

Footprint

November 2008

Chairperson's column

Many thanks to Ann and the out going committee for all their hard work and commitment throughout the year. They delivered a truly great programme over the last 12 months.

24 weekends away

18 day walks

14 evening walks

3 working parties

And 50 social evenings on a Tuesday

This is a hard act to follow, however I believe we have a great team together on this year's committee. We will be doing the best we can to provide a fun and action packed programme for the year ahead.

Best wishes

Michael

Chairman

Editor's Column

Thank you this month to Nazar for providing a scenery photo – not sure where it is. A white horse somewhere. Thanks for articles go to Romaine, Alan and Stuart.

All that remains is for me to say a big thank you to everybody who has provided write ups and photos during the past year. Sue will be taking over from next month so please send any content to her.

Thanks

Caroline

How do you feel about having a "Green Christmas", one way is to give a donation to a charity instead of exchanging Christmas cards in the group.

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St Albans day walk 17th August – organised by Dave & Romaine.

Southward Ho!

10 intrepid adventurers plus a four footed Harry met in St Albans on 17 August under glowering skies. A poor weather forecast for the day after overnight rain plus August holiday absentees and those just returned from the Offas Dyke foray, meant a smaller contingent this year.

Setting off by the Abbey and the Abbey orchard, we took the Ver Valley path to leave St Albans - passing the old Sopwell Nunnery ruins and the watercress beds, and so out over the North Orbital Road to make for the grounds of Napsbury Hospital. The old buildings and water tower remain, converted into residences but newly built houses meant a footpath detour - and so on to tracks leading to Barley Mow Farm behind London Colney. An attractive bridleway took us beside the River Colne and passed riding stables before joining the old A5 at Colney Street. By this time the sun had decided to appear and having found a field near Moor Mill to relax in, we adjourned for lunch. While dining, we had to adjust our positions to let a couple of beautiful horses through - we were on their path!

After some sunbathing (yes!) and M.J. having slightly recovered from foot-itis (Oh for a footbath) we crossed Smug Oak Lane and followed the River Colne back to the Frogmore Lakes (Harry taking a dip). We re-crossed Watling Street to take the meads walk using the Ver/Colne path back to Sopwell House Hotel (expensive - but designer food). Reaching Verulamium Park, we enjoyed the springy turf under our hot (M.J. sweltering?) feet to visit the Hypocaust (open and free on Sunday afternoons) to marvel at the Roman central heating system under the mosaic floor there. Returning via St Michaels to the house, we were able to indulge in tea and cakes in the garden - and not one drop of rain.

Participants: Sue and Alex, Ann and Harry, Helen W, Rosemary, Mike J, Norbert, Andrew W.

Romaine

Blackboys weekend 3rd – 5th October 2008 Cast = Stuart, Alan, Sarah, Sue, Liz, Maja

Our little group of 2 men & 4 good looking ones were led by the intrepid Liz to this Sussex YH. Blackboys is a neat, well maintained, wooden building set into some wooded grounds.

Saturday didn't look promising with dark threatening clouds, but our assemblage pressed with Stuart at the helm. I had to leave them part way through to rest a badly sprained ankle which had been injured on a previous journey & spent the rest of the day in the pub. I wanted to phone Stuart on my mobile to let him know that I had limped to my destination and went outside to make the call. Outside, it had started drizzling and I found myself amongst the smokers. Here we both were, banished from the warm pub to a damp cold exterior. The dregs of society - smokers & mobile phone users. My task completed, I returned to the pub for a few more beers. I can't remember how many I had, but I had visions of the landlord returning me the YH saying 'I think that this belongs to you!'

From our elevenses stop at the church in Waldron, the remaining 5 (1 man and still 4 good-looking ones) carried on along paths, through woods and across fields to Framfield, in the hope of tea and snacks at the pub. It was shut. And it was raining. And we still had 2 or 3 miles back to Blackboys.

We headed north out of the village to join the Vanguard Way and started along it back to the hostel. Just over one stile we found a cow lying down and contentedly chewing the cud, and totally ignoring anyone who passed. A couple of fields later, we came across a small (per Liz 'enormous'), relaxed ('ferocious'), young ('fully-grown') bullock, with small ('gigantic razor-sharp and ready to disembowel us') horns. The decision was to turn back and go back to Blackboys along the roads.

That evening Liz took us to the same pub for the evening meal. A pleasant enough evening marred by me setting fire to my serviette on one of their candles. Life became very exciting for a short time.

Sunday was distinctly soggy. The day started raining & we abandoned any walk and went on the Bluebell railway instead. We had a couple of happy hours as the steam engine chugged along pulling our rattling carriage. 'It's looking misty' we thought. No, it was the steam from the locomotive which was floating across the window. It was still raining after this so we went off to Batemans, a National Trust property and

home of Rudyard Kipling. We spent a few hours wandering around his to learn about this controversial & fascinating man. Kipling was considered the best short story writer in the English language. I guess that writers of articles for the Barnet YHA newsletter don't count.

Thanks to Liz and everyone for a mostly relaxing weekend.

By Alan and Stuart

