



Taff Ely

Sunday 2nd October: Rudry Walk - Led by Peter Law

With many ramblers enjoying a walking week in Croatia and a less than ideal weather forecast back in Wales, it was a relief to see a turnout of 8 for this walk. As so often happens the weather turned out to be much better than forecast with a good amount of sunshine.

Just to be a little contrary the leader decided to undertake the walk in an anti-clockwise direction having reced it clockwise. It was a surprise to discover how confusing it can be when covering the same ground but in a reverse direction! Finding a minor gap through which to enter woodland, was more difficult than when exiting through the same gap. We progressed then descended to the village of Waterloo, undiscovered by many, but a surprisingly prosperous looking rural location close to Caerphilly.

After leaving Waterloo the curse of the reversed route struck again resulting in a right turn taken 400 metres before the intended one. Armed with modern technology we could see that we were misplaced rather than lost (now that's a good politician's choice of words!); the resultant detour took us through a farm where we met a friendly stockman who confirmed our error but was happy to let us proceed to the nearby road. We were soon back on track and reached the village of Garth before heading towards Mynydd Rudry. Not far along the path out of Garth we enjoyed a coffee stop taking advantage of a small clearing sporting an impressive, sculpted seating feature.

Skirting the base of Mynydd Rudry we reached a carpark on Rudry Com mon before proceeding by road then path to Rudry Church. The churchyard offered an attractive location for lunch and the vicar who happened by, com mended us on our choice! The final leg of the walk took us up to the Rhymney Valley Ridgeway and down through the Coed Coesau Whips before circling back to the start point at Llwyn Hir.

To round off proceedings, most of us decanted into the very pleasant Maenllwyd pub at Rudry for well-deserved refreshment.



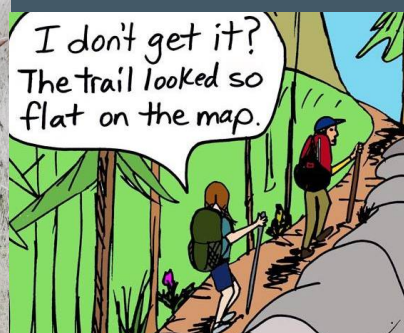
October 2022

This month's newsletter includes additions from the weekend in Elan Valley, and a review of the trip to Croatia, that several of our members visited in late Sept./early Oct.; the latter of which I have tagged on to the end of this newsletter. Unfortunately, Sun. 23rd was cancelled due to illness.

Thanks to all leaders and contributors this month. In future, please could you send me your walk reviews or photos to my new e-mail address stevierambler@hotmail.com. What would you like to see in a future newsletter? If you have any thoughts or ideas, then please ping me an e-mail.

The group AGM takes place on Saturday 5th November at 3 p.m. which every member is welcome to attend, and last but not least we now have more details about this year's Christmas party. Details of both are on page 5.

Steve Craven (Ed.)



Saturday 8th October: Radyr Woods & Glamorgan Canal - Led by Lisa Burton

On Saturday 8th October I led a walk from Radyr train station. 18 walkers joined me, five of which were new to the group. The intended walk was through Radyr Woods toward Llandaff Cathedral, returning along paths passed Radyr cricket club to the start. As it was a lovely day, we detoured to Insole Court, a Grade II listed Victorian Gothic mansion dating back to 1855 and former home of the Insole family who were pioneering coal-shippers and mineowners. We had an extended coffee break and some time to explore the house and its gardens before continuing our way, passed Llandaff Cathedral, walking partway along the Penrhys Pilgrim Path and Taff Trail back to the start. We finished with post-walk refreshments at Cicchetti in Radyr.



Sunday 9th October: Crickhowell & Beacons Way - Led by Michelle Mansell



On Sunday 9th October, 12 walkers and two canine friends gathered in Crickhowell. The majority of walkers were wearing several layers in anticipation of cold weather, but layers were gradually removed and brows were being mopped on our ascent up the Beacons Way in the direction of Tretower.

After a well-deserved coffee stop with fabulous views, we turned off the Beacons Way and continued our ascent, passing several "piles of stones" before we reached the ridge which led to Pen Gloch-y-pibwr. By the time that we reached the ridge, the wind had picked up, dark clouds loomed overhead, and our layers were being worn again! We continued along the ridge to Pen Allt-mawr, but no group photo was taken at the trig point as it had fallen down. We collectively decided to tackle the steepish descent from the trig point to find a more sheltered place for lunch where we had more panoramic views. After lunch, we gradually descended Cwm Banw where the path is very indistinct in places (although it looks very simple on an Ordnance Survey map), but it was dry underfoot. Eventually the path became more distinct and this led around the lower reaches of Pen Carrig-calch before we rejoined the Beacons Way and descended to the quiet lane which leads back to Crickhowell (an alternative would have been some ascent towards Table Mountain, although not going to the top, but we all agreed that we had done enough ascent for the day). After a couple of miles of lane walking, we turned on to a stony path (which made a pleasant change after two miles of tarmac) and followed this path down Crickhowell and back to the cars. Luckily, we didn't have a drop of rain all day.

