



As he approached his 952nd birthday
Santa realised he was losing some
of his renowned agility.



My second trip to the Ling Hut – perhaps it takes eleven years to forget its limitations, but it only takes a few hours and it all seems completely normal. Running water? Yes - in the stream. A constant flow from a tap? Unheard of, and why would you *not* need to boil it all (once painstakingly collected) before drinking? All it requires is a rigorous and continuous system of water management - and it is *fun* collecting water from the stream in a broken bucket each time you need to flush the loo. Fridge - who needs one of those? Four miles to the shower - what's the problem? And, I am reliably informed, there are always the options of the pools below or above the waterfall!

It was brilliant. The sun shone and, apart from a few atmospheric clouds, there was no other weather to speak of. The drying room was not used. It was light until late - enabling some long days (and one even longer day!) and, despite our fears, there were relatively few midges, and even fewer ticks. Stunning mountains, blue lochs, blue sea, blue sky. AMAZING views. Fantastic walks and some fun scrambles over some very old rock. I believe the climbing was good as well. Thank you to all involved; for planning, company, walks, conversation and meals. It was a great week. We love the Ling Hut! **SB** (*text and photos*)

are you reeling in the years?

I didn't discover mountain walking or Red Rope until I was in my 40's, so by my 50's there was still lots to do. I started jogging - 3k max, two or three times a week, with some 'fast-as-possible' stretches and some hills, making sure I got out of breath. The point was to have cardio-vascular exercise so that I could keep going up mountains without being left behind! 20 years later I am at the back, as ever, but I can get there without holding people up too much. And these days, because I can afford it, I can sleep and eat in the wonderful mountain huts in the Alps/Dolomites etc and not have to carry all that camping gear and food. Nowadays I only run on grass to avoid damage to my knees, though this means you have to look at the ground all the time to avoid tripping over fallen branches or twisting your ankle. I also do a slow 20 sit ups and push ups. Yoga is useful for stretching and relaxation.

I've been very lucky. Keeping fit and healthy isn't always a matter of taking care of yourself - various people in London Red Rope have been struck with a variety of pains in their feet/legs/ankles/back (planta faciitis/achilles tendon etc) which seem to have been visited on them quite arbitrarily and now limits their ability to do long walks. As a result our day walks are often quite short to allow them to keep coming. Even if you can walk longer, the walks are still fun and there is a lot of brain exercise involved in the social interactions (though less than on a Ramblers walk, where you may have to defend your socialist views!)

Osteoporosis warning: Make sure you have a bone scan as you reach 50 - you may have to insist as it's not statutory and it will cost your GP. If you don't it may go undetected until you start getting multiple fractures and crippling pain, like my friend Jean, whose doctor refused her a scan even though the disease ran in her family. If, like her, you do succumb, you will have another battle with the poor old NHS to get treatment and then, like her, you will have to beat it with a lot of grit, determination - and pain killers.

Pam Case

Lines from a Red Rope Granny

Doggerel by a Dog Lover!

Hats off to you hard core, who love cold high places
Wild swimmers and campers, fell runners and racers
Who perch on a precipice or bleak windy tor...
Have you never considered what sofas are for?

I love coast *and* country when summer comes round,
And walking where teasops and pubs can be found.
Hot baths and soft beds at the end of the day
And Poldark on telly, scything the hay.

Having never been fit, even when in my youth,
I'm not 'going for gold' now I'm long in the tooth.
My libido is singing a gentle swan-song
So my arse doesn't need to look good in a thong!

Pilates, karate, gingseng and lime
Won't pull the plug on Old Father Time.
So look on the bright side, we live long enough!
Don't scream to high heaven, don't go off in a huff.

We smug Baby Boomers have all done our bit
At putting our beautiful Earth in the shit
But worry and guilt are not part of my plan
So live, laugh and languish as long as you can!

Helen Alsworth

*Santa and his 'colleague' Dr Helga Stickelgruber seen
celebrating New Year in St. Moritz - a lively pair of oldsters!*



from a peaceful plunge to a hefty hike...

