

# NEWSLETTER

## THE LOWER WYE RAMBLER

NUMBER 50 AUGUST 2011

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



### CHAIRMAN'S RAMBLINGS

Well we don't seem to have had much of a summer so far and this, together with a number of longer more difficult walks through July, has been reflected in fewer numbers turning out for walks. Hopefully Ron Gladwin's first programme as Rambles Officer will whet your appetite and encourage you to get your boots on and start walking again. There is something for everyone and thanks to Ron and our loyal team of walk leaders.

We have now sold about 8,000 copies of our walks booklet, 'Lower Wye Rambles', and are currently launching the 4<sup>th</sup> edition. Thanks are due to the first team who had the original idea and did all the groundwork. Enormous thanks to Allan Thomas who has, virtually single-handedly, done all the revisions for the 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> editions. The revenue from the booklet sales enabled us to give £4k to Monmouth County Council for footpath improvement work, including a new footbridge at Malley Brook on the Wye Valley Walk, and more recently a £1k donation to Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust for significant improvements at the Lancut Nature Reserve. By virtue of the efforts of the 'Chain Gang', Monmouthshire County Council have been persuaded to make a number of improvements to the furniture on several of the walks in the booklet.

A group of thirty-one made a start on the Pembrokeshire Coastal Path in May – at one point I could read the headline: 'Group of Pensioner Ramblers Blown Off Cliff in 50mph Gusts of Wind', but luckily we all survived and enjoyed some spectacular coastal scenery! I hope the group going on the SWCP in September have as enjoyable a time.

The barbeque was a great success again and there is the Quiz Night in October and the Christmas Lunch in December to look forward to – full details and booking forms are in the Newsletter.

Next year we have Sue Oswell's trip to Austria, and Mary Quirk's holiday in the Lake District in April – places still available on both – as well as the PCP weekends and, I

hope, another SWCP event. Frank Cook has some tentative plans for a two-week holiday on Samos in 2013.

As usual, the Committee and dedicated volunteers have been busy making sure there is plenty going on – all we now need is your support. The notice for the AGM is included so if you would like to join the committee and help to keep the group full of new ideas you would be very welcome – nothing onerous, only six meetings a year.

Dawn Davies

### **ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

The Annual General Meeting of The Ramblers Lower Wye Group will be held at **7.30pm on Friday 04 November 2011** in the **Chepstow Methodist Hall**, to which you are invited to attend. Please see the enclosed notice for further details together with the nomination form for new committee members.

### **WALKS PROGRAMME**

After the wonderful 3 years of Len's efforts with the walks programme, I think how can I follow that, when such a high standard has been set? Thank you again, Len. Well here goes!

I am still putting the programme together at the same time as penning this report, so the finished product is unclear but it is looking good so far. Many thanks to those who have helped me cover my desk with A4 sheets of paper that I must sort out – thank you all for your contributions.

The major change that you will notice is that more information on meeting points is being printed on the programme. This is to help all who live outside Chepstow by giving more help with the whereabouts of the meeting points. All walks will continue to start from the CLC and the time will be given for meeting there. As an additional meeting place, if we are heading west, Raglan School (RS) has been added 25 minutes after the printed time for the CLC. Likewise, if we are heading northwards to Monmouth or Herefordshire, Dixon Roundabout at Monmouth (DR), has been added, as a meeting place. This will be about 30 minutes after leaving the CLC. Finally, in some cases we have added the map reference of the start point of the walk. Anybody going directly to the start should inform the walks leader. This is particularly important for Allan's mid-week booklet walks.

There may be some teething troubles first time round with some other odd start points from time to time, but I am sure we will soon get used to the change.

The past few months has proved to be very popular for walks away from this area, either for weekends or longer. There has been Len's jaunt to the Isle of Wight, Sue's trip to Cyprus and, of course, Terry's week in Pembrokeshire. Gills Monnow Valley Walk will be completed in next to no time. Still to come are Gordon's trip to Cornwall, while Terry's merry band will eat up the miles in SW Wales. Next year's trips are also in the planning stage: more of these elsewhere. This looks like a very active walking group !

The first 4 pages of the Walks' Programme lists some 'do's and don'ts' on walking protocol, and it is hoped that these will be heeded. One difficulty, which crops up a lot, is the habit of a rambler walking way ahead of the leader. Rein it in please!

Keep walking in sunshine, sunshine and sunshine.

Ron Gladwin

### **LOWER WYE CHAIN GANG**

The chain gang is now well into its third year of working with the Monmouthshire County Rights of Way maintenance staff. The same small team continues to battle the elements in all corners of the County - as yet there are no lady volunteers but the offer remains open.

