect your committee and make your opinions known. The AGM is also a pleasant enjoyable social event after the formal business is completed (usually in about an hour).

The last few years have seen a rather static committee and the voting has generally been a matter of re-electing the existing officers and committee members. One difference this year is that you will be electing a new Chairman. I've been doing this for five years now and feel that it's time for someone else to have a go. I'll still be around and will be pleased to continue as a committee member, subject to due process obviously.

One of the minor changes this last year has been the presence of the Booking.com link on the front page of our web site. This was at the request of our web site administrator Clive, who receives a modest sum for each booking. The last year, between us we have made enough bookings for Clive to waive his administration and web hosting fees, a saving of around £40 for the club. I do hope you will continue to do this. Those of you that met Clive in Grazalema will know that his main interest is in walking and wildlife. Apart from reducing our administration costs, income goes to fund his running of responsible tourism and wildlife web sites in Andalucia.

My best wishes to you all for 2018 and I look forward to seeing you on a walk soon.

Mike Coyle (soon to be Emeritus, Chairman)



More uses for old boots in Dyffryn Ardudwy, Wales (Dominique)

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The Polytechnic Rambling Club

(in association with the
University of Westminster)
Founded 1885

Affiliated to the Ramblers'
Association (Inner London Area)
Affiliated to HF Holidays

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Kim Chowns
Dominique Le Marchand
Solvig Starborg
Stuart Swan
Geoffrey Waters

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Club's Facebook page:

<http://tinyurl.com/qclyyf>

* Articles for inclusion in the newsletter are welcome from all members. They should be walk related, but do not necessarily have to be about a club walk, e.g. walking holiday or what the club was like in the past. **Kim**

AUGUST BANK HOLIDAY WEEKEND IN THE SCOTTISH BORDERS FRIDAY, 24 TO TUESDAY, 28 AUGUST 2018

We will be based in Galashiels staying at the Jean Muir Student Village. Bed and continental breakfast accommodation (not self-catering). Single ensuite rooms at £38 per room per night plus a few double ensuite at £76 per room per night.

Travel by train to Edinburgh and then take the recently opened Borders Railway to Galashiels. Early booking of tickets to Edinburgh advisable due to the Festival.

The area offers a range of walking options including the Eildon Hills, Southern Upland Way and River Tweed. A programme for hikers and strollers will be available with possible intermediate options (subject to availability of leaders).

If you would like to come please contact the organiser Gillian Swan (gillian.swan@dsl.pipex.com) and send a £100 non-refundable deposit - bank transfer to the Club's account (number 29935940, sort code 05-02-00) or a cheque made out to the Club to Danny Duffy, at Flat 2, Gooch House, 63-75 Glenthorne Road, London W6 0JY.

Gillian Swan

DOGS ON WALKS

Some club members have dogs and bring them out on walks. In general this is perfectly fine and indeed seeing a healthy and happy dog out enjoying a walk can raise ones spirits. However, not all dogs get on well with other dogs and there can be other occasions, particularly involving livestock when tricky situations arise.

It would be appreciated that, if you are intending to bring your dog on a walk, you have a word with the leader in advance.

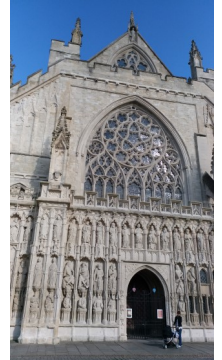
Mike Coyle

EXETER BANK HOLIDAY WEEKEND AUGUST 2017

This was the first time Sandra and I had organised a UK trip for the club. Our Bank Holiday weekends have become very popular and in view of this we wanted a destination which offered: easy rail travel from London; proximity of good walking countryside for hikers; shorter walks for the strollers, preferably with independent transport; sightseeing options for those who didn't want to walk, and somewhere big enough for us all to stay, together with plenty of single rooms. We hadn't visited Exeter before and it was with some relief that during a couple of reccies, we discovered that it would indeed provide all of the above.



We stayed at Exeter University. After arriving mid afternoon we made a brief orientation tour of the city to see the magnificent Gothic cathedral surrounded by some fine old buildings and the historic Royal Clarence Hotel that was, sadly, destroyed by fire in October 2016. The current proposals for rebuilding are for retaining the facade and not much else and are being challenged by conservation groups, rightly concerned about loss of internal fabric.



We also visited the lively Quay on the Exeter canal, where various historic buildings have been converted into bars and restaurants.

The canal was an important waterway for the development of Exeter. The estuary is barely navigable at Exeter and the canal allows boats to reach here from Topsham, which is about halfway to the sea.

