Gorphwysfa Club Journal

Vol. 49 no. 1 December 2026



Dedicated to

Terry Jones

Wyn Jones

Roland Jackson

Celebrated and remembered

IN THIS ISSUE

Everest Base Camp

The Seven Shires Way

The Outer Hebrides

Poetry

Donations, £5 please

Cover photo: Everest Base Camp, source Coalatree

Gorphwysfa Club Journal

Vol. 49 No. 1 December 2026

Dedicated to Terry Jones, Wyn Jones and Roland Jackson

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Editorial 2026

As is usual, as I pick up my computer, it is again past the time when the editorial should have been written - how time flies! To seek my redemption, life never seems to slow down – and it is not only mine; I see us all passing through a disturbing time, surrounded by time-saving gadgets which swallow the spare time that we used to have to write Editorials and similar enjoyable activities! Still, the time has arrived, and here goes!

First, the Gorphwysfa has had a reasonably active year, despite the average age of its membership. There was a little bit (?) of excitement at the 2025 AGM, which was very admirably sorted and problems resolved; a very grand thank-you to all sides for the brilliant conclusion, added to which we now have a revised and agreed Constitution! Of course, our outstanding Chairman, Kate, has had a very large contribution to all the success that we have achieved. It is marvellous to greet two new members to our Club,

The loss of some of our friends and members, from a small but personal group that we are, has been particularly upsetting and stressful; we devote in this journal several pages to Terry Jones, Wyn Jones and Roland Jackson about their lives and contributions made, both within and outside our club. We note that our loss is far greater to the family members involved. Terry's loss was so sad; he had many plans made and would have been able to share much with the members of this club. I am very sad to tell you that Tess Marsh passed away on Friday, the 18th of September. There will be a chance for all to contribute memories of Tess in the next journal. We include a brief paragraph on Tess in the **In Celebration** section.

Yes, it has been a very sad year – to which I can add a friend Dr Trevor Owen, who I had enjoyed being on the hills, and competing in the Karrimor Mountain Marathon several times, who then decided he would join our Nepal trek to climb Meru Peak, which turned out to be a memorable and exciting three-week mountain trek.

Year 2026 has brought us so many interesting and enjoyable meets. The New Year Meet 2025 brought our calendar of this meet to about the 50th year! For many years, the club has held its New Year meet at Pen Y Pass Youth Hostel, and they, I am sure, carry a label marked SUCCESS over all those years. This year, a group of thirteen (the unlucky ones were the ones who did not make it!) were based at Hafod Y Gwynt for the New Year, with the Rowlinson family joining us on New Year's Eve. Some people stayed at HyG, Stella and her grandchild Oliver slept at Pen y Pass, with Paul and Heather 'slumming' it at the Pen y Gwryd! All found this arrangement OK and a success. There were the usual jigsaw, games and carol singing; even the Station Game ran well! New Years Eve was celebrated with an evening meal. We had a total of five children who had a great time. The weather generally behaved itself. Monday's walk went down very well - interesting and through generally unknown countryside. Tuesday was a little damp, but Nant Gwynant filled the bill and was very much enjoyed. All reported that the meet at HyG was a great success.



Oliver, Toby, Lucy and Anna enjoying the hills

The Llydaw race on Wednesday was also one to remember. The idea for the Llydaw race came from Brian and Harvey again about fifty years ago. It has become a valued event by local competitors and those from further afield, and of course the event is approved, registered and insured by the Welsh Fell Runners Association. The somewhat limited organisation ran like clockwork. 57 people took part this year in the wind and rain; all were counted out and counted in again. Many thanks to Jeff Edwards for the very efficient timing system. There were 34 likes on Facebook! The race raised £220, which went to charity. Thanks to the hostel for allowing the

race organisers to use a room for the race reception. Club members are encouraged to come along to stay at Hafod y Gwynt or in the vicinity for future New Year meets.

Other events through 2026 went like clockwork. The Lakes Meet, organised by Christine and Andrew, was absolutely 100%; the accommodation, the site and the meals were perfect, a venue that we can visit sometime in the future. The same could describe the Scottish Meet, arranged by Lucy and Janice. It was a treat to stay in the wonderful, well-situated building; all the facilities were just as one would wish.

Recruitment in 2026 has broken new records! This year we have two new members, Sue Mosley from Matlock and Sally Rogers from Shipston-on-Stour. Welcome to our very sociable gathering – I trust we see lots of you in 2027 and may you both spend many hours with us in the countryside – and some of it even on the tops of one or two mountains! A further move forward is that we have another member joining in 2027; are there any other suggestions to expand the growth?

Writing about new members perhaps will remind the readers of this Journal that we are in the business of increasing the size of our Membership Address List! We would welcome new members so please encourage friends, relatives, and family to come along and join in on one of our meets. I would also encourage you to explore our Website – Kate has done a wonderful job of bringing it together, and it is full of interesting material, particularly in the history of the Gorphwysfa.

The Journal comes under the above label too – please pass on to friends and contacts copies of our Journal – we have now put a cover price of £5 on the cover (free to members, but always happy for donations!). It does make interesting reading, perhaps opens unknown areas of the countryside worth exploring, and we are then always happy to receive draft text from members and friends giving details of their adventures in the wonderful landscape that this country has available. In this Journal you will find a copy of the Gorphwysfa Diary of Events – which the Executive Committee hope you will support and attend.

In 2025 we held a summer meet in Snowdonia where 10 or so members linked together the ascent of the 15 mountains which are 3000's feet high mountains in the National Park over about 7 days, based at Hafod y Gwynt. One wonders if something different, but perhaps similar, could be brought together in 2027? You will note in the diary that a small group are contouring the edge of Anglesey – again, the idea could be extended or broadened (or shortened!) if someone wishes to launch the idea.

We had a respectable attendance at the club's AGM at the Tyn y Coed Hotel, Capel Curig on the 10th October, chaired, very efficiently, by Gilliane as Kate was sitting in a broken-down aeroplane in Spain! One or two well-worth-the-while days were spent on the hills by all that attended. Frances was feeling under the weather but still managed a well-worth-the-while walk on Saturday. Our Winter Meet this year is breaking new ground by exploring all the high ground around Lincoln, with the very kind gesture of Stella, Paul and Heather, who are providing the accommodation needed in their homes.

Finally, I hope that you have found that 2026 has been a cracking year – I am sure that you will have to delete all mention of politics, war and a certain man in the USA to reach that height! We very much welcome three new members, and we are more than eager to introduce others to the club via the Diary of Events. Please bring your friends along to our events, remembering that we must consider personal insurance in society these days. Note that this Journal has a 'Donation £5 please' printed on the front cover – that is not targeted at the membership – but any donations will be very pleasantly received by the treasurer! Added to this, I do feel a little sad that quite a few members prefer to receive this unique Journal online – however, I speak no more! Please try to support the Diary/programme, and if you don't like it, let us know,

A very Happy Christmas and a Joyous New Year to all our readers!

Harvey Lloyd 1st December 2026

Gorphwysfa Meets Diary 2027

Accurate as of <publication date>. For an up to date version, see the website. https://www.gorphwysfaclub.org/diary

29/30/31st December, the stay can be extended over the 1st Jan 2027

New Year Meet 2026/27. Based at Hafod y Gwynt, other accommodation can be sorted

It is now time to decide to go for it. Same social gathering with plenty of hill walking thrown in free. It is hoped that Gorphwysfan locals will join in, both on the day and the evenings. Book HyG or even S/C cottage hired close by – and of course en-suite Pen y Pass is available. Let Harvey (harveyrichlloyd@gmail.com) know if you are interested phone. 01865 750067 The Llydaw Race will happen on the 1st.

Probably in February.

Stage three, of the Around Anglesey coastal Trek, 2027

More details from Frances soon!

February 26th, 2027, for 3 nights

The Steve Ogden Memorial Meet 2027 in the Lake District

New venue this year! We are staying in a Holiday Fellowship House, Monk, Coniston. Two places have become available. This year's costs are £299 or £349 for three nights. A great location. Deposits should already have been paid. Organiser Christine, cmm701@gmail.com, 07799 651 414.

April/May 2027

Scotland in the Spring,

This is currently being organised and a date and location will be sent out soon.

Volunteers contact Kate or Harvey

Saturday 30th May

Welsh 1000 Metre Peaks race 2027

Anyone interested in either marshalling or competing? **Race details online entries open 1st December 2025.** Room available at present at HYG if needed. Email Harvey for details.

18th/19th 20th June.

Hafod y Gwynt is available for a two- or three-night weekend

The house can be booked for multi activity or something similar for one week.

Or for a change we could visit the Devon Coastline! Anyone interested?

Date to be confirmed 3rd or 10th July

Oxfordshire Meet

Host needed. Accommodation normally available, a walk Saturday, evening meal & /or buffet, be sociable and on Sunday explore Oxford.

Mid / Late July

Alpine Meet 2027

Will it ever happen again????? - Someone say 'YES! '

Early/mid-September

September Meet

The YHA have a few Hostels in Wales that are available to sole hire. What about exploring the availability?

8th, 9th 10th October

Gorphwysfa Dinner and AGM

Dinner and AGM on 9th, probably in the Tyn y Coed. Hafod y Gwynt is available for beds.

November

Winter Meet

Watch this Space!

29th / 30th/31 December 2027/28

New Year Meet 2027/28

Watch this Space! Will it be Hafod y Gwynt? And there is the Llydaw Race!

February or March

Lakes Meet 2028, that seems a long way off!

Watch this Space!

If you are interested in getting out on the hills with the Gorphwysfa then you need to note the above dates in your diaries now and get in touch with the appropriate organiser! Friends are really welcomed to come along to our meets and so become involved in the club. On all meets please feel free to ask if there is room. Note our web site: *www.gorphwysfaclub.org for reports and ideas.*



In Celebration

This year, we have sadly lost two current and two previous club members. Terry Jones was an inspiration for his enthusiasm for the mountains and for travel. He was a great companion in the hills and will be very much missed. Wyn Jones joined the club through his long friendship with Harvey. He was a keen outdoors man and was a member until the 1990s. Roland Jackson, with his wife Nicola, were early members. Roland had a deep love of mountaineering, its practice and history. Tess Marsh, just recently passed, will be much missed and will be celebrated in the next journal.

Terry Jones

Terry took to the hills as though he had been born there, and it was the same with the Gorphwysfa. From our first meeting, he slotted and mixed in; he joined and contributed from his earliest days. He was adventurous, and at the same time careful and helpful, a real joy to be with out on the hills. Terry's first trip to the Himalayas was with the Gorphwysfa, to Kathmandu and Bhutan in 2020, reports of this trip are in a previous journal. He may have developed the idea of writing a diary during this trip. He made many contributions to the club journal, immaculately written and always on time. There are three in this very journal. His death is a huge loss to the club.

Harvey Lloyd

Terry's funeral

I was shocked, as I am sure we all were to hear of the sudden death of Terry Jones. I was therefore very pleased when I found that I could attend his funeral. Gerry was of course there as a longstanding friend of Terry, but I appointed myself the Gorphwysfa representative. There were also a substantial number of people from the Duke of Edinburgh Award (D of E / scouting / mountain leadership world.

The funeral was planned to be perfectly in keeping with the gentle gentleman we knew. It was clear from the account given of Terry's life that he was as kind and encouraging as a father and grandfather as he was when being a companion on hills and expeditions with Gorphwysfa members. He had started his involvement with training and assessing D of E candidates when his own daughter wanted to do her gold award. Terry had completed all the Wainwrights himself a while ago but he supported his friends Judith and Gerry to finish them this year. One of my personal memories of benefiting from Terry's ability to encourage and build confidence in others was on a walk I was doing with him and Gerry on a Scottish meet. The mist came down when we were on a high open moorland area. We could have followed a looping path around the edge of the moorland but Terry suggested we took a direct route as this was a perfect opportunity for us to practice leapfrog navigation on a compass bearing.

The music, played for us while we reflected, was a very gentle version of The Happy Wanderer by Bill Straines. An extract from Wainwright, read at the end, was adapted;

All I ask for, at the end, is a last long resting place on Walla Grag; by the side of Bleaberry Fell where the water gently laps the gravelly shore of Derwent water and the heather blooms with Catbells keeping an unfailing watch. A quiet place. I shall go to it, for the last time and be carried by those who knew me in life and loved me. To scatter my ashes, to lay me to rest and above all, to be once more with Elizabeth.

In all it felt a fitting way to say goodbye to our friend who had contributed so well to leading walks on Gorphwysfa meets, looking after those who had taken on a little more than they could manage and encouraging others to try a little more than they thought they could manage.

Finally, a good word for Hartlepool. Although I had, relatively recently, orienteered on nearby dunes, the only thing I knew about the town was the 'monkey hanging' legend celebrated in the folk song. As seemed fitting I walked from the station to the crematorium and I was surprised by the number of fine old buildings I passed. Arriving at the 30 acre Edwardian Cemetery I was impressed by the long sweeping avenues and impeccably manicured high privacy hedges which create sheltered spaces and a wonderfully peaceful atmosphere. Walking back after the Wake I was able to follow the green corridor of the Burn Valley Beck.

I was pleased to spend the day reflecting on the contribution Terry had made to the Gorphwysfa club and to have been able to join with his friends and family in saying goodbye.

Judith Holt Cooke

Terry's many interests

I was very shocked to hear about the sad death of Terry Jones. Andy and I were with him on Winter Mountaineering training for a week two years running, as well as Club Meets. He was so consistent in researching and offering a number of walks and then leading groups of a range of abilities at every meet. People in Buxton Mountain Rescue knew him too from the winter mountaineering events. He did a lot of trips and walking in the last few years and he was so fast and competent. I am pleased that the Club acknowledged his contribution and his death by awarding him the Distant White Domes award at the Dinner. We were very fortunate he joined the Gorphwysfa Club.

Sarah Hargreaves

Remembering Terry at the Annual Dinner October 2026



My friend Terry. Your friend Terry. In fact, Terry was everyone's friend. I first met Terry 25 years ago and have learned a lot about him. I learned he had three aspects to his life.

The first aspect was his career and working life. He was regional manager in the North East with his final contracts working for Worcester Bosch. He took early retirement at 55 to give him more time to spend doing the things he loved.

The second aspect to his life was that he was a devoted family man. He met and married his childhood sweetheart, Elizabeth and he and Elizabeth went on to have two daughters Caroline and Judith. Each daughter between them gave Elizabeth and Terry four grandchildren. They were very involved with the lives of their children and grandchildren spending time and sharing holidays all over the world. He travelled widely with Elizabeth and his family right up until Elizabeth became ill. In 2018 Elizabeth passed away after a short battle with cancer. Terry continued to travel widely with his family and his last Christmas, 2025, was spent in the Maldives on a beach with a gin and tonic each day.

After Elizabeth died Terry began to find new connections. He joined the Gorphwysfa club for his first meet in Scotland followed by his first trip with the club to Bhutan in 2019. I have memories of Terry and Len trying all sorts of local drinks once back in Kathmandu.

The third aspect of his life was walking and travel and it is this aspect I will share with you all. I first met Terry when he and I, and 2 other members of the Hafod Training Team, attended a Winter Mountaineering Leader Training course in the Cairngorms, some 25 years ago. It was during this experience I learnt how supportive and encouraging a person Terry was. Always looking out for people and having an insight to be prepared for all eventualities. My fondest memory was of coming off the Cairngorm plateau after a night navigation training and back to our snow holes. Snow was falling and he invited my snow hole buddy and myself back to his snow hole to share a glass of wine. What a lovely offer but we both declined as we needed to retreat into our snow hole while we still were warm.



Terry had been a member of the Hafod team for some time before I was invited join. It soon became clear to me how methodical and highly planned he was in his delivery of the syllabus. Anyone who was fortunate to be in his training team benefitted from his support and guidance and teaching.

At the same time Terry's daughters were signed up to do the Duke of Edinburgh's award in the North East area. Terry was invited to become part of the training and assessment team by Judith who was field officer for the North East. This led to both myself and Terry becoming part of the Open Gold Team at Hafod which we shared training and assessment for the last 20 years or so.

I learned how encouraging Terry was with all the young people. He had an uncanny way of seeing what young people needed in order to achieve their assessed expedition routes. We shared our last gold group this August with Terry assessing and I supervised the team on the hill. We had a problem with one young person who had injured their back and Terry worked around this aspect allowing the young person to take charge of what they needed to do and facilitating them to make decisions which allowed them to complete their expedition successfully.



Terry and a small group of us from Hafod would travel to Scotland and get some winter walking in each year. It is on these occasions I learnt how well-planned Terry was and his attention to detail was second to none. He was the one to arrive not only with ideas of what Munros to go up but with his maps printed and routes planned. We were all in for a good long day on the hill each trip.

