



The Poly Rambler

Members' Newsletter of the Polytechnic Rambling Club

www.polyramblers.org.uk

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Chair's message

We have had a really successful summer programme of walks and trips away, quite an achievement in another challenging year. Our total membership of 119 this year compares well with previous years.

We have moved away from social events on Zoom increasing our fitness and rediscovering our love of the outdoors with good attendance on our walks and trips away.

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

Chair's message continued

We now have Jennifer and Susan as our programme co-ordinators keeping us all on track by ensuring that the programme is completed on time, with a balance between the length of walks. We have continued to ensure a safety briefing at the beginning of each walk and although unexpected difficulties may still arise, I am impressed by leader's risk analysis of their walks.

Our walking weekends away have proved to be particularly popular. Our August Bank Holiday trip to Chester was attended by 41 Poly Ramblers staying at the university student accommodation. We had a varied weekend of hikes and strollers' walks with plenty of sunshine unlike rather dull weather in London!

Our Bank Holiday Monday hikers walk included a very tricky crossing over a busy road this was highlighted in a briefing beforehand, however it still ended up with hikers rushing across the road at the blind bend rather than walking further along. A solution may be that we ensure that difficult road crossings are completed in small groups in future.

This year has been especially difficult for members of our club who have suffered from debilitating illnesses with long term consequences. Club members have been proactive in offering support and ensuring regular communication with them. We were greatly saddened to hear of the death of Valeria Mosini who had been a member of our club for many years and a keen participator on many of our walks and trips away.

I am really pleased that we have reinstated our tradition of an Xmas meal at the Freemasons Arms this year giving us all the opportunity to reconnect with Poly Ramblers who have not been able to attend walks this year. Although we are still in very uncertain times having positive events to look-forward to makes so much difference!

Hilary

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

OFFICERS AND COMMITTEE

Honorary members

Christine Bignold
Peter Bonfield
Shirley Hafey
Rosemary MacLoughlin

GENERAL COMMITTEE

CLUB OFFICERS

Chair
Hilary Abbey
General Secretary
Gillian Swan
Treasurer
Daniel Duffy

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Pam Beach
Kim Chowns
Mike Coyle
Susan James
Jennifer MacKenzie
Jackie McCartan
Geoffrey Waters

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Club's Facebook page:

<http://tinyurl.com/qclyyfq>

* Articles for inclusion in the
newsletter are welcome from all
members. They should be walk
related, but do not necessarily
have to be about a club walk,
e.g. walking holiday or past
memories of events and walks.

News about the Walks programme

We have now resumed our regular walk programmes. The next programme covers October 2021 to January 2022. It is no longer necessary to book, you can just turn up on the day and we have no limit on numbers.

We are encouraging good social distancing and use of face masks on public transport and in indoor spaces, so rest assured that we are doing our best to keep everybody safe.

We are always looking out for new leaders. If you think you could help, please contact the programme co-ordinators Jennifer or Susan. We are happy to advise and buddy you up with an experienced leader if you need assistance.

Susan

Quiz news

On Saturday December 4th at 8pm our popular quiz on Zoom is back! Despite the various laments on the topics and debate on the accuracy of an answer, such as Rochester having been demoted as a city, great fun is always had by all.

It is getting quite competitive! Gillian has had to be quite strict when members ask to be assigned half a point for an incomplete answer.

Since May 2020 Gillian and I have run 16 quizzes. The Rambling Roses and Dolly's Polys lead with five victories each (one joint). The Quintins have three victories to their name, but they always remind us that their team is less numerous than the others, the Wanderers two, and Alas Alsace! and the Munros one victory each. If you would like to participate, whether you have joined before or not, please let Gillian know.

Susan

Christmas meal returns for 2021

The Club's Christmas Lunch will be held on Sunday December 12th at our usual venue, the Freemason's Arms, in Covent Garden. The menu and booking details will be sent out shortly under separate cover.

Danny

Chester August Bank Holiday Trip - strollers

Wirral Way, Saturday:

Sandy led this walk because Danny was injured leaping off an omnibus!

We joined the Wirral Way at the village of Neston. We set off along the tree-lined embankments and cuttings of a disused railway line and walked for a couple of miles meeting many dogs and cyclists and then headed for the village of Parkgate on the Dee estuary.

Parkgate was once a port but silt in the Dee estuary made it unusable, as with Chester itself. During its time as a port there was much traffic with Ireland, and Handel landed there when returning from Dublin to see his agent Louis Walsh! The silting formed extensive salt marshes. We now followed the estuary, first along a road and then on a narrow path, which was surrounded by thick vegetation and some boggy stretches which had to be carefully negotiated, but weren't as some of the party got wet feet and in one case lost their shoes, which fortunately they managed to retrieve. However we Strollers are used to tough conditions and we ploughed on until we reached open country and the Harp pub at Little Neston.