On our first evening, we had arranged a group meal in the hall dining room. We had pre-dinner drinks, sitting out on a terrace enjoying the evening sun and fine views towards the moors. The meal provided was excellent, as were the breakfasts.

On Saturday, the hikers went by coach to Lustleigh and did a circular walk, a mixture of woodland and moor. We saw our first tor and survived a challenging crossing of a stream on large boulders. Lustleigh is a pretty village, which doesn't have a car park and so isn't overwhelmed by large numbers of visitors. We had time for a drink in the pub before walking down to Bovey Tracey and our coach.



Sandra took the strollers by train to Totnes for a pleasant boat cruise down the River Dart to Dartmouth. It was regatta week and Dartmouth was absolutely heaving. Some found the crowds too much and got the first bus back to Totnes and enjoyed an excursion on a steam railway. The others managed the planned town walk and ice creams before the bus to Totnes.

Danny led the in-betweeners to Totnes where they completed a gruelling five-mile circuit of the Dartington Estate with its spectacular medieval hall, followed by a walk around the historic town of Totnes.

Continued on next page

August BH continued

On Sunday Danny took the strollers by train to Teignmouth from where they took a ferry to Sheldon. This claims to be the oldest continually operating ferry in the country but fortunately this doesn't apply to the boats now in service. From Sheldon the group made a circular walk up and round the back of the town with fine views of the coast and estuary. It did involve quite a stiff climb, which some of the group wisely avoided, passing the day in the pubs and cafes of Sheldon. For those who did the walk, but found it strenuous, it should be noted that the walk was from a book called "Short Walks for All the Family."

Sarah led the in-betweeners (actually just one, Maggie B) to the attractive village of Topsham on the Exe estuary. After a walk around the town (of which more below), they took the tiny ferry across and walked into Exeter along the canal.

The hiker's day started well enough with a train ride to Totnes. This estuary and coastal railway route is one of the most scenic in the country. We walked around the historic town, taking in the castle. I had arranged for taxis to take us to Cornworthy for the start of our walk, but they didn't show up. We managed to find alternative taxis and were only slightly delayed, but it was a somewhat fraught 20 minutes for the organiser.



From Cornworthy, we followed the estuary, stopping in Dittisham for refreshments. We had our picnic lunch on a nice grassy bank overlooking the estuary.

On reaching Dartmouth we enjoyed ice cream and beer and then most of us took the boat back to Totnes. It was a lovely warm evening and it was interesting to see where we had been walking earlier. Most of us had a meal in Totnes and a further stroll around before heading for the station. We found that the

train had been delayed, and was then cancelled, due to trespassers (possibly strollers!) on the line. Eventually we took taxis back to the University. An enjoyable, if longer than planned, day.





August BH continued

On Monday, a coach took the hikers and walkers to Widecombe. The hikers were dropped off at the top of the hill down to Widecombe and did a circular walk taking in some of the most iconic of the tors, including Top Tor, Saddle Tor, Hay Tor and Hound Tor. We also visited some granite workings and a granite tramway, which was built to take the stone down to Newton Abbot where it was transferred to boats.

Dominique led the in-betweeners on another circular walk from Widecombe itself, which in some ways was more strenuous, as it involved a lung busting climb out of the village before settling down into a gentle route across the heather clad hilltop. The two groups met at the top of the descent into Widecombe where beer and afternoon teas were enjoyed before taking the coach back.

Sandra led the strollers on a trip around the estuary, starting with a train ride down to Exmouth. From here they took a ferry across to Starcross. The navigation channel forms a great sweep across the estuary, passing through dozens of moored craft. At Starcross there is an interpretive panel about Brunel and his atmospheric railway, of which a pumping station survives. From here a pleasant walk took them to Turf Tavern before catching the ferry to Topsham. This former port is now a fairly upmarket village with some lovely old buildings and an interesting museum about its naval and trading past. After lunch and a walk around the village, they took the train back to Exeter.



So far, the hikers hadn't really spent any time around the Exe estuary, so on Tuesday I took a group by train to Starcross. From here we walked to the Turf Tavern, taking in the grounds of Powderham Castle on the way. Crossing to Topsham by ferry, we had time for lunch, the museum and a tour of the village before taking the train back.

Those who didn't do the walk spent the morning in a variety of ways in Exeter itself and went on organised walks of the city and the large network of underground passageways.

As the organisers, it's difficult to be objective, but we think the trip went OK, helped in no small measure by our experiencing some of the best weather of the summer. It's certainly an area that deserves more time than three and a bit days and one could do a lot worse than stay at the university outside term time.