Thankfully mountain huts are one part of the property sector that is blissfully devoid of estate agent involvement. But if one of their (many) clichés could be applied to the new '**Cae Ysgubor**' hut in Beddgelert, the Lancashire Mountaineering Club establishment in which Red Rope has a share, it would be "Location, Location, Location".

It's hard to go wrong from somewhere so ideally situated. Beddgelert is on the Sherpa bus route to Pen Y Pass and beyond. Snowdon and its southern foothills can be done directly from the front door on foot. The rest of the range is just a short car trip away with a plethora of hikes, climbs and scrambles. If the weather rules out going up high there are plenty of river and valley walks or smaller peaks such as Cnicht to fill plenty of days.

For the wild swimmer there are lots of doorstep opportunities for a dip. The shallow Llyn Dinas is warm and clean and ideal for a peaceful plunge with cuckoos and other birds providing musical accompaniment. If you don't like getting your feet wet then these lakes and rivers are also fantastic (and safe) places for canoes.

Such an outstanding setting is suitably equalled by the superb accommodation itself. The hut is essentially a new build and well-fitted throughout. The spacious, comfortable dormitories all have standard bunks complete with reading lights and ample kit storage. The smallest room has four beds and its own en-suite bathroom. The kitchen-diner area is large, well-lit and magnificently equipped with everything necessary to make a meal for a big group along with an enormous table around which to eat it. Comfy chairs finish the space off with a corner to relax in. But given that it hardly ever rains in North Wales, ho ho, who would want to be stuck inside on an evening when you could be relaxing on the large sunny patio? There is barely a beaten track to be off so peace and quiet are guaranteed; leave your Disco Dancing Trousers at home.

While the legend of Prince Llewelyn killing his loyal beloved wolf hound was made up by a local inn-keeper to (successfully) boost the tourist trade Beddgelert is none the less a very pleasant village.

('Bedd' meaning 'grave' and Gelert being the dog's name.) The village is just ten minutes' pleasant walk along a good path from the hut and it's well equipped for hikers' needs, endowed as it is with several pubs, all of which serve real ale and food. The village shop stocks newspapers and other basic groceries and if you get tired of sandwiches and Wacko bars the large Glaslyn Ices & Glandwr Cafe has pizzas, an ice cream bar and a girthsome menu of tasty post-hike treats.

All the village eateries also have wi-fi for checking the weather or letting partners back home know that you've made it safely back to civilisation. See the last bulletin and the club website for details of how to book this particularly well appointed hut!

Simon Skeritt

Simon looking Neptunesque in Llyn Dinas.



Pravin serving up a tasty stir-fry.

The dining area/kitchen.

Relaxing in the 'comfy corner'.



bmc or climb britain?

The British Mountaineering Council announced in late July that it was changing its name to Climb Britain.

Several RR NC members expressed their concern about this and **Barbara Segal** wrote to the BMC's CEO, Dave Turnbull, to say that she felt the new name failed to convey the broad remit of the BMC. She was especially concerned that this has come at a time when the BMC has been making serious efforts to attract walkers:

"I am a member of an affiliated walking and climbing club in which most members do not climb, or go to the huts to which BMC affiliation gives us access. Our affiliation fees are our biggest expense and we periodically have to fend off attempts from some members to disaffiliate, on the grounds that the BMC offers them very little. Your excellent recent attempts to recognise and support walking as a valid activity of members – I believe it is the main outdoor activity of around 60% of them – has made our affiliation much more acceptable." She also expressed surprise that the decision had been taken without apparent consultation of members or affiliated clubs. See www.thebmc.co.uk/bmc-to-change-its-name-to-climb-britain

This is an shortened version of **Dave Turnbull's** reply: 'Many thanks for your email. Please see: www.thebmc.co.uk/climb-britain-a-personal-message-from-bmc-ceo-dave-turnbull it might help. The article by our Hill Walking Officer, Carey Davies, may also be of interest, see: www.thebmc.co.uk/what-climb-britain-means-for-walkers

The basis for choosing the word 'Climb' is that whether hill walking, climbing or mountaineering, BMC members all climb things ...it's a word that unites us. Before we proceeded it was endorsed by our board of directors which includes two very keen hill walkers and by Carey Davies - all of whom saw the connection. 'To climb a hill' is a very well established phrase these days, both amongst walkers and the media. The name also met with the keen approval of our Hill Walking Working Group recently.