Here we met Danny, putting on his old sea dog act to get some free pints from the punters, in the pub garden where some had lunch while others sat on a grassy bank looking out over the salt marshes towards Wales and the power station at Connah's Quay. We were told that occasionally, with a combination of wind and high tide, the water comes up to the pub. This brings lots of sightseers to the pub, and lots of rats from the salt marshes.

After lunch we left the Dee estuary and set off inland. We passed through the village of Ness, once the home of Emma Hamilton and our route led us through fields and lanes and back on the Wirral Way, in time to catch the hourly bus.

Sandy

Delamere Forest, Sunday:

Naturally we started by sampling the local ice cream, then for some serious strolling. The weather was perfect partly sunny with a breeze. We passed under Go Ape. Alas there were no takers! Past the lake with a circular walk ending up at the visitor centre for lunch. By all accounts the ice cream here was up to scratch. We had an hour to kill and 8 of us decided to walk it off with a quick ascent to the top of Delamere Old Pale at 176 metres and with a great 360 degree view of Cheshire, Liverpool and Wales. Then back to the station in time for more ice cream and the train home. **Stephen**



Delamere Old Pale

Chester August Bank Holiday Trip - strollers (continued)

Chester outskirts Monday:

We started at the stone cross in the centre of Chester, which marked the centre of the Roman fortress. We then proceeded down Bridge St and Lower Bridge St till we came to the river Dee and walked on to a part of the city walls. We came to Grosvenor Road and crossed the river on the Grosvenor Bridge, which on construction was the longest single span stone arch bridge in the world.

Following Eaton Road we entered the Duke's Drive through some very impressive gates. There followed a very pleasant walk through woodland for a few kilometres and then back to the River Dee and the city. We re-entered the city across the Queen's Park suspension bridge, where I released my charges, and hoped they had enjoyed their walk.

Judy

Chester August Bank Holiday Trip - Hikers

Frodsham to Delamere Saturday:

We followed the Sandstone way from Frodsham climbing above the town to a war memorial at the top with views over the Mersey Estuary. The path meandered around outcrops of sandstone and through birch and oak woodland. We followed the waymarks along the edge of the hill pausing to read lettering carved into the rocks written by Edwardian women. The path dropped into Jacobs Ladder, a steep staircase carved into the rock. The trail followed the edge of the woodland on Alvanley Cliff.



We later arrived at Stonebridge Farm for lunch. The food was delicious and very good value. We then entered the Delamere Forest, a remnant of the ancient hunting forest of Mara and Mondrum used for hunting by royalty and later reached a visitors centre where a number of hikers stopped for further refreshments whilst the others caught an early train back to Chester.

Hilary



Chester August Bank Holiday Trip - Hikers (continued)

Mostyn to Prestatyn Sunday



We took the train to Flint in Wales. We were met by two minibuses to take us to the start of our walk just before Mostyn. We followed the Wales Coast Path to Prestatyn. We climbed up through woods and after crossing a few fields descended through a pretty woodland gorge to Ffynnongroyw. At the bottom of the gorge we stopped outside the picturesque stone Garth Mill buildings. Several members played with two very friendly little dogs, one of which relieved itself on the leader's rucksack while a group photo was being taken! Ffynnongroyw was built in the 1800s to house local miners and we could see numerous former chapels, a large parish church and terraced miners' cottages.

After stopping at a pub for drinks we proceeded alongside the saltmarsh to Talacre beach at Point of Ayr, the northernmost point of mainland Wales. We passed various memorials to the Point of Ayr colliery, the last deep coal mine to close in Wales in 1996. The good weather allowed us to picnic on the beach near the dunes. After lunch we walked along the beach with some polys wading in the water. The beach gave way to saltmarsh and the path took us through the Gronant Dunes nature reserve to Barkby beach and the promenade at Prestatyn. Here the group split. At the point where the Offa's Dyke Path meets the coast some turned inland to the station to return to Chester.



Others remained for fish and chips in Prestatyn before returning. **Susan**

Northwich, Lion Salt Works, Great Budworth & Anderton Boat lift Monday:

We caught the train to Northwich and made our way to the Northwich Community Woodlands. The majority of this is a reclaimed derelict area that now boasts a diverse array of natural habitats. We passed through Anderton nature Park and skirted along Newman's Flashes an area of marshland popular with Bird watchers. We reached the Lion Salt Works where most of the hikers went into the museum. The Lion Salt Works is the last remaining open pan salt works, it closed in 1986. The museum contains



an intriguing warren of stove, boiler and pan houses recreating the steamy and dangerous conditions where bare chested men toiled over great vats of the boiling brine. A representative of the museum gave us a fascinating talk on the social and industrial history of the area and demonstrated the Nodding Donkey Brine Pump.



Chester August Bank Holiday Trip - Hikers (continued)

We continued our walk between two meres and across fields of potatoes before reaching our lunch stop at the very pretty village of Great Budworth. We ate our picnic lunch in the church yard and enjoyed some liquid refreshment at the George and Dragon Pub. On leaving the pub we retraced our footsteps though the village to enter some woods and crossing some fields with a view of Budworth Mere.



