



# The Poly Rambler

Members' Newsletter of the Polytechnic Rambling Club

[www.polyramblers.org.uk](http://www.polyramblers.org.uk)

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## Chair's message

The Polyramblers Spring Programme of walks have been a great success with options of short and long walks. Sunita and Jennifer's walk-through Perivale woods with a glorious expanse of Bluebells proved a particular success with well over 30 walkers attending. With summer approaching we are now able to offer a range of longer walks to challenge our level of fitness and look forward to high attendances!

Danny organised our first weekend of the year with the YHA weekend in Beer, Devon. This presented some unexpected challenges, as the weather was one of gale force winds which on the coast threatened to topple ramblers completely off balance! A big thank you to Danny for a great weekend. It was decided at our committee meeting for more input and ideas about future YHA weekends set out in this newsletter.

This year we had our AGM at a new venue, the Bankside Community Centre in Southwark, which was very successful with a good turnout of club members. We hope that we will be able to book this venue for future AGMs.

Prompted by Christine's decision to step down from the role of club president and after some discussion at the AGM it was decided that the positions of both Club and Vice Presidents would be discontinued, but we will continue to have Honorary Members. Christine and Rosemary MacLoughlin, a Vice President for many years, were both elected Honorary Members at the meeting. It was also decided that our Annual Subscription will be increased to £10 a year to ensure that we meet the increasing costs of running the club.

Christine recently cracked her hip, but is now making a good recovery and we send her all our best wishes for a full recovery.

We go to the Dolomites towards the end of May, travel to Lancaster over the August BH and have an autumn trip to Lynton. **Hilary**



Material for this edition collated by the committee.  
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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

### **OFFICERS AND COMMITTEE**

#### **Honorary members**

Christine Bignold  
Rosemary MacLoughlin

#### **GENERAL COMMITTEE**

#### **CLUB OFFICERS**

##### **Chair**

Hilary Abbey

##### **General Secretary**

Gillian Swan

##### **Treasurer**

Daniel Duffy

#### **COMMITTEE MEMBERS**

Pam Beach  
Kim Chowns  
Mike Coyle  
Susan James  
Dominique Le Marchand  
Jennifer MacKenzie  
Geoffrey Waters

#### **CONTACT FOR CORRESPONDENCE\***

Kim Chowns

k.chowns@yahoo.co.uk

#### **Club's Facebook page:**

<http://tinyurl.com/qclyyfq>

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\* 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 past  
memories of events and walks.

## **Geoffrey celebrates 40 years of Club Membership**

### **(Part Two)**

In 1979 I attended my first AGM and got elected onto the committee, probably because it was seen that I had attended most of the rambles since I joined and liked map reading. The most notable rambles that year were a lovely one on a hot sunny Sunday in May from Sevenoaks via Ightham, led by Ann Farquhar. There were good views from higher ground, but especially the bluebells in the woods were ABSOLUTELY GORGEOUS! It was over 10 miles up and down. When I got home I sprawled out on my bed that evening listening to "The Country Diary of an Edwardian Lady" on Radio 4, which helped me reflect on the day out.

Another trip, May BH 1979, was with the Ramblers Association Southern Area organised in association with British Rail. We would piggyback onto these once or twice a year (it saved us a leader), this one was to Freshwater, Isle of Wight, rather overcast dry day, but good down land/sea views. Apparently I had a lot of feedback from members about a similar event here the previous year where people got absolutely drenched in constant rain.

Also in May 1979 I attended my first Annual Dinner-Dance. These were organised by Doreen Small, our club treasurer. Dinner-Dances were the vogue right up to the mid eighties. We often used the Coburg Hotel in Bayswater Road. They were well attended, usually 30+ members, and it was here that I would see many older members who hadn't been on rambles. We would appoint a Master of Ceremonies and hire Eddie Noys who would provide the music on turntables. In those days we had a formality of calling toasts at the Dinner.

Another notable trip was our 1979 August BH weekend to Exford hostel in Exmoor. I drove there picking up Gerald on the way. When we arrived mid afternoon, the hostel was closed, we went straight to the nearby teashop where we met Peter Gould, Rosie and possibly Dorothy who were tucking into a lovely cream tea. Gerald and I ordered the same. Afterwards, there was left a half full bowl of cream on the table. Gerald enquired if we'd finished with it, then went ahead and consumed it all up with a large spoon!!! Again lovely sunny coastal walks, though we nearly lost Lucy (Ann's little dog) in the clifftop heather near County Gate.

