

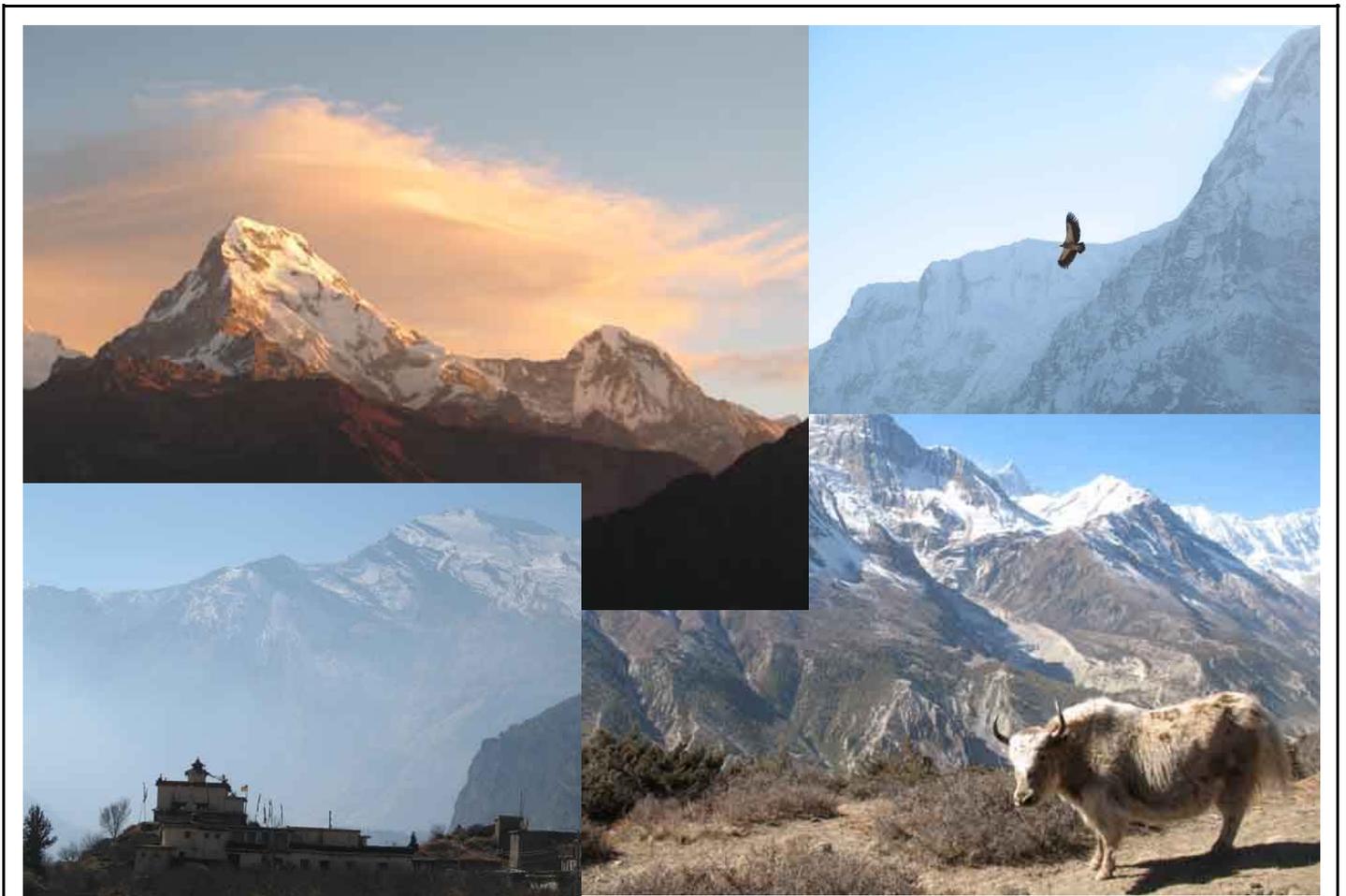


Issue No. 32

Summer 2008

Photo: Pendoylan, Vale of Glamorgan by Bob N.

Trekking in The Himalayas



During Christmas last year COG member Richard Thompson went trekking on the famous Annapurna Circuit. **Full Story Page 4**

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Newsletter of



A message from your Madam

Well, haven't we experienced a variety of weather conditions over the last few months. One we would have even been justified in pulling on snow shoes and salopettes. But that's British Spring-time for you! As an example of our skittish weather, I would like to mention the sixteen brave souls who joined me for a walk along the Afon Ogmore.



The mouth of The Afon Ogmore.

We started our walk in crisp, dry, Spring weather and even had the opportunity to enjoy a relaxing lunch stop in the sunshine at Ogmore Castle. As we arrived at the mouth of The River Ogmore, we were met by the happy scene of people both young and old, with a few dogs thrown in for good measure, making the most of the sea, sand and sunshine. This hint of warmer weather was not to last. As we made our way back along the coastal path it started to snow, but this gentle flurry did nothing to detract from the walk. As drifts of snow fell over a deserted beach, it simply enhanced it. As breathtaking as snow over sand may have been, it paled in comparison with the scene that greeted us during a memorable Easter Weekend that was so ably organised by Sue Cox.



Kettlewell in the snow.

Kettlewell

During our visit to Kettlewell, the stunning scenery of The Yorkshire Dales was carpeted in snow and apart from Charles falling in love with a snowman, our only concern was being snowed-in. I doubt if this would have worried us intrepid COGers, as we were well stocked up with tea, cakes and red wine. The Stuff Of Life.

Alfriston

Come our Early Spring Bank Holiday visit to Alfriston, we did manage a few days of sunshine. Blue skies, green grass and cream teas, 'Beautiful!'

Boscastle

During our Late Spring Bank Holiday trip to Boscastle had two reasonably sunny days walking until, on our last day in Cornwall rain stopped play and we were forced to beat a hasty retreat home. But I would like to take this opportunity to thank Jane O for introducing the group to the wonderful little Youth Hostel at Boscastle.



Charles and his new best friend.

Three Peaks Trial

As I am on the subject of diverse weather conditions, I would like to mention this year's Three Peaks Trial. As I'm sure you all know, the 3PT is a very successful walking event which has been run exclusively, by Cardiff Outdoor Group for over 45 years. The event attracts competitors, both runners and walkers, from all over Britain and further afield.

It is usual for the group to attract a high number of enthusiastic people onto this prestigious event, but owing to diverse weather conditions, those involved in organizing this year's 3PT feared that it would be a complete wash out. So, (for those who weren't there) you can only imagine our surprise when over 540 people turned up to trudge through mud and rain to take part in the event. The only thing that spoils the day was a lack of enthusiasm from the majority of COG members.