I accept Climb Britain needs more explanation to hill walkers than it does to climbers and its clearly extremely important we work hard to get the right message across in our media; I can assure you we're on the case with this.'

Colin Knowles, one of Red Rope's founding members, said, 'As a director of the BMC and a National Council member I'm aware that the constituency of the BMC is changing, and the activities it embraces have widened. Looking at things from the perspective of a young person entering any of those activities, for most 'Mountaineering' is not inclusive, and 'Council' is meaningless.

Our thinking was clear - we needed a re-branding that was inclusive for all our activities. The BMC is highly committed to developing its hill walking aspects and that commitment is embedded in the new brand. So give it time. In two years you won't even notice that it's the new brand.'

Following an accident on the February trip to the Scottish Highlands the National Committee reviewed trip safety. Members from the trip were consulted and two contributed to a discussion at a National Committee meeting. The review resulted in changes to the route card and additional notes on winter safety being added to the Trip Organisation Pack. These notes will be circulated to everyone booking on national trips held during winter and spring. Additionally, winter skills training has been organised for our 2017 February trip. The main concerns raised were the size of groups going out and our responsibility towards novices, concerns which apply equally to all season hill walking. We no longer appoint a safety officer for trips as it is now thought that this responsibility must be shared and self-reliance encouraged. The revised route card has just four spaces for names and includes prompts for discussion at the planning stage on expected pace and levels of skill, experience and confidence. This was felt to be especially important on national trips where people do not always know each other. I am grateful to all who contributed to this positive development which will help to keep us safe by encouraging the development of skills and consequently self-reliance.

Safety on Winter Trips

"The BMC recognises that climbing, hill walking and mountaineering are activities with a danger of personal injury or death. Participants in these activities should be aware of and accept these risks and be responsible for their own actions and involvement."

Winter trips are potentially dangerous. 'Epics' can be created by lack of effective planning and communication. Red Rope encourages individual self-reliance: members look after themselves and each other. There should be a balance of experience in a group to avoid overwhelming anyone with responsibility for novices. Routes planned should be within the capabilities of everyone in the group.

Planning/ Routes

- Evening meals should be eaten reasonably early, leaving plenty of time for rest and planning

- The recommended group size is 3 to 4

- The group should discuss each other's experience, skills and confidence

- Expected pace and frequency of rest stops should be discussed and noted on the route card

- Early starts are essential when daylight hours are short

- Overlong routes should be avoided and 'summit fever' put aside in favour of developing winter skills and safe practice

- Escape routes should be realistic

- Plan to carry spare batteries for phones and torches and/or keep phones close to your body for warmth

Practise winter skills when conditions allow at the start of the trip and include

- Putting on crampons

- Ascending and descending on different angles, walking in a zig-zag, 6m apart

- Ice axe arrest practice

- Using the axe as a pick

- Assessing avalanche risk

On the route

- Before leaving base get together to check group and individual gear

- Before leaving base do a route check together

- Front walkers should keep an eye on others and adapt their pace so they stay in touch with the rest of the group.

- Back markers should not be the slowest walkers

In harsh conditions

- Use of the group shelter will facilitate group communication and considered decision making

- Listen to people unsure about continuing

- Consider turning back or adopting the planned escape route

- If needed call Mountain Rescue

National Trips Programme 2017 Five week long trips have been confirmed for 2017 and each one has bookings so if you are hoping to join one or more of them get your form and post-dated cheques in asap, details in MIS. February: Mill Cottage, Cairngorms. April: Alex Mac, Glencoe May: Glen Brittle, Skye June: Naismith, Elphin October: Count House, Bosigran, Cornwall. **Becky Bates** trips@redrope.co.uk

news from nowhere: a radical bookshop

The establishment always needs to frame debate in terms of 'no alternative' but one glance inside a radical bookshop reveals a wealth of publications detailing alternatives to everything on earth. Our shelves are crammed with books outlining alternative economic systems, visions of alternative futures, accounts of past struggles for change and encouragement for new ways of thinking. Our customers must be among the best informed and passionate in the world, and what is urgently needed now is a pooling of that knowledge, expertise and passion, as has been evident in the Radical Indy and Common Weal campaigns in Scotland. Radical bookshops have often been ahead of the game, in their stock and their championing of liberation struggles - against sexism, racism, and homophobia - with an emphasis on international solidarity.