#### *Other notable events*

At the AGM in March 1980 I was presented with the Rambler of the Year Cup as I attended most rambles during 1979, my first complete year. This was repeatedly throughout the 1980s, because I loved the rambles so much. Until I moved to Crosby during the 1990s. You could say I was a 1980s Cup custodian!

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## Geoffrey's 40 years continued

The furthest I've ever rambled in a day was in the early eighties when Peter Gould was keen to enter members in to the Chiltern Marathon, a 25 mile challenge walk up and down the Chilterns, from Marlow Rugby Club (circular). In Sept 1982 he entered himself, Gerald and I into it. Both he and Gerald completed the whole circuit. As for me, by 5pm one of my soles was beginning to get quite painfully sore, slowing me down. At just before 6 pm I reached the final check point (Pinkneys) and had to bow out. However, I completed 21.75 miles so broke my personal record of 17 miles before I joined the club. At Pinkneys there was a lovely couple who drove me back to the rugby club. When I drove home afterwards, was I glad my car had automatic gears. Oh yes!!

1985 was the centenary year of the club. We celebrated by undertaking the complete North Downs Way long distance footpath in 12 stages. This was coordinated by Peter Gould, split into 12 stages, with different leaders, over various days and weekends from late May to October. I recall leading the first 3 stages from Farnham to Reigate Hill. When you look at the cover of our club history book, you are seeing the picture I took as we are getting near to Dover on the last stage. Taken on the afternoon of Sunday, 20 October 1985 and we had a good turnout that day. The section we did from Canterbury to Dover in September was the longest, covering 20 miles in a day.

Strangely enough the Ramblers Association also celebrated their 50 years anniversary in 1985. I mention this because they undertook a continuous ramble all over the country, starting at Royal Holloway College Egham in the Spring, continuing every day until the Autumn. The last day was a boat trip along the Thames from Putney Bridge to Westminster, then on foot to 10 Downing Street where a petition was handed in. I and a few Polyramblers took this Friday off work to attend. Its the only time I've ever been through Mrs Thatcher's metal gates into Downing Street.

The club held its Centenary Dinner-Dance in January 1986 at the Carburton/Regent Centre Hotel near Great Portland Street station. Since I joined the club in 1978 a Centenary fund was held by the treasurer to subsidise this Centenary event. This was a great success, and we hired a band for the dance music. But the Annual Dinner-Dances we held in previous years died out after the Centenary one, and became Annual Dinners at other venues.

During the mid eighties, the club introduced a December ramble (not in Central London) with a pre-bookable pub Christmas lunch. It proved very popular, with a walk before and after the lunch. Eventually after some years, the walk after the lunch was dropped as it grew dark when we finished lunch. We soon discovered this was a good way to exchange Christmas Cards. Which is why it survives today, especially as we have no club room.

In August 1990 I moved from London to Crosby and was too far away to attend all the rambles. At this time the clubroom was taken away from us, so we could no longer hold regular socials, except restaurant visits. However it was imperative that I kept my membership going and during the nineties was always keen to hear the new club programme drop on my hall floor in Merseyside. If it was a Saturday I would take to an armchair to read through the forthcoming rambles etc, then decide which events I would go down south to attend, and thus planned my weekends down south accordingly. In those days I had the best of both worlds as I also joined the local Crosby Rambling Club who do Sunday coach rambles. However, Polyramblers weekends normally went straight into my diary. It was also lovely to be phoned by weekend event organisers asking if I wanted to book a weekend.

**(continued on next page)**

My favourite Polyrambler weekends from Crosby were Beer in May 1999 and Lulworth Cove in 2000 both organised by Christine Bignold. For these events I travelled through the Mersey Tunnel to Shrewsbury en route, where I picked up former member Ann Farquhar and her lodgers, so in 1999 I was a party of 4 travelling to Beer. I also picked up Solvig at Axminster station when we were nearly there. I said I'd be there at around 4pm, but on a near 300 mile journey couldn't guarantee punctuality. And what do you know! As I was driving up Axminster Station approach, the 4 o'clock pips were sounding on radio 4. How did I do that??? And then there were five!