I am not sure if all COG members realise the importance of this event which not only raises money for our group, but throughout the years has supported many charities who work hard to make access to the countryside available to all.



Sarah meeting the locals on the Cornish Coastal Path.

We are not looking for members to take part in the trial walks. That would be contradictory to manning the event. What is needed is for members to volunteer their time, (be it all day, or just for a few hours) to make the 3PT run as smoothly as possible.

There are many ways COGers can support the event. For the more hardy amongst us, we need volunteers to spend the day, or part of the day manning check points on route. Or maybe you would like to spend your time in the hut, either checking people out at the start of the day or back in at the end of the day. We are also looking for a small army of volunteers who could spend a few hours during the day to welcome walkers back to the hut with lashings of tea and in some cases, sympathy. So, please COGers don't let the Three Peaks Trial die on its feet through lack of enthusiasm. Let's make 2009's Three Peaks Trial the best ever.

Sian X



Drawing of COG member after one of Steve's backpacks!

3rd June—Bulmore

11th May—GrwyneFawr



15th June—Clytha



17th June—Groesfaen—makes Clive want to sing!

24th June—Pontsarn



8th June—Rockfield

Om Mani Adme Hum! *By Richard Thompson*

At Christmas last year I was guaranteed two things: snow and an alcohol-free headache. I was trekking in western Nepal. The night before I attempted to cross the Thorung pass, the highest point on the famous Annapurna circuit, I slept, or rather tried to sleep, at High Camp, the closest accommodation to the pass at around 4850m above sea level. I think it was too big a jump from the night before and I spent much of the night listening, despite my best efforts to the contrary, to a heart intent on playing my head like a tabla drum. To my dismay I had to drag myself out of my sleeping bag a couple of times as well, shuddering my way through sub-zero temperatures in search of the outside loo. The only solace in this was the incredible night sky. It is often hard to conceive that all those stars could be anything more than what they seem to be: fragile pin-pricks of light. But at nearly 5000m and many days of hiking from the nearest street lights, there can be no doubt, for the sky seems filled with a thousand suns.



By morning I had a raging headache and little appetite for breakfast: two symptoms of altitude sickness. I had almost resolved to descend to Thorung Phedi about 400m below to spend the next night there recovering. But two painkillers lifted the cloud from my head and so too my negative thoughts: only 600m more ascent to go.

It was hard work though. At 5000m there's about half the amount of oxygen in the air as at sea level, so perhaps that's why I felt so listless. My stride length declined to a fraction of the length of my boot and I seemed to need to rest every ten or twenty yards. Icy sections on the trail didn't help either, which I had to negotiate very carefully for fear of ending up at the bottom of one scree slope or another (oh, for a pair of crampons!).

I passed a group of snowcocks foraging amongst windswept rocks for who knows what up there. Their red legs and eye patches contrasting starkly with the drifts of snow. How very different from ten days before at the start of my trek when I watched a huge, raucous mob of rose-ringed parakeets reeling from one tree to the next, a blur of yellow and blue tail feathers trailing behind them.

The green trees were now a long way behind me, but at least the blue sky remained. I was now trudging over a palette of brown: a dry, barren, rocky landscape ringed by white peaks. It seemed endless. The cusp of one hill turned into the foot of the next time and time again. But after two hours of my newly adopted, shuffling gait I finally reached the top, 5416m above sea level. There I was reunited with a Canadian couple with whom I had spent the previous evening. We began the long, slow descent to the Mustang village of Muktinath together.

Shortly afterwards, we heard a huge roar to our left and a cloud of white rose up from a nearby mountain. A small avalanche had tumbled down a slope. Thankfully we weren't at the bottom of it.

The route to the extraordinary high desert of Muktinath involved crossing yet another vertiginous pedestrian suspension bridge (there are so many on the circuit!). This bridge was suspended high above a broad stream angled steeply from the mountain above to the valley below. In the summer months it must be a raging torrent. But that day, like many a waterfall I had seen in the past few days, it was taking a rest. It was frozen solid.

That said though, every day of the nineteen days I spent trekking (with the exception of a hazy last day) was gloriously sunny. It almost always became lovely and warm in the sun. But above 2000m the nights were long and bitterly cold. I was invariably in my sleeping bag by 8pm having stuffed myself on all-you-can-eat dal bhat (rice with dal and a couple of vegetable curries, which were never the same in any two places). I often tested the all-you-can-eat principle to the limit, mind you!

For its latitude Nepal is unusually warm, such that at the start of my trek, through precipitous, terraced valley slopes, where rice grows in the rainy season, I was passing groves of orange, banana and the occasional papaya. There was even an unexpected flavour of Christmas in the abundant red splashes of Poinsettia. It's so warm because of the Himalayas which prevent cold, winter air moving down from central Asia. In effect, the foothills of Nepal are a huge, natural, walled garden: the biggest in the world. Perhaps that's why the range is known as Annapurna, the Hindu goddess of food and harvests.

It would be impossible to encapsulate the many different aspects of my 19 day trek, the sights, sounds, scents, battles, emotions and thoughts, without writing an entire book. Broad impressions must stand in for the detail.

One of these has to be the Buddhist mantra, Om mani padme hum (Ah! The jewel is indeed in the Lotus). The mantra is heard so often, set to haunting music. Very different from the more formal and restrained Theravada Buddhism of Thailand where I once lived and worked, where such mantras seem the exclusive preserve of temples and monks. In Himalayan Nepal even the wind and the rivers are harnessed in the chant.

Every village has an abundance of prayer wheels. These are (usually small), colourfully painted, hollow, cylindrical, metal drums that can be rotated on a spindle. They are inscribed with mantras, while scrolls containing more mantras are placed inside the cylinders. Locals will spend time each day moving from wheel to wheel, turning them as they go, believing the mantras to be uttered in the process. Occasionally I came across such a drum enclosed in a wooden structure by the path of a stream, the rushing water turning the drum all day. Then there are prayer flags: colourful strips of cloth, also inscribed with mantras, tied to long strings; the words to be snatched and carried away on the wind. And perhaps the Gurung people believe that nature is in itself full of mantras: for in that region, near the end of my trek, I came across many long strings strung between buildings with flowers, leaves and lichens attached, rather than flags.

They may have a point. The raw, insurmountable heights, the relentless, unending roar of the valleys' rivers, the isolation from the outside world, the tireless manner in which local people bear impossible weights up and down the trails, convey the impression that time doesn't pass here at all. Like a mantra, it collects; piling up into mountains and dribbling out through the streams.

Around Jomson the river basin is full of ammonites. This despite the fact that, today, the place must be a thousand miles distant from the nearest sea; and fully two miles above sea level. The Himalayas may be the youngest of mountain ranges, but they have some very old tales to tell.

