



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 227.

PROGRAMME DEADLINE

- **March – June 2012 programme:**
Peter Davies, Tel. 01600 711558
e-mail: eanne.davies@virgin.net

Details of walks for the next programme should be submitted no later than the **15 January**. 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 Peter or any other Committee member.

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

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The next AGM will take place in the Catholic Church Hall, Coleford at 7.00 for 7.30 pm on Friday 4 November. The agenda for the meeting is included with this mailing. Many Committee members (including the secretary, treasurer, walks co-ordinator, and publicity officer) have said that they intend to step down, so please consider nominating for one of the positions. Without a Committee there will be no walking group. New members are also required for the Gloucestershire Area Committee. If members are not forthcoming it is possible that the area will be disbanded and groups allocated to other areas.

There will be the usual 'bring-and-share' supper allowing us to unwind after the meeting, so please bring along a plate of sweet or savoury goodies. Hot and cold drinks will be provided.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

There are no social events finalised at present. However, we are looking into the possibility of having another Mediterranean event at the Miners Arms, Whitecroft, in the spring. Any other ideas would be welcome.

20 members have expressed an interest in the group holiday to Zante (one of the Greek Islands) next May. Bookings are being handled by a travel company. If anyone else is interested, please let one of the Committee members know as soon as possible.

NEW WEBSITE

Using some of the profits from sale of our book, the Group website has just been redesigned, with a new look and a new address (fodramblers.org.uk). Our new home page gives a summary of the next two walks on the programme, with links to full walk details, along with a local five-day weather forecast. The online programme page shows all our forthcoming walks, with old walks progressively being removed so that the next walk is first in the list. Each walk has its own page, with an OS map showing the starting point. The new website also includes facilities for our walk leaders to add their walks online, which should simplify creating our programme and improve accuracy. We also have a publications page so website visitors can buy our walks book and leaflets online.

The webmaster would welcome your feedback and suggestions, both positive and negative! (Malcolm Shergold)

BOOK SALES

Sales of the book *Exploring Historic Dean* are currently as follows: total sales: 1539; free-of-charge (for publicity purposes, to outlets, etc.): 41; remaining stock 420. These sales have brought in over £10000, with over £4500 now in the Project Account. (The remainder is accounted for by the printing costs and loan, now fully repaid, from the Ramblers.) Sales of the three walks leaflets are also going well, with the manager of the shop at Beechenhurst reporting that copies of the *Beechenhurst Trail* leaflet were "flying off the shelf".

We are still looking into the possibility of replacing the closed bridge near Norchard, and contact has finally been made with the Manager of the Lydney Park Estate. Arrangements are being made to attend the site with a contractor to begin the process of pricing the work. If the cost proves to be prohibitive, or if the Estate does not agree to the path being dedicated as a public right-of-way, then we will need to look at other projects on which to spend the book profits. One possibility might be contributing towards the restoration of the currently-closed footbridge over the Dean Forest Railway at St Mary's Halt, Lydney.

OS MAPS OF NATIONAL PARKS

Susan Warren has been lucky to win a competition organised by the Ordnance Survey, the prize being a set of Explorer Maps covering all the National Parks in England, Wales, and Scotland (58 maps in all!). If anybody would like to borrow some of these maps, please contact **Susan** on **01594 843389**.

BLACKS, GLOUCESTER

Blacks outdoor store in Westgate Street, Gloucester is closing down in December. There are bargains to be had now, with a sale to come nearer the actual closure date. (Robin Warren)

FOOTPATH MATTERS

The summer had been a busy one for the Footpath Committee, with many issues needing to be followed up. Two successes can be reported. The first concerns a footpath at Birdwood which crosses an inadequate sewage outlet from a large group home. There were plans to increase the size of the home without improving the sewage outlet, but following our involvement, a local landowner gave an interview to a newspaper which prompted the District Council to impose more stringent conditions on the planning application. The second involved the war games activity near Longhope, where the 'games' would have taken place in fields crossed by two public rights-of-way. Following our objections, the planning application has been withdrawn and when it is resubmitted it is likely that the location will be moved to another field.

A long-standing problem of a footpath across the new golf course at Lydney has worsened and is being dealt with by the District Council. A renewed application had been submitted by the Wye Valley Smokery for water treatment lagoons at their site. We had previously objected owing to the impact on footpaths, but as it was thought that this new application gave more consideration to the footpaths, we have not objected, providing there is a minimum of 4 metres between tanks. (Sheila Constable)

We thank the Footpath Committee (Sheila Constable, Pat Williams, Roger Cox, Dave Mahar, and Dave Street) for all their hard work 'behind the scenes'. Pat Williams deserves particular thanks as she will be standing down after no less than 14 years on the committee. The Committee urgently needs another member who lives in the south or west of our area in order to help with investigations there.