They have also led the way in challenging forces of destruction in the book trade, from the ending of the Net Book Agreement, which opened the door to price competition, to the dominance of corporate bully, Amazon. Any trade unionist who has not yet closed their Amazon account needs to do so pronto. It's not just the aggressive tax avoidance, or the decimation of the independent book trade. It's the simple fact that you do not become a market leader undercutting all the competition without ruthless targeting of employee rights. That cheap book comes at a price, and that price includes sacking 850 employees in Seattle in the face of a unionisation drive; employing a neo-Nazi security company to intimidate migrant workers in Germany; and, in the UK, tagging minimum-wage workers, who walk up to 15 miles a day, to force them to walk faster. So don't boycott Amazon just to be nice to your local indy, do it because you are outraged at their employment practices and refuse to support a company which treats employees like robots, with no sick leave and a 'three strikes and you're out' policy.

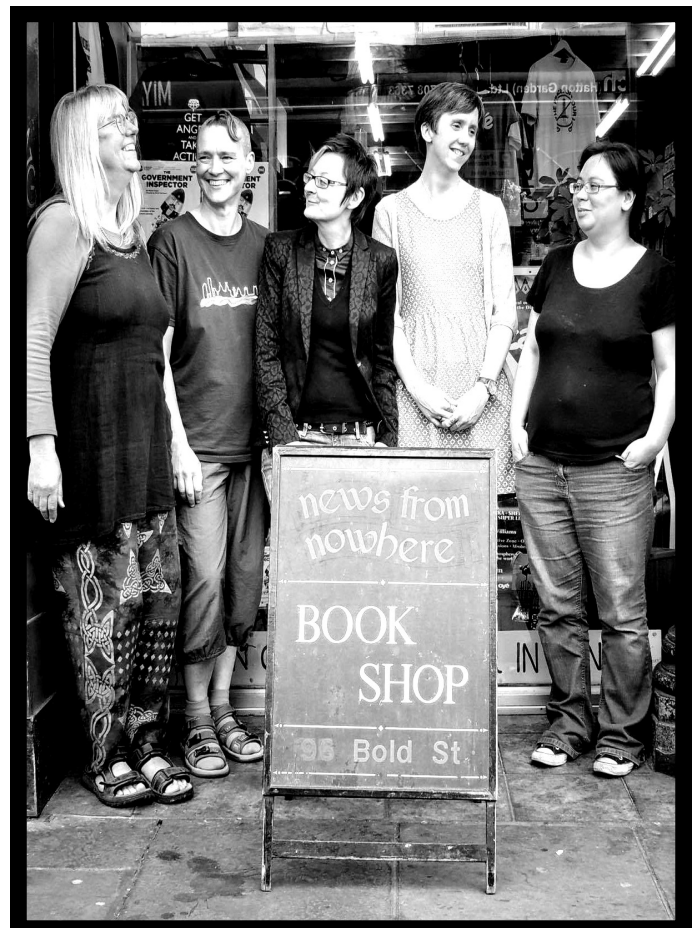
The number of indy bookshops now stands at 939 (down from 1500 ten years ago) but the radical booktrade has been punching above its weight recently. There are now thirty members of the Alliance of Radical Booksellers, albeit including some online or second-hand outlets. Housmans in London, the oldest radical bookshop in the UK, has taken the lead on an impressive range of initiatives: the Bread and Roses Award for Radical Publishing, the Little Rebels Children's Book Award and the London Radical Book Fair. This resurgence reflects the mood of a populace embracing radical ideas.