Terry travelled widely on his own and booked on treks worldwide. His last major trek was in November 26 to Mera Peak which he experienced his biggest challenge. He knew it was going to be tough. He was happy with the altitude he reached as he found he was at his limit. He was the oldest on the trip and was still pushing the boundaries of his capabilities.

Terry was also a great instigator in planning long distance trails and encouraging others along the way. I think planning was Terry's second name. It was Judith (ex field officer) who stated, on one of our Lake District trips, 'shall we finish the Wainwright's. As a result of this comment an excel spreadsheet was devised and all the Wainwrights which we each had previously summited were placed on it. There began our 3-year project to complete the Wainwrights. Terry was meticulous in how to achieve all the tops with planning taking a great deal of his time and a lot of juggling of routes to get the best experience for us all. Terry finishes his tops first, followed by Judith and then I completed in June of this year.

Post Covid we also walked the Pennine Way from North to South, with Judith, then the Coast to Coast. The first time I did the Coast to Coast with Terry was from East to West. I learned that we could walk for miles and miles sharing a passion we both enjoyed. On our second time of doing the Coast to Coast a member of the Stockton walking group heard about our plans. Terry believed in being inclusive and bringing people together and this was another strength of Terry's. Jean joined us last September to walk from East to west again. Terry's gentle approach, both encouraging and supporting, helped Jean complete her first long distance trail. How proud we both were for Jean and her achievement. Jean's husband Mike was there at the end to pop the bottle of bubbly.

The Coast to Coast became a National Trail in 2026, a year later than planned. It was decided to walk it again to celebrate this event. But this time we would walk it the opposite way from St Bees' to Robin Hood's Bay. Little did we know that that was to be our last long-distance trails with Terry. We completed it in July 2026, just a few weeks before our last Duke of Edinburgh's Gold assessment in August.

Our next plans were to include the Pennine Journey trail and to start climbing the Nuttall's. Sadley these are not going to be possible. But I am hoping to join with Jean next year to walk the Pennine journey as a memorial walk for Terry.

What Terry gifted me and many other people was a belief in that you can do anything and with care and attention you can prepare for any challenge. He was the most positive and nurturing person who touched the hearts of so many people in many aspects of their lives.

I certainly have been very privileged to have shared the last years with Terry, in the hills and on the long-distance trails. We had some wacky times in all sorts of weather. He will be sadly missed by me and all who knew him and no more so than by his daughters, partners and grandchildren.

I will finish with a poem Terry chose, which was read at his funeral. It sums up his passion for walking in the hills.
The fleeting hour of life of those who love the hills
is quickly spent, but the hills are eternal.
Always there will be the lonely ridge, the dancing beck,
the silent forest: always there will be the exhilaration of summits.
These are for the seeking, and those who seek and find
while there is yet time will be blessed both in mind and body.
I wish you all many happy days on the fells in years ahead.
There will be fair winds and foul, days of sun and days of rain.
But enjoy them all. Good walking!
And don't forget – watch where you are putting your feet.

Alfred Wainwright The Western Fells Book 7

I will finish now with a toast to Terry. May he now rest in peace with Elizabeth on Walla Crag overlooking Derwent Water in his favourite area the Lake District.

Gerry Wigglesworth

Wyn Jones

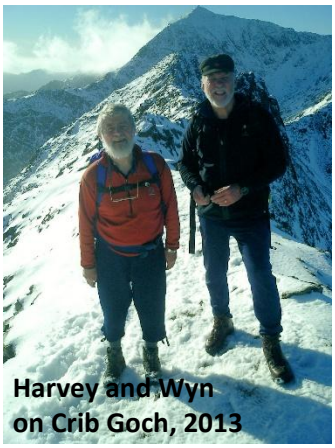
18.08/1940 – 29.06.2026

Early club members will remember Wyn Jones, (Winston Jones in the early days!) who was a Gorphwysfa member for many years, from the mid/late 1970s through until the early 1990s.

I knew him from school days, we both lived in Connah's Quay, but he was 2 years younger than me - so Scouting not schooling brought us together.

Probably from the early/mid 1950s camping and the outdoors were the name of the game, camping in ex-army bell tents and loads of fun in the countryside brought excitement. By the mid 1950s we were both working our way through apprenticeships, Wyn at the Steel Works on Deeside, as an electrician. I was asked to set up a Senior Scout group and Wyn became an assistant leader, opening even more doors for both of us. Snowdonia became the area to escape to. Exciting times, I suppose we did not need to try hard, fun and excitement was at our doorsteps.

The move that took Rosie, me and the family to Pen y Pass Youth Hostel broke my link with Scouting, but Wyn was an enthusiastic visitor to Pen y Pass from the earliest of days - often getting stuck into the everlasting piles of washing up in the kitchen and all sorts of other exciting jobs that the hostel kitchen generated. Of course the reward, once the hostel calmed a little, was a day on the hills, and even involvement with the Llanberis Mountain Rescue Team, if there was action on the Snowdon area.



Harvey and Wyn on Crib Goch, 2013

Interestingly, Wyn put pen to paper in 2011 and wrote '*The story of a remarkable man*' , nearly 20,000 words of biography on me, and based on all the fun we had together over the years. From 1998 onwards he helped in a number of ways in the rescue of the old church in Capel Curig.

Sadly, his health over the last year or so deteriorated, spending time in Glan Clwyd hospital through cancer and other problems. The round of chemo did not produce positive answers and led to the development of several more problems. Although it was thought that we should expect the worst, he rallied and improved in most aspects. Generally he was in good spirits up until the last couple of weeks and was still able to make Hilary laugh!

He was a man of many skills and full of interest in so many things, in later life gaining a Masters in the Open University.

Harvey Lloyd

Roland Jackson

Roland was a member of the Club in the early days. Below is a tribute to him, taken from obituaries in his local paper, the Cumberland and Westmorland Herald and from his university department of Mathematical and Physical Sciences at UCL. It gives an overall view of a rich and varied life, both on and off the mountains.

Sir Roland Jackson, 9th Baronet (1954–2026)



Sir Roland Jackson, 9th Baronet, who has died aged 72, was a leading figure in public understanding of science, science education and the history of science, and a man whose love of the mountains shaped both his life and his death. He died suddenly on 10 January 2026, of natural causes, while climbing a snow gully on Helvellyn in the Cumbrian fells he had known for most of his life.

Born at Northallerton, North Yorkshire, Roland was one of three children of the late Sir Thomas and Gillian, Lady Jackson, later of Mungrisdale. His parents moved to farm in the Lake District valley of Ennerdale, where he was raised alongside his brothers, Piers and Jolyon. He was educated at Wycliffe College, Gloucestershire, then read biochemistry at Oxford, doing a doctorate at Exeter College.

At Oxford he met his future wife, Nicola, through the university mountaineering club. They married and climbed together in the Lake District, North Wales and the Alps, a shared passion that lasted the rest of their lives, along with a love of wild flowers. They lived first in Oxford and later in Welwyn, Hertfordshire, where they raised three sons, Adam, James and Oliver. For the last twelve years they divided their time between Hertfordshire and Gamblesby, near Penrith.

After nine years teaching science, Roland moved into scientific administration, public engagement and scientific ethics. He served as education adviser to the chemicals company ICI, then as Head of Education at the Science Museum from 1992, and for a year as its acting head. From 2002 to 2013 he was chief executive of the British Science Association. There, and later as executive chair of Sciencewise, which works to make scientific research and policy more inclusive and effective, he helped pioneer new forms of public dialogue on scientific issues. From 2014 Roland was an honorary research associate in the Department of Science and Technology Studies at University College London.

He held a firm conviction that science is for everyone, and that young people in particular deserve the chance to develop an interest in it. In later years he was a visiting fellow at the Royal Institution and served as one of its trustees from 2019 to 2022.

A very active retirement brought a second career as a historian. His climbing led him to John Tyndall, the Victorian physicist and intellectual, a leading alpinist of his day and an early pioneer of climate science. He became one of the chief editors of the multi-volume *Correspondence of John Tyndall*, the first volume of which appeared in 2016; the series has reached volume 16. Drawing on that vast body of material he wrote the biography *The Ascent of John Tyndall* (2018). Two years later he and Nicola, with Professor Daniel Brown, produced an edition of Tyndall's poetry published by UCL Press.

A member of the Alpine Club, and locally of the Eden Valley and Keswick mountaineering clubs, he was happiest among hills he had climbed since youth.

He is survived by his wife, Nicola; his sons, Adam, James and Oliver; his brother, Jolyon; and his granddaughter.

Tess Marsh

Tess Marsh passed away on Friday, the 18th of September. Lucy and Kate became concerned when she didn't answer emails and her phone was not working. Kate drove to her house and learned from a neighbour that there had been a fall a few weeks ago, and an ambulance was called.

Following this, an obituary we found from her art club told us that she passed away suddenly and died in hospital. She was having tea with some of their members when she suddenly became ill. They called an ambulance and informed her son, but unfortunately, she died later in hospital.

Sadly, we have had no message from her two sons. We understand that the funeral was family only.

She was a good friend of the late Liz and Mike Leask and retained her membership of the Club and contacts with members, even though, in recent years, she was not very mobile. She was a very intelligent, cultured and gifted lady, and her hobbies included writing poetry. She was very knowledgeable about art and enjoyed going to art galleries She had an individual style of painting, which we saw when members of the Gorphwysfa visited her club's annual exhibition earlier this year. She contributed in a lively way to our discussions and was always interesting to chat with.

She will be very much missed by the Gorphwysfa Club, and more will be written about her in the next Journal.

The Lakes November 2025

Wet and windy. That was the forecast for the week before I set off to the Lakes. It seems that we are going to be hit by the remnants of the tropical storm Benjamin that had devastated Jamaica and Haiti. Undeterred I packed my bags and travelled over. Meeting up with Gerry we discussed her plans to complete more of the 17 Wainwrights she still had to do.

Day 1

Yes, it was wet and windy. 40 mph winds gusting to 60mph with showers being replaced by constant rain. Plan is to drive to Haweswater and tackle Mardale Ill Bell and Harter Fell. The wind was forecast to be from SW to S so we would be sheltered until we hit the col. It was almost an hour's drive to the car park but we did not make it. After passing the Haweswater Hotel a car driving toward us stopped and advised us of flood water ahead. Sure enough, after about 200m we had to stop and make an 8 point turn to reverse our direction to turn back. The road was impassible. Quick recap on remaining Wainwrights. Ullscarf? Possible but it would be a long day and we felt that we did not have the time to do it. Seat Sandal? Yes. A relatively short up and down so well within the time we now had available. Parking in the layby at Dunmail Raise we got out of the car and prepared ourselves for the ascent. Our track took us straight up the nose to the top of Seat Sandal. The path was not marked on the map and so it was another "Wainwright" path. When will OS update their mapping? A steady uphill plod from the road to the summit took 1hr 20mins. With the rain being persistent and the wind freshening and gusting as we ascended, we decided that our return route would be to follow the wall down to the


Flooded road


Raise Beck

relative shelter of Raise Beck and then down to the road. This was a good choice to keep out of the blustery wind but we were basically walking in a stream. The water flowing off the slopes of Seat Sandal to the beck meant that we had numerous streams to cross but the majority of the streams then took the line of least resistance and just followed the path we were on. The rain continued and we eventually reached the car. Sitting in the calm of the car we began our drive back to our accommodation. This in itself was not uneventful with a lot of surface water and care needed with some potentially deep water. Eventually our day ended. Back safe and sound with only our waterproofs wet, we settled down to chill for the evening. Listening to the news that evening a Glasgow to King's Cross train had been derailed at Shap due to a landslip caused by the wet conditions. A sobering thought.

Day 2


Kirkstone Pass

Still wet and windy. It had rained non-stop during the night creating more flooding. The MWIS forecast indicated the wind only gusting to 50mph today with frequent or persistent rain, heavy at times. With the wind again from S to SW. we considered the 3 tops of Yoke, Ill Bell and Froswick. These tops run from south to North along a ridge line meaning that the wind would be behind us and our return along the valley with Hagg Gill would give us some shelter. We left the hotel already wearing our waterproofs and boots in steady rain. Driving towards Kirkstone pass we encountered quite a bit of standing water which we negotiated with care. After writing off my previous car earlier this year in flood water I did not wish for a repeat performance. Climbing steadily up to the pass we could see numerous streams coming down the slopes raging with excess water. Climbing higher we reached the cloud base at about 350m. Not looking good for a potential 6hr walk. We stopped in a layby at the Inn to consider the day. Our planned route was not going to happen with the current conditions. The hills will still be there on another day. Should we head down to Thirlmere and do Ullscarf? No. The tops of Ullscarf are always boggy at the best of times so in these conditions we could be walking in a lake. Further thought was that if, as forecast, the rain was to be continuous during the day we may not be able to travel back to the hotel if the flooding became worse. So, discretion is the better part of valour (it is said) and we turned around to head back. As we were driving through increasing levels of standing water a radio announcement came on saying that the A66 between Cockermouth and Gt Broughton had been closed due to flooding. Good decision to stay dry today.


Swollen Caiston Beck


Trapped sheep


Normally a stream


Flooded valley floor

Day 3

Still wet and windy. But this time the rain was to ease in the afternoon and the wind was not going to be as strong. So back to yesterday's plan. Yoke, Ill Bell and Froswick. Rationale for this was also due to the fact that the road north of Patterdale was closed to all traffic between 9:15am and 3:15pm. Roadworks were needed but they only did the work within school hours to allow pupils to have access to the school. Driving south to Troutbeck over Kirkstone pass we still had a cloud base of about 400m so all of our tops would be shrouded in cloud with poor visibility. Leaving the car, we walked through a caravan park to pick up Garburn Road (track). Navigation was not going to be difficult today. Follow the track, turn north at a 90 degree bend in the track (just after Garburn Nook), head up to the ridgeline and follow it North over the 3 tops. Drop down to a col just after Froswick and find a path off to the left leading us down in to the valley and back to the caravan park. Easy, and it was, apart from the fact that the first 1.5km along the track was walking in a continuous stream of water. Glad that I had waxed my boots the previous night. The cloud base did not lift, so each of the summits emerged from the gloom as we approached them. Timings were fine and no difficulties were encountered. Dropping down to the col the wind finally abated and we stopped for lunch. It was then that we realised that it had stopped raining and as we descended further the cloud base just dissipated giving great views down the valley. A good walk regardless of the poor conditions. We arrived back at the car with Gerry now only left with 13 Wainwrights to do. We began to travel north on the A592 but after only about 200m we reached a road block with a sign saying "Road Closed". Puzzled as we had only travelled down the road this morning, we took the detour back to Patterdale. It was later we heard on the news that the road had been closed due to a landslip and would be closed for a few days. We later found out that the road surface had been undermined and would probably need pinning. It could be 18 months!



Braced against the wind



Day 4

Today was always planned as a rest day. Whilst the weather had started to improve the tops were still in cloud. After a leisurely wander around Keswick, meeting other friends who had come over for the day, we returned back to the hotel where I began to pack for my Nepal trip leaving tomorrow for Manchester.

Some photos courtesy of Gerry.

Terry Jones

Geoffrey Winthrop Young: The Man Who Changed British Climbing

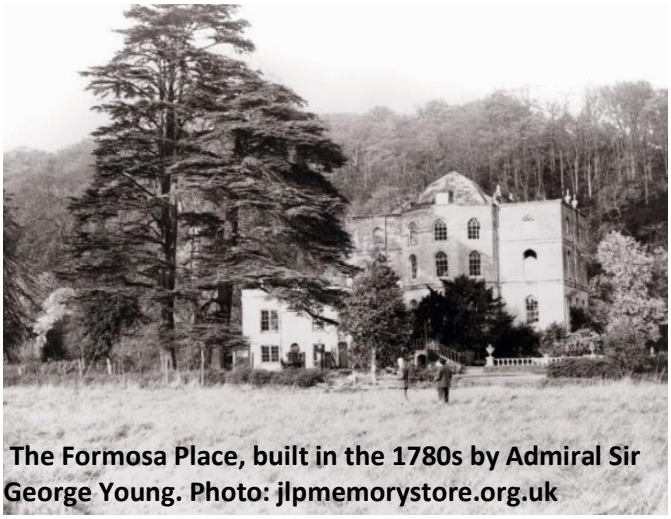
In 2001, we published in the Journal a brief account of the life of Geoffrey Winthrop Young. He was a legendary climber and much revered within the Club. His widow Eleanor "Len" Winthrop Young (1895–1994) was also a fine climber, who was co-founder and the first president of the Pinnacle Club, the national women's climbing club and made numerous ascents in the Alps and many in the United Kingdom. We were privileged to have her company at one of our New Year meets and at a club dinner.