.....we heard a huge roar to our left and a cloud of white rose up from a nearby mountain. A small avalanche had tumbled down a slope.

Continued from Page 4:

The sheer scale of the place can seem oppressive at times. I have always had a sense of freedom in mountains before. But a few days into the trek, not having seen another tourist to talk to for three whole days, bounded by impossible rock faces and peaks to the left and right and relentless, exhausting hikes each day, I began to feel claustrophobic. But, with increasing height, the valley began to open out and the peaks no longer seemed so oppressive or quite so insurmountable. The latter was pure delusion however. Spending an entire day to climb up to a tarn and "small" hill from the village of Manang reminded me that the place remained on an altogether different scale from Britain's molehill peaks.

In terms of wildlife, it is not perhaps the best region in which to trek, at least as far as the foothills are concerned, where much of the natural forest has given way to agriculture. That said, one of the highlights was the last three days which I spent exploring the incredible Rhododendron forests around Ghandruk. These were dominated by Rhododendron trees up to 20m high, with very substantial girths, their pink-brown bark mottled and peeling, their branches full of epiphytes. One particularly abundant epiphyte was a thick, strap-like fern that hung from boughs and trunks like a cluster of string beans. Sadly few of the Rhododendrons were in flower, though all were at least in bud. But this was compensated for by a low shrub of the genus Daphne, from which a local paper is made, its small white flowers extraordinarily fragrant, floating like a perfume on the air. Mahonia was also extremely abundant in places, though very different from the garden stock back home, with wonderfully convoluted stems covered in mosses. On the ground, maidenhair ferns were common, and an extraordinary range of blooming, bird's-eye primroses. Hanuman langurs, macaques and barking deer were commonly seen and heard and the bird life seemed exceptional.



In the high mountains my optimistic attempts to spot red panda or snow leopard came to nothing, only succeeding in spotting huge numbers of the latter's principal prey, the very attractive (though not at all blue) blue sheep. I also saw my first pika, some 30 years after first reading about the animal, its big round ears failing to disguise its rabbit-like propinquity. Plenty of weasels seemed to be out hunting them too. In the skies, the views of lammergeier, griffon vultures and choughs were truly spectacular.

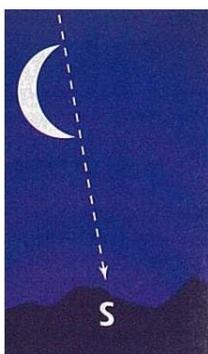
The times, though, are a-changing. A road is being constructed up both valleys of the Annapurna circuit and these will, in the next year or two, extend to the uppermost villages of each valley: Manang in the east and Muktinath in the west. This road will be narrow and unpaved but it's sure to bring big changes regardless. Indeed, the road construction caused one of the most exhausting days of my trek. On the second day, work on a huge cliff face, meant the trail was diverted to the other side of the valley. Unfortunately, the lower reaches of this opposite side were similarly vertical, necessitating a zig-zag ascent of several hundred metres to pass over it. Nearly three hours of the most exhausting of ascents and descents led to a mere five hundred metres' progress further up the valley!

I could see dozens of men looking no bigger than ants, chipping away at the rock face without the least sign of safety equipment, some 300 or 400m above the foaming river.

I was glad for the diversion all the same. Looking back across the valley

Richard will be giving a talk on his trek at Chapter Arts Centre, Tuesday 28th October. The presentation will include stunning photos of the scenery, flora and fauna of this amazing part of the world. Richard will also include another trip he did to Sikkim: a slither of mountainous country sandwiched between Nepal, Tibet and Bhutan.

NAVIGATION HANDY HINTS FROM TRAIL MAGAZINE



Finding South Using the Moon

Navigators down through history have used the Pole Star to guide them over the oceans, but how about using the scabbard of Orion's Belt, which in winter points to the south?

That's okay for budding Patrick Moores, but another (simpler) method is this. If the moon rises before the sun sets the illuminated side will be west, but if it rises after dark the illuminated side will be east. Finally, for a crescent moon, take an imaginary line between both tips downwards until you reach the horizon. In the northern hemisphere, this is roughly south.



How to Navigate by the North Star

Find it using the Plough (Ursa Major) which is the one shaped like a saucepan. Once you've found the Plough you should:

- Pick out the two stars that form the edge of the pan furthest from the handle.
 - Hold up your hand in front of you so these two stars line up against its edge.
 - Follow this angle for 4 times the distance between these stars.
 - Look for a bright star, the North Star.
- Once you're facing it you have a moderately accurate bearing on your position, with west to your left and east to your right.

Walking the New Ceredigion Coastal Path by Enid Lewis



3 July 2008 saw the official opening of the Ceredigion Coastal Path. The whole 60-mile length of the Ceredigion coastline from Cardigan, at the end of the Pembrokeshire Coastal Path, to Borth and the Dovey Estuary in the North.

The Ceredigion Coastal Path is a £500k path jointly funded by Ceredigion County Council and the European Union. It has taken 5 years to create and is expected to be popular with walkers far and wide, providing a real and lasting boost to the local economy. Ceredigion Coastal Path will form part of the 800 mile all-Wales Coastal Path which is being completed over the next four years.

I was fortunate with 5 friends to walk the path a couple of weeks before the official opening. We completed the walk over 6 days at a leisurely pace with a chance to enjoy the sunshine, scenery, wildlife and wild flowers .



- -Day 1, Cardigan to Aberporth which includes a lovely new path from the Church in Mwnt to Aberporth. This new path has been dug by hand by local volunteers – very hard work and apparently four volunteers were in their 80s. It is a shame on this section that it is not possible to walk all along the estuary due to a dispute in the High Court and also you have to walk around the RAE base in Aberporth.
- -Day 2 Aberporth to Cwmtwydu saw us walking along possibly the most spectacular part of the walk. There are a few old railway carriages which have been converted into holiday cottages which may interest some coggers. For me not being a train spotter the beaches of Tresaith, Penbryn and Llangrannog and the new path between Ynys Lochtyn and Cwmtwydu were superb. This new path has been cut along a very steep section of the cliff, by a couple of diggers, to give spectacular views. The diggers were completing the final section as we passed by. Having seen the work that goes into these paths at first hand I do appreciate the skill and effort involved much more than I used to.
- -Day 3 Cwmtwydu to Aberaeron. Here the path has been well used over the centuries providing spectacular views of dolphins from the lookout just south of New Quay and in New Quay harbour. Slow progress was made on this day as dolphin watching can be very time consuming!
- -Day 4 Aberaeron to Llanrhystud. A path opened a couple of years ago which is at sea level and very flat and a chance to see the erosion at close quarters.
- -Day 5 Llanrhystud to Aberystwyth. Again a path opened a couple of years ago but which has not been walked much. Here we came across the Monk's cave a rock formation and a couple of derelict farms quite a contrast from previous days and much more remote.
- -Day 6 and the final day Aberystwyth to Borth and Ynys Las and the Nature Reserve. This is a section that I have walked previously with Cog from the hostel situated on the front in Borth however this time the dolphins came out to play which was a wonderful end to our walk.

