



The Poly Rambler

Members' Newsletter of the Polytechnic Rambling Club
www.polyramblers.org.uk

Contents

Page

- 1 Chairman's Message**
Mike Coyle
- 2-3 Autumn Weekend in Berwick-on-Tweed**
Hilary Abbey
- 3 Lyme disease**
Solvig Starborg
- 4 Sylvia Veal**
Mary Stevens
- 4 2016 August Bank Holiday W/E**
Gillian Swan
- 5-7 2015 August Bank Holiday W/E in Bangor**
Gillian Swan
- 8 Backstage tour of the National Theatre**
Solvig Starborg

Chairman's message

We were barely into the New Year when we received the sad news that Gerald Kremenstein had died. Gerald was an active club member over a number of years, serving on the committee and was one of our Vice Presidents. He had not been in the best of health for some time, and was living in a nursing home. He was visited by Christine a few days before his passing and found to be in good spirits. We will remember him for his lively participation in Club events, especially after a drink or two! A fuller appreciation of Gerald will appear in the next newsletter.

On 5 March we hold our AGM. We do hope that as many of you as possible will attend. This is your opportunity to vote on the composition of the committee and to give us your views on how you would like your club to be run. There will be drinks and snacks and time to chat after the meeting.

I mentioned at the Christmas lunch that overall, attendance last year on walks was up compared with 2014. However, it would appear that this is because a small number of us are walking more frequently and that the majority of members are attending less. This is a natural result of an ageing membership. We do need to think seriously about how we can recruit some new members, if the Club is going to continue at its current level of activity. Apart from walkers, we would benefit from more members who are willing to organise events. Most new members are recruited by word of mouth, so do continue to mention us to family, friends and colleagues. The committee is considering doing a small amount of advertising by placing flyers in public places such as libraries. If you have any thoughts about this or any other suggestions, we would be pleased to hear from you.

My very best wishes for 2016. I hope to see you on a walk soon. **Mike Coyle**



Gerald Kremenstein

Material for this edition collated by the committee.
Production by Kim Chowns

The Polytechnic Rambling Club

(in association with the
University of Westminster)

Founded 1885

Affiliated to the Ramblers'
Association (Inner London Area)

Affiliated to HF Holidays

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Vice Presidents

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Rosemary MacLoughlin
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Hilary Abbey
Pam Beach
Kim Chowns
Dominique Le Marchand
Solvig Starborg
Stuart Swan
Geoffrey Waters

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Club's Facebook page:

<http://tinyurl.com/qclyyfq>

Autumn Weekend in Berwick-on-Tweed

Berwick-on-Tweed is England's most northerly town. It was once Scotland's wealthiest royal burgh and its greatest seaport. Memories of its previous royal connections are still apparent in the medieval walls and other architecture. We were spoilt for choice in the abundance of pubs & teashops and a lively market.

We started our weekend with a walk around the town's ramparts followed by a meal in the slightly less salubrious Leaping Salmons Wetherspoon Pub.

Our first walk was a visit to Holy Island. I mentioned to Danny that I had remembered my travel pills. He reminded me that we were travelling by bus via a causeway rather than by boat!

The longer walk group did a circular tour around the island, taking in views of the castle and Priory. Some of the group joined Gillian and Stuart for a further walk along the headland to Berwick, by getting off the bus early. I realised that I had overestimated my level of fitness, as I hobbled into the town well behind the rest of the group. However, the beach and scenery were really beautiful and well worth all the extra effort!

On Sunday we visited Bamburgh, the ancient capital of the Kingdom of Northumbria. The magnificent castle overlooks the Farne Islands where Grace Darling rescued survivors of a ship-wrecked paddle steamer. The village has a museum to commemorate the event and her grave is in the nearby churchyard.



Continued on next page

Berwick continued

After a circular walk heading along the beach to attractive Budle Bay, finishing up via the seaside dunes, some of the group visited Bamburgh castle. The remainder headed for the village to visit the museum and teashops. Bamburgh Castle was well worth the effort, but proved to be more in keeping with a day's visit rather than an hour!