Sandra and Mike

Weekend in Barmouth (Wales) October 2017

The idea for the weekend in Barmouth came up to me after watching a programme with Julia Bradbury when she was walking along the Mawddach Trail and across the Barmouth Bridge. The scenery was so beautiful that I thought it would be an ideal venue for a Polyramblers weekend.

On the Friday, after a long but scenic train journey, 18 Polyramblers arrived in Barmouth on a sunny afternoon for our autumn weekend. After settling in our B&Bs, we went on an orientation walk that was more challenging than usual, especially for the Strollers (this was the hardest walk of the weekend for them!). We walked up to St John's Church and up a steep hill to Dinas Oleu, the first land donated to the National Trust and up again to the Frenchman's grave. We came down through the little alleyways of Old Barmouth next to The Last Inn and then went to the Round House, the old lock-up for the Barmouth drunks – no longer in use. We ended the evening with an excellent dinner at The Captain's Table.



Saturday started with grey skies and some rain. The Hikers took the train to Dyffryn Ardudwy to do the southern section of the Ardudwy Way. We stopped to chat with a lady who introduced us to her donkey, black nose Valais sheep, dog and horse. After a second stop at the Neolithic burial chambers, we walked through fields and woodlands following a gushing river until we reached Pont-Fadog. We climbed steadily through fields, admiring views of the sea and mountains. We stopped for lunch before a steep climb and, while eating our sandwiches, watched Stuart prepare coffee and a hot sticky toffee

pudding (no custard) for him and Gillian on his Trojan cooker. We arrived at the top of the climb in the mist later to become showers. We followed an undulating route, avoiding many boggy bits, back to Barmouth. The Strollers walked from Tal-y-Bont station, stopped in two pubs, walked along the shore and went to the Neolithic burial chambers.



Continued on next page

Weekend in Barmouth continued

Sunday was a hard day for the ten Hikers. Our taxi dropped us off at the Dol Idris car park and we started our climb up Cader Idris on the Minffordd Path. Although Cader Idris is 'only' 893m, it is a hard mountain walk and quite steep. We went up to the cliffs around Lyn Cau, the lake in the middle of the caldera, and continued climbing up to Craig Cau in the mist (no views). After a stile, the path went down, the fog got thicker and there was a final steep push up to the summit. Thankfully, there is a shelter there and we were able to eat our lunch inside. Coffee &



lemon curd sponge for Stuart. We descended the mountain by the Pony Path which goes down gradually and is not as steep as the Minffordd Path, but the walk did not end at the bottom. We continued along a lake, fields and woodland to Penmaénpool. Irene and Stuart rushed ahead and had time for a drink at the George III pub. No drink for the other eight Hikers as the taxi was waiting for us. The Strollers walked the Mawddach Trail to the George III pub, went across the lovely toll bridge and took the bus back to Barmouth. Dinner was at the Myn-y-Mor hotel.

After the previous day's hard walk, only five Hikers had enough energy to do a last walk on Monday. It was a beautiful sunny morning and, as we crossed Barmouth Bridge, we admired the estuary and the mountains in all their splendour. We followed the Mawddach Trail to Arthog (after going the wrong way a couple of times) and went up to the falls. Returning to Barmouth, we managed to find the right path through fields and along the estuary and, as the tide was out, were able to walk along the shore. The two Strollers walked to Fairbourne and came back by train. After lunch, we gathered at the station for our long journey back to London.

Dominique



Autumn Bank Holiday to Ashbourne in Derbyshire from Friday, 5 October to Monday, 8 October

Ashbourne is an ancient market town situated in the southern part of the Peak District in Derbyshire and close to the popular walking area of Dovedale. It boasts a large number of public houses for a small market town!

Accommodation will be at Sandy Brook Country Park two miles outside of Ashbourne. We will be staying in self-contained lodges with kitchen and dining facilities. There is a restaurant on site. Also included in our stay is use of a swimming pool and other games such as table tennis. There are also woodland walks on site.

Early booking is essential as this is a popular venue. I will need to know (habbey@btinternet.com) by the end of February your expression of interest, together with a deposit paid to the treasurer.

Send a £50 deposit to the Club to secure your place. Payments by bank transfer to the Polytechnic Rambling Club account number 29935940, sort code 05-02-00 or by cheque made out to the Polytechnic Rambling Club and sent to Danny Duffy at Flat 2, Gooch House, 63-75 Glenthorne Road, London W6 0JY.

Hilary Abbey

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