

LMC MOUNTAINEERING CLUB

Volume 27 Issue 2 Feb 2023

Contact Details

Chairman:	David Wells
Meets Co-ordinator:	Angela Leaman
Secretary	Charles Harrison
Treasurer:	Paul Ackroyd
Website	Kirsty Johns
Newsletter Editor:	Sarah Bulling

LMC website address: <https://www.hillsandvalleys.co.uk/LMC/>

LMC email address: **NEW** LMCmountaineeringclub@gmail.com

From the new Chairman

While I don't intend to make this a monthly epistle, as I have recently taken over the Chair role, I'd just like to provide a few words of introduction.

In 1983 I joined LMC (as it was then) at a meet in Blencathra Centre in the Lake District (from memory: Easter with lots of snow); fresh out of University as a graduate joiner to Shell in 'IC/13' - an operational research department which provided many of the Club members of the time. Although until that point a reluctant walker, I really embraced the sport & went on to take up rock climbing, even trying my hand at potholing, then a (minority) club activity. I was Meets Secretary for some years & Chair in 1988/89 before departing to work in France for Shell, leading some great overseas meets in the Alps, Dolomites & Atlas Mountains.. Family & kids plus overseas postings meant I essentially left the Club until rejoining in 2017 on return to the UK, having enjoyed the 40th Reunion at Lensbury. I think I am the only Club member still working for Shell - for the moment! I enjoy walking (though am slowing down . . . a bit . . .), cycling, skiing & outdoor pursuits generally.

It was pleasing to meet many of our members at Marlborough for the AGM & hope to meet most of you over the course of the year. Ideas on new activities are very welcomed though the mainstay will remain the Weekend Meets & Day Walks in South East England. New members, of course, are very welcome: we continue to advertise in the Shell Pensioners magazine but would really welcome newcomers from any source. This is important to keep the club thriving in the coming years.

With deep regret I heard of the recent death of Bruce Oakley (aka Wombat). Bruce was a stalwart of the club for many years, including the period when I was most active in the club. His long term partner Diane introduced me to the Club & I remember many great days walking

& rock climbing with Bruce – particularly a pretty relaxed style of belaying, which didn't always inspire confidence but seemed to work!! [More about Bruce below]

I would like to end by a sincere thank you to those leaving the committee – Rob Kell for his period as Chair, Bob Cumberland as Meets Secretary & Kirsty Johns for carrying the Secretary's role for many years. All have contributed hugely to the running of the club: I am very grateful for all their efforts. The new Committee will try to follow in their footsteps.

See you all soon! **David**

Next Newsletter: Please send copy for the next issue by midday on the 10th of the month. Because of various GDPR issues discussed at the AGM, the Newsletter is now being emailed under Blind Copy. Club group communication is via the Newsletter; additional emails may be sent to the Secretary for distribution.

From the new Meets Co-ordinator

I'm delighted to offer a full & varied Meets Programme for 2023; thank you to everyone who has stepped forward to arrange an outing. The Premier Inn chain offered welcome flexibility during a challenging time but, going forwards, it would be nice to offer a range of different accommodation. Recent experience indicates that B&B rooms are in demand & can be expensive, therefore I recommend that meet leaders investigate options well ahead of time.

Some events to draw your attention to. . . After several years & many footsteps, John Blight will complete the South-west Coast path in June. Everyone is invited to join him for the final weekend in Weymouth, for the last day on the trail & a celebratory dinner (& no doubt a few beers).

Looking forward to April 2024, Heather & Andrew McGinn have an option to stay at the rather fabulous Simonsbath House on Exmoor. The hotel is hugely popular & it would help a lot if expressions of interest could be submitted to Heather as soon as possible.

Finally, on Sunday 12th March David Abbott will be leading a day walk to the glorious & ingenious Victorian splendour of the Crossness Pumping Station in east London. Tickets need to be booked in advance for the Open Day.

Happy trails this year & look forward to meeting up soon. **Angela**

LMC Meets & Events Programme 2023

Date/s	Meet	Meet Leader	Comments
Sat 4-Sun 12 Mar	Crickhowell Walking Festival	[Andy Johns]	Not LMC
Sunday 12 March	Crossness Sewage Pumping Station	David Abbott	Day Walk - New
Sunday 2 Apr	North Warnborough to Fleet	Charles Harrison	Day Walk - New
Thu 20-Sun 23 Apr	Pembrokeshire	David Wells	Long Weekend
Sun 30 April or 6 or 7 or 8 May	Ightam Mote to Knole Park	Paul Ackroyd	Day Walk - New
May TBC	Hampshire	Christopher Lawrence	Day Walk - New
Sat 10-Sun 18 Jun	W Bay to S Haven Point	John Blight	SWCP Week 9 Update
Fri 16 – Sun 18 Jun	Durlston Head to S Haven Point	John Blight	Weekend & SWCP celebration dinner New
Sun 25 Jun	Winchester	H & A McGinn	Day Walk - New
Fri 7- Sun 9 July	Shropshire	Andy & Kirsty Johns	Weekend - New
September TBC	South Downs	David Wells	Day Walk - New
Fri 8-Sun 10 Sep	Lake District	Sarah Dixon	Weekend - New
Fri 13-Sun 15 Oct	Destination TBA	Hilary Pettit	Weekend - New
Fri 17 – Sun 19 Nov	Wookey Hole & the Mendips	Angela Leaman	Weekend - New

