



The Poly Rambler

Members' Newsletter of the Polytechnic Rambling Club

www.polyramblers.org.uk

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Chairs Message June 2023

Following a well-attended AGM on the 18 March, I hope you will all have had the chance to read our summer programme and are feeling sufficiently invigorated to tackle some excellent walks for both the hikers and strollers. I am looking forward to what has become a yearly event led by Harriet, the South Downs from Lewes, 16 mile circular walk. Recent dry weather has resulted in ideal walking conditions. The recent introduction of midweek walks has proved popular thanks to Dominique who has taken the lead in putting them on the programme, I would hope that these will continue.

We have continued to enhance the walk programme with some interesting club events. Dolly and Mick recently arranged a visit to Harrow School attended by nineteen Poly Ramblers, this proved to be informative with an excellent guide.

The visit to Windsor Castle has now been rearranged for the 5 August I am hoping that we will not again be beset by rail disruptions.

Material for this edition collated by the committee.

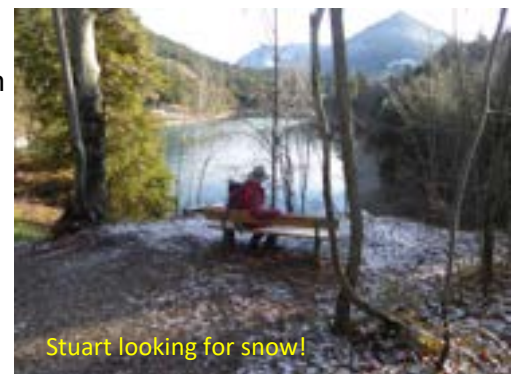
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Our walking trips away this year have been a great success, and very well attended. The Norfolk coastal path from Hunstanton to Wells next the Sea organised by Gillian provided us with the opportunity to see rare coastal birds and estuary plants as well as great hiking. Our Spring Bank Holiday trip to the Cotswolds has also been a great success with thirty-eight participants, this was particularly challenging with the return journey made problematic by further train strikes. Many thanks to all the organisers and walk leaders for taking time and dedication to ensuring an enjoyable weekend for all. We have two further walk trips to look forward to this year a trip to Northern Ireland organised by Jackie and a hostel weekend in October to Conway in Wales organised by Danny.

The walk club could not function without the input of our committee members. Following the AGM when it was announced that Mike Coyle and Jackie McCartan had stepped down. We have two new members Chris Maslen and Sunita Shah. Both Chris and Sunita are enthusiastic hikers and regular leaders on our walk programme. Sunita has taken on the task of ensuring accurate walk attendance records and Chris has taken on the role of website lead editor and liaison with Gillian. Geoffrey has now taken on the task of checking travel arrangements and alerts of changes in timetables which has caused an increasing challenge for walk attendees and the programme co-ordinators.

I look forward to seeing you all on future walks taking full advantage of our summer weather and enjoyment of picnics and sitting in pub gardens.

Hilary



Stuart looking for snow!

**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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Christopher Maslen
Sunita Shah
Geoffrey Waters

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Club's Facebook page:
<https://tinyurl.com/2p8fzk7n>

*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.

**SNOW-WALKING WEEKEND REUTTE – TIROL -
AUSTRIA
13-17 JANUARY 2023**

After a two-year interruption, we decided to resume the snow-walking weekends. This time, we stayed four nights to be able to do three walks. As the time to leave got nearer, snow was lacking in the mountains. Would it just be a walking weekend? Never mind, we were keen to see the mountains. At Heathrow, one member of the group was missing but we were eventually reunited at the gate (phew!) and eight Polyramblers flew to Munich on Friday 13. After travelling on three different trains, we finally arrived in time for dinner at the Hotel Goldene Rose in Reutte, a small Austrian market town located on the river Lech.