While the political establishment appears to be taking a line similar to the Daily Mail's and common sense ideas of a welfare state for all, a publicly-funded NHS (not to mention an international perspective which does not rely on nuclear weapons of mass destruction) are painted as old-fashioned or extreme, the hope that radical literature holds out is sorely needed. It's no surprise that journalist Owen Jones's public appearances are so popular. He offers hope based on historical examples, facts and passionate encouragement.

The same can be found in one of our favourite books: Rebecca Solnit's "Hope in the Dark: the Untold History of People Power". While her examples are primarily from the Americas, the message is universal: consequences are often unexpected, change can happen rapidly, nothing we do is wasted, and our greatest enemy is despair. News from Nowhere is committed to supporting the most progressive movements and campaigns, locally, nationally and internationally, and transforming an agenda of despair into hope may just be the most important task of all.

Mandy Vere

A longer version of this article originally appeared in the journal 'North West Labour History # 40 in 2014. NWLH kindly gave their permission for us to use it. NfN, Bold St., Liverpool 1, also sell by post – try them! Mandy is on the left in Claire Stevens' fab photo.



RR 2016 AGM at Mankinholes YH

**Friday September 23th - Sunday 25th 2016,
Mankinholes YH, Todmorden, Lancashire,
OL14 6HR. OS map 103, Grid Ref SD960235.**

See <http://www.yha.org.uk/hostel/mankinholes>

Booking forms are on the RR website under 'Members'.

OK, Mankinholes is not a great name, but look at the sunshine on the weather-beaten building and imagine the clear Pennine air! The hostel is a former 16th century manor house located in a quiet hamlet and is rated 4 star by Visit England. It has a lounge with a log burning stove, 10 space car parking and drying room. More details are given on the website above. Note that **bedding is provided** by the hostel but you'll need a towel.

Directions: Follow the road signed to Lumbutts village. The hostel is 0.25 miles east of the 'Top Brink' public house & 2.5 miles east of Todmorden.

Trains – Todmorden is the nearest station. There is a frequent train service from Manchester Victoria and Leeds.

Buses – There is a reasonable service, including Sundays, from opposite Todmorden train station.

When? Arrive Friday evening (sort your own food out, as per normal). Saturday: walks, climbing and

maybe Tai Chi. 7.30 pm Evening meal, followed by quiz, leaving plenty of time for socialist socialising! Sunday: AGM at 9.30 am; Lunch 12.30-1.30pm. Afternoon: leaping around/ tidying up.

Drinks – A supply of real ale, wine and soft drinks will be available at cost price (ish), so there's no need to bring your own.

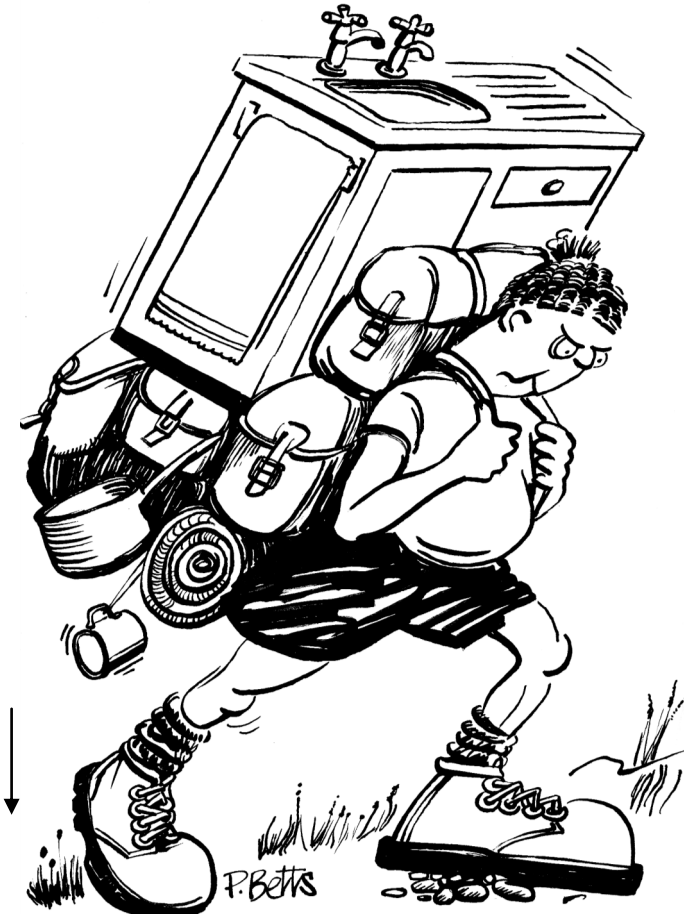
**Bookings by Saturday 10th September to:
Sherry MacIver, Garden Flat, 9 North Villas,
London NW1 9BJ treasurer@redrope.org.uk**