LMC Meets & Events Programme 2024

Date/s	Meet	Meet Leader	Comments
Sat 13 Jan	AGM & Annual Dinner Salisbury	Angela Leaman	Weekend - New
Thu 11-Sun 14 Apr	Exmoor	H & A McGinn	Long Weekend - New

LMC Meets Details

Crickhowell Walking Festival – Saturday 4th / Sunday 12th March, Andy Johns [Not LMC]

As you know, online bookings for the Crickhowell Walking Festival 2023 are open. There are over 80 walks plus evening events running over the nine days of the Festival. *This is not an organised LMC activity*: you make your own arrangements & book your own preferred walks & events. For information on cancellations & refunds, please read the 'Terms & Conditions' on the CWF website. For the full programme plus further information, see www.crickhowellfestival.com – then make your bookings. Walks can sell like hot cakes: some become fully booked only a week after bookings open.

As usual, the Abergavenny Premier Inn offers handy accommodation (currently from £66 to £112 per room per night, fully flex). If you intend to join in, it is worth making your flexible room bookings as soon as possible before prices rise further (or fix up other accommodation elsewhere, of course).

Sunday 12 March – Crossness Sewage Pumping Station Open Day – David Abbott

Crossness has its open day on March 12 so if you fancy visiting a cold (no steam) finely decorated Victorian pumping station for a contribution of £12, you can do so via a walk based on Abbey Wood station, the Elizabeth line terminus, meeting about 1000. Travel via Farringdon, Tottenham Court Road or, sigh, Whitechapel . . . passing the ruins of [Lesnes Abbey](#) (the 'Abbey') & its mulberry tree - perhaps founded in penance for the murder of Thomas Becket but closed in 1525 & dissolved. On to the Green Chain route past the Puginesque 'cathedral' of Bazalgette's [VISIT US](#) Crossness Pumping Station (cafe) to reach the Thames Path / England Coast Path (part of linking the Capital Ring & the London Loop), to [Erith](#), an historic port. The 'Running Horses', overlooking Riverside Gardens, offers Sunday lunches.



Returning on the Green Chain through the 'Abbey Woods', a local Nature Reserve, to the station. About 10km before lunch, half on the Thames bank & 5km after (before rain sets in?).

Please contact me if you would like to come. **Advance booking is essential so please purchase your own ticket directly from the Crossness website:**

www.crossness.org.uk/visit.html

Sunday 2 April – North Warnborough to Fleet – Charles Harrison

This will be a walk of around 10 miles along the Basingstoke Canal from North Warnborough (the current limit of navigation) to Fleet. We can visit the ruins of Odiham Castle at the start & there are a couple of pubs en-route if refreshment is required.

North Warnborough can be reached by taxi from Hook station (South Western Railway); Fleet is on the same line. Please let me know if you plan to attend.

Prior to this walk, I am planning to explore the route from the terminal basin (Basingstoke Wharf, now the Bus Garage) to North Warnborough. It is mostly filled in with the line severed by a number of roads but there will hopefully be items of interest. This will be a walk of around 7.5 miles so if anyone would like to join me, please get in touch.

Thursday 20 / Sunday 23 April - Pembrokeshire – David Wells

We now have 8 intrepid adventurers signed up for this meet & would welcome more. Most are in the Premier Inn though one is trying the City Inn, providing an alternative. I am planning on leading 3 walks – on Friday, Saturday & a shorter walk on Sunday - on the spectacular coast-path & the neighbouring hills; probably a day or two on coast path plus one on Preseli Ridge – all subject weather & usual arguments the night before . . . Nearer the time I will propose dinners for Thursday-Saturday evenings. Premier Inn in St Davids prices have risen considerably: 3 nights for between £321 (standard) to £413 (fully flexible). Of course, other

accommodation in the surrounding area will be available. Please let me know if you'd like to come along & where you've booked. Hope to see you there!

**Saturday 10 / Sunday 18 June - SWCP Week 9 / W Bay to S Haven Point / Final Week
Friday 16 / Sunday 18 June / Final Weekend – John Blight**

With four people confirmed for the whole week I have booked a house in Weymouth, which is around the mid-point of the week's walk. The house is full so if anyone else wants to come for the whole week they will need to make other arrangements.

