



Sunday 5th February: Clytha Castle led by Michelle Mansell.

I arrived at Clytha car park at 9.50am and found lots of Ramblers already assembling. I then discovered that they were a different group of Ramblers and they left the car park at 10am. Whilst our Ramblers were getting ready for the walk, we found that there was yet another group of walkers meeting at the car park. However, there was space for everyone with a bit of double parking.



It was a glorious sunny morning (in contrast to the persistent heavy rain of last year) and 26 Ramblers and three dogs ambled along the riverside path (part of the Usk Valley walk). The option of an early pit stop adjacent to a large house was declined and, after leaving the river, we walked up through some woods and arrived at a golf course (I have never seen this part of it in use).

We then descended to the lane in Bettwys Newydd and our first significant sighting of snowdrops before a short ascent to the church and a well-deserved coffee break. At least one other group of walkers had reached the church before us and so it was crowded but their coffee break was almost finished.

February

What a wonderful February it's been, a bit chilly at times but dry with some blue skies for all our walks this month.

An abundance of snowdrops on Michelle's Clytha Castle walk made it feel as if spring had sprung.

Mind you the lack of leaves on all the gnarly trees on the other walks, shows we have a bit to go before the lighter, longer days of spring.

Both Saturday walks were rich with heritage, history and cake stops (I think I need to start doing the Saturday walks).

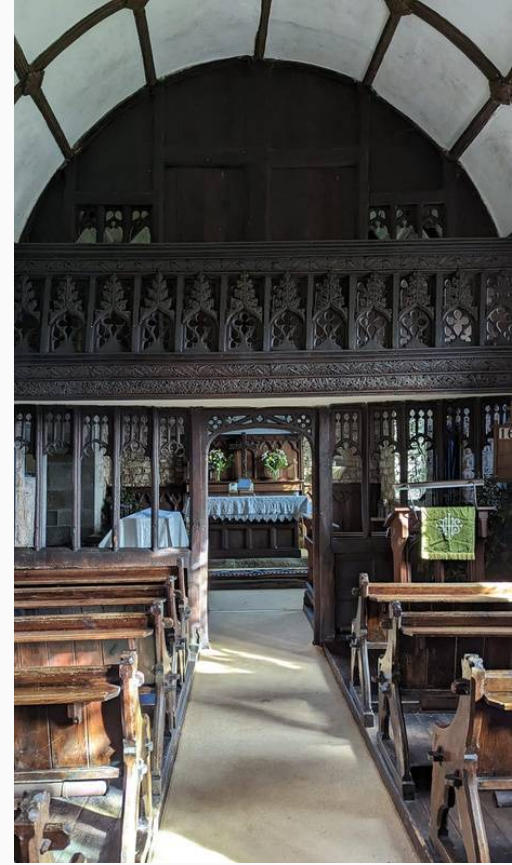


Or find cake stops on our Sunday walks...

It's been lovely to see such high turn outs and more people joining us. I know that Tony Lawrence hopes they turn into Walk Leaders too. Our next walk programme for April - June is ready and waiting to be filled.

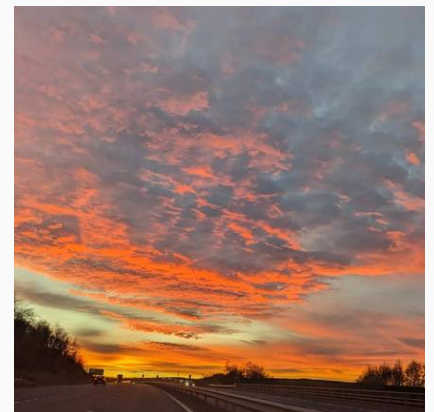
Many walkers ventured inside the church and were told about the historic rood screen. There were several patches of snowdrops in the grounds of the church and we had excellent views (helped by the good weather).

Upon leaving the church, we made our way uphill to the ancient hill fort and did the circuit of it so that we could see the rings of the fort. After leaving the hill fort, we walked along quiet lanes to reach the part where the snowdrops were abundant along the side of the road and in a short section of woods. We walked downhill to Clytha Castle (a folly) with more snowdrops nearby and found a suitable spot for lunch shortly afterwards.