Don't forget to include a cheque to Red Rope to cover your full charge. (You should also contact Sherry if you want to camp or take a camper-van.)

It may be unprecedented but this year there are no motions to discuss, which obviously reflects how happy members are with the way the club is running! There will be reports from Officers and discussions about safety, accident procedures and trip know-how.

If you are looking for a challenge the following posts will be up for grabs: National Trip Treasurer, National Hut Booker and Ramblers Rep. National Treasurer could also be available but should not be done as a job-share, as previously suggested.





A system of socks is required gear
for walking on rocks - for taking the air.
Two Lekis, a Sigg, and some karabiners,
with a length of (red) rope for the even keener.

A head torch, an ice-axe and some pickled sarnies,
first-aid, marmalade, the entire Swiss Army.
A bivvy bag, Billy Bragg, some vibram soled boots,
a mobile phone, snorkel and a spray-on bathing suit.

A couple of umbrellas, a tiny ten man tent,
a Sandinista style bandana and some leaking liniment.
A ghastly, lurid jacket, which emits a ghostly glow -
a bobbing, blinking, pulsing, throbbing latex laser show.

A month of rainy Sundays misspent in old Joe Brown's,
and similar shops with the latest stock to seduce the
outward bound, make it hard to do much walking:
there are windows to be assessed!

It's clearly quite essential to know you are abreast
of the latest in technology: T-shirts, strips and zips ,
what to rub on your appendages and smear upon your lips.

The next innovation, to put these goodies in,
should be a four-wheel drive, inflatable,
Gore-tex wheelie bin!

PS Yes, there are some things omitted,
balaclava, gloves and cap,
you might even take a compass...
*and some form of schematic representation
of the relevant topographical circumstances
printed on a finely woven but durable
material composed of reconstituted plant fibre,
arranged in a convenient folding format,
sometimes simply referred to as*
'a map' !

bulletin@redrope.org.uk

Thanks to all contributors, most of whom are female.

I hope the chaps will pull their weight in the next edition,
deadline January 31, 2017! The cartoons are by Pete
Betts of Merseyside RR. The one below is called 'The
Ornithologist'. I designed the montages on the cover
and p.3 and did the drawing which accompanies the
wild swimming article. By the way, revered Cicerone
guide book author Kev Reynolds recommends carrying
no more than 10 kg when trekking. Leave the sink at
home! Many meanderings, Dave/id Symonds



Over the past year an enthusiasm for outdoor swimming has spread across a subset of Merseyside Red Rope. At the sight of the sea, a river or lake several of us have to restrain ourselves from diving in. Our outdoor swimming is not limited to Red Rope trips but the opportunity to try new swimming spots while out walking is tempting. To avoid inconveniencing the non-swimmers on what are after all billed as walks not swims, we try to squeeze these in at the end of walks but I have to admit that the presence (or lack of) water in an area has influenced our walk routes on several occasions.

I see other walkers looking bemused. "Why?" they ask. A very good question and one that I am sure I would have asked before the wild swimming bug got me. That we enjoy it massively is not in doubt – our faces come alive, we roar with laughter, we feel lighter for days afterwards, but why and how?

I walk out of a love for the outdoors and wanting to experience it as fully as possible. Similarly with swimming. I know and respect some awesome outdoor swimmers who put in long hours of swim training throughout the year and have unbelievable endurance and hardiness. That's not us. We immerse ourselves in the water and our surroundings, we soak up and relish the experience but we don't do any serious swimming. We're too busy enjoying ourselves for that. Something about being in and with the water seems to release us from any tensions or distractions – work, family, life issues, the stories we tell ourselves about what we need to do or be just seem to float away on the water leaving us there in the moment, often with skin tingling and always it seems with faces beaming.