My reason for sharing the wonderful week with you is to ask if you get the chance please go and walk the coastal path particularly the new sections. Your help is needed to keep these sections open! We only saw about 12 people walking any section of the path in 6 days of walking! How different to walking the Pembrokeshire Coastal Path and the scenery is better in Ceredigion of course! (Not that I'm biased being a Cardi!)

Ex-Soldier's Extreme Ironing Task

A former soldier is launching his own year-long "extreme ironing" challenge in the Brecon Beacons.

Ian Ambrose plans to photograph himself ironing in unusual locations, including on canoe, in a gorge and on top of England's highest peak, Scafell Pike. The 32-year-old, who runs an ironing business, is raising funds for The Gap, which puts on activities for young people in Swansea.

The bizarre sport of extreme ironing was started in Leicester in 1997. The first world championships were held in Germany five years later and devotees have since taken their ironing boards to a host of weird and wonderful places from Everest to the bottom of the sea.

Mr Ambrose first became aware of it on the internet before last year while walking in the Brecon Beacons he came across some students out ironing. "I'm ironing every day with the business, so I just thought it would be a good way to support the charity as it is local and raise the profile a bit," he said. Starting with a trek up Pen-y-Fan, he has set himself the target of raising £2,500 in a year. He has set up a page on his company website and will update it with photographs after each expedition. The Gap, which is based at Cornerstone Church in Penlan, helps teenagers from across Swansea develop social skills and gain qualifications such as Duke of Edinburgh Awards.



Extreme Ironing on top of Pen y Fan!

**Late August Bank Holiday in Marloes Sands, Pembrokeshire
22nd to 25th August**

Wake up to the sound of the sea at this hostel close to a superb beach. A cluster of National Trust traditional farm buildings with exceptional sea views, YHA Marloes Sands is on the Pembrokeshire Coastal Path. The famous bird sanctuary and marine reserve, Skomer Island, can be reached by ferry from nearby Martin's Haven or you could try your hand at watersports in nearby Dale. The cost of the hostel is £41.85 for 3 nights, full amount to be paid by the 16th June. For more details, please call Charles on 01633 856403.



**October Weekend in Liverpool,
European Capital of Culture 2008**

A chance to enjoy the many attractions of this year's European Capital of Culture. The hostel is next to Albert Dock, a 10 minute walk from the city centre. Did you know Liverpool boasts more galleries and museums than any city outside London? Also the architecture is world-class, with more listed buildings than any city outside London. The heart of the city and its waterfront sit proudly alongside treasures like the Taj Mahal and Pyramids at Giza as a World Heritage Site.

Being named European Capital of Culture 2008 was arguably the greatest day in Liverpool's recent history. But what is beyond argument is that 4 June 2003 changed Liverpool. At a stroke, national and international perceptions changed and the image of the city improved. Already, 2008 is the rocket fuel that is propelling Liverpool's economy, and solid foundations have now been laid for its ongoing transformation into a world-class city. Liverpool is already well known around the world for maritime heritage, architecture, music, literature, the arts and sport. The Capital of Culture title will place the city firmly on the global map. Nearly two million extra visitors are expected to attend the many world-class festivals and events that will take place. Now, alongside its proud past, Liverpool has a bright future as a modern, cosmopolitan and premier European city with a world-beating reputation.

COG will be staying at the 4★ Liverpool Youth Hostel, a new purpose built hostel close to the Tate Gallery and the Maritime Museum. Cost of the YHA booking (two nights with hearty buffet breakfasts): £49.00. Deadline for payment to David: Tuesday 5 August. Contact David M on 2076 5815.



Liverpool skyline at night

CHALLENGE WALKS



16/8/08 Rhayader Mountain Trail 30, 20 or 12 Miles **Description:** 30, 20 or 12ml Tough but highly scenic moorland and woodland routes around the Elan Valley, calling for sound navigational skills. Details & entry form by e-mail or SAE. **Email:** janet@CJPL.DEMON.CO.UK **Contact:** Janet Pitt-Lewis **Address:** 5 Rad Valley Gardens, SHREWSBURY SY3 8AU **Telephone:** 01743 236122 **Email:** janet@CJPL.DEMON.CO.UK

6/9/08 45th Across Wales Walk 45 Miles from the English Border at Anchor to the Welsh Coast at Clarach nr Aberystwyth. Rendezvous/Friday night accommodation at Clun (GR SO305815) Scenic route on fps, rd & open country across Mid Wales inc Plynlimon. 1 Friday accommodation at Clun, Sat night at University of Wales, Aberystwyth, (meal Sat night at extra cost) Organised by West Birmingham Hostelling Group. Entry form & loads more details on website or by SAE **Contact:** Stuart Lamb **Address:** 42 Hunt End Lane, Hunt End, REDDITCH B97 5UW **Tel:** 01527 545998 **Email:** stuart@acrosswaleswalk.co.uk **Web Site:** <http://www.acrosswaleswalk.co.uk>

19/9/08 Welsh International Walking Festival 26.3, 12.5 or 6.3ml each day from Llanwrtyd Wells Waymarked routes through the mountains, forests & scenery of Mid Wales. Entry: 1 day £4, 2 days £7, 3 days £11 or 4 days £15; discounts for children & families. Free entertainment each night.