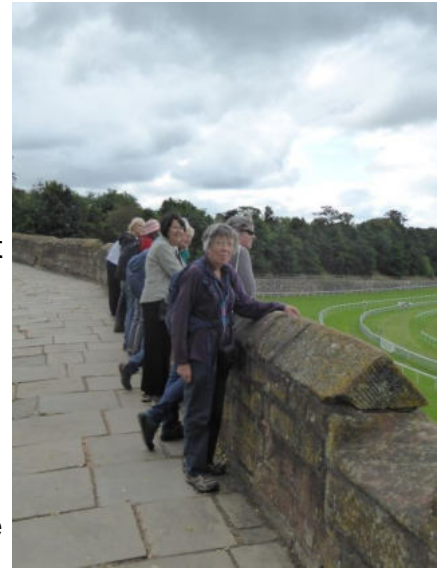
We walked a short way along a road before entering Marbury Country Park where a free music festival was taking place and onto the Trent and Mersey Canal where we continued to the Anderton Boat Lift. Some of the hikers enjoyed ice cream being sold by enterprising boaters. Unfortunately, the Anderton Boat Lift was closed but we did get a view of the lift before continuing our walk back to Northwich along a winding path following the river Weaver though Carey Park to reach Northwich Station.

Hilary

Chester August Bank Holiday Trip

Chester City Wall, Tuesday:

We gathered at the Northgate to walk the almost 2 mile circuit, the most complete town walls in Britain. After the Civil War they were no longer required to be fortified for defence and were developed as a recreational walkway. We walked anti-clockwise and the first section gave us a good view of the racecourse. This is the oldest one in the country, dating back to 1539. It is on the site of the port of Chester which was bustling in Roman times but the River Dee had silted up here by the 1500s and changed its course. We were able to observe many of the various buildings we had seen on Friday from a different perspective. The view of the cathedral was particularly impressive and the famous Eastgate clock celebrating Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee proved popular for photos. One section of the walls near Eastgate collapsed in 2008 and repairs are ongoing. Various panels showed us the timeline of the repairs and how these have been carried out. On our return to Northgate we dispersed, some to collect their luggage and make their way to the station to return to London, others to spend a little more time in this fascinating city steeped in history before heading home.



Susan

Valeria Mosini (? - 2021)

Valeria had been a member of our walking club for several years and participated in many walks, weekends away and social events. She preferred shorter distances and was very good at finding ways to cut walks short so that she could join the group. Our members remember her as such a life affirming person, great fun to be with on a walk and sharing a good meal. We will remember her always looking the height of elegance even when just dressed for a walk in her stylish wellington boots. We will also remember her as a lively conversationalist and we will miss her company on our walks and weekends away.

Gillian Swan

Sarah Wrightson adds...

I only lived 5 minutes away from Valeria's flat and did see her fairly often during the pandemic lockdowns. We would take short walks of an hour or so, on the Parkland walk, Capital Ring or Hampstead Heath, when she felt able. It was only latterly that she admitted that she had been treated for throat cancer and she feared that it had returned. In late April, she decided to clear her flat, and put it on the market. Most of her book collection was donated to Highgate Library. On the 10th May, she flew home to Rome and to Italian treatment.

Pre-pandemic, I had introduced her to our local U3A in North London and she was an enthusiastic attender at the History of Art and Shape of London classes. This lead to us visiting auction house previews of art sales, as free galleries. Her other interests included concerts and current affairs, and she teased me about the policies of the Lib Dems. She was popular and well known to the club, and we will all miss her enquiring mind and companionship.

Article of Clothing!

It was Harriet's walkover. I was kneeling by the stream, waving the ducks away, washing the mud off my arm, when I heard a kind voice behind me. "Are you all right? Can we help?" "No. It's all right" I said. "You know there's a Ladies just over there?" "Yes! I was just getting as much mud off my arm as I can in the stream, so that I don't dirty the facilities when I go over there to clean up my trousers." "Would you like to come to ours and clean up? It's right nearby." "I don't want to dirty your place." "It's ok. It's a building site!" It was too.

They were refurbishing the ground floor. He sprayed my arm with the builder's pressure hose. The builder laughed at him. Then he said, "Wait here a minute". He returned with a choice of jeans or joggers! I was overwhelmed. We were all smiling. I chose the jeans, rolling up the bottoms until they rested on my muddy footwear, putting my own muddy trousers in a plastic bag. They stood on the threshold of their house with their children, mugs of tea in their hands, waving us off as I tried to utter my amazed thanks and promised to bring the jeans back on the walk in October. How unexpectedly kind!

So, when you pack your map, compass, first aid kit, tweezers, insect repellent, waterproofs, sun cream, sun hat, picnic lunch, water, torch, binoculars, smart phone, camera, spare socks etc., think about what would happen if you slipped over backwards into a pool of grey clayey mud and consider packing a spare pair of trousers! Just in case there isn't such a kind family to come to your rescue!

Pam



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