The castle was designed by John Davenport and built by William Jones of Clytha House with the purpose of 'relieving a mind afflicted with the loss of a most excellent wife'. We resumed our walk and crossed the main road carefully (as it was on a bend), noted the Clytha Arms and walked through some fields following a large arrow on an ancient oak tree before we reached the remains of Capel Aeddau. Little survives of the medieval chapel except for an L-shaped section of wall footings. We then followed the waymarked footpaths through the woods, seeing yet more snowdrops, before reaching the main road (and passing by an old milk churn dock). Our path then took us down to rejoin the riverside path and back to the cars.

We then decided that the Clytha Arms was very convenient and went there to quench our thirst. The drive home was glorious with beautiful shades of pink in the sky.



Saturday 11th February: Barry Sidings and Rhondda Heritage Park led by Lisa Barton

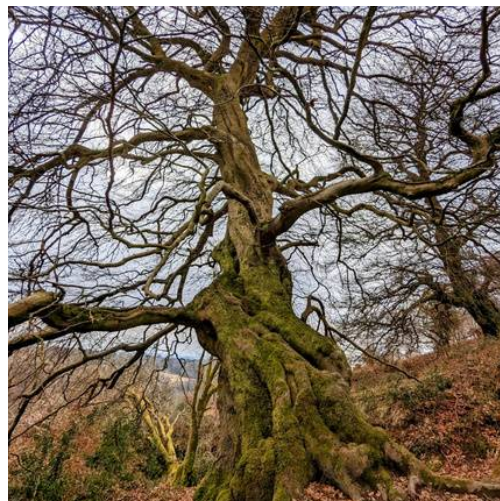
Lisa led 15 walkers on a leisurely 4 mile walk from Barry Sidings to the Heritage Museum for a lovely coffee stop, then on to Llwynycelyn. The day started a little damp but soon brightened up. Thanks to Colin who gave us an insight into some of the local history on route.



Sunday 12th February: Castell Coch and Caerphilly Common led by Julie Brightman.



Over 30 ramblers joined me for a walk starting at Castell Coch. After a climb we were rewarded with good views. Carrying on along the ridge we descended, crossing field to Caerphilly Common. After a lunch stop Tony Lawrence stepped in to get us home. Don't ask about the reccie although I'm sure Tracy will fill you in. Big thanks to Tony for saving the day.



Sunday 19th February: Creigiau led by Sue Bowker.

There was a great turnout, 27 walkers, for the walk from Creigiau surgery on 19th February. I was pleased to welcome 2 guests from the Vale of Glamorgan Ramblers, and two friends from the village - one of whom had helped me recce the walk and so was on hand to question any wrong turns!

As usual on walks from Creigiau, we headed to the old railway line. Our route then was to the top of Tyn y Coed woods (apologies for the steep climb) and along the ridge to Garth Mountain where we stopped for coffee with views across the Channel. It even felt quite warm by this point.



We had a gentle descent through fields and imposing coniferous woodland to the village of Gwaelod y Garth; but then had to climb back up the hill - this time through beautiful deciduous woodland, with felled or fallen trees acting as benches for lunch once we reached the top.

The walk then skirted the smaller quarry before crossing fields back to Pentyrch. Apologies for the mud on this, and the next section - I did the recce on a frosty day so it was less obvious.



A cold wind accompanied the rest of the walk through fields and woodland back to Creigiau, where a small group sampled the hospitality at the Creigiau Inn.

The final mileage was between 9 and 9.5 miles.



Saturday 25th January: Trelewis led by Martyne

Martyne led 12 walkers for a 4 mile leisurely walk on a fine dry morning from Taff Bargoed Park to Quakers Yard then on to Treharris, stopping at the Summit Center for coffee and cakes and with great company what more can you ask for.



Sunday 26th January: Cwmwernderi Reservoir led by Steve Craven.

