



PYW goes to



September 2014

September 2014 and PYW retreats to the Welsh Mountains to escape the Scottish referendum. And instead holds its own gastro referendum – vote **YES** to starters!

The long weekend from Thursday to Monday saw 11 members staying in style at Alexanderstone Manor just outside Brecon for a weekend of walking, wine and gastro entertainment!

Thursday: Arriving on a warm September Thursday afternoon, beer and wine on the terrace was underway before the 5 o'clock Tesco food delivery man arrived.... And so to the first Manor House banquet of the weekend with Chef Ian James spag bowl followed by Julie's crumble



Supervised by the girls

A night cap and dancing by some (Mainly Ian C & Julie) whilst others were more concentrated on puzzles and some just slept!



Friday: After a full English to celebrate the retention of Scotland within the UK the door of the Manor opened to a wet Wales where the rain continued for the majority of the day. Undeterred for the traditional 10.30am start the eleven set off on foot for a circa 10 mile walk along country lanes, across muddy footpaths, through grass fields of cows and Mr Bull, skirting round Brecon town for a lunch stop at the peak of Pen-y-crug (331m) before descending into Brecon for a culture stop at the impressive Cathedral and a little exploration of the town.



After culture and coffee the sun came out as we continued along the towpath of the Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal, part of the Taff Trail, heading back to the Manor.



Our evening banquet comprised Red Thai curry courtesy of the lady of the Manor Sarah Driscoll followed by Banoffee pie – delicious! Having consumed considerable quantities of food and fine wine Trivial Pursuit was entered into, though soon declared ‘too complicated’ and so Articulate was the game of choice, all the more amusing being played in Spanish by guest member Mark!

Always time for more pudding!

Saturday: A drive to the Storey Arms (disappointingly not a pub!) from where we immediately ascended a stony path which soon drew a few breaths in the mist. We continued to climb to Corn Du, 873m, for a coffee stop, before continuing to the rocky outcrop of Pen y Fan, 886m (the highest summit in South Wales).

Damp and misty we soon continued to Cribyn, 795m, for a lunch stop and a flying attempt to escape by Ian C and Mark.



Soon after the sun shone as we bypassed Fan y Big (to the disappointment of some) skirting round the Neuadd reservoirs before a backlash at the pace set by leader Shane.... who was insistent ‘no more ascents’ only to be confronted by a rock climb 2 minutes later!

A rest stop was demanded thereafter before continuing again along rocky ridge Craig Fan Ddu to the final ascent and ice cream stop – the 10.9 walk being officially declared ‘challenging’ at a pace.



Back at the Manor it was cooks night off so we all showered and spruced up for an additional mile or so walk (for most) to the neighbouring village of Groesffordd where a table was booked at the Three Horse Shoes Inn – the world’s hottest pub - where amazing starters were enjoyed, although the mains a little disappointing by comparison. After a melting evening we staggered home to the Manor in the Welsh darkness.

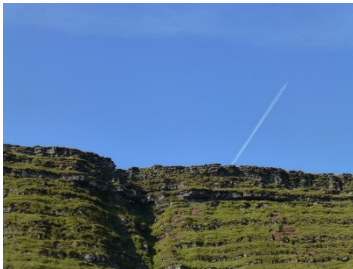


Dinner at the Three Horse Shoes





Sunday: After some detailed research and debate by the boys as to how long to cook the giant pork joint (kindly provided by Adrian – thanks!) for we said farewell to Linda and Janet who headed home and to Tracey who was to stay at the Manor as maid and chief cook for the day.



A short drive took us to Glyntawe where the remaining eight headed again for the hills with a steady ascent.... 11 miles in the Black Mountains with brilliant sunshine, clear blue skies and green hills – first stop Llyn y Fan Fawr by the waterside before heading to the highest point of the day Fan Brycheiniog, 802m – with beautiful panorama.



Continuing on with descents and ascents before descending across a marsh with some tricky navigation required – never could it be said the walk leaders looked dubious about the path, before a little blackberry picking on the final leg and a pub stop at the end.



Meanwhile, Back at the Manor, Tracey fortunately had ignored all the boys timing tips and had cooked up an amazing Sunday roast, enjoyed by all – luckily no vegetarians!



Sunday roast at its best!

Monday: We departed the Manor one last time, checked the route map and with one simple direction 'turn left just after the pub' – simple - we headed for the Sugar Loaf, a short drive (for some) of half an hour. Ian C was first to arrive (despite a detour to drop an injured Kate in Abergavenny) soon followed by Shane, Adrian and Sarah...spot the missing car?

Yes you've guessed Mr James was distracted by his harem, instantly ignoring the simple but precise directions and following his SAT NAV – to get himself lost. He indeed arrived approximately 40 minutes later, red faced to full PYW applause, at the Sugar Loaf, having visited all four sides en route.

Finally, we headed off in now almost mid-day brilliant sunshine. A leisurely walk (we had finally educated walk leader Shane in the art of PYW leisurely walking!) up the grassy paths of the Sugar Loaf, along the ridge to lunch at the summit (598m) taking in the rays and wonderful 360 degree views of patchwork green fields dotted with farmsteads. Some were distracted by photographic birds before returning to complete the 4 mile walk and a fantastic weekends walking. Oh and not to be resisted a quick stop at the vineyard for coffee and cake – perfect finish to the weekend.



All in all a great weekend Lording it at the Manor. A gastro walking delight!

Thanks to Shane for leading the walks, Sarah for being tour operator and arranging the weekend including shopping! And everyone else for their chef and housekeeping skills and being great company.

Attending – Ian C, Ian J, Janet, Julie, Kate, Linda, Sara, Shane, Tracey, Adrian, Mark.

Report by Ian C.