Below is a comprehensive article about Geoffrey by Kris Annapurna.. You can find the author on https://explorersweb.com/



Geoffrey Winthrop Young. Photo: American Alpine Journal

Geoffrey Winthrop Young (1876-1958), British climber, poet, and author of several books, was one of the most important and influential figures in the history of British mountaineering. His significance was not only due to his notable climbs. He shaped the sport technically, ethically, and culturally.



The Formosa Place, built in the 1780s by Admiral Sir George Young. Photo: jlpmemorystore.org.uk

Young was born into a wealthy, intellectual, and climbing family. His father, Sir George Young, was a baronet and classical scholar who had pioneered early Alpine routes. When Sir George's brother died in a climbing accident on Mont Blanc in 1865, he decided to quit climbing. He even banned any mention of climbing in the family home. But sons and daughters often defy their father's taboos, and when Geoffrey Winthrop Young was a young man, he discovered the beauty of climbing.

At the age of 21, Young ascended Mont Blanc with a guide. After that, he fell in love with mountaineering. He started climbing in Britain and Wales during the school holidays while he worked as a teacher. However, at that time, the ethic of going without a guide was already emerging. In 1904, Young already held the opinion that hiring guides was something outdated for skilled amateurs.

Ascents in the Alps

From 1905 to 1914, Young led a small, elite circle that systematically climbed hard lines in the Alps without guides, often in lightweight style and in bad weather. One of his partners was Josef Knubel, one of the era's top Zermatt guides, whom Young later called his ideal companion.

Together and with others like Siegfried Herford, they carried out an astonishing number of notable ascents in the Alps, including:

- the Southeast Face of the Weisshorn and the Furggen Ridge of the Matterhorn in 1905
- the first ascent of the South Ridge of Täschhorn
- new routes on the Weisshorn and Dom in 1906
- the Midi-Plan traverse in less than 15 hours
- the Southeast Ridge of Nesthorn
- new routes on the Rimpfischhorn and Zinal Rothorn in 1907
- the ascent of the Mer de Glace face of the Aiguille du Grepon in 1908
- the Northeast Face of the Charmoz in 1909
- the first ascent of the Brouillard Ridge of Mont Blanc with H.O. Jones and George Mallory
- the first complete traverse of the West Ridge of the Grandes Jorasses
- the first guideless traverse of the Frontier Ridge of Mont Maudit in 1911

In 1913-14, he ascended the Zmutt Ridge of the Matterhorn and the West Ridge of the Gspaltenhorn with Herford. This was Young's last great pre-war climb.

Transformative

These weren't always the hardest ascents of the era, because climbers like Hans Dulfer and Paul Preuss were already pushing free-climbing to new levels in the Kaiser and the Dolomites.

But in British alpinism, Young's ascents were transformative. They proved amateurs could match professionals, emphasizing balance, trust, and minimal gear over brute force. And that was the point.


The YHA Snowdon Pen-y-Pass. Photo: onorthwales.co.uk

From around 1907, Young organized legendary Easter and Christmas meets at the Gorphwysfa Hotel (later called the Pen-y-Pass Youth Hostel) in Snowdonia. Up to 60 climbers — men, women, and even children — converged for two weeks of cragging on sites like Clogwyn du'r Arddu and Idwal Slabs. Evenings of lectures, rope practice, and debate followed these days of climbing.

These gatherings were the beginning of a climbing school for the next generation. Women climbed on equal terms, a rarity then, and the atmosphere fostered an "almost ideal social fabric."

Every key British climber of the interwar years went to those meetings, including Mallory, Herford, John Percy Farrar, and Oscar Eckenstein. Young taught balance techniques, modern belaying, and the moral weight of leadership.

The Alpine Club archives highlight these get-togethers as the beginning of British rock ethics, shifting from "engineer's climbing" (top roping) to free, partnership-based ascents.

Young also pioneered new British routes on Northumberland crags, the Lake District, and on Welsh slate.

Mallory mentor

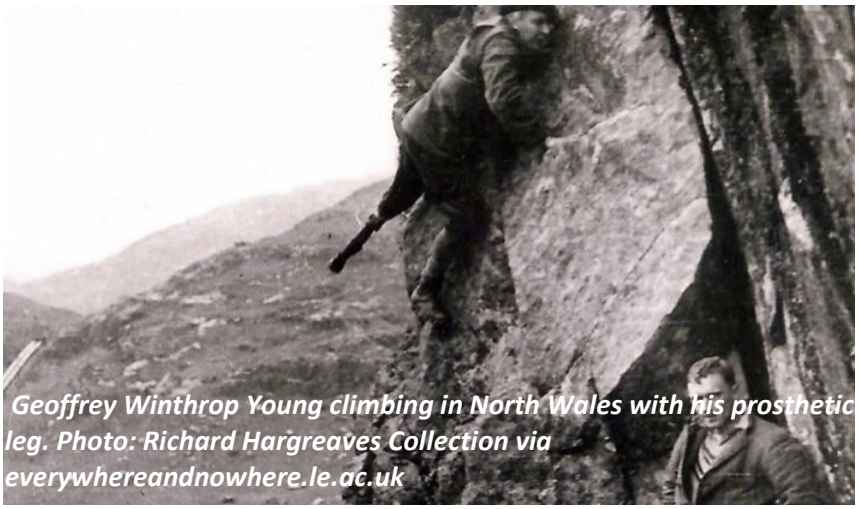
George Leigh Mallory met Young at the 1909 Pen-y-Pass meeting. The 33-year-old Young realized that the young Mallory (then 23) was a talented climber and invited him to the Alps.

From 1911–1914, Mallory roped up almost exclusively with Young, and they climbed together the Brouillard Ridge, Mont Maudit Frontier, the Grepon North Ridge, and more. Young imparted his guideless ethics, balance moves, and alpine minimalism. All these influenced Mallory's later style.

Their bond was fraternal. Young was the best man at Mallory's 1914 wedding. As Alpine Club records note, Young was Mallory's "principal guide" in his formative years. Without him, the Everest icon might have stayed earthbound.

Injured in WWI

In 1914, World War I broke out. Working as a correspondent for the *Daily News*, Young crossed to Belgium after Mallory's wedding. As a conscientious objector, he joined the Friends' Ambulance Unit in Flanders and then commanded the First British Ambulance Unit for Italy in 1916. On the brutal Isonzo Front, he drove ambulances under fire. There were no fatalities under his command, and he saved thousands, earning the Belgian Order of Leopold and Italian Silver Medal for Valour, as well as British decorations.



Geoffrey Winthrop Young climbing in North Wales with his prosthetic leg. Photo: Richard Hargreaves Collection via everywhereandnowhere.le.ac.uk

On August 31, 1917, during the assault on Monte San Gabriele, shrapnel shredded his left leg above the knee, which had to be amputated. It seemed that his climbing career was over. But Young didn't give up. He designed an aluminium prosthetic leg and tested it on Tryfan in 1919. As Wayne Willoughby reported in the *American Alpine Journal,* Young wrote to Mallory about his plans to continue climbing: "Now I shall have the immense stimulus of a new start, with every little inch of progress a joy instead of commonplace. I count on my great-hearts, like you, to share in the fun of that game with me."

'I keep the dreams I won'

From then until 1935, Young climbed routes like the South Ridge of the Täschhorn, the Matterhorn, the Petits Charmoz, Dent du Requin, Grepon, Zinal Rothorn, and Monte Rosa, which companion Claude Elliott called "the greatest physical feat" he had ever witnessed.

We can see his impressive resilience in his beautiful post-amputation poem of 1917, entitled *I Hold the Heights*:

I have not lost the magic of long days;
I live them, dream them still.
Still I am a master of the starry ways,
And freeman of the hill;
Shattered my glass, ere half the sands had run –
I hold the heights I won.

Mine still the hope that haileth me from each height
Mine the unresting flame.
With dreams I charmed each doing to delight;
I charm my rest the same.
Severed my skein, ere half the strands were spun –
I keep the dreams I won.

What if I live no more those kingly days?
Their night sleeps with me still.
I dream my heart upon the starry ways;
My heart rests in the hill.
I may not grudge the little left undone;
I hold the heights, I keep the dreams I won.

Writes 'Mountain Craft'

In 1920, Young published *Mountain Craft*, which remains one of the most important manuals in mountaineering history. It focuses on different topics: technical skills, route-finding, mountain judgment, reading terrain and weather, history and ethics, training and leadership, and first aid and rescue techniques.

In fact, the book contains one of the earliest systematic approaches to mountain rescue in print. *Mountain Craft* remained the standard reference for serious mountaineers for decades. He also wrote: *The Roof-Climber's Guide to Trinity* (1899), *Wall and Roof Climbing* (1905), *Freedom — Poems* (1914), *From the Trenches: Louvain to the Aisne, the First Record of an Eye-Witness* (1914), *On High Hills: Memories of the Alps* (1927), *Collected Poems* (1936), *Mountains with a Difference* (1951), *The Grace of Forgetting* (1953), and *Snowdon Biography* with Sutton & Noyce (1957).

"For the youngest, as for readers of all ages, it is a blessing that his books will always be there," wrote David Allan Robertson Jr. in the *American Alpine Journal* in his remembrance piece on Young. Young died on September 8, 1958, at age 81.

When historians list the handful of people who changed mountaineering, Young's name is always there. Few have touched the sport at so many decisive points. As the *American Alpine Journal* noted in its 1959 obituary, Young exemplified melding mind and body, graciously and gallantly, into full play. Young stands in much the same relationship to his era as Edward Whymper was to the Golden Age or Albert Mummery to the Silver Age of alpinism.

You can read *Mountain Craft* here: https://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/67729/pg67729-images.html

Kris Annapurna

Poetry from Tess

Knots, Loch Foyle

From the North Atlantic
the winter wind howls in;
trees, hills, men, all frantic
a shelter safe to win.

Dark piles of bladderwrack
washed up on wrinkled sand;
great flocks of wading birds pack
the estuary – Curlews, Knots and
Oyster Catchers form a stack
pointing into the wind.

Suddenly the stillness shatters.
A frenzy of Knots takes to the air.
Avoidance now matters
as a lone Peregrine
dives into their murmuration
and they part in the sky
like a shoal of fish swerving away
from a shark:
life above water
mirroring that below.

Gorphwysfans

nothing fulfils
like a day on the hills
walking and talking
and never balking
at challenge of incline
or creaks of the spine
or failing map-reading
by leader not heeding
that turning deceptive
retracing perspective
or lashings of rain
or sunburn's pain -
we just love the views
and adventurous cues
provided by messing
about on the hills

Tess Marsh

The Seven Shires Way

A couple of years ago, the Oxford contingent of the Gorphwysfa (Oxfogo) alighted on a wonderful walking guide, entitled "The Seven Shires Way", by Elaine Stearne. To quote from the LDWA (Long Distance Walkers Association):

"The Way takes its name from the fact that as it circles the county boundary of Oxfordshire it encroaches into six other counties, thus making up the Seven Shires. The route, which mainly uses public rights of way, passes through a wide variation of countryside including the stone villages of the Cotswolds, the ironstone villages of North Oxfordshire, the marlstone scarp slopes of Warwickshire, the clay Vale of Aylesbury, the beech woods of the Chilterns, the Thames riverbank and the downland of Berkshire."

It is 234 miles in length and visits Buckinghamshire, Gloucestershire, Northamptonshire, Oxfordshire, Warwickshire, W Berkshire and Wiltshire.

The book divides the walk into 21 days. However, some of the sections were too long for us, especially on short and muddy winter days, so we ended up doing the route in 24 days. A few of the days were out of order, as we jumped ahead of the schedule to avoid wet or flooded areas during the winter.

The walk starts and ends in Moreton-in-Marsh going clockwise. Here is the overall route.



Date	Leg	Distance (miles)
27 October 2023	Morteton in Marsh to Ascott	11.3
23 November 2023	Ascott to Middle Tysoe	7.5
10 January 2024	Middle Tysoe to Shotteswell	7.4
21 May 2024	Shotteswell to Wardington Church	10
18 July 2024	Wardington Church to Aynho Wharf	11
2 September 2024	Aynho Wharf to Mixbury	9
9 October 2024	Mixbury to Poundon	9.6
14 November 2024	Poundon to Boarstall	9
31 January 2024	Boarstall to Waterperry	8
11 April 2025	Waterperry to Henton	11.1
21 March 2025	Henton to Northend	12.6
23 May 2025, also 18 September	Northend to Henley	11
21 July 2025	Henley to Reading	10
21 August 2025	Reading to Goring	10
3 September 2025	Goring to Streatley Town Copse (car park on Ridgeway)	7
7 October 2025	Streatley Town Copse to Lands End	10
29 October 2025	Land's End to Warren Down/Sparsholt Firs	11.4
27 November 2025	Sparsholt Firs to Bishopstone	9
28 January 2026	Bishopstone to Coleshill	10
21 April 2026	Coleshill to Southrop	11
10 June 2026	Southrop to Great Barrington	10
18 February 2026	Great Barrington to Bledington	10
12 August 2026	Bledington to Chastleton	6.8
28 August 2026	Chastleton to Morton-in-Marsh	4.4

Yellow boxes indicate sections done out of order



Four Shire Stone

The route is very varied, mostly well walked. There are occasional Seven Shires stickers on footpath signs which reassured us we were on the right track! The book is full of local historical and geographical detail which kept us entertained along the route.

The first leg passes the Four Shire Stone, a boundary marker for the point where the English counties of Warwickshire, Oxfordshire, Gloucestershire, and Worcestershire once met. All along the route, we crossed and recrossed the Oxfordshire border. On this leg, we found a field of brussels sprouts on the top of Otley Hill, some of which were "scrumped" for the evening meal!

There were many memorable moments, some more joyful than others! We had many lovely views, notably on the Middle Tysoe to Shotteswell leg and also overlooking Henley.

In several places, we saw examples of strip lynchets. These are ancient step-like terraces on hillsides created by medieval farming, featuring flat crop areas called treads and steep slopes called risers. They formed when centuries of ploughing pushed soil down a slope.


Medieval Strip Lynchets near Bishopstone


Lark Rise Cottage

On the Mixbury to Poundon leg, we visited the home of Flora Thompson, who wrote the semi-autobiographical trilogy, Lark Rise to Candleford, recording rural English life in north-east Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire during the late 1880s.

One leg could some into the "epic" category! On a (short) November day on the Poundon to Boarstall leg, we enjoyed a fine sunset followed by an epic trudge through slurry filled fields, finding our way with torches and phone lights until emerging much later near Boarstall Tower, exhausted and very muddy. It was not surprising to find that the path followed a spring line!


Chetwode Priory church

We often stopped in churchyards for coffee or lunch, often in the porch if there was rain or wind. We also, and explored some of the many churches we passed, when time allowed.

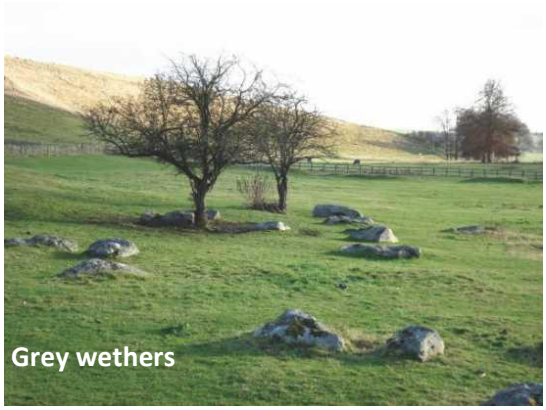
Chetwode Priory church (Mixbury to Poundon leg) has beautiful 13th-century triple- and five-lancet windows, some of which contain the oldest medieval stained glass in England.


Flying pigs

Our lunch and coffee stops also included bus shelters, school shelters and under trees overlooking a cricket pitch. The bus shelter in Horton cum Studley had views of this wonderful example of thatch finials, this time of flying pigs!

We had our picnic lunch in Thame churchyard and discovered that we were sitting right next to the grave of Robin Gibb of the Bee Gees.

The Reading to Goring leg coincided with the beginning of the Reading Festival. We walked alongside groups of young people overloaded with their overnight equipment. We managed to avoid the pillows and duvets which were falling from their overloaded packs!


Grey wethers

On the Sparsholt to Bishopstone leg, we saw Grey Wethers, sarsen stones scattered across valley near Ashdown House. These are natural blocks of dense sandstone, which can easily be mistaken for a flock of grazing sheep (a "wether" is a castrated ram). There were actual sheep amongst them!