On the Saturday it was sunny and after a hearty breakfast we went to the tourist office to get confirmation that all paths and restaurants were open. We then set off across the valley, crossed the river Archbach before reaching lake Urisee. From there, it was uphill all the way to the top along narrow paths. We walked from 2,799ft in Reutte to the



Durrenberger Alm at 4,717ft where we had lunch, an ascent of 1,919ft. The path was quite popular, and we stopped quite often to let fitter people go past, including a couple with a cat in a coat on top of a rucksack. They walked too fast for us to take a photo. As we climbed higher, we reached the snow line, and we were snow walking! We finally reached the restaurant for a well-deserved lunch of hot soup and a schnapps offered by the owners. On the descent, we put our grips on to avoid slipping. We opted to go down on a wide path which was not as steep as the path on the way up. Once back in Reutte after a 7 mile walk, we all agreed we deserved a coffee and a cake and made our way



to a café where Susan, who had arrived earlier that day, found us. How did she guess we would be there! Back at the hotel, we went to the sauna to relax before dinner.

(continued)

Snow walking weekend (continued)

On Sunday, we started our walk southbound along the river Lech up to the hamlet of Platten. As there was no snow in the valley, we were walking at a steady pace, and I was worried that we would be back at the hotel by lunchtime. But Stuart spotted a cable car in the distance, and we decided to investigate. We all agreed to go up Hahnenkamm on the gondola and, at 5,577ft, we



were rewarded with fantastic views of Reutte and the valley. After enjoying the view, we went to the Panorama restaurant for a hot alcoholic drink. We then walked the short hiking trail around a lake. We were snow walking again! We went down on the gondola and the weather took a turn for the worse; it started raining but we are made of hard stuff and continued our walk. We walked to Wängle



and turned north-eastward to reach a forest track. It stopped raining but the path was quite muddy and slippery. We continued through the forest on narrow paths until we reached a deer feeding station but saw no deer. We finally reached Frauensee lake (3,280ft) where we had a late lunch. While we were eating our soup followed by cake, it started snowing quite heavily but the snow did not settle. We made our way down a quiet narrow road and reached the Lech which we followed back to our hotel. After our 7.4 mile walk, we headed to the sauna before going out to eat in a pizzeria booked by Rochelle.

On Monday, we took the bus to Heiterwang - passing under Highline 179 (more on this later) – which is in another valley and, seen from the top of the gondola the previous day, did have a layer of snow. We followed an icy road to Heiterwanger lake and continued along woodland before starting to go up and up along a wide track through the forest until and along a very narrow stony path and were rewarded by beautiful views of Ehrenberg castle and Fort Claudia. We followed a wide track down until we reached Highline



179. There had been much discussion about going across the "Longest pedestrian suspension bridge in the world in Tibetan style" awarded by the Guinness Book of Records. When faced with the fact, we all went across the long bridge walking at different speeds and, for some of us, avoided looking down to the road



376ft below. After taking many photos, we walked through the gateway of Ehrenberg castle and went down to find the restaurant. Alas,

Monday was the day it was shut so, after eating our snack while proudly looking back at the footbridge we had just crossed, we made our way to Reutte. After walking to the left of mount Sintwag and along residential street, we reached a coffee shop where we all went in for well-deserved coffee and cake. We had a long session in the sauna before our last meal in the hotel.



(continued)

Snow Walking weekend (continued)

On Tuesday we made our way to Reutte station and took 3 trains to Munich airport for home. The next trip is planned for January 2024 in Reit im Winkle (if the hotels are not all booked because of the World biathlon championship as happened this year).

In case you are wondering what snow-walking involves: we walk on paths which have been cleared of snow and are specifically designed for winter walking with our normal walking boots (no need for snowshoes) and put on small grips on our boots if it is icy.