More info & entry forms on website, or send SAE. **Contact:** Bernice Benton **Address:** Ty Barcud, The Square, LLANWRTYD WELLS LD5 4RB **Telephone:** 01591 610666 **Email:** llanwrtydtouristinformation@yahoo.co.uk **Web Site:** <http://www.green-events.co.uk>

20/21/9/08 The 1st Mountain Trail Challenge 30 or 17ml from Grawen Campsite on the A470 N of Merthyr These challenging routes in the Brecon Beacons will take in the highest summit in the area, Pen-y-Fan (886m), and includes spectacular ridgeline walking as well as forests, reservoirs and waterfalls. Long route has approx. 1,863m of ascent. Entry forms, route details, etc on website, or with SAE. **Contact:** Mike Rolfe **Address:** 6 Oakhurst Close, Churchdown, GLOUCESTER GL3 2SS **Telephone:** 07973 320437 (weekday eves before 22.00; weekends anytime before 22.00) **Email:** mountain-trail-challenge@live.co.uk **Web Site:** <http://www.mountain-trail-challenge.com>

27/9/08 Pumlumon Challenge 27ml from Nant yr Arian Forestry Centre, approx 8ml E of Aberystwyth on the A44 The route is over the Pumlumon hills passing the source of the Wye and the Severn; then onto the Hengwm and Hirnant Valleys, around Nantymocho dam and more climbs before the finish. Total ascent 5,500ft. Traditional Welsh Cawl at the finish. This area represents a real challenge, and should only be attempted if well prepared. Full details and entry forms on website or with SAE. **Contact:** Wynne Jones **Address:** Pentir Pumlumon Pumlumon Challenge, Lisburne House, Pontrhydygroes, YSTRAD MEURIG SY25 6DQ **Telephone:** 01974 282581 **Email:** wynne@pumlumon.org.uk **Web Site:** <http://www.pumlumon.org.uk/challenge.php>

11/10/08 Talybont Trial 20 or 10ml anti-clockwise from Henderson Hall, Talybont on Usk First summit is Craig Pwllfa then via Pant-y-Creigiau, and the trig point, the Chartists Cave, & Tor-y-Foel with a total ascent of 4,500ft. 10ml route avoids high moorland but maintains beautiful scenery, total ascent 1,500ft. Entry form on website or by SAE. Organised by Newport Outdoor Group (YHA) with the assistance of the Brecon Mountain Rescue Team on the Cps **Contact:** TT2008 **Address:** 122 Stow Hill, NEWPORT NP20 4GA **Telephone:** 01633 257632 **Email:** marty-rogers@supanet.com **Web Site:** <http://www.walk.to/nogs>

Caving News

Damaging Limestone Landscapes

Following a caving trip in the upper Neath Valley an astonishing event unfolded while the cavers were changing. In the middle of nowhere, a convoy of 4-wheel drive vehicles approached from the south along the Sarn Helen green lane. After stopping at a gate, a discussion among the group ensued and one vehicle drove off the track to disappear from view into a nearby shakehole. The crater is typical of the area, being steep sided with a cone-shaped profile that is about 4-5m deep. This was clearly a deliberate action—to the guys involved it was all a bit of fun, though it did a lot of damage. We watched for perhaps half an hour as the 'rescuers' attempted to recover their mate, now stuck in the shakehole.



Clearly some off-roaders are having a devastating effect on such landscapes. The Brecon Beacons National Park Authority and landowners are determined to clamp down on such activities, but what action will be taken in this case remains to be seen.

Rescue Teams Kept Busy

While Porth yr Ogof may have gained something of a reputation for deep-water drownings, cavers would certainly regard this site as among the safest and most suitable for introductory activities. Despite over 30,000 caver visits a year it is rare to report anything more than a sprained ankle. However in February West Brecon CRT was called to the cave when a young lady suffered a dislocated kneecap in a very narrow section of passage. Severe pain prevented any movement.

A team doctor was soon on site and the dislocation was reduced with the aid of Entonox and by manipulating the joint. An hour later the casualty was en route to the car park. Despite having lain in a flat-out crawl for nearly three hours she maintained her body temperature with the aid of a thick duvet-type jacket that her fellow cavers had wrapped her in.

The following week there was a joint Gwent/West Brecon CRT call-out to Agen Allwedd when a six person party undertaking a Grand Circle trip was overdue. Once again a very effective strategy was implemented. By four in the morning some 50 rescue team members were committed to searching, running communications or were on standby while others were waiting at Penwyllt for a possible call.

It turned out that one member of the overdue party had sustained a hamstring strain and there had been some route finding difficulties. The party was able to make its own way to the surface and by 6am all of the overdue cavers and the rescue team had returned to their base, Whitewalls.

New Void to Investigate

Recently while undertaking their usual deliberations in the New Inn, Ystradfellte, some Croyden CC cavers were told by a local farmer that his attempt at drilling a new borehole had failed as the drill had encountered a significant void at about 30m depth. Having obtained his permission to investigate further, Rob Damen assembled a 'borehole camers' from a collection of LED lights, a webcam and a plastic drinks bottle held together with gaffer tape and duly lowered it down the hole at Plas-y-Darren farm near Porth yr Ogof in the mellte valley.

At about 27m the bothe borehole broke into a space and bottomed at 32m. In spite of a poor quality picture, vision having deteriorated due to mud on the bottom of the plastic bottle, a large void was seen. Roy Morgan has traced the water in the borehole to a resurgence in the Mellte valley downstream from Porth yr Ogof and this will no doubt soon become the subject of an investigation. Meanwhile Rob has produced a DVD of the camera descent.

Climbing Code

The British Mountaineering Council has published a Crag Code of conduct to encourage the sustainable use of crags in England and Wales. The code functions in much the same way as the Countryside Code with ten basic common sense points of principle. A similar code of practice might even prove useful to caving, where landowners unfamiliar with caves on their land would be able to see the responsible aspects of the sport are championed and upheld. See more at www.thebmc.co.uk

Above is from the 'Descent' Caving Magazine.

Cycling News from the CTC

The Celebratory Sustrans Channel Challenge

A week-long bike ride over 300 miles around the Bristol Channel took place at the beginning of July to celebrate its 30th anniversary of Sustrans. The Sustrans Channel Challenge ride set off from the charity's home city of Bristol. The celebration ride route went over the 'old' Severn Bridge into south east Wales and on to Swansea, where a special chartered ferry took participants across the channel to Ilfracombe on the west Devon coast. Riders then made their way through Devon, Somerset and Bath before pedalling back into Bristol on the final day.

Wales to adopt cycling proficiency for the 21st Century

Plans for a national cycle training standard across Wales were announced in June in a bid to improve safety and the take-up of cycling amongst children and young people.

At a Walking and Cycling Conference in Cardiff, the Minister for Environment, Sustainability and Housing, Jane Davidson, said the Welsh Assembly Government would be investing £250,000 to train more than 100 instructors to teach the new standards across Wales. The aim is to increase the number of qualified instructors that can deliver cycle training to a consistent standard that prepares children and adults to cycle on today's roads.

The CTC guide to family cycling

"The CTC guide to family cycling" is about getting children, from babes in arms to teenagers and all the points in between, on bikes. This book is aimed at all families who are on the cusp of becoming cyclists or existing cyclists who have recently become parents. It is, in short, everything you need to know about cycling with children, from birth until they're bigger than you. It is currently the **only** book available on family cycling and it is a comprehensive guide on topics such as:

- How to choose the safest child seat or child trailer.
- Trailer cycles and tandems explained.
- How to cycle with a child aboard.
- Buying your child their first bike.
- The best way to teach your child how to ride a bike.
- Cycling to school.
- When to buy a bigger bike and what to look for when you do.
- Clothing and accessories to keep you all comfortable and secure.
- Essential skills for riding on and off-road.
- Great days out: the best places to ride your bikes.
- Tips to make your cycling trips a success.