The Field Wardens have kept a record of the jobs we have done since April 2009 (we actually started in the previous January before the Field Warden learned to write) and I thought that you might like to know what we have been doing. Rumours that we work for an hour or two and then retire to the nearest tavern are entirely malicious.

We have installed: 62 gates – mostly self-closing “kissing” or “box” gates,  
45 stiles,  
50 roadside fingerposts,  
34 waymark posts,  
and repaired 17 footbridges.

We have built 211 steps in flights from 90 to 3 or 4, put handrails on 3 existing bridges, done 52 path clearance jobs and put in surface drainage at 10 sites.

All this equates to the digging of about 500 holes and their subsequent refilling. We have put in a total of 323 man-days of work equivalent to almost 2170 man - hours. This is the equivalent of one full time employee (or three County Council employees).

Ken Llewellyn has been officially reprimanded for over-zealous hole digging, necessitating extra and unnecessary back filling. Tony Bull has broken the county record for the most attendances in a year (apparently he has no decorating to do at

home). Steve Ceislik continues as the entertainments officer. Jim Kenny is in danger of having his good conduct badge revoked for telling outlandish Irish jokes.

Any Lower Wye member who thinks he may be qualified and who wishes to join us on our weekly –Thursday – outings will be made most welcome. CV and 5 nominated referees together with application fee to me.

Allan Thomas

### **PATH CLEARING**

We as a group have a responsibility to report and clear overgrown footpaths. At present two of us go out sometimes and make but a small impact on the work that needs to be done. I would like to return to the situation that we used to have, where a few of us went out on a regular basis to clear the footpaths of overgrowth.

It need not be a heavy commitment. If we had a few - say 6 - volunteers, we could go out twice a month, on perhaps Tuesdays and Fridays, for a morning's work. We have the tools. All we need are the people: males and females are equally welcome. Incidentally, we nearly always finish up at a pub for a drink and sometimes a snack.

So all we need are A) your reports on blocked paths and B) the people to clear them.

Please come forward with your names, and form an orderly queue!

Thank you very much.

Ron Gladwin Tel 01600 713726 email [ron819@btinternet.com](mailto:ron819@btinternet.com)

### **DIARY DATES 2011**

03-18 September	WALES VALLEYS WALKING FESTIVAL – see Newsletter
05-10 September	SOUTH WEST COASTAL PATH – fully booked
11 September	AREA WALK – hosted by South Gwent - details in Walks Prog
17-18 September	PEMBROKESHIRE COASTAL PATH – details in Newsletter
14 October	QUIZ NIGHT – details and booking form in Newsletter
04 November	LOWER WYE GROUP AGM – details in Newsletter
06 November	GREATER GWENT AREA AGM – hosted by Lower Wye - details in Newsletter
10 December	CHRISTMAS LUNCH – details and booking form in Newsletter

## **MEMBERSHIP REPORT**

Thank you to everyone who returned their details' form to me. We have managed to collect email addresses of 35% of our members, but with your help we would like to have more. I hope you will agree that this is a cost effective and efficient way of communicating with you, and we have used these addresses to send out reminders of deadlines for events and last minute places that have become available on trips. If you haven't already let me have your email address, please send it through to me on [hprice@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:hprice@tiscali.co.uk) and I can include you in future mailings.

Membership numbers are holding up at around the 200 mark, but we are always striving to increase our membership.

Please pass the word around to friends and neighbours that we welcome new walkers to come along and "try us out" before joining officially.

Heather Price

## **HELPERS NEEDED! - GREATER GWENT AREA AGM – 06 NOVEMBER**

This year it is the Lower Wye's turn to host the Area AGM and arrangements have been made for Sunday 06 November at The North Village Hall. There will be a 5-mile walk from the Hall led by Frank Cook at 10.30am. This will be followed at 1pm by refreshments **ONLY for those who are staying on to attend the AGM at 2pm.**

The Area Newsletter and AGM Notice will be available on-line at [www.gwent-ramblers.co.uk](http://www.gwent-ramblers.co.uk) from mid September.

Following the success of the Area Walk last year, Heather and Babs, our official caterers(!) have very kindly agreed to do the catering again for the AGM but they are looking for helpers on the day to lay out tables, help serve, clear up and probably do some washing up! If you are able to give Heather and Babs some support please let me or Heather know as soon as possible. Many thanks.