Dominique



Fort William Weekend 30 September – 4 October 2022



By some lovely twist of fate, I spent seven weeks of the first lockdown in 2020 marooned in a youth hostel at Loch Ossian in Corrour, where my friend is the manager. During my sojourn I grew to appreciate what a special place it was and wanted to share it with my fellow Polyramblers, hence the idea for this trip was born. The facilities in the Loch Ossian hostel are rudimentary and not to everyone's taste, so it was decided to base the weekend in Fort William, with access to a variety of hiking and sightseeing, not least Ben Nevis and to culminate with a day in Corrour.

Twenty-four Polyramblers met at Glasgow Central station on Friday 30 September to travel up to Fort William. The remainder valiantly weathered the last-minute scheduling changes – complete with buggy transfer to the train to secure seats en-masse - and delights of en-route delays to finally arrive 90 minutes late. Fortunately, there was a coach booked to Fort William and the driver provided an interesting and entertaining commentary along the route.

Saturday 1 October

Hikers Walk – Kinlochleven Circular

Eighteen hikers took a bus to Kinlochleven. The intention was to walk up Glen Leven through trees and streams to reach the Blackwater Dam and across the bottom of the dam back down on a wide path to Kinlochleven.

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Fort William weekend (continued)



We climbed up the valley on a narrow rocky path, levelling out at one point to a grassier area which had been a WWI POW camp with a few small stumpy ruins. Views were initially of waterfalls through the trees on the other side of the steep valley walls, but what had been a few gentle rocky streams when I did the recce in June had been swollen by recent heavy rain and more challenging, requiring helping hands and



walking poles along the way with a few falling in and getting soaked! The going was slow and after a couple of hours we reached an impassable waterfall. There was no alternative but to head back the way we had come. We arrived back in Kinlochleven and passed the next couple of hours in the Highland Getaway Inn, drying out and admiring the view before returning to Fort William.

Strollers walk to Spean Bridge and the Commandos Memorial – report by Sandy

Five Strollers took the bus to Spean Bridge, with a detour to the ski centre. The first stage of our walk took us up the busy A82 for about a mile to reach the Commando Memorial; fortunately, there was a pavement all the way.



The Commando Memorial is dedicated to the men of the original British Commando Forces raised during World War II. This site was chosen because it is on the route to the commandos' nearby training base at Achnacarry Castle. A further reason for the choice of site is that it provides a good view of Ben Nevis and Aonach Mor. The cloud denied us that view, but I think I just about made out the vague outline of the Ben. Near the memorial is a garden of remembrance which contains plaques with the names of commandos who served in World War II. There are also plaques for members of the armed forces who died in more recent conflicts. We were saddened to see that so many of them were 23 and 24 year-olds.

Our route back to Spean Bridge took us first on a well-kept path over moorland and then along a disused railway line high above the river Spean. We arrived back in Spean Bridge in time for lunch at the Bridge Café, which was run by a lady who might have been a sergeant major in the army, such was her manner in telling people where to sit and giving orders to the young girls who were serving.

However, to her credit she pointed out to me that my return bus ticket had fallen out of my wallet when I was paying my bill.

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Fort William weekend (continued)

It had been raining on and off all morning and three of the group decided to return to Fort William to look round the town. Two of us set off across the railway line for an invigorating walk in Killiechonate Forest. At times the rain was quite heavy, but we enjoyed the way the path twisted and turned and went up and down. When we returned from the walk, we visited another café where we passed the time till we caught the bus. The day finished with a meal in the excellent Ben Nevis pub.

Sunday 2 October

Small group Hikers ascent of Ben Nevis – report by Jo



Carole, Mary, Dominique, Ida and Jo formed the Ben Nevis breakaway group. We set off from Glen Nevis youth hostel and took the steep direct route up to the main path, where we met quite a few “3 peakers” on the way down from the summit and many more parties on their way up the so-called Tourist Path.



Our ascent took 4.5 hours, the last part through swirling mists as we navigated the pink granite boulders into the tundra - with regular updates from Dominique’s ‘metres climbed’ app to encourage us. Despite a few mishaps at the summit everyone made it down in one piece, in good spirits and in a sedate 5 hours or so, with some lovely views once we’d cleared the zig zag paths.

