



FOREST NEWS

Editor: John Sheraton

Forest of Dean
Group



NEW MEMBERS

A very warm welcome to new members who have joined the Group since the last Forest News.

Membership is now 216. Although this is somewhat down, the number of active members is still most encouraging.

PROGRAMME DEADLINE

November 2012 – February 2013 programme.

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Details of walks for the next programme should be submitted no later than **15 September**, directly onto the Group website if possible, or to Henry. Any member, whether old or new, is welcome to lead a walk. Anyone who wants to borrow books of walks or who needs help to organise a walk, please contact any Committee member.

Many thanks to everyone who has led a walk since the last newsletter.

TONY DRAKE MBE

Many members will have heard of the death on 7 March of Tony Drake, at the age of 89. Tony devoted much of his life to the Ramblers, so much so that he became a legend. He was Area Footpath Secretary from 1951 until 2008 and continued as Area Footpath Consultant until 2011, when he also retired from the post of Area President, held since 2009. Tony and his teams of volunteers were very active in recording, updating, and maintaining public rights of way in Gloucestershire. He was a major contributor to the creation of the Cotswold Way long-distance footpath, as well as the Cotswold Way Handbook and Accommodation Guide. Possibly his greatest achievement was the Cambrian Way, a challenging (I can vouch for that, *Ed.*) 270-mile walk with a total ascent of 61 540 feet, from Cardiff to Conwy. A few members of the Group completed this in May 2008. He also compiled our own Highmeadow and Beechenhurst Trails. In 2001 Tony was awarded an MBE for Services to Public Rights of Way. He regularly attended our AGMs and Group walks, and I particularly remember him celebrating his 83rd birthday walking with us in the Dymock area! A much fuller appreciation of Tony's life, written by Mavis Rear, can be found on the Area website: www.gloucestershirearearamblers.org.uk

ROY BROOKS

Roy Brooks died on 16 May, just one month short of his 99th Birthday. He was among a handful of RA members living in the Forest of Dean district at the inauguration of the Group in 1978. Already a regular walk leader for the Cotswold Ramblers, Roy's name soon appeared on the Forest Group's programme. Living in Newent, his rambles introduced us to the then unknown areas of Dymock daffodil woods and the Leadon Vale. Roy's walks were always meticulously timed and enhanced through his knowledge as a professional horticulturist. He contributed one of these walks to the Group's publication *More Walks Around the Forest of Dean*. His 80th and 85th birthdays saw him leading celebratory walks, the latter including a picnic on the summit of May Hill, even if the programme indicated a "slowish walk of 9 miles". At the turn of the millennium, Roy became less active with our Group, having supported his wife

Valerie during her term as Group Chairman from 1997 to 2000. However, both continued to attend AGMs and social events until recently. Roy was a lovely gentleman and an inspiration to us in the early days of the Group. We extend our sympathy to Valerie in her loss, but give thanks for a long and fruitful life. (Susan Warren)

DIAMOND WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

Sylvia and Albert Gibbs celebrated their Diamond Wedding Anniversary on 16 February. As many of you will know, Sylvia is still a very active member of the Group, even though Albert has always been very busy looking after the farm. Our heartiest congratulations to them both.



AGM DATE

A date for your diary: the next Group AGM will be held at 7 pm on Friday 2 November 2012 at the Catholic Church Hall in Coleford.

QUIZ NIGHT

Twenty-six masochistic members enjoyed a quiz night at the Miners Arms, Whitecroft on 18 April. The baffling questions were posed by Henry (where did he get them from?), with June keeping the score. By scurrilous interpretation of the rules by all but two teams (who played their 'Jokers' with disastrous results), most teams scored more than they should! Our Quiz Inquisitionist masterly succeeded in sending everybody home feeling smug that they knew far more about Tudor Queens than he did! (He was lucky not to suffer serious injury. *Ed.*) In the event, two teams (Tables 2 and 6) had equal scores, even though the former unfairly had two extra members (one being Rudi the dog), so that a tie-breaker question (the value of Pi) was needed. Table 2 fell badly at this last hurdle, leaving Table 6 the clear winners. (Modesty forbids me from saying who won, but the chocolates were delicious. *Ed.*) After so much brain straining, we were able to enjoy an excellent supper laid on by the Miners Arms. (Henry Burden)

ZAKYNTHOS HOLIDAY

Eleven members departed from Bristol airport on May 17 for the flight to Zakynthos. After settling in at the Clear Horizon Hotel we were treated to an excellent Greek meze-style dinner: starters arrived continually until we said we were full, followed by main courses and puddings (sheer gluttony, *Ed.*). This became the pattern for the week. We had a series of walks virtually all over the island, ranging from ancient olive and citrus groves, hilltop and mountain villages with panoramic views over large parts of the island, and coastline, to an ancient monastery. Spring flowers and herbs were at their best, bringing out many beautiful butterflies. The walks were punctuated with lunches at welcoming tavernas. As you would expect, the weather was fine, but not too hot, and good suntans were acquired. Overall, a great holiday and experience fully enjoyed by all. (Alan Fisher)