New vision needed for road safety

CTC - the UK's national cyclists' organisation told an influential committee of MPs that the Government must set out a new vision for safe community streets to enable people to cycle and to feel comfortable letting their children cycle to school. In the run-up to consultation on the Government's new Road Safety Strategy for the next decade, CTC's Campaigns and Policy Manager Roger Geffen has given evidence to the Transport Select Committee's inquiry on road safety.

Road Safety Minister Jim Fitzpatrick MP has said he wants to introduce more 20mph speed limits in urban areas. The Minister will be appearing before the Committee immediately after CTC's evidence session. CTC is one of 70 organisations which recently supported a call for 20mph to be the norm for community streets in urban areas, leaving local authorities free to set higher limits on wider and busier main roads. Roger Geffen said: "20mph speed limits are popular, with around 75% public support

CTC also believes speed limits and other rules of the road need to be backed up by a reform of road traffic law. The current distinction between 'careless' and 'dangerous' driving is hopelessly.

New traffic-free route links up Welsh communities

What: Opening of the Cwm Ogwr Fach section of the Celtic Trail.
Where: Cycle route at the county boundary between Bridgend CBC and Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC, the latest piece of the across Wales Celtic Trail between Tonyrefail and Blackmill near the entrance to Lakeside Farm Restaurant on the A4093. The five-mile Cwm Ogwr Fach section follows the former railway line and parish road, and allows walkers and cyclists to avoid dropping onto the busy A4093.

The above is from the CTC website, www.ctc.org.uk and Sustrans website www.sustrans.org.uk



Steve's Big Sack

There's been a surprising amount of backpacking since the last "View" in March.

The Mendips backpack on the weekend of the 4th to 6th of April was,

of course, a raging success. We had two days of clear, sunny weather with a "cooling" breeze from the west. This was a pleasant change from the usual backpacking environment – low, rolling hills, cute villages and (mostly) good pubs. Though the hills are fairly low you do get great views across the Somerset levels and over to Wales. This was also a relatively civilised backpack with breakfast on Saturday morning at a café and dinner on Saturday night at a relatively swish place in Wookey Hole. There were 5 of us in total (I rarely need to use a second hand to count people on my events).

For the official 10th anniversary COG backpack over Mayday Bank Holiday there were fewer of us – two in total – but with the other one being fellow Cuillins conqueror Ruth B, quality was never going to be an issue. Friday night we were at the campsite at Devil's Bridge (recommended) and on Saturday we walked via Ponterwyd and Eisteddfa Gurig over Pumlumon Fawr and Pulmlumon Arwystli, visiting the high sources of both the Wye and the Severn. Again, the wind was strong – a theme of this year – but the weather turned out to be better than forecast. Saturday night we had a wild camp in the Hengwm valley, one of the most remote-feeling valleys I've been to. The next day we had lower hills, woodland and fields down to the very impressive Rheidol gorge. From there it was a short, sharp climb back up to Devil's Bridge for an early return home. I'd recommend a visit to this area if you haven't been before. The hills are picturesque and the Rheidol valley has spectacular woods.

There was more wonderful wild camping on Roger's Carmarthen Fans backpack on the weekend of the 6th to 8th June. Again, Ruth was there so it was the full Cuillins complement. Friday evening was, unusually, without wind but this did bring out the local midges. The "Skin So Soft" and midge head-nets were fully utilised. Saturday had glorious weather,

with plenty of opportunity for cloud-spotting (very interesting cumulus clouds). There were a lot of people on the main drag but once we headed off towards Carreg yr Ogof we saw hardly anyone. We wild camped in the Twrch valley. Fortunately, there was a midge-dispersing northerly breeze at a fabulous spot. After a camp dinner it was an early night for everyone. The next day the route was generally easterly then north-easterly through forestry and fields (quite tricky navigation) then over moorland up to Cribarth and back down to the Dan-yr-Ogof campsite for a triumphant return. After such a successful weekend surely Roger will be organising another.

The next event with a backpacking theme is the return of the COG night walk. The plan is to leave Crickhowell on the evening of Friday 15th August, go up Pen Cerrig Calch, head over to Pen Allt Mawr, then (if the weather's good) bivvy up on the

....if you spend a night on the summit you'll wake up as either a poet or a madman (NB this could affect your earning potential).

ridge. If the weather's not so good we'll bivvy further down. Next day the plan is to head up to Crug Mawr then return to the café at Crickhowell, via Llanbedr. There can be no better way to spend your Friday night – the russet moon, the stars, the quiet hills and a special bonhomie.... If you'd like to come but don't have a bivvy bag, don't worry – I now have a tarp which is a good shelter. All you'll need is a sleeping bag and sleeping mat.

Looking further towards the weekend of 3rd to 5th October, there's a backpacking trip to yet another iconic hill – Cadair Idris. Probably we'll camp at the campsite near Tal-y-Llyn, call into Dolgellau at some time (another café stop) and camp at one of the lakes halfway up the mountain. If the weather's really good we might even sleep at the top - and this is one of those hills where legend has it that if you spend a night on the summit you'll wake up as either a poet or a madman (NB this could affect your earning potential).

And as if all that isn't enough, Chris L is masterminding a series of determinedly long walks for COG (I'm looking forward to his Abercynon walk on 9th August). Things are looking up for COG, and hopefully it can evolve, like an early life form, out of the sloth wherein it currently flounders.

Elenydd Trust News

Some of the proceeds from this year's Three Peaks Trial are to be donated to the Trust. Below is the latest news from the Trust on their efforts to keep the hostels going.

Our second Annual General Meeting is now behind us. The number of members attending at Tregaron's Memorial Hall on 19 April exceeded all expectation

Steve Griffith noted the Trust's achievements over the past year with the substantial increase in bednights at Ty'n Cornel indicating a promising future for both hostels. Colin Francis, our retiring treasurer whilst stressing there are likely to be many calls for substantial expenditure, particularly in the case of Dolgoch in the next two or three years, he was able to show that the Trust is on a sound financial footing.