Lunch stop in Kelmscott

On the Coleshill to Southrop leg , we passed through Kelmscott, where William Morris lived. We lunched on this ancient base and stump of a medieval cross.

This summer (2026) was very hot and we decided to split the last leg, especially as we wanted to celebrate the finish in Moreton in Marsh.

This area, as much of the Cotswolds, reflects the past and present wealth of the area. From stately homes (The Jacobean Chastleton House) to horse head topiary outside a very smart stables.





Our final leg was celebrated by tea, coffee and cake in Huffkins Café in Moreton in Marsh. A lovely end to a long but very enjoyable adventure.



Kate Williams,
with help from Lucy, Janice, Tricia, Frances and Harvey

Outer Hebrides - A Wild and Windy Trip August 2024

The Outer Hebrides stretches 130 miles from Lewis in the North to the Island of Vatersay in the South. Many smaller islands are uninhabited and most of the population lives on Lewis and Harris. These islands have been inhabited for at least 4,000 years and prehistoric remains are numerous. By the 1st centuries AD the island's inhabitants were speaking Gaelic and they were Christianized following St Columb's arrival in Scotland. In the 6th century.

The islands suffered from Norse raids beginning in the 8th century and they came under Norwegian dominance from the 9th to the 12th centuries. The fusion of Celts and Vikings produced a period of relatively high cultural and material wellbeing in the 11th and 12th centuries. The cessation of local wars and the increased cultivation of the potato as a food crop were instrumental in the subsequent population increase, which soon reached the limit of the subsistence economy.

Later, Somerlad rebelled against the Norwegians and founded the Lordship of the Isles. The Lord of the Isles maintained effective rule over the islands through the late Middle Ages and the Kingdom of Scotland did not establish control there until 1493 when the islands history largely merges with that of the historic counties of which they became part.

A period of social unrest ensured and in the 19th century emigration from the Hebrides to Australia and Canada became common. The immigration of sheep farmers to the islands from the Scottish mainland – they paid higher rents for large acreages of ground – caused the eviction of many small tenants, who resettled in coastal townships where they supplemented the produce of their small plots of land by fishing. In the 19th and 20th centuries the UK assumed a greater role in the islands' administration. In 1886 an act of parliament gave the crofters security and heritability of tenure. Later fair rents were established by a crofters' commission.

The economy of the islands centres on crofting, weaving and fishing. The machair on the western coasts of some islands are the most fertile agricultural areas in the Hebrides, especially when fertilized with seaweed, the common local practice. Cattle raising and dairying are also practiced. Weaving and fishing are concentrated on the rocky infertile eastern coasts of the islands. The best known textile enterprise is the manufacture of Harris Tweed, which traditionally has provided a part time occupation for the crofters. The manufacture of tweed in the Hebrides is historically of ancient origin. The wool was originally vegetable dyed, hand spun and hand woven in the crofters' own homes. Today, before in-home weaving takes place, the washing and the dying of sheared wool as well as its blending and carding into embryonic yarn, along with the spinning and warping process, occur in factories, to which the woven tweed returns for finishing and stamping. The whole process now takes place in Lewis and Harris. Herring fishing is important in Stornaway on Lewis. Tourism and the oil industry are also important economic engines.

It is against this background that I set about planning my Hebrides journey. It took a lot of coordinating of campsites (where available), four ferry crossings and as many historical sites as I could get to and a challenge to walk on every island, in a period of 16 days while driving from south to north on the islands.

The chief islands of the crescent-shaped chain of the Outer Hebrides are Lewis, Harris, North Uist, Benbeccula, South Uist and Barra and St Kilda (40 miles) North West of the main chain. As much as I would have like to include St Kilda the planning of that was so dependent on the weather that it did not fit in finally with my itinerary. So I travelled from Barra in the South all the way up to Lewis in the North in my campervan. I also managed to drive onto Vatersay, Eriskay, Grimsay and Berneray by weaving around on my way north. The most nerve wracking part at times was the single track roads with passing places especially on the 'c' class roads, once you leave the single track main routes. My longest wiggle was 14 miles into the Eagle Observation on the Huisinis peninsular. I only did half of it in the end because I planned to do a walk into Gleann Mhiabhaig.

Day One

My journey began with a drive up the motorways and a stop over at Biggar for the night.

Day Two

The next morning a drive to Oban to catch the ferry. I left Oban on the lunch time ferry and arrived in Castlebay at just after six in the evening. First night camping was at Bove on the west coast of Barra. It was a beautiful evening with clear views out to sea.

Day Three

The next day I drove over my first causeway onto Vatersay. I then discovered the machair in full bloom, a blaze of colour. The machair is formed from lime rich shell sand washed up thousands of years ago by the sea and eroded from the dunes by powerful winds, spreading the sand well inland. The plants species I spotted included red clover, bird'sfoot trefoil. Yarrow, daisies, poppies, silver weed, ragged robin and iris.



The Machair in full bloom



The Annie Jane Memorial

I walked through the machair and on up to the Annie Jane memorial. This was a memorial to remember the 350 lives lost in the bay when all drowned leaving their bodies to be washed up on the beaches and buried near the memorial in a mass grave. This is just one of the many ships that were wrecked on the coastal rocks of the Outer Hebrides.

I continued parallel to the Traigh Siar beach and on up to Sloc Mhartune to the remains of a dun. Just a few rocks left but great views of all the beaches and the walk was wonderfully bracing in the winds. I managed to be back at my camper as the first drops of rain started.

The plan was to finish the day with a circuit on the Eolaigearraidh peninsular, on the far northern part of Barra, where my second campsite was. However the storms came in and the winds howled and everyone (all 3 vans) retreated into their campervans for the rest of the evening.

Day Four

My first stop of the day was at the Cille Bharr Church, dedicated to St Barr, the 7th century Irish monk who gave his name to the island of Barra. It has a rich history, originally having three chapels but only one remaining now. The chapels, I read, date from about the 12th century, but may occupy the site of much earlier buildings. It was the north chapel that I found to have been restored and housing several medieval grave slabs as well as a replica of the Kilbar Stone, or Clach Chille Bharra, a Christian-Nordic rune stone. The original now being houses in the Scottish Museum of Antiquities in Edinburgh. The stone indicates that this area was a Christian centre from a very early time. Also in the North chapel are four late medieval carved slabs, probably representing the MacNeill chiefs. Outside I went to look for the grave of Compton MacKenzie, the author of

the humorous novel, Whisky Galore. I could not find it, but needed to head down to Ardmhor ferry terminal to catch the early morning ferry over to Ereskay.

My experiences of Barra left me reflecting on how kind and supportive the locals are and everybody helps everyone without judgement or expectation of something in return.

Once on Eriskay I parked up along from Acairseid, after meeting three ponies being walked freely along the main road to a new location. I then disappeared for a leg stretching time walking over to Rubha Laith. Not a long walk but another bracing walk in the wind. The whole area is a little gem of a place with hidden bodies of water, the remains of blackhouses dotted about and a rocky coast at the end. I did not see another single person on the whole walk.


The walk over to the coast from Acairseid


Walking over to Rubha Laith

I then drove back towards past Rubha Ban and down another very small single track road to a commonwealth grave site. A local priest was buried here with a spectacular cross. He was responsible for pushing for education for all on the island of Eriskay. He succeeded by setting up night schools for adults and better schooling all round for the children.

I continued my journey to reach the Cladh Halainn after a drive and then a short walk in over the machair. Here were the neolithic round house remains clearly visible and it is the only place in Britain where pre-historic mummies have been found. In 2001 two mummified bodies were found under the floor of one of the round house. These early people appear to have crossed the Minch and lived on the machair for the 1st time. It is thought that Clach Hallen was abandoned when people started building brochs and wheelhouses. Then the Vikings arrived and the settlements moved off the machair.


The neolithic round house remains


The beach at Pollachar Inn

I finished the day by going along to a standing stone by the Pollachar Inn and walking along another fine beach with oyster catches playing in the sand.

Day Five

I started the day with my first museum visit. The Kildonan Museum was crammed packed with information about island life, crofting, historical artifacts and more. It is well worth a visit if you are ever on the Outer Hebrides. What it did express quite clearly was the impact religion on the islands had had and has to this day. There was one display completely given over to the priests who served on the Uists from the 19th centuries to 21st century.

As I drove along I could see numerous amounts of water bodies dotted all about in between the bog lands. Then it was time to stretch my legs again. I started up from Loch an Athain to the An Carra standing stone. A tall lonely stone all by itself. I was not there for long as once again the heavens opened and this time I got drenched!

Further along the road I saw the evidence of one priests work. The very large, dominant statue of Our Lady of the Isles, built by money from crofters which seems incredible, given that crofting is not highly paid. Is this blind faith I ask myself?

I left South Uist and drove over the causeways to Benbeccula in another rainstorm. Once this had eased I parked up for the night and once again found myself another untamed shore with wild sands and a variety of natural habitats to walk along. One man and his dog and I on this beach for miles and miles. As we passed we both left footprints in the sand waiting for the tide to return and wash away.

Day Six

On the road again and heading north on Benbeccula to the Culla beach. Another amazing white sandy beach where the waves had battered against the hard shoreline gradually eroding it. The resulting sediments get moved along with the tides and currents to eventually be washed up again onto the shore and form beaches and rounded forelands which is where my walk took me. Again gentle on the way out and bracing on the way back.

I continued on past the RAF base and on to do a loop onto and around Grimsay or Griomasaigh. I reached the half way point at the fishing harbour which is set in a world of its own. A fish shop providing a variety of really fresh fish along with employment for the local community.

Back on the road and I left Benbeccula to cross another causeway, another engineering masterpiece, to the start of the southern end of North Uist.

Again the area is dotted with bodies of water and divided up into strips of land for each croft. I even managed to get up to the dizzy heights of 30mph on the single track roads as I drove to my next planned stop – Teampullna or Trinity Temple. This is the ruins of a 13th century nunnery all alone on a little blip of land. Nearby was also the site of the Battle of Cairnis which was fought in 1601 between the MacLeods from Harris and the resident MacDonalds. It was the last battle fought in Scotland using traditional weapons. The outcome was the slaughter of the MacLeods.

I returned to the camper van for a coffee and suddenly a magic moment occurred. Three mature deer passed with in metres of me. I don't know who was more surprised, me or the deer. But quick as a flash they responded by running and jumping over the croft boundary fences and were away.

The fishing catch from the Kallin harbour was brought to my next stopping point, the Hebridian Smoked Salmon Processing Plant. A quick visit here. Has I been earlier I would have seen the locals preparing the fish ready for smoking.

I continued to drive on to the northwest side of North Uist to stay at the Balranald Nature Reserve for the night. Here I did a lovely sweep of the machair to reach Traigh Lar. I then headed out and around the Aird An Runair peninsular hugging the coast all the way. Yet again another very windy and bracing walk but a great feeling of freedom. The views were superb. I turned into the east to face Traigh nam Faoghailean, another sweeping long curved sandy beach to return without seeing another person.

Day Seven

Today I started with heading out to park by Loch a Bharpa. Another walk in history to seek the previous inhabitants of this area. I had planned a circular walk firstly up to Barpa Langass buriel chamber. This has a very long history and is the best preserved chamber cairn in the Outer Hebrides. It was built in Neolithic times and is an impressive 25 meters in diameter. It is thought it served as a communal tribal resting place and the tomb was in use for thousands of years. The internal entrance to the chamber is now cordoned off but up until recently you could have gone into the chamber itself.

I continued weaving my path up and over the boggy ground to the top of Beinn Langass at a height of 91 metres. Not quite a Wainwright!! On looking around I was blessed with views of the crofts and land parcels dotted among all the bodies of water. I walked off in a ESE direction to swing round to Sornach Coir Fhinn – Finn's People, the only stone circle on North Uist. It was well and truly tucked away on the slopes of Beinn Langass. My walk finish by passing Langass Lodge, where on my descent, I spotted the first full peat stacks drying after being dug out of the ground lying near by Loch a Bharpa.

I continued on my way to Lochmaddy and stopped by the little museum there which had displays of the accounts of local people and their lives. So very different growing up on the islands. The young children had to leave home and stay in a hostel from Monday to Friday, in Stornaway, while they were at school.

Back on the road I next headed north to cross the causeway to Berneray where I stopped for the night. My camp was a patch of grass overlooking the sea on the East coast of Berneray. Once again the winds built up, rainstorms lashed down and I debated if I should stay or move but I stuck it out. It was sort of fun!

Day Eight

Storms over and sun out what a contrast this morning. I drove to a parking pull up along from the harbour and was blessed with another magic moment. Perched on a rock were two grey seals basking in the sun and wind. I shared their space for some time watching them move between the rocks and sunning themselves. This whole stretch of coastline is a seal area and I was here at the right time to see a mum and her pup resting on the rocks.

I popped back over to the Balranald Nature reserve for another walk over the machair before I left the island. The pull of these lovely long sandy beaches, the bracing winds and the white sands and the beautiful plants were worth another visit. I did a wild camp just before the causeway on to Berneray and tonight I was blessed with a setting sun. The sun went down but it did not get dark.

Day Nine

I caught the early ferry from Berneray to Leverburgh on Harris and started with a visit to St Clement's church in Rodel. It was the MacLeod clan chiefs of Dunvegan and Harris who built this beautiful church as their burial place in about 1520. But the church fell into ruin after the protestant reformation of 1560. It was rebuilt just over two centuries later by Captain alexander MacLeod, but within three years it was damaged by fire and needed substantial repairs. In 1873 the building was restored by the Countess of Dunmore. The church is well worth a visit as it contains the finest wall tombs in Scotland and a collection of late medieval and post-

reformation sculptures. The finest is the tomb and carving of Alisdair MacLeod, 8th chief of the MacLeods., which has a number of symbolic carvings on the tomb.



Tomb of Alisdair MacLeod, 8th chief of the Macleods

My next port of call was the famous Luskentyre beach down a single track road that wiggles about for three miles. On arrival I went onto the three miles of white sands for another bracing walk, and once again there was nobody about.

I wasn't all walked out when I parked my van at Horgabost for the night. I popped along and up a small hill to find the MacLeod standing stone perched at a height of 61 metres. I returned along another sandy beach once I got down from the standing stone to be met with a crofter releasing a herd of sheep across the path. What a laugh watching them run all over the place and the sheep dog gathering them back to the flock to be walked to a new location.



The Macleod standing stone



A crofter releasing a herd of sheep across the road

Day Ten

I continue driving through a very different landscape. Gone is the flat boggy land dotted with water of the Uists and Benbeccula to be replaced with the South Harris hills and more vast stretches of bog.

My first sop today was in Tarbet just to stretch my legs. A café and gift shop and the ferry so I did not stop long. Not a fan of 21st century at this jaunt!

A challenge awaited me with a 28km single track drive on a 'c' road out to the Hushinish peninsular. Well I got as far as the Eagle Observatory and parked up.

I had a lovely walk into the Eagle Observatory. And you guessed correct I didn't see a single eagle. So I was not disappointed because I had a walk to do. Over to Loch Mhiabhaig, then onto Loch Scourst and finally I spied my target Lochan an Fheoir andLoch Bhoisimid in the near distance. It was at this point the clouds turned black and the winds picked up. So I started back and got to the camper just as a down pour started. That was good timing I thought.

Then the slow crawl back along the single track road for tonight 's wild camp at Bowglass overlooking the lochs and crofts in the distance.

Day Eleven

I awoke to black clouds rolling in and my first thunder and lightning storm. So once it had passed I headed out to the standing stones at Callanish. Calannish stone circle is an extraordinary testament to the skills and determination of the people who lived here over 4,000 years ago. It is thought the stones were moved by rollers, wooden frames and brute strength. It must have been a tremendous investment of time and effort.



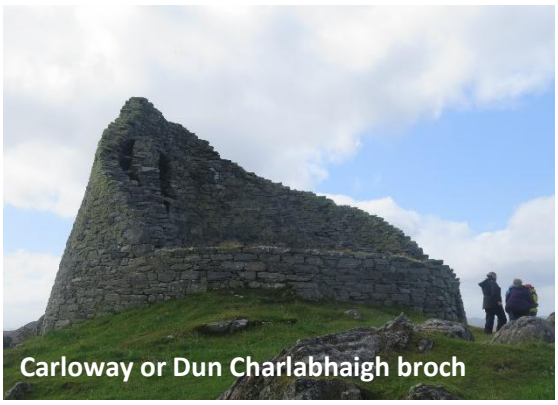
The standing stones at Callanish

The purpose of the stones remains a mystery, but builders of these monuments frequently orientated the monuments according to astronomical events such as the mid-winter sunshine and sunset. Research at Callanish has shown that it has both astronomical and landscape alignments. As I walked around the stones I definitely felt a sense of awe.