Dawn Davies

## **WALES VALLEYS WALKING FESTIVAL 2011**

A celebration of walking and the outdoor life in the Valleys of Southern Wales from 03 -18 September 2011. A choice of 38 free walks. If you would like further information and booking details please go to [www.thevalleys.co.uk](http://www.thevalleys.co.uk) or contact me at [rdawndavies@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:rdawndavies@hotmail.co.uk) and I will send you details.

Dawn Davies

## **LOWER WYE RAMBLERS INVADE PEMBROKESHIRE**

“What an amazing week’s walking” was one of many similar comments made by members of The Lower Wye Ramblers who had spent the last week of May walking 73 miles starting the long distance Pembrokeshire Coastal Path. Some of the members have already completed The Wye Valley Walk, Offa’s Dyke Path, Hadrian’s Wall, The Usk Valley walk and the Cotswold Way. Some have started the Monnow Way and 31 members of the group have now reached Milford Haven on the Pembrokeshire Coastal Path. The intention is to spend two weekends a year continuing the Coastal Path until reaching Ceredigion. The organiser of the walk has said that, all being well, he would like the walk to continue around the whole coast of Wales to meet up with the start of the Offa’s Dyke Path at Prestatyn. All that would then be needed to complete the whole circumference of Wales would be to walk the section between Chepstow and Amroth.

Amroth was where our week started, with a gentle 3 mile stroll on our arrival on Saturday afternoon finishing at our hotel in Saundersfoot. And what a hotel it turned out to be! The walk leader and his wife had stayed there to plan the first week’s leg of the walk but even they were pleasantly surprised how perfect the hotel turned out to be for the group. A small family run enterprise, the Malin House Hotel was comfortable and has wonderful facilities – a small indoor swimming pool, an outdoor Jacuzzi, 3 lounges, a fridge in every room perfect for storing sandwich provisions and the bottle or two of wine to have with our meals (much appreciated by all of us in this unlicensed hotel). The meals were truly superb and our large group was very grateful to the owners and small staff of the hotel who provided them as a special addition to their normal bed and breakfast package.

Our walk continued on Sunday, Monday and Tuesday with mixed weather and strong winds. On Sunday, we walked from our hotel in Saundersfoot to Lydstep Haven passing through the historic town of Tenby with its fine beaches. Monday started where we left off and continued via Manorbier Bay and Freshwater East to Stackpole Quay where tea and cake at the café was very welcome. Due to the closure of the Castlemartin Ranges on weekdays, our walk on Tuesday started at Merrion from where we walked along the perimeter fence of the MOD range, giving us glimpses of tanks manoeuvring and soldiers diligently training. This was a sobering reminder of those in the armed forces professionally performing their duties in dangerous far off lands. We continued through Freshwater West where hardy surfers were enjoying the wind and waves. The fine coastal scenery continued round the Angle peninsula to the village of Angle, with interesting views of the industrial areas of Pembroke and Milford Haven. The publican of the Compass at Angle point, was kind enough to open early so we could all have a very welcome drink near the end of our day’s walk.

Wednesday was taken as a day of leisure to do as each wished, although most of us seemed to walk almost as far on that day, whilst sightseeing around this interesting area. On Thursday we walked around Angle Bay, past the Chevron Oil refinery and finished the day at Monkton Priory in the outskirts of Pembroke. This provided an interesting contrast to the walk of the previous days round the pretty sandy bays and ups and downs of the magnificent cliffs. We continued the route on Friday through more urban and industrial areas but were rewarded with fine views from the Cleddau toll bridge. The metal crate-like bridges high over the vast pipelines were fascinating, if not a bit scary for those with a touch of vertigo! We finished our day in the centre of Milford Haven, where some were able to visit a pub for a drink while others enjoyed ice creams.

After 'checking out' of our hotel on Saturday, we walked from Merrion back to Stackpole Quays, across the MOD ranges of Castlemartin, a particularly pretty and interesting section of coastline including the Green Arch of Wales, the guillemot covered Elegug Stack rocks and St Govan's Chapel set down on the cliff face. We finished our week with an enjoyable tea sitting in the sunshine at the National Trust café, before we all drifted off back home.

Since returning home the devastating explosion has occurred at the Chevron Refinery in Pembroke. We all have such good memories of our week and with our close proximity to the site of the accident it somehow seems more real to us. Our sympathies go to the families and friends of those who were injured or lost their lives.

Stevie Summers

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**NOTICE FOR ALL MEMBERS**

Will all members please read and note the following:

**ORGANISED EVENTS/HOLIDAYS**

Once the organiser is committed financially to an event or holiday, members who have paid a deposit cannot automatically expect a refund if, at a later date, they find they are unable to attend.