We finished the day with some liquid refreshment at the Bear Hotel (our dogs were allowed inside).



Sunday 16th October: Cwmcarn and The Canal - Led by Tony Yule

Another bright day saw 16 people walk a section of the Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal near Pontywaun; then climb through Cwmcarn Forest to Twmbarlwm before returning to the canal. The accuracy of the Naismith's Rule was again demonstrated as the walk finished just five minutes ahead of schedule. En route, three at the front of the party, saw a flash of blue... On his last reconnoitre the leader had had an excellent view of a kingfisher as it flew and perched on two garage roofs alongside the canal. Good, rather than excellent, views of the surrounding valleys were had en route. As seems to be quite common this year a lot of fungi were also seen.



Most of the group then found an outside area in the very crowded Philanthropic Inn to learn that Tracey, by refusing to find her glasses, had wiped the address book on her phone. Hilarity followed when Julie noticed Tony Y's antique phone.

Saturday 22nd October: Pencoed area - Led by Rob Young

There were 14 of us in attendance, with the weather remaining sunny during our walk on the outskirts of Pencoed. A fairly level walk, we ventured on to some paths, including through Pencoed college.

We then crossed into RCT territory for a short gentle climb up to the ancient church of Llanilid, where we took a break and admired the view before returning by a more direct route to the car park at Pencoed Swimming Pool.



Friday-Sunday 21st-23rd October: Elan Valley weekend - Review by Derek Wallis



On Friday the group were travelling in separate vehicles with most in the minibus driven by Andy Fellows, with three members of the party joining in the evening at the Elan Valley Lodge. For the rest of us braving the weather, our stop was at the little village of Aberedw, near Builth Wells. This walk had much variety, not all intentional! After visiting the so-called Llewelyn's Cave, we slowly ascended from the river valley onto the ridge of Llandeilo Hill. No views of the Beacons this time as all the bad weather was coming from the South. However, the views northwards and over the river valley were most attractive. After following the ridge to "Twm Tobacco's Grave", an unusual place for interment, we descended past a farm to the river. This section was somewhat confusing to follow but teamwork won through. We then sheltered in woodland from the rain during lunch before following the route above the river. The last section was through challenging undergrowth although the scenery and riverside were worth the effort. We then made our way to the Elan Valley Lodge.

We were met there by Steve, deputy to the founder of the Lodge business Roy Davies, who proved to be an excellent host and walk guide for the weekend. The Lodge is more of a hostel than a full hotel and everyone assists to make mealtimes and evenings a success. Despite very threatening forecasts for the whole weekend, most of the rain only fell overnight so that we had good walks during the day.

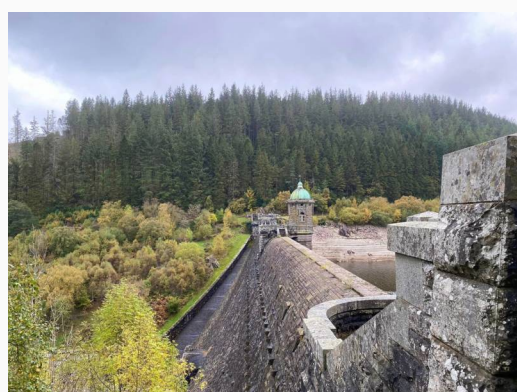


On Saturday we had our longest walk of the weekend with an option to take a longer but more interesting alternative above a reservoir. We climbed above one hill to the north of the Elan Lodge looking down over Garreg ddu Reservoir with great views all around. It was very obvious how low all the reservoirs were even after recent heavy rain. This was clear evidence of the drought status over the summer.

After descending to the Penygareg dam the return route passed through woodland and along the former trackbeds of the railway built for the construction of the whole dams project. Steve was a font of information both on the fauna, flora of the region and about the Elan Valley reservoirs and their construction history.

On Sunday morning after a night of thunderstorms and very heavy rain we were pleasantly surprised by how good the weather turned out for the walk. This time we went south of the Lodge above and then alongside the Caban-Coch Reservoir and descended past a former Welsh longhouse, now renovated for holiday lets, and then to the opposite side of the reservoir and back to start. Again the views across the hills and reservoirs were excellent and make this whole area so well-known.

This was a very enjoyable trip away and fully recommended for repeating. Our thanks go to Sue Bowker for her effort in creating a quiz for us after dinner on Saturday, which made for a good social evening, and again to Andy for organising and driving the minibus.