It was then back on the road to my next stopping place. Another feat of engineering but built at a much later time period than the stones, the Doune Carloway or Dun Charlabhaigh broch. This is a most impressive building built about 2,000 years ago. It is the best preserved broch in Scotland and is located above Loch an Duin on a rocky knoll. It is an iron age structure designed to impress and defend and it is believed was a home for tribal leaders and important members of the community. You could clearly see it's design of two concentric walls, with a stairway or gallery within the walls to the upper floors. I clambered into the space between the two walls and climbed up to where the staircase remains ended. The broch would have been 15 meters high and was a very sophisticated building for the time it was built. It is not known how long it remained in use but in the 16th century Donald Cam MacAulay climbed inside the broch to smoke out a party of Morrison cattle raiders who had taken refuge in the ruin. He threw in burning heather and the cattle raiders were trapped and all died.



The remains of the Doune



Carloway or Dun Charlabhaigh broch

Back on the road again and I left the medieval period and moved forward in time and visited the Gearrannan Blackhouse Village. Another gem from our more recent history, which in my lifetime, has been saved from dereliction.

The whole area is fascinating and so too is it's more recent history. However, there had been a settlement here for at least 2000 years but it was abandoned. In the 16th century a second permanent settlement was established. By the 18th century one extended family lived here – the MacLeod family. At this time the village was small. Before 1850 there were no houses situated where the blackhouses village is today. Houses were at Sithean - a hummock of land a few yards to the south. There were no crofts and the land was farmed communally. Rent was paid but if tenants fell into arrears they were easily evicted. By 1850 the land was lotted in such a way that each tenant was given his own 'croft' but it was not until the crofting act of 1886 that matters improved for the families living on the land. Tenants were no longer in danger of being evicted and they had the right to pass their lands on to their families. By the end of the 19th century the present crofts were established and new blackhouses were built further north, where they are today.

As you walked in and around the blackhouses you could see the blackhouses had seen the cycle of life through generations of crofting families. The blackhouses were occupied until the early 1970's when the last few elderly residents moved to new accommodation that didn't need the annual maintenance of thatch and stonework. The old houses and their environs were declared a conservation area shortly after the last residents left. There was a unique opportunity to preserve a style of house building which had survived for centuries but which had almost disappeared in the last half of the 20th century – the blackhouse.

What I found fascinating, given the eco-friendly climate we live in today, the blackhouses were suitable for the Hebridean weather with all building materials being natural and found locally and there was little waste. But they had no modern comforts. The floor was generally flagstones or packed earth and there was a central hearth for the fire. There was no chimney for smoke to escape through, instead the smoke made its way through the roof. This led to soot blackening of the interior which may have contributed to the adoption of the name blackhouse. There was no running water or electricity and toilet facilities was to go and dig a hole outside!

The whole village has been kept alive by the local community trust Urras nan Gearrannan. It features nine restored traditional thatched cottages built in the late 1800's and lived in until 1974. – the last to be inhabited in the Western Isles. I was able to go inside and view a few blackhouse interiors. Some were kept just as they were when the last resident left. I saw my grandmother's sewing machine, the box bed my father had when growing up in Glasgow, the ceramic hot water bottles - still in use when I was a child in Glasgow and lots more artifacts. One black house also has a local weaver set up in the byre and we watched him weave on a 70-year-

old Hattersley Mark 1 loom making the famous Harris Tweed. He gave us a talk about the tweed's history and how the Harris Tweed Orb Certification in 1909 and the Harris Tweed Act of parliament came about.

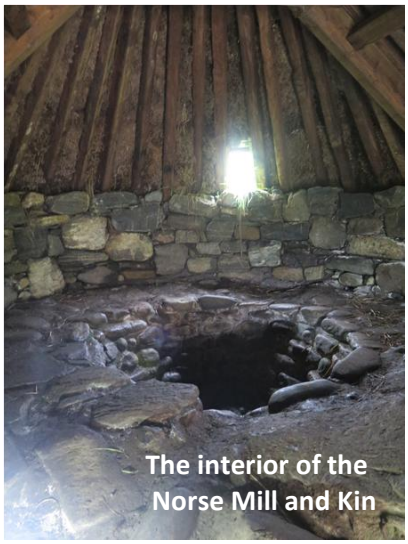

Urras nan Gearrannan black houses

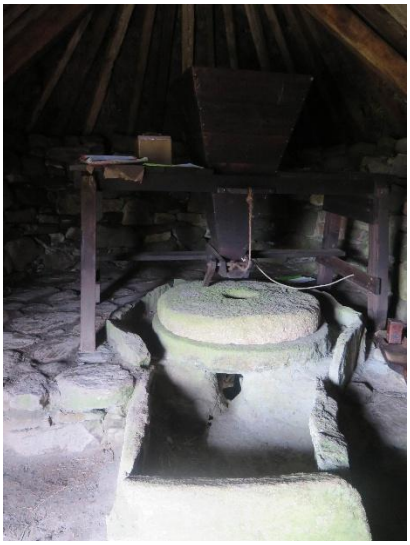

The 70 year old Hattersley Mark 1 loom

So today I have travelled in both time and distance again and moved onto my next campsite for the night on the northern coast of Lewis. – Eilean Fraoich.

Day Twelve

Today was day which started with a look back at a rare glimpse into Scandinavian past of Lewis. The Norse Mill and Kiln , powered by water from a small stream from the nearby Loch Roinavat. The mill and kiln were used at a time when crofters were completely sufficient and producing for all their needs of the people. Oat and barley were grown on the crofts and the mill and kiln were used to process the grain into oatmeal and barley meal. The mill and kiln were rebuilt in the late 1960's and worked on again in 1995. I went into both buildings which served different purposes. One was the kiln and drying room with a raised stone floor and a fire pit underneath which prepared the corn for milling. The second building had a mill laid running through the middle of the building to drive the paddles and mill wheel. It would have had two stones rotating to move a feed hopper to drop grain into the rotating wheel. The two buildings had been carefully restored and were well worth a visit.


The interior of the Norse Mill and Kin



My next stop can only be described as unusual. The whale bone arch in Bragar. This has a fascinating story which happened in 1920 when the corpse of an 80 foot long blue whale drifted into 'Geodha Nam Muc, Bragar Bay. It had a harpoon in its head trailed by fifty feet of rope. The beached whale attracted a great deal of attention due to its size. The whaling company were contacted to come and dispose of it, but no one came. The corpse began to rot and the stench was awful. So the villagers dealt with it themselves. The blubber was

harvested by tapping into the whale's body and filling bottles and barrels with the gloopy fat. It was used for oil, disinfectant, tar and medicine.


The whalebone arch in Bragar

Murdo Morrison decided he would take a memento and the lower jaw bone would make an ideal arch over his gateway. In the Autumn of 1921 a procession of the villagers pulled the gigantic bones on a make shift sledge over the rough tracks from the shore. The jaw bones stand here today at 25 feet tall and four tons heavy. The harpoon is suspended at the apex where it was found. The arch has been bid upon numerous times over the centuries but it is not and never will be sold.

I finished my explorations with a visit to the Arnol Blackhouses where there is another nature reserve on the outskirts of the blackhouses. I walked over to Loch na Muiline hoping to see some of the special birds, red-necked phalarope. There are less than fifty males who return each year to breed. Alas I was too late as they return in May to July, but I did have another very bracing blustery walk.

My camp for the night was the Hebridean Camper overnight parking. Before I stopped for the day I did a little walk down to the very old jetty before the rain occurred and once again the winds picked up.

Day Thirteen

Today was my trip to the windiest part in the UK, the Butt of Lewis and its lighthouse. The lighthouse stood at 37 meters tall and 52 meters above sea level. It stands on the most northerly point of Lewis and was designed and build by David Stevenson, grandfather to Robert Louis Strevenson. The area where the light house stands features some of the oldest rocks in Europe, having been formed in the Precambrian period up to three billion years ago. With this history I went to explore the coastal route back around Roinn a Roidh and spied some fascinating stacks and rock formations created by the pounding waves.

As I returned to the beach Traigh Shannaigh, where I started my walk, I came upon a memorial to the fishermen who had lost their lives on the rocks around the Butt of Lewis. One such event was witnessed by the entire villager who could see it unfolding yet were unable to help. The Ness crew had left behind nine widows and twenty two children. All were without means and some families were landless too. What a harsh life it was.


The most northerly point of Lewis


The rocks around the Butt of Lewis

Later I walked into the Port of Ness harbour, passing all the crofts which are still being worked today. At the harbour was another memorial to all the local fishermen who had lost their lives with each storm being recorded. Most crew had gone out in a 6 oars open boat as was the custom of the time. The men had risked their lives to earn a living so they could pay their rent on their crofts. We really have no idea of hardship.

My camp for tonight was the Galson Campsite with excellent facilities. There were three vans tonight so very quiet apart from the wind.

Day Fourteen

A drive through Stornaway to get out to Crossbost to the Weaving Shed. A little local enterprise where two sisters had bought a Hattersley Mark 1 loom off a very old weaver who was retiring. This loom was older than the one I saw in the blackhouses by 10 years and still going strong. The weavers had created a workshop similar to the crofting of old and sold their weaving in a little shop next door.

Just by Stornaway I saw a sign for another memorial for the Iolaire. The Iolaire set sail from Kyle of Lochalsh at about 19:30 in strong winds on 31st December 1918. A few miles off Stornoway the weather got much worse and as the Iolaire made its final approach into Stornoway harbour in a strong gale, it is believed the boat changed course at the wrong point. With the lights of the harbour in sight, the ship struck rocks known as the Beasts of Holm at full speed and immediately began to tilt, filling up with water. The men were just 20 yards from the shoreline when the Iolaire hit the rocks just before 02:00. More than 200 people drowned, just yards from the shoreline and the safety of home.

A total of 79 men managed to survive the sinking. John Finlay Macleod, from Ness, helped save about 40 of them. He grabbed a rope, gave one end to a man onboard, and prepared to swim ashore through the violent sea. Speaking in an interview in 1973, he told how it was not far to the shore but the waves were terrible and pushed him back further than he had been before he started. Mr Macleod, who was 30 at the time, said he succeeded in getting to the rocks by keeping afloat and then riding in on the crest of the wave. He was thrown on to the rocks but managed to cling on, establishing a rescue line that others used to get to shore.

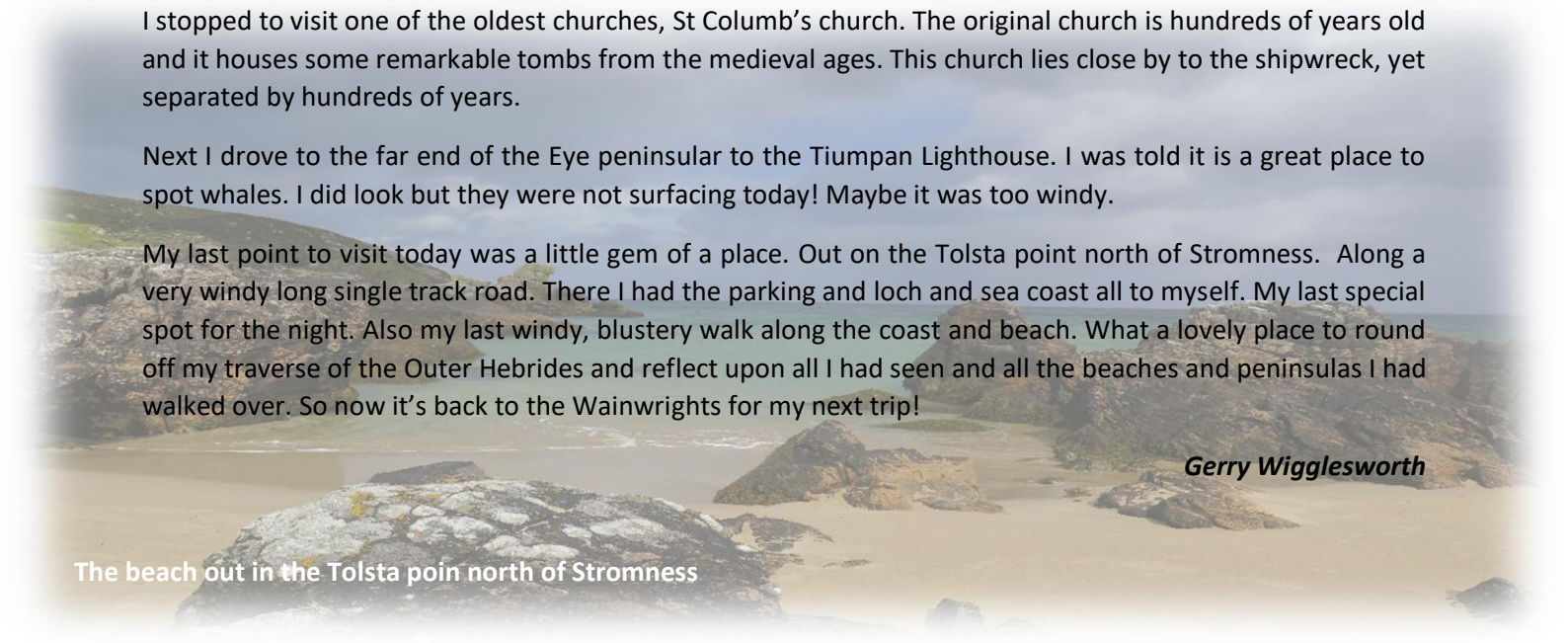
Another survivor, Donald Morrison clung to the mast of the ship all night, awaiting rescue. He also described what happened in the 1973 documentary. "I could see the big sea coming, and I would squeeze myself onto the mast," he said. "I heard a crash, and the other mast had broken, and the two men who were on it had gone too, and there I was all by myself till daybreak." Of those known to have died, 174 came from Lewis, with seven Harrismen among the dead. A further 18 crew and two passengers on their way to the Stornoway Naval Base were killed. At the time of the incident, such was the grief on the island that few families spoke of what happened. Many feel that what happened contributed to future emigration from the Western Isles.

This has been the saddest story of my travels and to think these men were alive in 1973, when a local historian Catriona Dunn, interviewed them. So with this in mind I drove onto the Eye peninsular where at the causeway I stopped to visit one of the oldest churches, St Columb's church. The original church is hundreds of years old and it houses some remarkable tombs from the medieval ages. This church lies close by to the shipwreck, yet separated by hundreds of years.

Next I drove to the far end of the Eye peninsular to the Tiumpan Lighthouse. I was told it is a great place to spot whales. I did look but they were not surfacing today! Maybe it was too windy.

My last point to visit today was a little gem of a place. Out on the Tolsta point north of Stromness. Along a very windy long single track road. There I had the parking and loch and sea coast all to myself. My last special spot for the night. Also my last windy, blustery walk along the coast and beach. What a lovely place to round off my traverse of the Outer Hebrides and reflect upon all I had seen and all the beaches and peninsulas I had walked over. So now it's back to the Wainwrights for my next trip!