Refunds will only be made in exceptional circumstances and agreed by the Organiser and Chairman.

## **PEMBROKESHIRE COAST PATH**

### **Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> and Sunday 18<sup>th</sup> September**

There are still a couple of places left (for a shared twin room) for the September weekend. We will be staying in the Hotel Mariners, a 17<sup>th</sup> century Inn in the centre of Haverfordwest. Stevie and I went down to investigate it earlier in February and found it to be absolutely delightful. All the rooms have now been refurbished to a very high standard and we should have the upstairs section of the rather lovely restaurant to ourselves. The food we had was excellent and there is also a spacious bar with good beers and a fire in season.

The cost is £47 per person per night for bed, breakfast and a two course dinner. Should you want a sweet and/or coffee there will be an additional charge. The deposit is £40 per head: £30 towards the room and £10 for coach/admin. I will not know the precise cost of the coach/admin until closer to the time.

We will be starting from Milford Haven and will quickly leave the town behind us as we head for Dale. We have to make 2 inlet crossings on the first day and somebody up there has been very kind to us: the tides for Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> September are about as well timed as they could ever be and we will reach the first inlet in time for a leisurely lunch and wait till it is possible to cross.

On the second day we will walk from Dale, round St Anne's Head to Marloes Sands, back into the wild coastal scenery of Pembrokeshire. This will be a really interesting and enjoyable weekend.

Terry Summers (24 Mount Way, Chepstow NP16 5NF, 01291 625712)

## **AUSTRIAN HOLIDAY JANUARY 2012**

There are still places left on this fabulous holiday, which includes walking and snowshoeing. Please see last newsletter for further details or contact Sue at 01600780416 email [cretacotta@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:cretacotta@hotmail.co.uk)

Sue Oswell

## **THE LAKE DISTRICT APRIL 2012**

My walking holiday next year in The Lake District is definitely going ahead. So far, (yes, places ARE still available!) there are 18 of us who will spend a week based in the beautiful Borrowdale Valley, the finest walking area of all in The Lakes, in my view. Our accommodation, about 8 miles south of Keswick, is an Outdoor Activity Centre called Glaramara, peacefully situated in the tiny village of Seatoller. At

Glaramara there is room for 60 adults and children, in 22 single rooms and 14 twins, all with ensuite washbasins. Plenteous showers and toilets are near your room, male and female separately, and there are two baths. You will not be disappointed with the food at Glaramara either - the award-winning chef and his team produce locally sourced, freshly prepared, home-made meals, and special diets are happily catered for. Our package will be "full board" - a cooked, buffet breakfast, packed lunch and choice of three course dinner, including vegetarian option.

Now to the important bit - the walking! There will be a choice of walks each day, led by fully qualified mountain leaders from the centre. The ratio of leaders to walkers will be 1:12 ordinarily but 1:10 for higher level walks (after all, Great Gable and Scafell Pike are within striking distance!). There is outstanding walking directly from the centre, but transport by minibus will be provided for walks further afield. For those wanting to "take the day off", the bus into Keswick goes almost hourly, or maybe you will have left your own car in the centre's car park, which takes 40 vehicles.

After a spectacular day's walking (or shopping!), return to the centre for a drink from the bar, taken perhaps on the sun terrace with its lovely panoramic views of the valley, (including the Glaramara Mountain, after which the centre is named), or relax in the lounge by the log fire. Dry your gear in the drying room (what? rain??). There's even a TV room.

If you want to join the rest of us for what promises to be a great week's walking, the dates are: SUNDAY, APRIL 22nd TO SUNDAY, APRIL 29th, 2012. And the cost? For 7 nights' accommodation, full board, transport to and from the walks, and the services of the leaders - £415.

If you need to know more (e.g. the long-range weather forecast), either phone me, Mary Quirk, on 01291 680060 (always leave a message, I am frequently not available to answer the phone, but I do check for messages regularly), or email me on my husband's address: [chrisjhwilliams@btinternet.com](mailto:chrisjhwilliams@btinternet.com) To send your deposit of £30, post it to me at Spring Vale, Mill Hill, Brockweir, Chepstow, NP16 7NW. Your place will be reserved when I have your cheque in my hand! Make the cheque payable to Lower Wye Valley Ramblers. Remember, at the moment there are places at Glaramara that week, but the director may ring me at any time to say he is now full, so don't delay too long.