Sunday 30th October: Pontyclun circular (incl. Badger Walk 5) - Led by Julie Brightman

Not even 25 stiles and damp weather put off 24 ramblers turning up for a circular walk of Pontyclun. Starting in Pontyclun we made our way to Miskin where the heavens opened and we all had to squeeze into the cricket pavilion for a coffee break. We then made our way to Groesfaen, across fields, to Llantrisant Cemetery for a lunch stop, and a short walk back to the start. Thanks to Kingsley for ringing ahead to Pontyclun Rugby club where we ended the day with a drink.



TAFF ELY RAMBLERS CHRISTMAS PARTY

The Christmas party is £27 per person and to be paid in advance, either by BACS using the following bank details OR in person to Hayley Thomas.

Sort code: 60-83-01, A/c no: 20182487,

A/c name: The Ramblers Association (SW12)

Please note it is a bring your own drinks, alcoholic and non-alcoholic, event.

If payments could be made by Sunday 13th November that would really help us. We are still a few short of our minimum number, so it would be great to hear if anyone has yet to let me know. I have had some issues with my e-mail over the last few weeks, so don't hesitate to let me know again.

Many thanks

Hayley

Social Secretary - Taff Ely Ramblers

TAFF ELY AGM 2022

Our 2022 AGM will be held on Saturday November 5th at the All Hallows Catholic Church Hall (School Road, Miskin, CF72 8PG) commencing at 3 p.m.

As in previous years, there will be a social function as part of the event, and members will be asked to contribute food/drinks.



November 2022 walks programme

Saturday 5th

Tyn-y-Coed, Pentyrch and ridgeway
5 miles L - Led by Tony Yule

Sunday 6th

Cosmeston Lakes, Penarth & Lavernock Point
8.5 miles M - Led by Derek Wallis

Sunday 13th

B.B. National Park Visitor Centre, Libanus
8.5 miles M - Led by Tony Lawrence

Saturday 19th

Meet at the Llanfobon Inn, Nr. Nelson
4 miles L - Led by Tony Lawrence

Sunday 20th

Blaengarw to Llangeinor via Garw Forest
8 miles M (linear)- Led by Tony Yule

Sunday 27th

Usk and Gwehelog Common
8 miles M - Led by Tony Lawrence



Taff Ely

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National Parks of Croatia trip, 24th September - 2nd October 2022

- review by Janet Sully

After departing from Gareth's home at 3 o'clock in the morning, a group of sleep-deprived Taff Ely Ramblers and a few friends arrived at Split airport several hours later, to be greeted by warm sunshine. A minibus whisked us off on the short journey to Trogir, where we met Danijela, our guide for the week. The marble alleys of this medieval town, surrounded by water, are too narrow for any wheeled traffic, so we trundled our cases through the labyrinth from the city's North Town Gate to our hotel. After a welcome drink in the courtyard, some of the group were allocated their rooms, while the rest of us were assigned accommodation in a nearby apartment. That afternoon we relaxed and explored the sights of the beautiful small city, including the main square, the cathedral, the waterfront and the huge fortress. Many of us ventured up a series of increasingly steep steps to the top of the cathedral tower, where our efforts were rewarded with superb views of the town, the sea and the surrounding mountains.



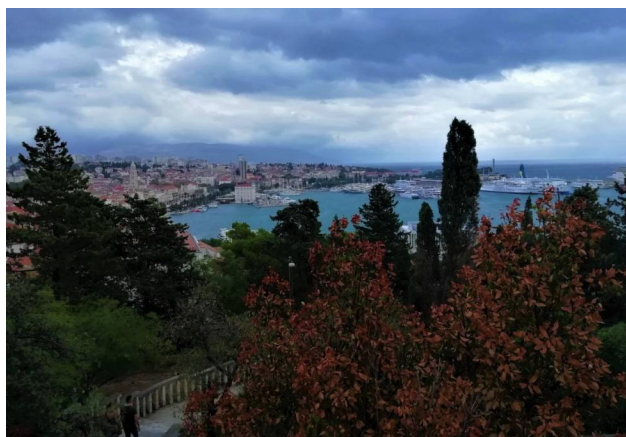
The sunny weather was not to last, and we were warned to expect rain for most of the week. The next morning, we packed up again and set off for the Krka National Park. Kitted out in our rain gear, which we were fortunately soon able to take off, we enjoyed a leisurely walk along a bank of the River Krka, with towering cliffs on each side and luscious green vegetation. We eventually arrived at the main feature, the massive series of waterfalls named Skradinski Buk, which fall into crystal clear water. Danijela led us up a path to a spectacular viewpoint and from there we had plenty of time to explore and follow a set route at our own pace along narrow paths and boardwalks, past small lakes, historic buildings and more falls, before having our packed lunches back at Skradinski Buk. In the afternoon we had a boat trip along the River Krka to our starting-point, but before heading on to our new hotel we briefly explored the quaint old town of Skradin, with its houses plastered in Venetian style, and its Catholic and Orthodox churches. From Skradin we travelled north to Seline, a coastal village where we were to stay at a very comfortable hotel right on the coast for the next five nights.