Gerry Wigglesworth

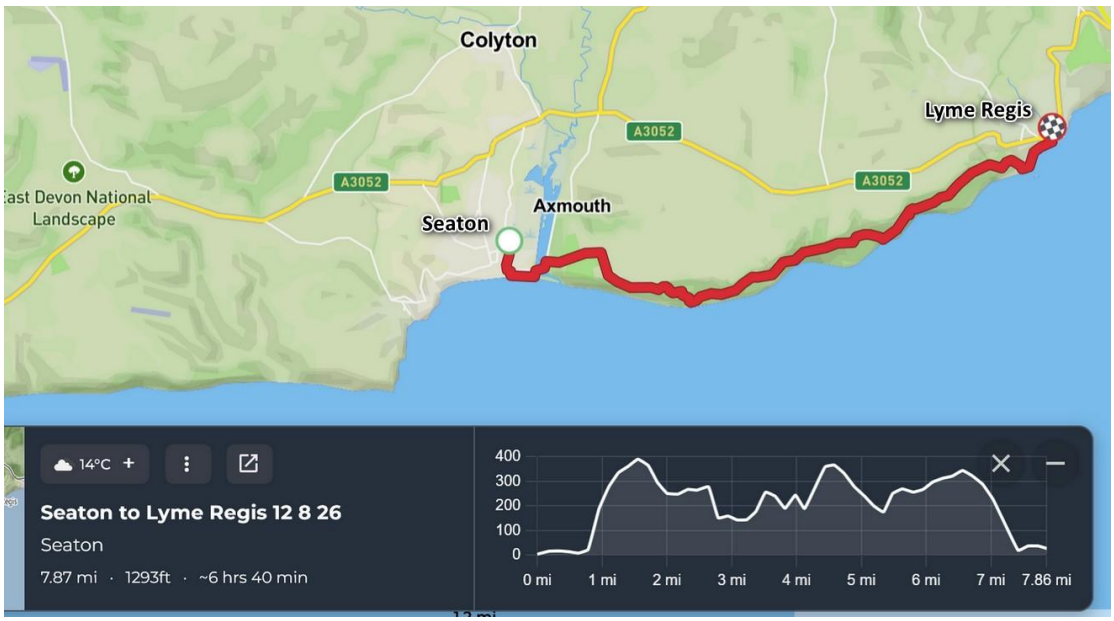


The beach out in the Tolsta poin north of Stromness

A Day on the South West Coast Path

We know the south coast better from the sea than we do from land, as we kept a small yacht in the Solent for nearly twenty years. We did a lot of local sailing – east to Chichester, west to Poole Harbour, Swanage and Portland - with three memorable longer trips. Once we sailed east to the Thames estuary and twice we went west to Falmouth. There are some exciting passages to be negotiated on the passage west. The lighthouse on Portland Bill warns of the dangers of being in the wrong place at the wrong time, due to a maelstrom of current at peak tidal flow, enough to cause the loss of much bigger boats than ours. But at slack water, at neap tides, there's a narrow stretch of water close to the headland that is calm, and we took this on both occasions, keeping a good lookout for buoys marking underwater fishermen's pots – it would have been a nightmare to foul one on our propeller. Further on, there are more headlands, with more-or-less fierce tidal races, particularly Start Point. So these are geographical features that we recognise from the sea, and the plan this summer was, since we'd sold our boat two years earlier, to explore the same coast from the land, using the south west coast path. This is part of the Jurassic Coast, a World Heritage site.

We rented an apartment in Sidmouth to be our base for the next four days. Using a combination of our car (twice) and local buses (three times), we got ourselves to Exmouth (visiting a marina we'd once taken the boat to) and walked to Budleigh Salterton; the next day we walked from Budleigh Salterton to Sidmouth and two days later, from Seaton to Lyme Regis.



The two first stages were delightful, with the path sometimes close to the beach (busy in the towns, where holiday makers were making the most of the vivid blue skies and the sea to match) and sometimes climbing high, on to the tops of the cliffs.



From the high points, we had views along the coast for tens of miles, looking west to Start Point and east to Portland Bill, a direct distance, according to Google Maps, of 90km. And looking inland, we could see miles of rolling countryside, with patchworks of different colour – various shades of green for the woodland and brown for the arable and the pasture. But it was the third stage that made an indelible impression.



The geology here has greensand and chalk overlying clay, a combination that can lead to instability as rain water percolates through the overlying material and then builds up along the impermeable clay surface, making it slippery. Landslides have occurred at various times in the past, with a major one on Christmas Day in 1839, and there is now a five mile length of undercliff, with deep chasms and jumbled rock between the inland cliffs behind and the fallen sections forming sea cliffs.



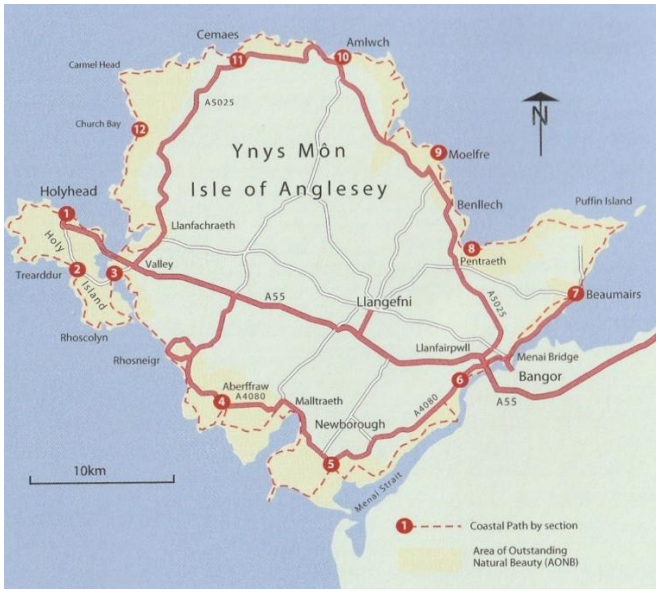
The area is now a National Nature Reserve and is managed to remove alien plants, so that it is an extraordinary example of untouched English rainforest. Self-sown ash and field maple dominate, with guelder rose and spindle, and the floor covering is dense fern. It was easy to believe in magic, with sunlight filtering through the canopy, trees contorted in to strange shapes, white cliffs above to our left, a crystal clear pool, and occasional glimpses of blue sea through breaks. The only route through is the coast path, with no escape to right or left, and we felt very conscious of its undulating, uneven nature, needing concentration for foot-placing. According to my navigation app, we climbed nearly 1300 feet – nothing in comparison with a day in N Wales, but enough to make us feel we'd done something by the time we reached Lyme Regis.



Gilliane Sills

Isle of Anglesey Coastal Path

Back in 2025 at Frances' suggestion a group of us embarked on walking the Anglesey Coastal Path. The group consisted of myself, Lucy, Janice, Frances from OXFOGO and Christine and Andrew Middleton also joined us. Having looked at the author and name of the guide book which Frances had obtained I duly ordered this from Amazon. I subsequently discovered there are two versions of the guide one going clockwise and the other anticlockwise. Of course, I got the wrong one, so I am working from the back of the book!



Anyway, on the 18 March 2026 the group set off from Holyhead to do the first section. The start of the walk is St Cybil's Church. We could only get to the outskirts of this as they were working on a mosaic pavement at the entrance path. It should be lovely when its finished. The weather was lovely sunny and dry, not too hot, good walking weather and remained good for the whole week.



Frances arranged a rental property to share in Rhosneigr doing car shuttles at each end of the day. On the first day we walked from Holyhead to Porth Dafarch (10 miles) climbing Holyhead Mountain and having lovely views of the lighthouses North Stack and South Stack. At our coffee stop, we watched seals gambling in the sea around South Stack. Lucy took *a* picture of us on the trig point on the top of Holyhead Mountain.



On the following days, we did Porth Dafarch to Four Mile Bridge (11 miles), Four Mile Bridge to Porth Trecastell (9.5) and finally Porth Trecastell to Maltreath (9).

We had beautiful views from the cliff tops, saw St Gwenfaen's well which was apparently a place of pilgrimage during the Middle Ages. The route also went over Silver Bay sands where we found lots of debris from recent storms including washed up mermaid's purses. We also saw oyster catchers and choughs from the cliff tops.

The path went by RAF Valley through sand dunes which was very noisy due to the number of aeroplanes. It was here we met Becky on the dunes who had run from Newborough Warren to accompany us that day.



We met up with Janet, a neighbour of Lucy's in Oxfordshire who has a former family home in Rhosneigr. It was fortunate her stay in Anglesey coincided with our visit and she managed to join our group walking on a couple of occasions.

We had also a good view of Llangwfyan Church from our coffee stop see above. It was cut off by the tide at that point but apparently still used for weddings.





We did have one problem in following the footpath on day three, which started at Four-Mile Bridge, the early crossing point to Holy Island. Here the route skirted the estuary which cuts Holy Island off from the greater part of Anglesey, but owing to exceptionally high spring tides, the posts we were following were under water. Fortunately an inland detour brought us back to the coast half a mile further along.



At the Bodogran Estate on the last stretch the landowner had diverted the coastal footpath, involving a mile and a half's extra road walking. Frances, who was map-reading, decided to ignore the new signs and follow the original route across fields. There were fine views of the Maltraeth Sands National Nature reserve as we descended towards Maltraeth, though we were just too early for the migrating birds

All in all a very pleasant few days, of course good weather and pleasant company always helps.

Tricia Shorter

Jordan - or more precisely Wadi Rum and Petra, April 2026

Day 1

After a 5hr flight from Heathrow I met up with my fellow trekkers at Amman Airport. Whilst being driven to our hotel for the night the heavens opened and it began to rain and it continued all night. I had a disturbed night with the rain hammering down and the barking and the howling of dogs prowling around making sleeping difficult. Then at about 5:30am the call to prayers was made for all to hear.

Day 2

After breakfast we met with our tour guide, Wafa'a. Wafa'a is Jordan's second female trekking guide and was a fount of knowledge throughout our trip. We journeyed to Wadi through a rainstorm and our spirits were not high with the thought of walking in rain, after all we were going into a desert, but as we arrived at Wadi Rum the rain ceased and the sun shone.

Wadi Rum, "The Valley of The Moon," became more widely known after the film "Lawrence of Arabia" and the book written by T E Lawrence although it has also been used in numerous films since. Whilst Wadi Rum is the largest Wadi (dry valley) in Jordan with its sand covered flat areas and rocky outcrops of sandstone it also has the largest underground reservoir in Jordan. The water is transported through a 325km pipeline and 65 wells to Amman for use there. Wadi Rum is also a designated nature reserve



From the visitor centre we looked out to a rock formation now known as "The Seven Pillars of Wisdom." These were named after the book written after the war by Lawrence. From the visitor centre we were taken to both meet our Bedouin guide and to eat with him at his home in Rum village. After eating we began our first day of walking. From the village we followed a partially restored path uphill to a spring known as Lawrence's Spring where Lawrence of Arabia reputedly washed during the Arab Revolt. Rock inscriptions are also found here. The path continued contouring around and over large boulder fields until we descended to the sandy floor of the desert. Here we were collected by a 4x4 and transported to our basic campsite for the night. A very basic campsite but at least we were welcomed by cups of very sweet tea. All meals were eaten in the traditional way with us all sitting cross-legged on the floor using a very low table. Not too good for the knees. Once our evening meal was over, we turned in for the night. Whilst the daytime temperature was in the high teens, the evening temperature dropped to a few degrees above freezing as the sun dropped below the horizon at about 6:45pm. Safely ensconced in a warm sleeping bag I drifted off to sleep just as it started to rain!



Day 3



Breakfast the following morning included bread, hummus, olive oil, herbs, hard boiled eggs, za'atar, halva and a few other dishes I cannot remember the name of. This was pretty much the standard fare for breakfast each morning. Today's walk was to a natural rock arch called Burdah Bridge. We began with a drive in a 4x4 to the beginning of a rock formation rising from the sandy floor of Wadi Rum. We ascended on very grippy sandstone slabs, wandering through a maze of gullies and rock faces until the final turn into a hidden gully to see ahead and above the natural rock bridge. After a final climb up a short steep wall, we reached the bridge. Amazing views all around. Reversing our route, the descent proved to be a little more difficult and our guide made use of a rope to safeguard our descent of the short steep wall. Once down this, we picked our way back through gullies and over slabs to the sand passing various flowers which were managing to exist including wild thyme and mustard flower. Lunch had been set up for us and after feasting and resting we began our trek to our new campsite. Crossing the firm sand, we came across a few holes which had been dug by foxes searching for small mammals to eat. A fine, dry, sunny day with a light breeze made for a pleasant day. Once at the tents we rested before our evening meal. Darkness came and we sat looking at the amazing night sky.



Day 4



After breakfast we had a 30min drive to Jabal Khasch. We walked through a rock valley and began to clamber over rocky slabs, twisting and turning before reaching the summit plateau at about 1700m. Here we met another Bedouin guide (a cousin of our guide) who began a small fire to prepare a hot cup of sweet tea for us. Continuing along the plateau we descended by another rocky route to our lunch spot before a walk back to our next wild campsite. Just around the corner from our campsite, sheltered below a cliff, we saw a flock of nesting Sinai Rosefinch. Chosen because of its rosy colour similar to Petra, the Red Rose City. After a refreshing cup of tea and our evening meal, we again marvelled at the night sky.

Day 5



Today another drive by 4x4 took us up Wadi Saabit to a point where we could begin our walk to the highest point in Jordan. Jabal Um ad Dami at 1832m. Leaving our vehicle, the walk climbed steeply up a rocky gully to emerge onto a stoney path which led us steadily uphill to the summit cairn. From here we were close to the border with Saudi Arabia. After taking in the view and taking photographs, we reversed our route back down to our transport. After a short drive we stopped, gathered up dead wood for a fire and our Bedouin guide prepared a meal for us. Resting for a short while we left our lunch spot to walk to a Bedouin campsite. This was an established camp with individual structures which had a real bed for the night along with communal showers and flush toilets. After 3 nights wild camping and walking in sunshine with the temperature about 20 degrees, the warm shower was very welcome. The evening meal was a traditional Bedouin meal cooked in an underground oven. Originally a fire would have been started in a hole dug in the sand. Once the fire had subsided the meat would have been wrapped and laid on the embers before being covered with a large stone and left for a few hours to cook. Now, the fire is started in an oil drum buried in the sand before the meat and vegetables are lowered on a tiered rack onto the hot embers. The drum is sealed, covered with sand, and again left for a few hours until it is unsealed and the food lifted out. Very tasty and then off to bed for a more comfortable night's sleep.

Day 6

After breakfast we returned by 4x4 to the village from where our Wadi Rum trek had begun. Here we said our goodbyes to the Bedouin guide, who had looked after us for the past few days, and transferred to a minibus for a 90min drive to Petra.

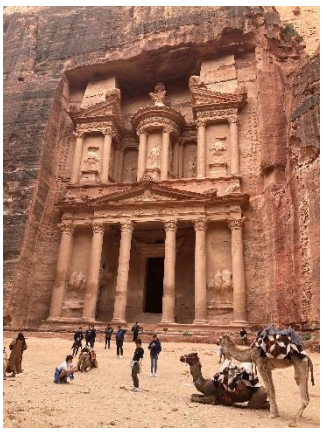
Petra became the capital of the Nabataeans from the 1st century, although the area around Petra had been inhabited from as early as 7,000BC. Petra was an important trading centre for caravan trade routes linking Damascus in the North; Gaza to the West; Aqaba on the Red Sea coast and across the desert to the Persian Gulf. Nabataeans survived at Petra by controlling the water supply from a perennial stream. Flash flooding was controlled by dams, conduits, and cisterns. Petra was annexed to the Roman Empire and whilst it continued to thrive an earthquake in 363AD destroyed many of the buildings. This, combined with the emergence of sea trade routes eventually led to the downfall of Petra and by the middle of the 7th Century, Petra became deserted apart from local Bedouins in the area. Petra is also known as the rose-red city, from

the colour of the rock from which many of the city's structures were carved. It became a UNESCO world heritage site in 1985 and was announced as one of the new Seven Wonders of the World in 2007.

Arriving at the town of Wadi Musa, we left our luggage at the Hotel and walked to the Petra Visitor Centre.



Here we collected our tickets for entry and began our journey of exploration towards "The Siq." This 1.2km dark rocky gorge, created from a natural splitting of the mountain, is narrow in places and leads to the first of the many impressive structures carved into the rock. Some structures are tombs, whilst the city also has a theatre carved into the side of the mountain seating 4,000 people, a Monastery measuring 47m wide by 48.3m high carved in the early part of the 2nd century, along with a Temple and a Church. The Treasury is the most well-known structure of Petra and is the first to be seen on emerging from the Siq. Our visit and tour through Petra were made both interesting and absorbing by our knowledgeable guide. After spending some time in Petra, we returned to our hotel for the evening.



Day 7

Our final walking day. We left our hotel and walked once again through the Siq and Petra to meet our local guide. After meeting our guide, rain began to fall, the first rain since our arrival, but after a few hours the rain had stopped and the sun shone. Our trek today was to the top of Jebel Haroun, also known as Mount Aaron. Following a path, zigzagging between rugged cliffs we reached a small, white painted mosque and shrine at the 1270m summit. The shrine is reputedly the burial site of Aaron, the brother of Moses. After taking in the views, we retraced our steps down to Petra. On the descent our guide took a phone call telling him that Petra had been evacuated due to localised flooding. We continued but when we reached Petra any flooding had disappeared although the ground was wet. After a final viewing of Petra, we returned to our hotel.



Day 8

An early start from the hotel at 6:30 for the 3hr drive to the airport. We left in torrential rain and it looked as if Petra might be closed again. The plan was to stop for refreshments before the airport but at that time of day all facilities were still closed due to Ramadan which had started a few days earlier. It seems that many people observing Ramadan rise late to reduce the time spent fasting. Our journey was uneventful and on reaching the airport we said our farewells to our tour guide to check in for our flights home.

Terry Jones

Everest Base Camp

Wednesday 9th October 2024.

Today's the day.and with a little bit of trepidation I left home for my journey to Manchester Airport for the flight to Kathmandu.