Eventually I worked again in London (staying at Addlestone) as from January 2001, so could attend most of the rambles from that date, the first being one from Hassocks which I drove to in 45 mins by motorway, having had a bad commuting week with SouthWest trains! Nowadays I still enjoy the rambles, as living alone, now retired and with a diminishing family, its often the only day of the week where I can interact with others during much of the day. But don't get me wrong, I do enjoy the solitude in the week!

Here's to more lovely rambles and more years of membership!

**GEOFFREY WATERS**



Geoffrey leading his most recent walk

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## ANNUAL YOUTH HOSTEL WEEKEND

The annual youth hostel weekend has been going for seventeen years, so perhaps now is a good time for a review. The first one was Eastbourne in 2003 and twenty-two members attended. The most recent one was Beer in March and twenty-one stayed at the hostel. The number of attendees has varied over the years from a high of twenty-seven at Saffron Walden in 2006 and a low of fourteen at Eastbourne in 2011 & Minehead in 2013. The hostel rental cost for two nights exclusive hire has gradually gone up from around £400 in 2003 to £1048 this year.

Hostels which are reasonably close to London, which we have not stayed in before and which have availability for some or all dates in March 2020 are Brockenhurst (£1148), Truleigh Hill (£1320), Medway (£1020), Streatley-on-Thames (£1368) and Milton Keynes (£1068). Available hostels that we have stayed in before include Littlehampton (£868), Eastbourne (£868) & Totland (a surprisingly low £400).

Interest in a potential 2020 youth hostel weekend is requested from members along with venue preferences and any views on the arrangements such as the catering, the walks, the communal tasks and the proposal for restricting the weekend to those staying at the hostel. Also volunteers for leading walks and even for organising the whole weekend would be appreciated. Replies please to me at [qprduffy20@hotmail.com](mailto:qprduffy20@hotmail.com) by the beginning of July so we can discuss the matter at the next committee meeting.

**Danny**

## FRIDAY 11 TO MONDAY 14 JANUARY 2019: SNOW-WALKING IN TYROL

After a delayed flight, 2 trains and 2 buses, 8 Polyrampblers finally arrived in Biberwier for our 10th snow-walking weekend. And snow, there was – loads. Just before our arrival, Austria had the biggest snowfall in recent memory; almost 10 feet fell in just 48 hours in parts of the country. After settling in gasthaus Panorama, we ate a lovely dinner in a nearby restaurant, Hotel Restaurant Alpina, which became our favourite watering hole. Some of us enjoyed our first apfelstrudel of the year and others a few schnapps. I will let you guess who had what.

On the Saturday, more snow had fallen during the night but it had stopped when we woke up. After breakfast, we took the bus to the Ehrwald cable car and went up the mountain. We had hoped to do a walk there but the path was shut because of the snow. To drown our disappointment, we headed to the nearest bar and had gluhwein (at 9.00 GMT!). We took the cable car down and walked to Ehrwald where we visited the church and the tourist office and had a light lunch. The sun was out and we walked to Lermoos across the wide valley, checking



regularly if the cloud had lifted from the Zugspitze (the highest mountain in Germany across the border). We then walked back to Biberwier and stopped at Hotel Alpina for a drink. After a short rest, we had dinner at the Brabander Alm to see how it compared with Hotel Alpina. It had started snowing by the time we got back to the guesthouse.



On Sunday, no view but heavy snow all day; very different from the previous day. We took 2 buses to get to the Tiroler Zugspitzbahn cable car which was shut because of the wind. So, to drown our second disappointment, we had a gluhwein in the nearest bar (even though we did not want to go on the cable car). We then walked on a cleared path through the forest and fields of snow to Ehrwald. We were getting wet so we had lunch in the first restaurant we saw – which was Italian and very friendly.

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## Snow walking weekend continued

Danny went to the swimming pool (free with the guest card) while we walked back to Biberwier in heavy snow. We stopped for a hot drink at Hotel Alpina – before going back to the guesthouse to dry up and rest. Our last dinner was at Hotel Alpina where we ended the evening with a few schnapps.