My original walk was a circular route in Dimbath Valley (taken from the Ramblers app), which I had reced twice in December with the intention to recce it a third time closer to the date. Thankfully, I went back earlier than intended (three weeks before the walk) as my son and I came across a landslide alongside a key section of the route (a milelong stream), giving me no option than to scrap it altogether and choose somewhere else at the last minute. The area is very steep in places, and it is not something I intended for this walk, as my plan was to have a moderate walk compared to my previous two moderate plus routes, I submitted in 2022. Time was not on my side to start rejigging.



Cwmwernderi Reservoir (nr. Maesteg) was high on my bucket list and as the route (also on the Ramblers app) is easy-going, it was the ideal choice. So, with two weekends to spare, June and I reced a 7.5 mile section of the forest, which would have been sufficient, and I even submitted the description to Tony Lawrence that day. However, as my original walk would have been 8.5 miles and I was going back to the reservoir the following weekend to show the family, I was able to extend the route by the extra mile and give it the variety I felt was lacking on my first attempt.

On the day itself I was surprised to see a decent turnout, considering the distance, yet 29 ramblers joined me on what was a very pleasant pre-spring day with blue skies and a fresh nip in the air.

We started on the outskirts of Maesteg (opposite the golf club), through forestry to the small village of Bryn, where we sat down for our first break in a picnic area which was once the site of an old coal pit. After a long stretch along a cycleway, we ventured back in to the forest where we passed the beautiful cascades of the Nant Cwmwernderi (stream), which for me was one of the walk's biggest draws, up to the main attraction Cwmwernderi Reservoir, situated deep in the heart of the forest. On the day, it had a tinge of blue, yet in the right light, it appears as an attractive bright blue, almost cyan, colour. This was the perfect place to have our lunch and admire the views around us in what was mostly peaceful seclusion. A couple of police vans were scouring the vicinity above us, but this did not affect the tranquillity we enjoyed. After reenergising we faced a couple of longer, but steady inclines, and mostly flatter tracks, before the final descent through the golf course to our starting point. The weather was perfect, and everybody seemed to enjoy themselves.



Afterwards, many of us paid a visit to Maesteg Golf Club for a refreshing cold drink and chinwag, which topped off the day nicely. Thanks again to those who attended including four newcomers, all of whom I hope to see again soon.

SOCIAL

We have 17 signed for bowling on Saturday 4th March and some good news, its cheaper than advertised at £15.95.

We are going with their catering option, which is a basket meal, which we will have between the 2 games. 5pm start so if you can aim to be there by 4.45pm that would be great.



Bara Brith Recipe

Taking inspiration from the latest Ramblers magazine, Walk article, Backpack Snacks, I thought I would share my Bara Brith recipe, which is a staple in my backpack. I originally found the recipe on a Visit Wales website but I have put my own twist on it.

Ingredients

400g mixed fruits (e.g. sultana's, raisins, currants)
300ml strong tea
250g self raising flour
1 teaspoon mixed spice
1 tablespoon honey (original recipe is 100g dark brown sugar)
1 egg

Method

To dried fruit add tea and honey, leave to soak for at least 7 hours or preferably overnight. Add egg, sifted flour and spice to soaked fruit and mix well. Bake at 180 degrees centigrade/gas 4 in a lined 900g loaf tin for 50 minutes to 1 hour. Glaze with honey whilst warm. And enjoy on a ramble.



Excursions

I have no firm updates on our planned excursions, we have a committee meeting next Tuesday where everything should be firmed up and then information emailed out to all the members.

March Walks

Sunday 5th

Cwm Sychan and Cwm Ffrwd led by Tony Yule
8m M

Saturday 11th

Talygarn led by Martyne & Geraldine 4.5/5m L

Sunday 12th

Llanhilleth led by Tony Lawrence 8m M

Sunday 19th

Craig y Nos led by Andrew & Hayley 5m + 4m M

Saturday 25th

Pencoed led by Rob Young 4m L

Sunday 26th

Talgarth and Castell Dinas led by Tiny Lawrence
10m M