The trek idea began in February in a general conversation about plans for 2024 with my friend Mick whilst in Scotland. He was planning a trip to Everest Base Camp (EBC). Sounded a good idea I thought so I asked if any places were still available. Yes was the response to which I replied book me on it. Whilst I viewed the trip as a journey through the amazing scenery and delights of the Himalayas, I considered actually reaching base camp as a bonus, not an objective.



The trip schedule was for everyone to meet at the Kathmandu Guest House on the Friday evening but I had decided to travel a day earlier and arrive at the Hotel on the Thursday, allowing some down time on the Friday. Check in was fine and flights were on time. Due to travel time and time zones, it was now Thursday when I landed. After the hustle and bustle of immigration and queing for a visa I was met by Mick in the arrivals lounge and transported to KGH. Dusk was falling and the traffic in Kathmandu was the same chaotic jumble of cars, bikes, and scooters all vying to edge ahead in stationary traffic to little avail.

On reaching KGH I checked in and met up with some of my fellow treckers, who had also travelled earlier. After an evening meal and feeling a little tired, an early night beckoned.

Friday 11th October 2024.

Kathmandu hasn't changed much since I was last here. Strolling around, the same hussle and bussle of people and the aftermath of the earthquake was still visible with cables dangling and collapsed buildings being left untouched. Outdoor shops still dominate the area and street vendors peddle their wares. Back at KGH the remaining members of the group had arrived, one of whom was Gary a friend of mine from Yr Hafod along with his son. After lunch, clothing and equipment was discussed, with some members of the group (relatively new to walking) having their kit checked by Mick, our group leader and organiser. Next step was to buy local sim cards, to enable communication within the group, and arrange local currency. We also had a briefing outlining the plan for the following day and an overview of the days ahead. In 2022, the Civil Aviation Authority of Nepal had decided to use Ramechhap (Manthali) Airport to fly to and from Lukla instead of Kathmandu. This was due to an increase in passengers and flights in the peak trekking season causing pressure on Kathmandu airport so the plan was to take a four hour journey on Saturday to Manthali by bus, stay overnight in Manthali and we were then booked on to the first flight out on Sunday morning. Because of the size of the group we had the plane to ourselves. However, Nepal had experienced flooding in the weeks before our arrival and some roads and bridges had been washed away meaning the 4hr journey was now diverted and would take 8hrs. This meant that we would have an early start the next morning, after breakfast, rather than a more leisurely day travelling.

Saturday 12th October 2024. Kathmandu to Lukla to Phakding.

Breakfast at 7am. As we came down for breakfast Mick spoke with each of us individually to advise us that there had been no flights from Mantali to Lukla since the previous Wednesday due to poor flying conditions resulting in a back log of passengers waiting to fly. The consequence of this was that there was no certainty of our flight being available even if flights resumed due to the backlog of treckers waiting in Mantali. Big decision time. If everyone agreed we could try and charter helicopter flights direct from Kathmandu to Lukla. Everyone agreed although there would be an additional cost for everone. After a flurry of phone calls we loaded and boarded the coach that was originally going to be for an 8hr drive but was now only about 30mins. Arriving at the airport we checked in and were led to a departure lounge after having the weight of our luggage rechecked. We were soon shepherded out to a minibus but only 5 were allowed on with the remainder returning to the lounge. 15mins later at 9:30 a second group were led out leaving the final group of 5 (myself included) twiddling our thumbs in an increasingly hot departure lounge. Finally at 11:30 we were taken by minibus to the helicopter area for hopefully our flight. As we waited in a shaded shipping container we spotted the previous group waiting in some shade near the landing area. After waiting for about 30mins we were taken to a landing pad where a helicopter had just landed and was disgorging it's passengers and their luggage. As they walked toward our minibus we clambered aboard the helicopter. The engine fired up and the rotors began to whirl. We were on our way. The flight was less bumpy than I expected and soon we were approaching Lukla. We started to descend and landed in a field! The pilot explained that the cloud was preventing us from landing at Lukla and we had to wait. As we waited, a farmer who had been cutting down vegetation, put down his scythe and approached the pilot with a receipt book. The pilot signed the book which appeared to agree to paying a landing fee. Once signed, the farmer returned to his task. After about 30 mins we took off and landed at Lukla 3 mins later. Before leaving the landing pad the final group arrived after having waited another 30 mins before departing. After regrouping with everyone at a Tea house we had lunch. We then set off for a 4hr walk to Phakding, a day earlier than planned. After arriving at our Tea house for the night we checked in and had our evening meal. Not a big selection on the menu. After a briefing for the following day, (breakfast at 6:30 leave at 7am,) we retired to our rooms. An early night for all at a height of 2610m.



Sunday 13th October 2024. Phakding to Namche Bazaar (NB).

Breakfast not quite on time so we left at 7:15. Shortly after leaving the Tea house we encountered our first suspension bridge of the day. Swaying gently we strode across trying to match our pacing with the bounce of the bridge. The final part of the bridge seemed to be a challenge with an uphill slope from the lowest point on the bridge to the anchor point on the opposite side. Having crossed the Dudh Koshi we continued to follow the river in a northerly direction crossing smaller suspension bridges over the tributaries feeding in to the churning torrent of Dudh Koshi. Shortly after passing a path going off to Kyashar Glacier on our right we reached the entrance and control point for the Sagarmatha National Park. Due to the problems with flights there was no queues or delays in securing our permits to enter the National Park. The altitude at the entrance to the park is 2835m and although it was just under 4km to Namche we still had an ascent of about 600m. Halfway to Namche we reached our final suspension bridge. This was the Sir Edmund Hillary Bridge. This colourful bridge was completed in 2013 and was built to replace the original bridge which now spans the river beneath the new one and is used for bungee jumps. From here it is uphill all the way to Namche, where we arrived at 4:15pm. Whilst this was a 9hr day it was interspersed with a lunch





stop (which is never a quick process) and refreshments at Tea houses en route. Our Tea house for the night was called The Bodhi Hotel which seemed to be fairly new but the facilities were still basic. A large communal dining area that had some heating, shared bathrooms and showers available for 500 rupees (£3). Showering was pot luck as the water was only heated by solar power and once it was used up it was a cool/cold shower. No power was available in the unheated bedrooms but charging of devices was possible in the dining room for 200 rupees (c.£1.20). The food menu was the same as the previous night. With little entertainment we retired to our beds for an early start the following day. Altitude 3440m.

Monday 14th October 2024. Namche Bazaar

This was to be our first acclimatisation day but we still met for breakfast at 6:30am. The reasoning for this was to reach the Everest View Hotel from which Everest, Nuptse, Lhotse and others were visible providing the sky was clear and the best opportunity for this is early morning. Leaving at 7am we reached the Hotel at 9:15am and sat on a balcony peering at clouds covering the tops. Shortly after the clouds blew over and we were rewarded with great views. As we continued with refreshments the cloud kept blowing in and out with the view coming and going until it eventually remained in place obscuring any view. We then returned to Namche. During the 2hr descent we met many walkers heading up and knew that they would be disappointed as the cloud had now shown no signs of moving. Our early start was worth it. Once reaching Namche we had free time to wander and explore. The purpose of an acclimatisation day is to gain altitude from your overnight height and then descend to sleep at a lower height enabling your body to become accustomed to the lower level of oxygen in the atmosphere. Meeting up in the evening we went to a local pizza restaurant which was excellent but the portion sizes were too great for many of us. Returning to our Tea-house we prepared for our 7am breakfast and departure. Altitude 3440m.



Tuesday 15th October 2024. Namche Bazaar to Tengboche.

Despite having been down for breakfast at 7am we did not leave until 8:15am. Our baggage had left unseen an hour earlier. The weather was cool but sunny. Leaving Namche Bazaar we climbed steeply out of the village before traversing high above the Dhudh Kosi river through rhododendrom forests with the sound of the river being a pleasant constant companion which sadly at times was interrupted by the sound of helicopters frequently flying up and down the valley. The path was originally in a wide valley but as we climbed higher the valley narrowed and whilst our views diminished the valley itself was very deep and impressive.



Dropping down to the river at Phunki Tenga we stopped for lunch just before a suspension bridge at 3250m. With our final destination today being at 3860m we had a height gain of 610m. That didn't sound too bad but it was uphill all the way with no flat sections or any descent. After a steady uphill plod of 2hrs we reached the Himalyan Hotel (Tea house to me) in Tengboche. After refreshments we went to the Monastry for the afternoon service. Returning to the Tea house we sorted ourselves out for our evening meal. The outside temperature was 3° dropping to -3° overnight, but the dining room was very warm with 2 wood burning stoves.

After the meal it was another early night and my best night's sleep so far. The quilts provided had been warm enough for me but I wondered when I might need my sleeping bag. Altitude 3867m.

Wednesday 16th October 2024. Tengboche to Dingboche.

Another early start leaving at 7:30am after finishing breakfast. We descended to the Imja Khola one of the 2 rivers joining to form Dudh Khosi and crossed to the other side over another suspension bridge. A fairly level track took us past a few Mani walls and then steadily uphill to Pangboche where we had views of Ama Dablam. After lunch we continued gently uphill passing through Pheriche from where it was a short walk into the Imja Valley. From here the climbing steepens before reaching Dingboche. We were staying at the Good Luck Hotel (Tea house). Again the only room with any form of heat was the dining room. As was now becoming the norm, all wifi and battery charging became chargeable with no power available in sleeping rooms. I chose potato rosti for my evening meal, very tasty. Others chose spring rolls which turned out to be a bad choice. Another early night with reasonable sleep. Altitude 4410m.

Thursday 17th October 2024. Dingboche.

A later start to today as this was our second acclimatisation day. Whilst having breakfast, my friend Gary came in to the dining room feeling exhausted. He had been having poor sleep for a few nights and the previous night had kept waking up gasping for breath. Not a good sign at altitude. He took the descision. a tough call, not to continue and descend to a lower altitude. He was on the trip with his son who agreed that he would also descend with his father. Ringi, one of the guides accompanied the pair down to Namche Bazaar. The group felt a little deflated. Whist we all accepted that reaching EBC was going to be tough it was still disconcerting that we had lost 2 members of the group. Following breakfast we walked up a hill just behind Dengboche for about a 250m height gain. It felt steep. We descended back to the Tea house, dropped our gear and went to a recommended local café for lunch. Very nice. After lunch the owners turned on ther large screen tv and we and others all sat and watched a film. The film choice was …….EVEREST. As we walked back to the Tea house the valley had cloud cover and some of the tops were completely shrouded.At the Tea house we had some down time before our evening meal and sleep. Altitude 4410m.



Friday 18th October 2024. Dingboche to Lobuche.

Another 7am breakfast, leaving shortly after. As always we had left our baggage outside our room door before breakfast for the porters. We did see with them at times during the day and it was reassuring to recognise that your bag would be waiting for you that night. We followed a pleasant uphill path traversing the side of a wide valley with the Lebuche Khola flowing along the valley floor. Easy going before crossing a small bridge just before Dughia where we stopped for lunch. Another member of the group, Dai, then told us that he had had a headache for a few days and that it was now becoming progressively worse so he also took the decision to return to a lower altitude. Luckily the porters with all of our baggage were also at this Tea house. Only one little problem, Dai and his partner were sharing a bag between them for the trek. Fortunately, I had picked up a tip from Len on the Bhutan trip and all of my trek requirements were packed in a substantial waterproof bag, which was then packed in my kitbag. Problem overcome. My waterproof bag would now be carried by the porters and Dai could use my kitbag. After saying farewell to Dai we then had a steady 1hr



ascent to a col at Thokla Pass. Here were numerous monuments/memorials which had been erected in memory to those who had lost their lives on Everest and neighbouring peaks over the years. A very sombre, moving place at which we all spent some time in our own thoughts. A very steady descent from this place following a stream and the tail end of the Khumbu Glacier, which was more morain than snow and ice. Arriving at Lobuche we checked in to the worst Tea house yet. Still no power in the rooms, 2 shared toilets on the corridor, in not very good condition, and no heat yet in the dining room. When they decided to light the fire they also started to begin cooking the evening meals and must have been using kerosene stoves as the dining room became an uncomfortable place to be with the acrid smell. Everyone chose chips for the evening meal, not particularly good. Tomorrow was to be a long day so an even earlier cold night beckoned. Still managed to get to sleep with just their quilt. Altitude 4910m.

Saturday 19th October 2024. Lobuche to Gorak Shep and beyond.



This was to be a tough day. Not a lot of appetite so toast and jam for breakfast, not the best for the day ahead. From Lobuche we ascended over bouldery groung to Lobuche Pass then over glacial morraine to Gorak Shep (GS). Here we encountered snow for the first time. It took me 3hrs to Gorak Shep, arriving at 11:15am. Others trickled in after me. One of our group, Steve, stumbled in with no strength/stability in his legs and had been supported by Gary over the last few hundred metres. Before reaching GS, Mick had emphasised that if we did not make good time to GS, we would not have time to continue on to EBC and safely return to GS for the night. Instead we would stay overnight, walk to EBC and then descend back to Lobuche for a second night. Nobody wanted that, so we ensured that we made good time to GS. Deadline for leaving GS was 12:30pm for a safe return. When we reached GS, Steve appeared to be in no condition to continue walking. Up to this point Mick had been regularly checking each of us for headaches, aches and pains etc. and he again checked how Steve felt. His response was that he had no headache and had been sleeping well. Reassurance given all round. All he felt was tiredness in his legs. Should I? shouldn't I? his ego didn't want him to not reach EBC so he hired a pony to transport him further. Having had food and drink we all left GS at 12:30pm with Steve tottering along on a small pony. The initial walk was across mud flats before hitting a bouldery ascent. It was not easy, needing to look carefully at foot placement. It was estimated to be between 2½ and 3hrs to reach EBC, we managed it in 2¼ hrs. With such a short window to reach EBC we encountered many other walkers with the same objective and eventually joined a line leading down to EBC. I didn't know what to expect at EBC and was surprised that it was just a boulder with the words "Everest Base Camp 5346m" painted on it in red paint. Where are the tents? Where is the snow? Late April to May is the peak period for climbing Everest with September to November being possible, but less common, and with a shorter weather window, we were at the end of it, so all the summit aspirants had gone, leaving day trekkers. The EBC stone was a magnet. Individual walkers and groups alike all wanted to be photographed at the stone and quite rightly so. None the less, safety was paramount and after eventually managing to have our photographs taken, we prepared to leave. Whilst Steve had ridden up on a pony, it was not able to leave the track and weave its way through boulders so Steve, with support, had walked/stumbled the last 400m.





Getting back was tougher and it took a while. His ride back was traumatic to watch. He swayed back and forth, side to side, precariously looking as if he would topple at any time. We eventually reached GS just as darkness was falling. Steve was out of it and went to bed. We all relaxed in the draughty dining room which had some heating, but not a lot. After our evening meal we confirmed our plans for the following day. We were to leave GS and descend to Pherice at 4270m in a day, spending the night there. This would entail a height loss of 870m but we were now on our homeward stretch. We all then retired for the night but 2 members of the group were to have a very early start. They were going to be leaving about 3am to ascend Kala Patthar.This peak is just above GS with a summit height of 5550m. It boasts of an impressive view of Everest as the sun rises.

Sunday 20th October 2024. Gorak Shep to Pherice.

Seated for breakfast at 7am we were joined by the 2 members that had gone to the summit of Kala Patthar. Whilst it had been good, the weather had not played ball and the view was disappointing. We all continued to wait for Steve to appear. He did but only with a person under each arn supporting him. Despite all Steve's protestations Mick requested medical attention from the resident doctor. Whilst Steve was being examined we ate our breakfast with a little concern. Although anxious to leave for what is a long day we waited. The doctor decided that Steve needed to be airlifted out. This meant that Mick would need to fly out with him, and Maila the head guide, needed to tie up all the loose ends at GS, so the remainder of the group descended with one of the remaining guides. Descending quickly we passed Lobuche (pleased we were not stopping there) and continued to Dughla where we had lunch on our ascent. After another lunch there, we took the lower of 2 paths to Pherice. The higher path going to Dingboche. The weather began to close in with cloud increasing and an increasingly strong cold wind. Waterproofs needed. Reaching Pherice we checked in to the Everest Trekkers Tea house. This was the best Tea house so far. Pleasant dining room, good facilities and whilst the menu was common it was good to eat. Was this all in our head since we were now only a few days from the end of the trek? Who knows? Altitude 4270m.



Monday 21st October 2024. Pherice to Namche Bazaar.