Gini and I were determined to also visit the Grace Darling museum, gaining entrance at closing time by sneaking in as other people were being ushered out! For our last night Danny booked a meal for all of us at a really nice restaurant in the town centre. Good food and time to reminisce on a great weekend.

On Monday we went on a walk beside the river Tweed before the journey back to London. The weather changed from sunshine to rain and the ground became very boggy with a number of rivulets appearing. However, Danny undaunted, navigated us through the hazards and we arrived back in time for our journey home. A great weekend and a really interesting area, well worth visiting. Many thanks to Danny for all his hard work

Hilary Abbey

Lyme Disease

Recently, there have been several newspaper articles about Lyme disease. According to the charity Lyme Disease Action cases of the illness have been rising steadily since the first case was reported in the UK in 1977. Lyme disease is caused by a bacterium called *Borrelia burgdorferi* which is carried and transmitted through tick bites. Climate change with warmer, wetter winters may enhance the survival rate of the ticks. Having been treated twice (in Sweden), I thought I would write something to create awareness of its existence and increase.

The ticks are very small and carried by animals like deer, hedgehogs and foxes. Many people don't even notice that they have been bitten, as the ticks are very small and the bites don't hurt or itch. Usually it takes a couple of weeks before symptoms start, but it can also take longer time. Early symptoms can include feeling unwell, flu-like symptoms, rash, headache, stiff neck, muscle pain, increased sensitivity to temperature, sound and light. In some cases a characteristic, expanding rash ("erythema migrans") appears on the skin. Symptom patterns can vary from person to person.

Diagnosis is through blood test, but if erythema migrans symptoms occur you can start treatment straight away without waiting for result of the blood test. Treatment is with antibiotics and is most effective if started as early as possible. However, the advice is to try and prevent infection if possible. If you are going to an area that is high in tick-friendly habitat like moist and shady bracken or bushes and long grass it is helpful to wear trousers rather than shorts and to bring along a tee-shirt with long sleeves. Another good precaution is checking for ticks when you get home. Instructions on how to remove ticks is best obtained at www.LymeDiseaseAction.org.uk.

Finally, ticks like the countryside, just like we do. Although London has a proliferation of concrete, it also has plenty of tick friendly habitats. Richmond and Bushy Park have been named as hotspots and have issued guidance for avoiding and removing ticks!

Solvig Starborg

Sylvia Veal: 1936-2015

Sylvia had been a member of the Poly Ramblers since the 1960s and regularly attended the weekly Friday night club meetings in the panelled reading room of the Polytechnic in Regent Street. She enjoyed many of the rambles, Youth Hostel weekends, outings and Easter holidays with the Club. She became a Committee member and at one time was the Press and Publicity Secretary. She is particularly remembered for her assistance with the raffles at the annual dinners when everyone won a prize!

Sylvia had an unassuming and modest personality and endeared herself to everyone she met. She was kind and thoughtful for their welfare and all those who knew her will have good memories of her. Sylvia had studied for Library Association qualifications and worked all her life as a librarian for practices in the architecture and construction industry. For many years she was membership secretary of the Construction Industry Information Group.

In later years she was treated for a back problem and a heart condition and had a pacemaker fitted. She injured her ankle in an accident and had difficulties, but her friend, John Veal, assisted her. He too joined the Poly Ramblers and for a while was Treasurer. They married in 2003. In December 2011 both moved from their home into a care home. Sadly John died and Sylvia remained in the home, but after some hospitalisation she moved to another home and after another short spell in hospital she died in November 2015. She will be sorely missed.



Mary Stevens

AUGUST BANK HOLIDAY WEEKEND IN THE YORKSHIRE DALES: FRIDAY 26 – TUESDAY 30 AUGUST

We will be based in the market town of Skipton on the edge of the Yorkshire Dales National Park. Bed and breakfast accommodation.

Walks to include one or more of the Yorkshire Three Peaks – Whernside, Pen-y-ghent and Ingleborough. Opportunities to visit the famous village of Malham, stroll along the Leeds and Liverpool canal, visit Skipton Castle and the Embsay and Bolton Abbey Steam Railway. Travel by train from London to Skipton (3½ hours changing at Leeds).