The best laid plans.... On our last morning, we were going to do a walk in Garmisch but, instead, we spent the whole day travelling to Munich because of a delayed bus, delayed trains and a tree on the line. So, after 3 buses and 2 trains with a stop for a beer in Weilheim (to drown our disappointment), we finally reached Munich. We had a quick tour of the centre led by Danny before making our way to the airport. Next year, the plan is to go to a village near Garmisch or perhaps Mittenwald.

## Dominique

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### FRIDAY 15 TO SUNDAY 17 MARCH 2019: YHA WEEKEND IN BEER (DEVON)

On the Friday, travelling by car, train and bus, 27 Polyramblers made their way to Beer in Devon. 21 to stay in the youth hostel, which the club had hired for the weekend and 6 in the Dolphin Hotel. The hostel is a beautiful stone country house located just outside the fishing village of Beer. Standing in its own grounds, it retains many original features, including stripped timber floors and leaded windows.

Those staying in the hostel waited for the food delivery from Sainsbury and had a cup of tea and cake. We then made our way to the Anchor Inn for dinner and met our fellow Polyramblers staying in the hotel. Then it was back to our comfortable hostel for the evening.

Saturday was a very grey and windy day. After a nice breakfast cooked by group B, the Hikers made their way to Branscombe. We followed Quarry Lane then walked through fields and Hazelwood which was carpeted with wild garlic. We stopped at the Branscombe forge and then continued through fields. We struggled along a very muddy steep path to cross a small river. We went up Hole Hill where trees had fallen across the path. We then reached the Fountain Head pub where we had lunch. Afterwards, we went up again only to descend to the next valley and walked to Branscombe Mouth. We stopped at the Sea Shanty where some of us had tea / coffee. We split into two groups, one walking at the top of the cliffs and the second following the South West Coast Path at the foot of the cliffs. When we reached Beer Head, the wind was fierce and it was difficult to stand up. We continued along fields and finally reached Beer where some of us went to the beach and saw three brave souls go for a swim and others had tea and cakes. **(continued on next page)**



## YHA Weekend at Beer continued



One rambler is blown onto her knees!

The Strollers walked along a country lane, fields and Hazelwood to Branscombe where they had coffee at the Masons Arms pub. They then walked to the Sea Shanty where they had lunch. They returned to Beer via the undercliff path where they struggled with the strong wind after reaching the top of the cliffs. Saturday dinner was cooked by group A, led by Lorna. As a starter, we had pea and mint soup; then there was a choice of Moroccan vegetable tagine or chicken normande with rice and broad beans.

Dessert was sticky toffee pudding with cream or custard or stewed rhubarb and custard. Delicious. A few people went to the Dolphin hotel where an Irish band was playing to celebrate St Patrick's Day. Those who stayed at the hostel had a mastermind quiz with Geoffrey whose specialist subject was The Polyramblers.

What difference a day makes! We woke up on Sunday to blue sky and sunshine and a gentle breeze. After breakfast cooked by group C and tidying up the hostel, the Hikers walked over South Down Common to the Sea Shanty for coffee and then lunch at the Masons Arms pub before returning to Beer along the South West Coast Path. The Strollers walked to Seaton where they had coffee and walked on the beach before returning to Beer for lunch. 12



Polyramblers had opted to stay in Beer for another night while others went back to London after another successful youth hostel weekend. Thanks to Danny for organising the trip.

## Dominique



## Club Charitable donations

Each year the Club makes a donation (normally £50) to a walking-related organisation. In the past the Ramblers and the Woodland Trust have been amongst the recipients.

For the last couple of years, the Pathways Fund run by HF Holidays has received our money. It supports projects to improve access to the countryside around its country houses.

Recent projects to receive HF Holidays funding include the Hyden Lane project, part of the South Downs Way, Mend OurWay appeal (£2,000), the Whernside (Brunts car) Footpath Repair project (£4,000 ) and the Lake District Foundation (£20,000), which will go towards the cost of reconstructing the Keswick to Threlkeld multi user trail.

The Club benefits from our affiliation with HF Holidays. Our 100 shares in the company entitles us to free Public Liability insurance. This used to cost the Club over £200 a year. In addition, we receive £50 a year for including their advert (see below) in our newsletter.

Suggestions for future donations are always welcome.

**Danny**



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