Although we were by now accustomed to rising early, today our sleep was disturbed at 6am. Pherice has an altitude medical facility and helicopters were arriving and leaving at what seemed to be every 15mins. After breakfast we continued along the track to meet up with the path coming down from Dingboche. We were now back on the track to Pangboche where we had morning coffee and cake. We had already stopped here on the way up and had been looking forward to returning. Onwards we continued to Tengboche and then down many, many steps, passing supplies being taken up to the Tea Houses by ponies or yaks. We also had a few uphill sections that I could not remember, thinking it was all downhill to NB. As we approached NB, Dai came out to meet us and walk back with us. He was in good sprits and had spent his time in and around NB. We eventually arrived at the Bodhi Tea house. Gary and his son were



also waiting for us. They had spent 3 days in NB with Rinji who had taken them and showed them around many interesting places in the area. Whilst being disappointed in not reaching EBC they had an enjoyable time. We again visited the same local restaurant for pizza, but this time we were all able to finish the good sized portion. Feeling quite full we returned to the Tea house for the night.

Tuesday 22nd October 2024. Namche Bazaar to Lukla.



This was going to be a long day. We retraced our steps which began 10 days ago. Whilst it took us 1½ days to reach NB we were taking only 1 day to return. 4 members of the group had decided to charter a helicopter and fly back direct to Kathmandu rather than today's long walk and tomorrow's 8 hrs long road journey. This reduced the group to 8, so off we set. An uneventful day. Through the forest, over bridges, stopping for coffee following the path we had already trod but I was surprised at yet again, more uphill sections than I could not remember on the outward journey. Exiting at the control point for the Sagarmatha National Park, which had been quiet on our entry, we encountered many people gaining entry since normal flights had since been resumed. Arriving at Lukla we found our Tea house for the night and settled in. We were still a day ahead of our original schedule but Maila had managed to change our return flight from Thursday to Wednesday. This was welcome news as our extra day would now be in Kathmandu not Lukla. Altitude 2840m.

Wednesday 23rd October 2024. Lukla to Kathmandu.



6am breakfast. After breakfast we had a short walk to the airport for our flight which was scheduled for 7;15am. This was my first sight on this trip of the airport and runway having arrived by helicopter at the heliport, not the airport itself. No doubt many members will have memories of the short angled runway. It will certainly stay in my memory. After we checked in our baggage we waited patiently for our flight to be available. After boarding we shook off (sorry I mean took off) and a short while later we landed at Ramechhap Airport. The journey then began. We boarded a large minibus and left the airport. With our numbers being reduced there was plenty of space and the seats were comfortable. We soon reached a point where the road took a diversion due to the recent flooding washing away the roads and more importantly bridges. Unable to cross the river we followed tracks which were very poor in places. Even where there was once a tarmaced road the top surface had been peeled away exposing the sub base with potholes, craters and also littered with boulders and debris washed on to the road by the water flow. The journey was interesting. Passig through small villages and traversing up, down and around valleys on roads that normally saw very little traffic.It gave a brief insight to the more rural life in Nepal. 8hrs later we arrived at Kathmandu and then the tranquility of the Kathmandu Guest House. Here we met up with the other members of the group. Steve was also waiting for us, looking a little worse for wear. It transpired that on arrival by air at Kathmandu he was admitted to hospital and diagnosed with both HACE and HAPE. These are severe issues and normally take a few days to manifest with the person experiencing various symptoms yet Steve had none of these. When asked he had been feeling

fine, no headaches, no dizziness and until arriving at Gorak Shep no weakness. Very strange. We very quickly adapted to a lifestyle with hot showers, soft beds, greater choice of food and refreshments.

Thursday 24th October 2024. Kathmandu.

Tourist day. Souvenirs purchased after a little bartering. Generally unwind.

Friday 25th October 2024. Kathmandu.



Still tourists. Today we went to Durban Square which has had a lot of work done since the earthquake in 2015. We squeezed in to the small courtyard of Kumari Ghar Palace and waited for the Royal Kumari, the living Princess, to make an appearance at a balcony window. The entrance doors were closed and the Royal Kumari made an appearance. Once she withdrew, the doors were opened and the crowds disappated. Wandering through the crowds we returned for our final night at KGH.

Saturday 26th October 2024. Kathmandu to home.

We departed a differing times from the hotel as we had various flights home. Uneventful journey home after a great trip.

Thank you for reading.

Terry Jones

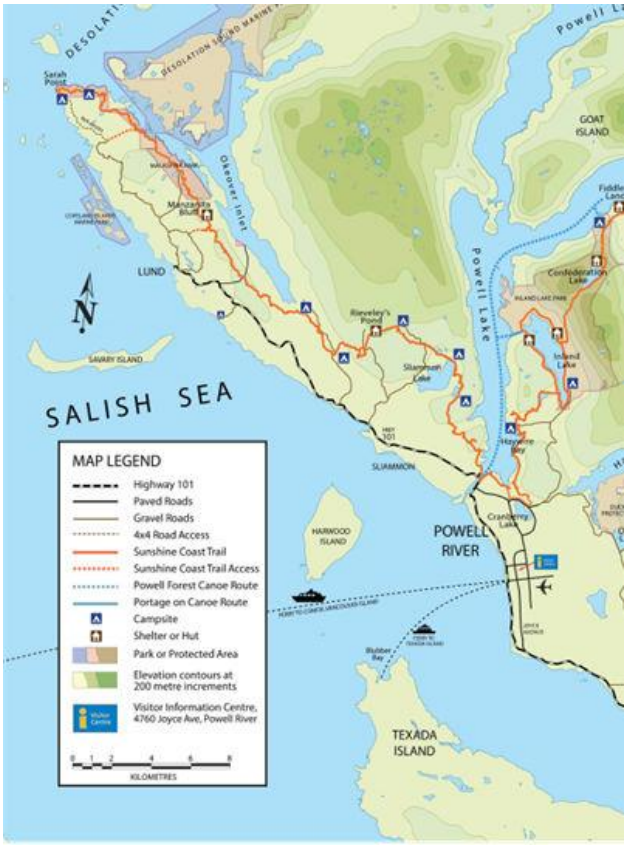
Trek on the Sunshine Coast Trail on the west coast of British Columbia

Date	Start	Finish	Distance	Climb
Friday 12	Sarah Point	Bliss Portage Hut	10 km	415m
Saturday 13	Bliss Portage Hut	Toquenatch/Plummer Creek	19.3 km	796m
Sunday 14	Toquenatch/Plummer Creek	Kokanee Campsite by Big Sliammon Lake	16.2 km	582 m
Monday 15	Kokanee Campsite by Big Sliammon Lake	Shinglemill Pub	11.8 km	459
Total			57.3 kim	2252m

Andy and I were visiting my son Rowan and his fiancé Tomoko (Tomo) to see them, attend his graduation from a two year intense taught and research Masters Degree on Public Policy and go on a trek. We had done day walks together but not a trek.

The Sunshine Coast Trail is on the west coast of the mainland north of Vancouver in British Columbia, Canada. The Visitor Centre in Powell River plus the trail website https://sunshinecoasttrail.com were the foci of research to enable planning and booking for the trip. https://tourism-powellriver.ca/visit/

The Sunshine Coast Trail Guidebook by Eagle Walz is a step-by-step description of all the trails that make up the SCT. The book includes detailed maps for each section of the 180-kilometre back country hiking experience that stretches from Sarah Point in Desolation Sound to Saltery Bay. We chose this trek because we had two full days and two half days to do a trek and this one did not require either a permit or booking the overnight hut or camping sites.



Day 1 – Friday 12 June Sarah Hut to Bliss Portage Hut 10 km 4.15m climb (half day)

We stayed in Courtenay overnight. We made good use of the buffet breakfast bearing in mind the evening and 3 more days surviving on packs of freeze-dried food and snacks. Apprehension and excitement mingled as we looked ahead to our trek.

The pre-booked ferry from Comox arrived in Powell River at 11.20 a.m. We had looked out for marine wildlife but saw none. Shinglemill Pub which offered safe enough parking for the four days at a reasonable cost was a short drive away. The Sunshine Coast Shuttle 8 seater vehicle arrived as booked to take us to the start at Sarah Point. The drive took about 1.5 hours along the coast. The road was tarmac and two lanes until after Lund when it became a track. We shared the ride with two brothers and a friend also walking the first 50km but finishing earlier on the Monday than us.

There were glimpses of the Salish sea on our left amidst the many trees. The driver, Clint, told us about the rich people who had bought a section of the coast off to our left with the dock for their boat and a landing area for their sea plane. Powell River is on the mainland of British Columbia but is accessible only by boat and plane. No roads came into it. This felt remarkable to us.

Nearing Sarah Point, we were faced with a locked forest road type barrier. ‘No worries’ said Clint, ‘we have negotiated access with the new owner of the land from there to the point and I have a key’. That was encouraging. Shortly afterwards, the vehicle stopped and Clint explained the road was too badly rutted to take us any further. A steep descent walk down the rest of the track took us and our rucksacks for the four days to the start of the trek. We had feared a lot of people on the trail but Clint said only the 7 of us would be on the trail that time.


Bliss Portage Hut

Day 1 was 10 km to Bliss Portage Hut, which also had tent pads. We were warned it was the slowest section of our planned route. The way was clearly marked. We took advantage of the rocky outcrops to gain a view over Desolation Sound with the blue sea and sky, small uninhabited islands near us and mountains in the distance.

We had been warned that sourcing water would be a challenge. We had a filter pump and water purifying tablets, which worked well. We knew where the streams would be but also that many were dry at this point in the summer. Lakes were potentially a more reliable source but the first one was full of bits. Instead of taking it from the lake as recommended, we found a trickle of water, which took a while to fill all the bottles. We developed a rota for this task. We drank far more than we had anticipated because it was very hot, despite the welcome shade of the near continuous trees.

Throughout the trek, we enjoyed seeing plants. The flowers were beautiful, the lichen very delicate and the fungi with stunning colours and shapes.

Bliss Portage Hut was indeed a welcome sight. It was built in 2020, the second newest hut after Sarah Point set in a glade. The three other hikers had put up their tents and left the hut for us. Downstairs was a picnic table with benches either side, a steep ladder up to a bare, dusty floor upstairs. A short distance away was the compost toilet, up steps and in a wooden hut. Sawdust was provided to put in the pan after use. Thankfully it did not smell bad, unlike the drop toilets in Nepal. Hand sanitiser was provided. The bear proof cache was a relief. We put all our food in a non-odour bag except the dried food, for which a normal dry bag was fine and locked it.

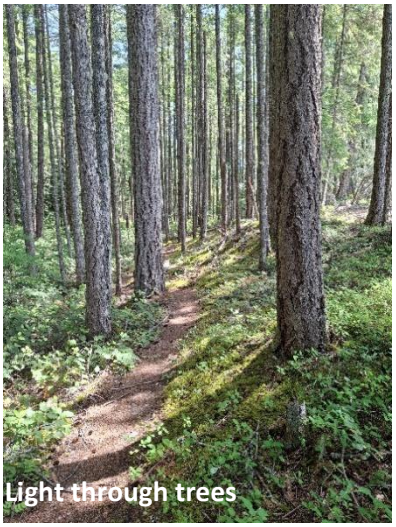
Before we ate, we and the three hikers decided to look for a notable very old growth tree mentioned in the guide book. The navigation was challenging. The piles of recent black bear poo were more alarming to some in the group than others. Once we found a marker to a track on the left Rowan and a hiker went far enough to see the tree in the distance. The majority decision was that that was good enough and meeting a bear was not in our plan so we retraced our steps to the hut.

We each carried food, a sleep mat, sleeping bag, flip flops, walking and evening clothes, swimming costumes and trek towels, medication, walking poles, water bottles, head torches and a share of the two tents and the stove. We also took a bear spray. Rowan and Andy carried more weight than Tomo and Sarah to even up the walking pace.

Rowan and Tomo had decided on one 1000 calorie meal each whilst Sarah and Andy had a 600 calorie meal each plus a dessert of 350 calories. Andy and I took the dried meals with us from England. We bought the gas in Victoria, Vancouver Island. Sleep did not come easy but eventually arrived.

Day 2 Bliss Portage Hut to Toquenatch/ Plummer Creek camping ground 19.3 km 796m

The first morning was less slick than the others. Breakfast was porridge oats, dried milk and water. Sarah had made a mistake in putting all our dried milk rations with the porridge leaving none for coffee/tea. Hot drinks with a surface smattering of porridge were not appreciated.


Light through trees

Wednesday Lake offered a very pleasant cool and cleansing swim. Every day was very hot. We caught up with the three hikers just finishing their swim. After the swim we walked along Manzanita Bluff and took a break at Manzanita Hut, which gave us panoramic views of the Copeland Islands, Savary Island, and the Salish Sea. It is surrounded by manzanita bushes, arbutus trees, and old-growth Douglas fir trees.

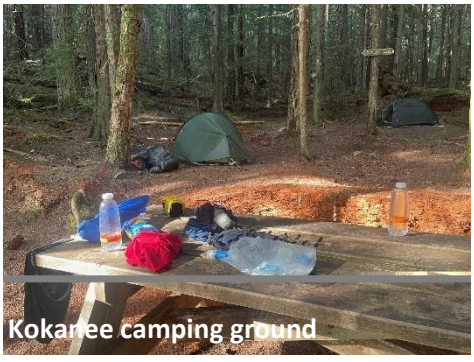
We were intrigued to spot several garter snakes beside the path. They did not seem very shy. An empty shell from an insect surprised us.

It was a long and tiring day through old growth and newer blocks of woodland, all beautiful walking on rocky paths. Rowan and Tomo went ahead on the last section, which was mainly downhill. We were slowed by Andy's hip, since replaced, and Sarah's knee. The camping ground location did not correlate with the map and the book. After some searching, we found a toilet on a main path with the camping ground nearby. It was underwhelming. A few flatter spots and a picnic table in an area that felt like a dirt car park was all that was on offer. However, we settled in alright.

That evening we needed to rig the bear proof pulley system. Andy had bought the fine cord with the right strength load but it stretched more than expected. The first aid kit provided a weight to attach in order to throw it over a high branch. All the food in dry bags was winched up high and the cord tied round a tree. It worked really well until one of us discovered food in a pocket so it had to come down again before being re-erected.

Day 3 - Toquenatch/ Plummer Creek to Kokanee Campsite by Big Sliammon Lake 16.2 km 582 m

A much slicker get up and get ready to leave process was achieved on day 3. We knew the day would be long but not as long as day 2. We walked past Rievely Pond but saved our swim for the end of the day. We took a short diversion in a wood with tall straight trees and beautiful sunlight filtering through to reach a stunning viewpoint. The sound of voices surprised us having seen so few people. Further along the ridge we found four climbers who had come for the day. Later we passed them as they were packing their car. From this point onwards, we walked across roads or tracks that came up from Highway 101 to the trail so more people were about.


Kokanee camping ground

The Kokanee camping ground was in a lovely wide, open area shaded by trees. The tent pads were covered in leaf debris rather than dust. The compost toilet was on a rise five minutes away. We took turns filling the water bottles from a flowing trickle of a stream below a bridge.


Kokanee camping ground

The access to the clear water in Big Sliammon Lake was very close and private. We all swam there before dressing in our relatively clean evening clothes. That felt great.

It was tricky to find a high unbroken branch to hang the food from but we managed it. The bull frogs were noisy that night but I slept better than before in a tent.

Day 4 - Kokanee Camping ground by Big Sliammon Lake to Shinglemill Pub 11.8 km 459m

We started the day with mixed feelings with just half a day to go until the end of the trek but looking forward to lunch and a beer in Shinglemill Pub. The route was much busier than previously. Much of the route was downhill, again through woods but passing larger streams. The waterfall, mentioned as a feature in the book, was indeed significant but we passed on the suggested shower beneath it.

We were excited to see a black squirrel going about its business. Two chipmunks running away from us and then turning and belting past us, including running over Rowan's foot causing a yelp of surprise, was fun to watch.



View from top of Scout Mountain

Towards the end we chose to continue on the Scout Mountain Trail to go up to the top of Powell Hill/ Scout Mountain from which there were fabulous views ahead to the next section of the Sunshine Coast Trail up to Tin Hut Mountain. An eagle soared high above us, which was wonderful to watch. Rowan and Tomo completed the summit loop but Andy and I retraced our steps back to the main path, as it was a gentler incline.

From there it was a track all the way to Shinglemill Pub back to the car, lunch and a rest from walking. We were all delighted with the success of the trip and the adventure together. We agreed we were willing to do further sections, either Rowan and Tomo on their own or all four of us. A final bonus was the sight from the ferry back to Comox of a pod of humpback whales.

Postscript: a week after returning to the UK, we read on Facebook that a black bear had made itself comfortable on the picnic table where we camped not long before. That was an excitement we were relieved to miss.

Photos: Andy Jackson and Sarah Hargreaves

Sarah Hargreaves

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