Hikers – Glen Nevis and the Polldubh Falls

Thirteen hikers met at the Glen Nevis Visitor Centre to walk along the glen. In good weather this is a lovely circular walk of 8 miles along the river Nevis to the lower falls at Polldubh. This plan was reviewed in light of the previous day’s adventures and on recommendation from one of the staff at the youth hostel, it was decided to only walk the higher-level path to avoid being ‘knee deep’ in bog!

The walk was pleasant on a wide path, and we reached the falls easily, glancing up at the cloud on the summit of Ben Nevis from time to time wondering how the intrepid five were managing!

After picnicking at the falls, we retraced our steps about halfway along the path and then ascended to Cow Hill. The track was wide but very steep and three of us stopped just before the summit and returned down to our accommodation at the Glen Nevis Youth Hostel. The remaining eight persevered and were rewarded by lovely views over Loch Linnhe, before following the path back down to Fort William.

Strollers - Neptune’s Ladder and Glenfinnan report by Sandy

Nine Strollers caught the bus to Banavie and arrived in time to see the Jacobite steam train on its way to Mallaig where it crosses the Glenfinnan Viaduct, cue Harry Potter! At Banavie we visited Neptune’s Staircase which is a series of 8 ladder locks



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Fort William weekend (continued)

on the Caledonian Canal, so called because each one leads into the next one, and are operated hydraulically, with electronic controls.

We walked along the bank of the canal to Corpach which marks its end. From there we caught the train along the shore of Loch Eil to Glenfinnan where we visited the small museum at the station which contained interesting railway memorabilia and pictures. The station is some distance from the



famous Glenfinnan Viaduct, and this proved to be the most challenging part of the walk and poles proved to be very useful. Coming down from the tricky path we passed under the viaduct where there is a monument to Bonnie Prince Charlie at the head of Loch Shiel.

After visiting the monument and admiring the view we returned to Glenfinnan station to wait for the train back to Fort William. Most of the group then met for dinner at the Black Isles Bar, which specialises in craft beer, whisky and pizza!

Monday 3 October - A Day in Corroul



The whole group met at Fort William train station to go to Corroul – the most remote and highest stop on the UK rail network. The station was built as a condition, stipulated by the then Laird, of running the Glasgow to Fort William railway line through the Corroul Estate. This is very fortuitous for hikers and lovers of the Scottish countryside as it provides access to a very beautiful area on the edge of Rannoch Moor and the small but picturesque Loch Ossian.

On arrival we were met by Jan the manager of the Loch Ossian youth hostel and walked down the track to the youth hostel on the edge of the Loch for lunch and were treated to hot drinks and Jan's homemade banana bread.

Due to the mist, the group unanimously agreed not to attempt any hills and most opted for part or the whole of the 8-mile circuit of Loch Ossian. A few of us went to Peter's Rock which is a memorial to Peter Trowell an ex-warden of the youth hostel.



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Fort William weekend (continued)



We then convened for dinner in the lovely Station House Restaurant. The food was delicious, and we chatted and played games by the fire. Sadly, Danny could not stay for long as his sleeper train was cancelled, and he had to get the earlier train to Glasgow. The rest of us also experienced the realities of remote Scottish railways as our train back to Fort William was delayed due to bad weather and we spent a good while sheltering from the rain on the platform, hoping we were not going to be stranded. Fortunately, Jan had called her friend in the next station down the line who confirmed the train was indeed on its way sat in the van on the other side of the platform on lookout and flashed her

lights as soon as she saw it rounding the hill.

Tuesday 4 October

After three days of mainly dry weather the heavens opened as we gathered at Fort William bus station to catch the coach back to Glasgow. We were allowed to board an earlier train, however, this was then delayed due to an incident on the line so we arrived back in Euston at our expected time.

My thanks to all contributors to this report and especially Sandy and Danny for leading the strollers and helping with the overall planning.

Rochelle



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