That night it poured with rain, and we knew that we were in for a soaking on our hike in the Paklenica National Park. We began by walking up the impressive canyon of Velika Paklenica, stopping occasionally to shelter from the downpour, but we were all soon completely drenched. Pressing on alongside a gushing stream which turned into a raging torrent, we gradually ascended into the mountains, eventually reaching a refuge which is so remote that all the food has to be brought in by donkey! There, having stripped off our wet clothes to a greater or lesser degree (!), we were warmed by a liqueur and bowls of hot broth and bread. Thankfully, soon after we began our descent (made more challenging by the slippery rocks), the rain eased off, so we were able to admire the scenery when we weren't slipping and sliding! A highlight for me was spotting a large black and yellow salamander by the edge of the path. We saw lizards, colourful beetles (and even dung beetles), and a snake during the week as well, not to mention a huge variety of flowers and shrubs.



I had particularly been looking forward to our excursion the next day to Plitvice National Park, the most visited and attractive place in Croatia, with its clear turquoise, green and blue lakes and numerous waterfalls, set amongst lush green vegetation. Alas, that night we had another torrential downpour, which continued in the morning. Yet, amazingly, as we drove towards the park, the rain gradually eased off, and the sun and even some blue sky appeared just as we arrived – a miracle! We had a stunning walk along beautifully landscaped paths, following one of the set routes in the park. From our lunch spot we had a relaxing boat trip on one of the lakes before continuing our trek to a shuttle bus which took us back to our minibus. The rain started almost immediately we reached our bus; we could hardly believe our good fortune!

Danijela kept a constant eye on the weather forecast and decided to swap the itinerary for the next two days. Again, we were very lucky, with rain during the night (including an impressive thunderstorm) but next to none on our walks. We hiked through the mountain range behind our hotel towards a high peak, Bojin Kuk, passing extraordinary rock formations, and from the top could see for miles back to the coast. On our way back, we stopped briefly at an interesting ancient site to see the temporary stopping places, called Murilla, of deceased people on their long journeys from the mountains to their church burials, and when we arrived back at the **hotel the weather was even good enough for us to walk to the Venetian Večka Fort**, which we could see on a promontory a short distance away. Hayley, Gareth and Steve even braved the cold water for a swim! The following day we walked a long way in the Velebit National Park, with quite different scenery. We were accompanied for most of the day by a friendly dog, and our efforts were rewarded with tremendous views over **the Adriatic Sea and some of its islands from the highest point, Basača (1,089 metres)**.



On the last day of the official trip, we had three quite different experiences. First, we descended by a steep and winding path to the bottom of the Krupa Gorge, where a narrow and rocky 18th-century bridge with twelve arches crosses the river, with a weir above and a huge waterfall below it. One of the group found it listed as one of the most dangerous bridges in the world! Most of us were brave (or foolhardy) enough to walk over it, though I did so only with Andy's encouragement and assistance as the stones were slippery and the surface arched, echoing the arches below. Back at the top of the gorge, Danijela produced pizzas, cakes and drink for us. We then visited the remote Krupa Orthodox Monastery, with its strikingly decorated church interior and treasury, and finally had time to explore the coastal walled city of Zadar, which is a UNESCO World Heritage Site. We were then driven back to Trogir, where we stayed for the last two nights.



The first evening back in Trogir marked the end of our official tour, and we all dined at the hotel so that we could celebrate Steve's landmark birthday! Tracey and friends decorated the dining room and a huge cake, complete with candles, duly appeared. We also took the opportunity to thank Danijela, who had been an outstanding guide. She organised a minibus to take us into Split for our last day, where in small groups we enjoyed spending hours exploring the remarkable Diocletian's Palace and other parts of the Old Town. A highlight for many of us was coming across a moving musical performance given by young people, with instruments, singing and dancing, in the courtyard of the palace. Some of us walked to the summit of the nearby Marjan Hill, from where we had great views back over Split and the islands. And – guess what? – right at the end of our time in Split there was another thunderstorm!

I have not mentioned all the laughter and fun we had during the week, but to anyone who knows the participants in this holiday, this should come as no surprise! We are particularly grateful to Andy for organising the holiday and to Gareth for arranging the transport to and from Bristol Airport. I must also thank the male members of the group who were always on hand to help me (and others) over various obstacles and slippery rocks when necessary! The obvious question now is: where will we go next time?