CARDIFF BAY TRAIL

A few more details of my Cardiff Bay walk on Saturday 4 August. The trail is publicised as 6.2 miles, but since we have to walk to the start from station I have given it as 7 miles. The route around the bay can be shortened by taking the water bus across, there being various stops along the route, although I do not know the price. The train fare is approximate since it may be possible to travel on the day as several 'small groups of 3-9' and get 25% off the full price. There is plenty to occupy anyone wishing to travel down and spend a leisurely day without walking the trail! (Susan Warren)

WYE VALLEY WALK: SOURCE TO SEA

Twelve members, during the wettest April on record, ventured to Rhayader to walk the first part of the Wye Valley Walk from the Hafren Forest down to Rhayader. The plan was to walk 26 miles over three days. Friday 27th was wet, but we made good progress from the infant River Severn to a viewpoint of the source of the Wye, about a mile away on the slopes of Plynlimon. We continued past the Sweet Lamb Rally Complex, alongside the Wye to Ty Mawr. Saturday was cloudy and windy, but dry. Near Ty Mawr we picked up a little dog called Eddie who followed us all the way to the Black Lion Hotel at Llangurig. Fortunately, the landlord knew the owner, and was willing to hold the dog for him to collect. After lunch we climbed to the high point of the day at 480 metres, followed by a steep descend to our transport at Ty Nant. Sunday was particularly wet and windy so that only four brave souls (raving lunatics? *Ed.*) did the walk to Rhayader. The lunch break at the Gilfach Nature Reserve was a most welcome respite from the weather. The rest of the group did their own things that day, four sampling the delights of Aberystwyth and Aberaeron. We can always repeat the last section (of 7 miles) next year. Ironically, Monday was a nice sunny day. In spite of the weather, I counted the ramblers out and counted them all safely back in. Next year, Builth Wells and another set of adventures. (Ronnie Walker)

Many thanks to all participants, both walkers and non-walkers, and to Simon Price Cars for their efficient transport, but especially to Ronnie for organising it all. The photo shows 11 of the walkers at the official start (or end, depending on your direction of travel), Ronnie being behind the camera.



BRIDGE NEAR NORCHARD

Thanks to continuing efforts by Rod, things are progressing, if not as fast as we would wish. We have the bridge and we have the money to pay for it, as well as for its installation. All necessary Council approvals have been obtained. The Dean Forest Railway has offered to help with transport of the bridge to the site and with the installation. We have been informed that dedication of the short length of footpath, which includes the bridge, as a public right of way should take no more than 3 months from the initial application. We are now waiting for the agreement of the landowner, the Lydney Park Estate, which apparently requires the approval of their Trustees. Ideally, we would like to do the work in the autumn, once the main DFR running season is over. Rod is now temporarily out of action

after a knee operation. We wish him a speedy recovery and hope to see him out walking again before long.

DINOSAUR WALK!

Megan's 7-mile ramble around Raglan on 22 March was distinctly unusual in encountering dinosaur hunters. Twenty-six members took part in a gently undulating walk with good views of Raglan Castle from various angles. Masses of daffodils and a pond with a variety of waterfowl (mallard, moorhen, and heron) added interest to a lovely walk. Near the end we met several groups of primary school children who told us they were searching for dinosaurs. When we expressed surprise that dinosaurs were still around, they quickly reassured us that they were only hunting for pictures of dinosaurs, and that we were quite safe! So that's alright then. (Barbara Fisher)

THE WALES COAST PATH

As many of you know, on 5 May the new coast path was opened, thus allowing a continuous 870-mile walk from Chester to Chepstow. So, if you have a long weekend to spare, get out and do it, or at least part of it; you will not be disappointed. There is a superb website at www.walescoastpath.gov.uk which gives a wealth of information about the route, including 109 detailed maps which can be downloaded in pdf format, as well as links to accommodation and public transport guides. It will be a rewarding challenge to complete the Path and I offer a prize of a bottle of Champagne to the first of our Group to walk the whole route. (Henry Burden)

OLD PHOTOGRAPHS OF DEAN

Several websites include some fascinating old photographs of people, places, and events around the Forest, one of the best being www.sungreen.co.uk. Some early photos of Newent are at <http://speedy1.smugmug.com/> and a collection of recent aerial shots can be viewed at www.viewsfromabove.co.uk (Henry Burden)

MAPS FOR BORROWING

Dot Waldie has a number of maps and walking books covering various parts of the country which she is happy to lend to any member who can make use of them. Details from Dot on **01594 825226**.

DISCOUNTS ON OS MAPS

Ordnance Survey maps, including 1:25 000 series sheets, both standard and laminated, can be purchased with discounts of up to 30-40% at www.dash4it.co.uk

GROUP WEBSITE

This can be reached either via the national Ramblers site at www.ramblers.org.uk and searching groups, or directly at our own site www.fodramblers.org.uk

EDITORIAL CONTACTS

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Some time ago I walked part of the Offa's Dyke Path up through Hudnalls Wood towards St Briavels Common. A large tree had fallen across the steepest part of the path near the top, and I duly reported this. A few months ago I found that the path had been cleared, although it was still rather narrow and slippery. Walking the same way recently I was pleased to see that a magnificent set of wooden steps had been erected there by the GCC. So it is well worthwhile reporting footpath problems, whether natural or due to human interference, to our Footpath Committee or to the GCC; they will do their best to resolve them. For example, two unusual recent cases in our area involved target practice along a PROW and a landowner greasing a gate to deter walkers! Keeping our footpath network open enables us to continue to enjoy our walking!

The Editor