If you would like to come please contact Gillian by email Gillian.swan@dsl.pipex.com or 01494721098/ 07719452023. Please specify if you are willing to share a room. Single rooms may be limited so early enquiries recommended.

Gillian Swan

August weekend trip to Bangor

Tradition dictates that on the last Friday in August a large group of Poly Ramblers convene at a London terminus with luggage in tow. This year the station was Euston and there were over 30 of us. After a tolerably comfortable journey to Chester we found ourselves on a crowded platform waiting for an ancient commuter train that was barely able to fit us all in. We trundled along the North Wales coast, with families disembarking at the various resorts en route. Eventually we reached the city of Bangor and made our way slowly uphill to the modern campus. Soon we were settling into our flats (ensuite single rooms with a shared kitchen). Shame that no crockery or cutlery was provided, but we came prepared.

An orientation walk down through the town and down to the pier followed. Bangor is reputed to have the longest high street in Wales, but I wouldn't make a special trip to see it – it's distinctly uninspiring. The pier by contrast is lovely, if rather windswept, with views of Anglesey across the Menai Strait. Bangor is a strange town (strictly a city due to its small cathedral). It seemed to be completely dominated by the University and student life. Several people commented on the lack of decent places to eat. For our first night I had booked us in at the restaurant attached to the University management centre, which turned out to be very civilised.



The big challenge of the weekend was an ascent of Snowdon. Twenty one members, with a range of walking abilities, had signed up and we had spent some time deciding which route to take in which direction and whether to split the group. In the end Dominique led one group up the Rhyd Ddu path and down the Miners Track and Stuart led the rest in reverse.

Stuart's group were dropped off just in time to get soaked in a heavy downpour, while Dominique's group were stuck in traffic. Although our group had a head start we all reached the summit at about the same time and huddled for shelter behind the café eating our sandwiches at speed. In spite of the inclement weather and complete lack of view the route to the summit was ridiculously busy. Thankfully the clouds cleared as we started our descent and the crowds thinned out, at least on the Rhyd Ddu path. We all made it back safely although some members of the group found it quite a challenge and the back markers did sterling work in assisting those who were struggling. Stuart's group even managed a pub stop before the bus picked us up.

Bangor continued

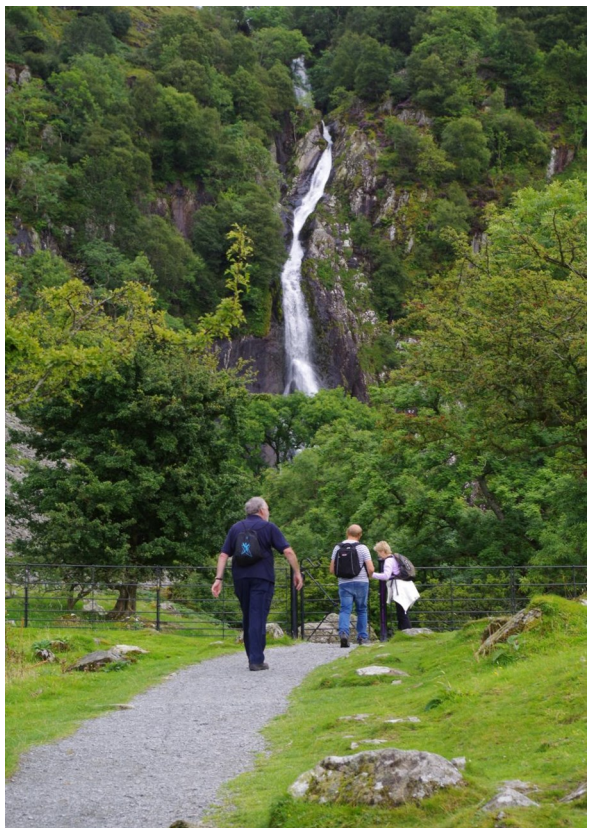
Sunday was meant to be an easy day to recover from Snowdon. A nice walk along the coastal path from Beaumaris – what could possibly go wrong? Things got off to an inauspicious start when we lost half the group on the brisk walk from the campus to the bus stop. Luckily a few phone calls, directions from helpful locals and a sprint meant that everyone just caught the bus. After time to admire the pretty town and buy lunch we set off, but soon ran into problems. We had researched Snowdon thoroughly but had not thought to research the Anglesey coast path. Had we done so we might have discovered that parts of the path were on the beach and were inaccessible at certain high tides.

