



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 219.

PROGRAMME DEADLINE

- **March – June 2014 programme.**
e-mail: walks@fodramblers.org.uk

Details of walks for the next programme should be submitted no later than **7 February**, directly onto the Group website if possible (www.fodramblers.org.uk), or to the walks co-ordinator. 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 anyone who has led a walk since the last newsletter.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Group AGM will be held at 7 for 7.30 pm on Friday 8 November 2013 at the Catholic Church Hall in Coleford. As ever, we are urgently looking for new Committee members, so please consider nominating for one of the positions. The names of the nominee, the person nominating him or her, and the position, should be given to a Committee member before the AGM. Without volunteers the group will have no direction and nothing will happen, including no walks! There will be the usual 'bring-and-share' supper after the meeting, so please bring along a plate of sweet or savoury goodies. Hot and cold drinks will be provided.

SPRING HOLIDAY: APRIL 2014

Following the success of the Gower trip, June has been persuaded to stick her neck out again and organize another holiday. If you have not tried our group holidays please do come along; we enjoy good walks, good company, good food, and generally have a very good time. We have provisionally booked 10 rooms at the Conrah Hotel, Chancery, Aberystwyth, for four nights from Sunday 6 April, leaving on Thursday 10 April, 2014. The hotel is set in 18 acres of gardens, and the twitchers amongst you will be pleased to know that red kites have returned to nest in the grounds this year after an absence of 5 years. Check out the hotel on-line at www.conrah.co.uk. The package includes dinner, bed, breakfast, and packed lunch at £51.25 per person per night, or £410 per double-occupied room. We have also agreed a 3-night option for those requiring it at the same rate. Unfortunately, as with all hotels, single occupancy pushes the price up to £75 per night, or £300 for the four nights. They will take dogs in some rooms at no extra charge. If you are interested please speak to **June** or phone **01531 820354**. A deposit of 25% (£51.25 per double room and £75 per single for a four-night stay) is required by Wednesday 18 December 2013. June will be collecting the deposits, but the balance will be settled individually at the end of our stay. The walks will include coastal and mountain scenery, hopefully at different ability levels. Anyone who thinks they might like to lead a walk on this trip should talk to our Chairman. He will be very pleased to hear from you.

SOCIAL EVENING

There will be a social evening starting at 7.00 pm on Wednesday 22 January, 2014 at the Catholic Church Hall, Coleford. Bill Chase, Walks Co-ordinator from HF Brecon, will give a presentation on the

history of HF and what they currently offer. There will then be plenty of time for a sociable chat, followed by a bring-and-share supper. Wine will be provided. (*Curses, I shall be away. Ed.*)

LYME DISEASE

Lyme disease has recently been brought to my attention by someone's daughter being very badly affected by it. I therefore thought it worth reminding members of the dangers of ticks, especially as we are based in an area where deer roam freely. Ticks can be found across the country in woods, fields, and moorland, and also in urban parks and gardens. People who spend more time in the countryside are likely to be at greater risk. Anyone can get Lyme disease if bitten by an infected tick. It is therefore important that anyone engaged in outdoor pursuits such as ours should be aware of the dangers and take steps to minimise the chances of being bitten (suitable clothing, insect repellents, and checking for ticks on clothes and skin). Ticks can be removed with fine-tipped tweezers, pulling upwards with steady pressure and being very careful not to crush the tick or leave the mouthparts behind. The bite should then be disinfected. Symptoms may develop after an incubation period which can last between one day and four months. To find out more you can write to: Lyme Disease Action, PO Box 235, Penryn, Cornwall TR10 8WZ or visit www.LymeDiseaseAction.org.uk (Margaret Powels)

REMINDER (1)

Please don't forget to give the membership secretary your e-mail address or any changes so that the Group list can be kept up to date. Most information is now sent electronically, as it is much quicker and easier.

REMINDER (2)

Would members carrying mobile phones please enter the number of a person to be contacted in an emergency under ICE ('In Case of Emergency') in your contacts. Alternatively, please complete a card with these details, which can be permanently carried in your rucksack.

SUGAR LOAF VIA DERI (TAKE 3)

It was third time lucky for Sheila's walk from the Lamb & Flag pub to the Sugar Loaf on 5 September. The first two attempts last December and March were both plagued by very wet weather and low cloud, but 15 members on the recent walk were rewarded by extensive views in much better weather.

UPPER FORGE BRIDGE UPDATE

Construction of the bridge, walkway, and steps down from the road and to Upper Forge has now been completed. There was a lot of hard work and many aching backs, but not one cross word. Everyone really mucked in and formed a brilliant group to be with. I have to thank Dave Street, Adrian Wasley, Pete Ellis, Derek Shepherd, John Bevan, Alan Fisher, and John Sheraton for all their efforts. Special mention must be made of Sue and Robin Warren who came down to the site on two occasions laden with tea, coffee and, above all, cakes! The help provided in clearing and moving the heavy stuff by the Dean Forest Railway was invaluable; many thanks to Chris Bull and his chaps. The only work left to do is to lay a path from the road to the top of the steps and put in a signpost, although this is scheduled to be done on 19 October. The remaining problem is that the path is not yet a dedicated PROW, as the legal eagles are still arguing over the semantics, and thus the actual sign cannot be erected until

they've finished. However, there is now a safe way over the river and that was our prime objective in all this. (Rod Goodman)

Rod deserves our heart-felt thanks for all his hard work, not only in the actual construction, but for the seemingly never-ending paper work which preceded it. (Ed.)