Dolgoch Launch

Following the AGM and its necessary but not always lighthearted formalities, we had a joyous opening of Dolgoch. The weather was thankfully dry but a trifle cold, giving ample excuse to make full use of the old fireplace, though the warmth generated by those attending made it hardly necessary. Huw Jones, born and brought up in Dolgoch and author of Bugail Olaf y Cwm (The last shepherd of the valley) was there as was our supporter, County Councillor and Tregaron Postmistress Catherine Hughes. She translated for the uninitiated amongst us some of the exploits recounted in Huw's book with Huw making the occasional comment, bringing the past vividly to life. He then cut the cake with its impressive picture in icing of Dolgoch - almost vandalism to destroy it.



Ty'n Cornel

Pearl has secured further funding for specified work at the hostel. This time £1987 from the Communities First Trust Fund to pay for woodworm treatment, insulation of the loft and removal of a heating vent in the roof. Rendering and damp proofing of the gable end and chimney repairs have been completed.

Dolgoch

The surface of the track to the hostel has never been good and the Trustees are well aware that it has now become a matter requiring urgent attention. A Grant has been applied for, to carry out refurbishment work at the hostel, includes a sum of £15,000 allocated to track improvement. Our own Corgi qualified volunteer, Ted Evans, has given considerable time to replacing the gas lighting on the ground floor and fitting new pipe-work for the gas rings. And what a difference it has made - the unique Dolgoch atmosphere has been preserved but one can now see to read in the evenings! By the time you read this there should be a hot water supply to the kitchen sinks. We have a gas oven and a small fridge is on its way. The hostel is looking decidedly chirpy as the numerous siskins, tits and chaffinches and the occasional greater spotted woodpecker flocking to the bird feeders outside the common room window (who needs television!) would undoubtedly agree.

Bookings

Those who have not visited the hostels for some time will be sure be pleasantly surprised by the changes that are taking place. That run down look which had crept in over latter years has given way to what we hope you will agree is a welcoming sparkle and freshness. Come and see for yourselves. Both hostels can be booked through the YHA Contact Centre on 0870 770 8868 (please note the new number) or online at www.yha.org.uk.

Volunteer wardens

The wardens' training weekend, organised by the Trust last February, has borne fruit with four of those taking part already fulfilling warden's duties at the Trust's hostels. This would not have been possible without Russ Johnson's meticulous work in dealing with the Criminal Records Board (CRB) checks that all prospective wardens and persons accompanying them need. Anyone interested in becoming a warden - and we do need more wardens - should contact a Trust officer.

COG Letters

RAIL RAMBLES

22 July 2008

Sir,

Fuel prices are on the up and the planet's going down the tube.

As an outdoor group shouldn't we have some sort of environmental agenda? More specifically, shouldn't we be using the train/bus more for walks? I've used trains and buses for walks for myself and for Group walks and I don't think we do it enough. After some thought, I've come up with the following pros and cons of using public transport:-

Pros:-

- Better for the environment (even taking into account car-sharing).
- We would be "taking a lead" as an outdoor group.
- Cardiff has an excellent and expanding rail network: the Valleys, Vale of Glamorgan and Wye Valley (Chepstow) are all within easy reach.
- It might end up being cheaper.
- It gives greater versatility by allowing for linear, as well as circular, walks.
- You don't have to worry about whether your car will be there at the end of the walk.
- You can drink as much beer as you like after a walk.
- If the Ramblers can do it (just google "Rail Rambles") then so should we.

Cons:-

- Rail and bus services are poor on Sundays.
- Despite the good network some areas (eg. Central or Western Beacons) would be out of reach.
- Depending on the destination, some people may lose time in getting into a central station before heading back out.
- Would probably be more of a headache for the Weekend Programme Secretary.

Should the Group increase its public transport walks to, say, 50% of all walks, leaving the remaining 50% for areas that are inaccessible by public transport?

This would also, however, mean more walks on a Saturday. I don't think this is a problem though. Presumably, walks have been on Sundays in the past to allow people to do their shopping and chores on a Saturday. Now, with the exception of reduced public transport, Sunday is pretty much like any other day.

Could this be something for the AGM?

Steve B

LLANISHEN RESERVOIR NEWS

As featured in previous newsletters, COG unanimously supported a motion urging WPD and their Chief Executive, Robert Symons, to "... drop they're misguided development campaign forthwith and ensure that the reservoirs are protected for future generations to enjoy." As a consequence a letter has been sent to both WPD and PPL asking them to reconsider this unnecessary piece of urban vandalism. To date, no reply has been received (no surprise there!).



Latest from the Reservoir Action Group Campaign: PUBLIC INQUIRY INTO THE FOURTH APPLICATION COMPLETED.

The Public Inquiry into Western Power's Fourth Planning Application was held in June and attended by many members of the Reservoir Action Group. The decision by the Inspector, Mr. Richard Poppleton DipTP DMS MRTPI JP is expected in a couple of months.

NEW POSSIBILITY OF ALL THE RESERVOIR HOUSING TRAFFIC USING LISVANE ROAD

Shortly before the start of the public inquiry, Western Power submitted some alternative scenarios for traffic flow in to and out of their proposed housing development on Llanishen reservoir. Surprisingly, these late and substantial changes to WPD's planning application were allowed to be submitted to the inquiry by the planning inspector, even though they were not part of the original planning application. If all the traffic were to enter and exit the site via Lisvane Road, it is estimated that this would result in an extra 1600 daily traffic movements on Lisvane Road and an increase in traffic of approximately 23%. WPD have proposed some 'traffic calming' measures on Lisvane Road to accommodate this extra traffic

CARDIFF COUNCIL WINS LEGAL BID OVER SAILING CENTRE

Cardiff Council has won a court case which prevents Western Power from terminating the Council's tenancy of the Sailing Centre at Llanishen Reservoir. This is great news, as it was feared that if Western Power won the court case they would immediately drain the reservoir. The Council are now able to negotiate a new lease for the site, meaning the sailing centre, one of the best in Wales, can continue.



2008 REVIEW
by Chris L.

This year's event took place in the worst weather conditions for 20 years. Despite the poor forecast an incredible 546 walkers turned up making this a record year. There were about 100 entrants who paid and didn't turn up making the total paying entry nearly 650! The efforts of the event sub committee certainly paid dividends.

The event cannot succeed without the huge efforts of COG members. So special thanks to the sub committee - Andy Prankard (Volunteer Organiser), Enid L. (Publicity), Julian L. (Treasurer, Risk Assessments, Communications) and Martyn Rogers. Although Martyn is not officially on the sub committee, he had to deal with the this year's massive deluge of pre-entries. Also a big thankyou to the COG volunteers who helped raise approximately £1200 to be distributed between the Elenydd Hostels, Llandeusan YH and COG. The volunteers were in alphabetical order:

Bob G.; Bob N.; Brian D.; Catherine H.; Ceinwen & Steve; Dave & Claire; Dean F.; Gary B.; Jane O.; Jane P.; Katherine Kevin H.; Lawrence T.; Lyndon M.; Martyn R.; Rhona C.; Roger & Rachel G.; Sarah L.; Sarah L.; Sian D.; Steve B.; Sue C.; Tony R.; Viv B. Andy P. is standing down from the event sub committee so many thanks to him for all his efforts over the last few years.