Whatever you do, don't miss this one! The Lake District is the finest walking area in Great Britain - take it from one who knows it well. Glaramara is a great base for us - I saw it for myself last year and I was impressed. Trust me, you'll have the time of your life!

Mary Quirk

## **SAMOS 2013**

I know 2013 is a long way off but.....!

This is a very preliminary attempt to see if there would be sufficient support in the Group to warrant organising a two week holiday on the beautiful (Greek) Aegean island of Samos in September of 2013.

The holiday would be “two-centre” in the island’s main settlement of Vathi and in a small, working fishing village on the south coast. It would be on a half board basis with evening meals of local cuisine taken, largely *al fresco*, in nearby tavernas. The hotels would probably be tourist - two or three star.

The walking itself is “generally easy” and the climbs “gentle”. Typically three or four, maximum five, hours a day would be spent wandering through the hills, along the coast, using mule tracks, paths and quiet roads to take in ancient sites, monasteries and beaches – making use of tavernas in local villages en route. There would be many opportunities to swim.

The weather in Samos in September tends to be in the mid to high 70’s with a cool evening breeze which may call for that “extra layer” in the evening.

Direct flights would probably be from Heathrow or Gatwick.

This is a holiday offered by Ramblers Worldwide Holidays but on this occasion I would be the Leader which would reduce the cost slightly. There would be a further small discount available for a larger party but, to give you some idea of the cost, the September 2011 brochure price was £985. To that you need to add, airport transfers in the UK, local transport costs on Samos, max (2011) €50 per week, packed lunches say €3 each, and to allow for inflation/exchange rate changes. Insurance would be mandatory.

So, if you fancy, oodles of history, tranquil mountain villages, olive groves, vineyards, remote white churches, Greek food and some very good beach – swimming, let me know and, if we have sufficient numbers, I can come back with a firmer proposal. Tel 01600860582 or [frankrcook@gmail.com](mailto:frankrcook@gmail.com)

Frank Cook

## LOWER WYE RAMBLERS

# COMMITTEE 2010-2011

TITLE	NAME	TEL NO.	E-MAIL
Chairman	Dawn Davies	01594 837157	<a href="mailto:rdawndavies@hotmail.co.uk">rdawndavies@hotmail.co.uk</a>
Secretary	Dawn Davies	01594 837157	<a href="mailto:rdawndavies@hotmail.co.uk">rdawndavies@hotmail.co.uk</a>
Treasurer	David Phillips	01291 621680	<a href="mailto:hdphillips16@btinternet.com">hdphillips16@btinternet.com</a>
Rambles	Ron Gladwin	01600 713726	<a href="mailto:ron819@btinternet.com">ron819@btinternet.com</a>
Membership	Heather Price	01291 637416	<a href="mailto:hprice@tiscali.co.uk">hprice@tiscali.co.uk</a>
Footpaths	Allan Thomas	01291 625915	<a href="mailto:ajt131@aol.com">ajt131@aol.com</a>
Publicity	Carole MacDougall	01291 423452	<a href="mailto:carole.macdougall@hotmail.co.uk">carole.macdougall@hotmail.co.uk</a>
Newsletter Editor	Nick Jones	01291 423981	<a href="mailto:nickingjones2000@yahoo.co.uk">nickingjones2000@yahoo.co.uk</a>
Social	Sue Oswell Allan Manson	01600 780416 01600 711971	<a href="mailto:cretacotta@hotmail.com">cretacotta@hotmail.com</a> <a href="mailto:allanrobert.manson@googlemail.com">allanrobert.manson@googlemail.com</a>
Minutes Secretary	Heather Price	01291 637416	<a href="mailto:hprice@tiscali.co.uk">hprice@tiscali.co.uk</a>
Committee	John Cottrell	01291 622081	
<b>Other Useful Contacts</b>			
PathCare	Allan Thomas	01291 625915	<a href="mailto:ajt131@aol.com">ajt131@aol.com</a>
Website Manager	Maurice Turner	01291 423523	<a href="mailto:m.turner3@btinternet.com">m.turner3@btinternet.com</a>
F o D Ramblers	Sheila Constable	01452 831868	<a href="mailto:sheila.footpaths@yahoo.co.uk">sheila.footpaths@yahoo.co.uk</a>
Monmouthshire CC	Ruth Rourke	01633 644850	<a href="mailto:RightsOfWay@monmouthshire.gov.uk">RightsOfWay@monmouthshire.gov.uk</a>
Gloucestershire CC		01452 425577	<a href="mailto:pro@gloucestershire.gov.uk">pro@gloucestershire.gov.uk</a>

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