PUBLICITY

Several new initiatives have been made to publicise the Group and its walks programme. We participated in the Co-operative outreach events at Cinderford and Lydney, displaying information and talking to members of the public. However, few people wanted to take part in the short walks which followed the events. In July the *Forest and Wye Valley Review* published an article about the new series of walks leaflets (the *Beechenhurst*, *Soudley*, and *Highmeadow Trails*). Our walks programme has been sent to libraries and information centres, and information has been sent to the media regarding the Walk in the Woods event in October. The annual Festival of Winter Walks takes place over Christmas and the New Year, and, thanks to Ronnie, some of our walks can be included in this event. Although numerous individual news items have been submitted to newspapers and local radio, we have had only limited success with these. (Susan Faircloth)

A BIT OF FOREST HISTORY

On Cyril's walk from Ruardean on 15 September we passed the old Northern United Colliery buildings. I was telling Viv about them and the memorial at the site when we arrived at this sign, which I had not seen before. Viv commented that the closure of the last deep mine in Dean on Christmas Eve, 1965 was 6 days before she was born. It transpired that she was born in the Dilke Hospital, the family home being at Sling. Her Mum tells the tale that it was a bad winter and shovelling bought on her labour. (Susan Warren)



BLACK MOUNTAIN WALK ABANDONED

It is very rare for a walk to be abandoned once it has started (in fact I can't recall it happening before), but that was the case with Alan Gillespie's walk in the Black Mountain area on 3 September. With driving rain and thick mist even on the lower parts of the walk, it would have been foolhardy to venture up onto the exposed ridge. So we cut across to a lane and returned to our starting point at the Tafern-y-garreg pub, having still covered about 7 miles. Here we sat enjoying our drinks in front of an open fire and gradually dried out. Alan undoubtedly made the right decision and he promises to put the walk on again next year.

DISTRIBUTION OF WALKS PROGRAMME

Many of you have elected to receive your programme, newsletter, etc. by e-mail attachment. If you do have any problems with this (not getting an e-mail, unable to open the files, etc.), please let our walks co-ordinator (**Peter Davies** on **01600 711558**), membership secretary (**Barbara Fisher** on **01989 770976**), or any other Committee member know as soon as possible.

AN ODE TO THE ENGLISH PLURAL

We'll begin with a box, and the plural is boxes,
but the plural of ox becomes oxen, not oxes.
One fowl is a goose, but two are called geese,
yet the plural of moose should never be meese.
You may find a lone mouse or a nest full of mice,
yet the plural of house is houses, not hicie.
If the plural of man is always called men,
why shouldn't the plural of pan be called pen?

If I speak of my foot and show you my feet,
and I give you a boot, would a pair be called beet?
If one is a tooth and a whole set are teeth,
why shouldn't the plural of booth be called beeth?
Then one may be that, and there would be those,
yet hat in the plural would never be hose,
and the plural of cat is cats, not cose.
We speak of a brother and also of brethren,
but though we say mother, we never say methren.
Then the masculine pronouns are he, his and him,
but imagine the feminine: she, shis and shim!

Let's face it, English is a crazy language. There is no egg in eggplant, nor ham in hamburger, neither apple nor pine in pineapple. English muffins weren't invented in England. We take English for granted, but if we explore its paradoxes, we find that quicksand can work slowly, boxing rings are square, and a guinea pig is neither from Guinea nor is it a pig. And why is it that writers write, but fingers don't fing, grocers don't groce and hammers don't ham? Doesn't it seem crazy that you can make amends but not one amend? If you have a bunch of odds and ends and get rid of all but one of them, what do you call it? Sometimes I think that people who grew up speaking English should be committed to an asylum for the verbally insane.

If teachers taught, why didn't preachers praught?
If a vegetarian eats vegetables, what does a humanitarian eat?
In what other language do people recite at a play and play at a recital?
We ship by truck but send cargo by ship.
We have noses that run and feet that smell.
We park in a driveway and drive in a parkway.
And how can a slim chance and a fat chance be the same, while a wise man and a wise guy are opposites?
You have to marvel at the lunacy of a language in which your house can burn up as it burns down, in which you fill in a form by filling it out, and in which an alarm goes off by going on. And in closing, if father is Pop, how come mother's not Mop. (Courtesy of Rod)

GROUP WEBSITE

As described above, this gives a lot of information about our activities and can be reached either via the national RA site at www.ramblers.org.uk and searching groups, or directly at our new site www.fodramblers.org.uk. This is replacing our old website, which has limited capacity. We thank Fred Gray for his dedicated work in setting up and looking after the latter for so long.

EDITORIAL CONTACTS

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*Three Group members (Ian, Phil, and myself), plus David from (whisper it) the North Dean Walking Group, have just got back from walking the West Highland Way: 96 miles from Milngavie, near Glasgow, to Fort William. While the rest of the country was enjoying hot, sunny weather, western Scotland was having damp, cloudy conditions. Fortunately, we only got seriously wet on the last walking day. Plans to climb Ben Nevis on our last day in Fort William were thwarted by abysmal weather, so we took the steam train to Mallaig and back. In spite of the less-than-perfect weather, we really enjoyed the walk through some of Scotland's finest scenery. Highlights included the stupendous views from King's House, near the head of Glencoe (in sunshine!), and eating at the Drover's Inn (1703) at Inveraman, including an enormous portion of chocolate fudge cake (with cream, ice-cream, and custard!). Whether you do a long-distance walk like the WHW or just a stroll in the woods, and whatever the weather, the main thing is to enjoy your walking. **The Editor.***