Photo from the Pen Cerrig Calch checkpoint by Roger G. Roger's also got some film of the gale effects he and Steve B sat through on their mountain top checkpoint. The footage will be played at the briefing for 3PT 2009.

This years poor weather conditions were a good test of our procedures. During the event approximately a third of walkers dropped out due to tiredness or injury and many things were highlighted, like the number of walkers who go home without informing us that they've dropped out. This means a lot of time is spent trying to phone their mobiles or next of kin trying to track them down. Ultimately if we fail to find them we have to call the police out. Fortunately everyone got accounted for.

Also the kitchen were at full stretch so more volunteers there will be needed in future events. These and a number of other issues were discussed at the event debrief in June which had a good turnout of ten COG members. Most of the ten have now joined the sub committee to plan Three Peaks Trial 2009 which is on Saturday 28th March which is a big boost to us sub committee old-timers! This year an extra route was added, the Bronze Route, and this also proved a hit with 43 entrants all completing the route

A very important date!
South Wales 3 Peaks Trial – Saturday 28 March 2009.

If you are a 3 Peaks virgin you may not have realised that this event, which attracts around 600 walkers and runners each year from all over the UK, is run almost entirely by COG volunteers. The South Wales 3 Peaks Trial is by far the biggest date in the COG calendar. It raises money for our own funds and for other organisations whose aims we support such as the Elenydd Wilderness Trust, the YHA and the National Trust for its work in maintaining footpaths in the area.

Saturday 28 March 2009 may seem a long way off right now, but please keep this date free, if you can, so that we can have as many members as possible helping out on the day of next year's Trial. The more Coggers there are, the more enjoyable the experience will be for all. New helpers are especially welcome; there will be a wide range of tasks to be done so it should be possible to find something you will feel comfortable with and enjoy doing. Even if you are only able to help out for a few hours, this will be greatly appreciated. Lots more information on this in due course but, for now, please try to keep free Saturday 28 March 2009!

Viv B. will be the Volunteer Coordinator for next year's event so let Viv know if you are able to help out.

Visit to Penderyn Whisky Distillery—Sunday 1st November

After a gap of over 100 years malt whisky making returned to Wales in 2000. This visit will be an opportunity for COG members to see if the wait was worth it!

Like the other Celtic nations, Wales has a long history of spirit distillation. It started life as far back as the 4th century, with a man known as Reaultt Hir distilling on Bardsey Island off the North Wales coast. The ingredients of this early spirit, known universally as "aqua-vitae" or "gwirod" in the Welsh language, was a mix of barley, yeast and honey distilled to make a basic raw spirit. In more recent times, there was a small commercial distillery at Dale in Pembrokeshire, opened in 1705. This distillery was owned by Evan Williams's family, who later emigrated from Wales to the USA and helped found the Kentucky Whiskey Industry. His name is still attached to a number of high quality bourbons to this day. Even the famed Jack Daniels is rumoured to be from Welsh stock.

In the 19th century, a whisky distillery operated at Frongoch near Bala in North Wales, under the chairmanship of a Mr Robert Willis. In the late 1800s, the "chapel building mania" in Wales with its associated temperance movement – combined with the unfortunate death of Mr Willis under the wheels of a horse and cart – conspired to put an end to legal distillation in Wales for more than 100 years.

On 14th September 2000, history was made when the first distillation was carried out at The Welsh Whisky Company's Penderyn Distillery, in the picturesque Brecon Beacons National Park.

Penderyn Distillery is the only distillery in Wales and one of the smallest distilleries in the world. One of the few remaining independent distilleries, Penderyn takes its name from the old Welsh village in which it is located and nestles in the foothills of the ancient Brecon Beacons mountain range. Here just one cask per day of the finest malted barley spirit is produced, which, when matured, is recognised worldwide as one of the finest malt whiskies. The crucial ingredients: the still, the wood and the water. When the bottles come off the bottling line, they are hand polished before being despatched around the world.



Penderyn Distillery—hopefully the weather will be better when COG visit!

Countryside News

National Park ensures 11 quarries stay closed

Eleven old and dormant quarries located in Brecon Beacons National Park have had their planning permissions revoked - so there is no longer a threat that they could be reopened to create further scars on the Park's landscape.

National Park begins crackdown on illegal off-roaders

Dramatic scenes unfolded over the May bank holiday weekend, when police helicopters were called in to help catch illegal off-roaders in the Brecon Beacons National Park.

After liaising closely with the local community National Park Authority wardens teamed up with Dyfed Powys Police to organise a joint operation to apprehend 4x4s and bikes off-roading through protected countryside in the National Park.

During the seven hour operation 'spotters' positioned at key observation points tipped off the National Park Wardens and Police the whereabouts of the offenders and they were duly stopped.

The Police cautioned the drivers of five motorcycles and six 4x4s and called in air support when one of the 4x4s attempted to evade the police by driving around the open moorland. The driver finally gave himself up when he realised that two police helicopters had his every move covered.

The wardens receive more complaints about illegal off-roading Than anything else. If you would like to report an incident involving illegal off-roading please contact Dyfed Powys Police on 0845 330 2000 with as much information as possible.

Outdoor volunteering needs to get its act together!

Whether it's organising a walking for health initiative, clearing rhododendron in ancient woodlands, undertaking a beach clean up or monitoring wildlife in hay meadows, volunteering in the natural outdoors needs a better image and more people taking part. That's the call from research undertaken by the Countryside Recreation Network the body that involves all the UK and Ireland major countryside and recreation agencies.

Record number of turtles stranded along UK shores

The public are being asked to look out for stranded turtles along the UK's coastline, after a record number of turtles have been found this year.

"If you find a dead or alive turtle, please report it immediately to Marine Environmental Monitoring on 01348 875000."

Of the 29 stranded turtles stranded this year in the UK and Ireland, 21 were found dead and six alive, however some of these later died. Two loggerhead survivors have been recovering in Newquay, Cornwall, and will soon be flown to Gran Canaria to be released.

A Colour Version of 'The View' is Available from the COG website
www.cardiffoutdoorgroup.org.uk

DO you have any **Photos** From Weekends etc, **Articles, Letters, Reviews of Trips,** Etc. that could be used in future '**VIEWS**'? If the answer is '**YES**' please Email them to ch-lewis@cardiff32.freemove.co.uk

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