After a mile of boulder hopping we were forced to turn back. Luckily a kind lady called Sheila took pity on us and allowed us to walk through her garden to reach a private road, thus avoiding the need to completely retrace our steps. We hastened up the road to reach the public highway before any of the residents objected to our presence. Stuart directed us back to the coast and, after a slightly hairy scramble along a coastal defence wall to avoid the high tide, we eventually found a beach for lunch and were joined by a passing seal.

Soon we reached the ruins of Penmon Priory and the 16th century dovecote and then Penmon Point and the lighthouse. We stopped for tea at the café before heading inland back to Beaumaris where some of the group stayed for an evening meal.

Monday's walk in the hills to the east of Bangor was the best of the three. After a short bus ride we started at on the Wales coast path at sea level and then after a couple of miles we climbed into the hills and after a couple of steepish climbs we were tramping across the swathes of heather with splendid views of the Menai Strait in the sunshine. Siew Tin managed to drop her phone in the heather, but by some miracle she found it again.

We even got a long distance view of the Abergwyngregyn waterfall, which Danny's group were visiting.





(photo of Danny's group)

We descended from the moor with a view of a huge slate mine, into the village of Rachub with a bus stop and a pub next door. It was good to find a pub that was open and doing good local business, as so many had closed down.

For our final meal we gathered at the Anglesey Arms just over the Menai Bridge who did us proud with good food and efficient service.

Gillian Swan

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Backstage tour of the National Theatre

On 1 November last year nineteen of us gathered at the National Theatre for a backstage tour. We were duly greeted by a guide who took us first up to the Olivier Theatre, which was showing Shakespeare's, "As You Like It". The stage was set up as a modern Forest of Arden, a corporate world with desks and chairs spiralling skywards to form tangled shapes. At first I had a slight attack of anxiety, I think from having known so many NHS offices! Then came the fascination with the clever arrangement of how all the furniture then could come down into their right places and form an office.

The guide gave an interesting talk about how the set functioned and how many technicians were involved in working the transformation of the furniture from hanging freely to forming an office. It was a good way of showing the National Theatre as the pioneering 'theatre working factory', as intended by its architect Denys Lasdun. Every aspect of theatre production was brought under one roof. More than 125 crafts people and technicians work here. The scenic construction and painting departments start work 20 weeks before the first performance. A 3D miniature model of the stage is produced as a reference. At any time several stage sets are in production. The plays are swapped, scenery taken down and put up. Sets must be functional for regular change over and easy storage. Props – rats, cakes etc. are made by prop makers, but also bought in antique and junkshops.

Previews are the first performances of a production. The creative team sees how the audience respond and check that technical elements work. Then follows a week of constant shaping and reshaping.

We continued to The Lyttelton Theatre which was being set up for 'Waste', Harley Granville Barker's play about a political idealist brought low by scandal. Some giant panels were due to be fitted, a forlorn looking beige sofa looked slightly lost outside.

We walked along corridors where large numbers of props were being stored on shelves and in cupboards and through large workshops where sets were made and painted. I wish I had had a camera to capture Rosie's face when she set eyes on the Wonderland teapot which was about the same height as her! What a smile!

The Dorfman Theatre (formerly the Cottesloe) has been redeveloped with a greater capacity. It is the most flexible of the NT auditoriums. It is a rectangular room which can hold up to 450 people. In the pit the new flexible seating system can be raised and lowered in minutes or the seats can be folded away completely to become a flat floor. The Dorfman was showing 'Husbands and sons' by DH Lawrence. The amount of coal stored outside made you realize how Lizzy Holroyd got so smothered in dirt!

Following our backstage tour we walked along the Thames to The Founders Arms for lunch. There we had a very nice view of the river.

Solvig Starborg