Our new footbridge over the River Lyd (Rod Goodman)

TRIP TO THE LAKE DISTRICT

Seventeen members recently enjoyed a four-day break at the comfortable and welcoming Hassness House, which nestles quietly alongside Buttermere. Admirably organised by June, we were all spoilt, not only by the splendid scenery, but with fabulous food, including home-made cake awaiting us on our return from walks each afternoon! Early arrivals were rewarded with an impressive initiation walk led by Mike to Rannerdale Knotts. (*Did he really use a beer-bottle label to navigate? Ed.*) Walks led by the optimistic Ramblers leader, Ian (from Ledbury), included a boat trip on Derwent Water, a climb to Dale Head, watching sheep herding on Goat Crag, and a leg-stretching ascent to Watendlath Tarn. Some ventured further to Robinson, Hay Stacks, and Brandreth, while others circumnavigated the lake and enjoyed Ayrshire ice-cream. Unusually for the Lake District, the weather was kind, with two quite sunny days. Magnificent cloud formations made wonderful photographs across the still waters of Buttermere (see later). The last evening, spent at the Bridge Inn, provided amusement in itself! A good time was had by all. Many thanks to Alan, June, Mike and Ian, together with manager Brian and all his staff at Hassness. (Margaret Powells and Robin Warren; Photo: Sue Shergold)



QUANTOCKS WALK

Fourteen members travelled to Somerset on 19 September to do a 14-mile walk from Kilve. There would have been more, but several people had to drop out due to injury. The walk included some coastal walking, picturesque villages (East Quantoxhead, Holford), and part of the Quantock Hills. The weather was rather mixed, with much of the higher part of the walk being in cloud. However we had some good views on the way up and coming down, enhanced by colourful displays of gorse and heather. The last coastal section was in sunny, if very windy, conditions. The Quantocks stag hounds were out that day, although most people just seemed to be watching from four-wheel drives. We did see one horseman appear out of the mist with his arm raised, as if to blow his hunting horn. But no, he was on his

mobile! Many thanks to Alan Gillespie for organising and driving the minibus. He was able to do most of the walk with us, and we hope he will be out walking more regularly before long.



The top of the Quantocks (Barbara Fisher)

BRECON BEACONS WALK

Just two days later, Maurice and I stepped in (excuse the pun) to lead a walk (with 8 people) from Storey Arms after Iain was forced to pull out due to a badly sprained ankle. Again the weather was less than co-operative and we were soon in cloud as we climbed Fan Fawr. The next part of the walk was an interesting exercise in navigation with map and compass, although Maurice's GPS provided a welcome back-up. Because of the weather and poor to non-existent footpaths, we decided to cut out the ascent of Fan Dringarth (we wouldn't have seen anything), but took a longer route down and were rewarded with some superb views as the clouds parted.



Descent from Fan Frynych (Jenny Robbins)

THE FUTURE OF OUR PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY

Many of you will be aware of proposals by Gloucestershire County Council to outsource the work currently being done by the Public Rights of Way Department (together with the Highways Department). The arrangements for these changes may well have been finalised by the time these words are read, although it may not be too late to express any concerns you may have to your local councillor. Of course, the merits and demerits of such privatisation can be argued about *ad nauseam*. However, apparently one of the requirements is that the contractor will continue to use and further develop the use of volunteers to maintain our PROW network. The Cotswold Wardens, who, like the Ramblers, do much footpath work, have pointed out that volunteers now happily give their time and skills helping to maintain the network, but that this goodwill will quickly vanish if they feel they are simply being free workers to enhance contractor profits. This seems to be a legitimate concern, so how do you feel about it? I dare say the subject will be raised at the forthcoming AGM, where you will be very welcome to express your views.

WALKS BOOK

My book *Exploring Historic Dean* has now virtually sold out, although there may be a few copies left in a couple of outlets. Having sold nearly 2000 copies, we have decided not to print any more, but to let people download any of the walks (from any one to all 14) through our website for a small fee. This should soon be set up.

FOR SALE

Lowe Alpine Rucksack TFDC Horizon ND 55. Used once. £80 new, but will accept £30. Phone **Susan Warren** on **01594 843389**

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

01594 531096 sheraton@stoneacre.orangehome.co.uk

On John and Derek's lovely walk in the Black Mountains on 29 September we climbed up past the Revenge Stone (Dialgarreg) to Twyn y Gaer Iron Age hill fort, where we were rewarded with extensive views of the surrounding hills. The stone is said to mark the spot where, in 1136, Richard de Clare, Lord of Cardigan, was killed by the Welsh. At the same spot, now much more peaceful, we met a party of Ramblers from Cardiff who were acting as hosts to a group of French walkers. You never know who you are going to meet whilst walking, but we all have at least one thing in common: to enjoy our walking!

The Editor

Finally, I couldn't resist including this superb photo by Robin Warren of Buttermere and Haystacks in the morning, taken on the recent Lakes holiday.