There are a number of parallels with walking – it appeals to our passion for the outdoors, our awe at nature, our delight in watching the weather change and seasons come and go. With experience we learn to better read the environment, to judge risks and opportunities, to know what we are capable of and when to err on the side of caution. In the water we are just immersed in the environment in a more immediate way. It is impossible to forget that nature is much more powerful and lasting than us as individuals when you are rising and falling with the waves.

Fellow RRer Andrea, bottom left opposite, explains the attraction, "I swim to feel part of nature, learning more about it by immediate contact. Overcoming fear feels part of the thrill."

Mario, bottom right, adds 'I am from Majorca so swimming outdoors in this country is a real challenge. It is also a spiritual experience that makes me feel closely connected with nature. It makes me feel 'clean' in mind and body, happy to be alive and a tiny part of the universe.'

We are far from alone. The Outdoor Swimming group on Facebook has over 19,000 members and grows daily. There are also various local informal groups and swimming get-togethers. We have found outdoor swimmers to be a friendly bunch, willing to offer tips, suggestions and to look out for each other. Although outdoor swimming is having a resurgence it is nothing new. Before the rise of heated indoor pools, outdoor swimming was the only swimming option people had, whether in the once popular lidos or in lakes, rivers or the sea. In some eras it reflected the preoccupations of the times: English Romantic poets like Shelley and Byron were inspired by swimming; some suffragettes apparently argued for the right for mixed bathing and functional swimming attire, for DH Lawrence outdoor swimming, especially by women, was not surprisingly seen as an erotic act. Different interpretations of one very simple act – getting into water under an open sky.

I'd suggest that anyone tempted by outdoor swimming takes their first dips in summer and acclimatises gently. In the interest of honesty, yes it is often ****ing cold, this is the UK after all. I'd also suggest you take all sensible precautions:

- Check the water out, ideally talking to someone who knows the spot and any particular dangers. Preferably swim with company, especially in winter and in unfamiliar territory.
- Always take extra layers to put on afterwards (one more than I think I might conceivably wear is the golden rule that seems to work for me).

Pack a hot drink and some food (outdoor swimmers seem to eat a LOT of cake). Then enjoy. Hope to see some of you in the water sometime. But you have been warned, it can be addictive!

Sarah Thwaites

(Sarah is in the centre opposite and took the top 2 photos.)

Savour the prospect with the 'Wild Swimming' book!

Wild swim map with ideas for swim spots <http://wildswim.com/>

Ideas and safety tips at <http://www.outdoorswimmingsociety.com/>

Pick the brains of other wild swimmers: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/outdoorswimmingsociety/>

Andrew Fusek Peters' book 'Dip' tells of how wild swimming helped him recover from major depression.



west midlanders wander into wales!

13 people from a variety of Red Rope regions were very lucky with perfect weather on this West Midlands trip, walking part of the Beacons Way in the Brecon Beacons, south Wales, over a long weekend in May. The trip started on a Thursday evening at Llandeusant YHA, an idyllic small hostel, then on the Friday everyone walked over 10 miles via Fan Brycheiniog to a bunkhouse near Pen y Cae.

On the Saturday two groups took different routes to Llwyn y Celyn, followed on Sunday by an 11 mile walk, some going over Corn Du and Pen y Fan, others taking an easier route to finish at Danywennallt, another lovely hostel. As usual this was a brilliantly organised trip, with good food, good company and our luggage cleverly ferried ahead of us each day. One of the strangest sights over the weekend was seeing people queuing to have their photo taken on the summit of Pen y Fan. Later some of us met a young woman playing a harp in a field, only stopping to tell us the way! The walking was superb and the views amazing.

On the final day a few did a short but tough walk to the Chartist Cave, where weapons were stored in 1839, prior to the Newport rising, and a commemorative plaque speaks of the Chartists' contribution to democracy. I suspect they would all be turning in their graves in the light of recent events. **Janet Saunders**