I would be delighted if anyone would like to join us for the final weekend, 16-18th June: the last hurrah!! This is the end of a 630 mile journey begun in 2015. The Saturday walk is from Durlston Head (car park at GR 034772 just south of Swanage) to South Haven Point (GR037867). Although it's about a 30 mile drive, it makes sense for everyone to stay in Weymouth so we can organise a celebratory meal together on the Saturday evening. Weymouth in mid-June is quite an expensive place. Premier Inn is currently offering rooms for 2 nights at £359 flex & £298.50 non-flex. There are plenty of cheaper options on Booking.com. As I've got quite a lot of organising to do for the whole week already, I would ask that you make your own accommodation reservations.

Friday 7 / Sunday 9 July – Shropshire – Kirsty & Andy Johns

We are basing this weekend in Little Stretton & hope you will join us for this Shropshire weekend. The Strettons, Church & Little, make an ideal base for walking the Long Mynd itself, the Stiperstones area plus the tops to the east of the town & railway, which include Hope Bowdler Hill & the striking hill fort summit of Caer Caradoc – a mountain range in miniature. Plenty of opportunities to vary, mix & match between about 7 & 12 miles – or more if you want!

Given the scarcity of summer availability, we recommend you act now to secure your own cancellable accommodation at **Mynd House B&B in Little Stretton** (<http://www.myndhouse.co.uk/>). Their current availability of 6-7 rooms may not last for long so we are asking you to **make your own bookings ASAP direct with Mynd House** – with free cancellation before 1st July. If we make a block booking now, it is likely to require a non-returnable deposit. Current prices are £210-£246 for the two nights, including breakfast. We couldn't find anywhere significantly cheaper with group availability – July prices are high, even though this is well outside the school holidays. Some of you will know **Mynd House** from a previous LMC weekend – now under different management we believe. It conveniently has two pubs for supper within walking distance. Having made our own booking already, we recommend you do the same if you are interested in joining this weekend.

Please let us know if you intend to join in, where you are staying & if you require suppers on both nights. We will then make supper reservations for us all at the nearby Green Dragon & the Ragleth Inn on Friday & Saturday nights.

2024

Thursday 11 / Sunday 14 April 2024 – Exmoor – Heather McGinn

The Simonsbath House Hotel, Simonsbath www.simonsbathhouse.co.uk we have used several times in Exmoor unfortunately is not available (at least not when we can make it) in 2023. Even 2024 has limited availability so I have asked them to hold for us the period Thursday, 11th April to Sunday, 14th April 2024 - three nights. Although the rooms are a bit dated, this is a lovely

hotel with great food, lounge & bar. I would expect the cost to be around £95/day for full board, including packed lunches - but cost to be confirmed. The plan is for 2 long walks on Friday & Saturday, with a shorter one on Sunday. If you are interested in principle, please advise me ASAP of numbers attending & room type preferred.

Meet Report[s]

14 January 2023 - AGM & Annual Dinner – Angela Leaman

The AGM & Annual Dinner 2023 took place in Marlborough, Wiltshire. Accommodation was at the Premier Inn, & those who arrived on Friday evening tested out the onsite restaurant which was surprisingly good (the breakfast was also a cut above the standard offering).

Weather for the Saturday walk wasn't promising (torrential rain) but, to avoid complex logistics for those already en route, we met in the car park on Manton Down at the scheduled time. Proving the need for faith, after a short wait the rain went through & we set out across the Marlborough Downs. This is a lovely area, with a wild feel well away from any roads.

Photo here of us all in front of the Devil's Den

First stop was at the Devil's Den, a Neolithic burial chamber. Sadly the club archaeologist (Stephen) was on sick leave so his lovely assistant (me) attempted to explain the significance of the ancient monuments scattered across the downs. On firmer ground with the sarsen stones at Fyfield Down National Nature Reserve (related to Stonehenge), the finer points of the next stoney highlight were rather lacking other than a small stone where ancient people once sharpened their stone axes. Map reading was also in deficit as we proceeded over a particularly high stile within 20m of a gate. At that point Andy provided some welcome geographical assistance.

Joining the White Horse Trail, the next highlight was avoiding being shot in Totterdown Wood. Despite being on a clearly marked public footpath, we were 'encouraged' by the estate shooting party to linger a while before proceeding. Having considered our options, we decided to stop for lunch. The walk ended with a stroll across the medieval field system at Fyfield Down & back to the car park.

Having had the AGM meet cancelled by the Roebuck Inn at the last minute a year ago, it was a relief to find the table laid when we arrived for dinner in the evening. Perhaps not the quietest place for a meeting, but the roast dinner was delicious & we had a very enjoyable get together.

Photo here of us all at the Dinner.

The weather was cold & showery on Sunday morning so, after an inspection of the National Trust car park at Avebury, most people decided to head home. However David A & Hilary were made of sterner stuff & the three of us did an excellent circular walk taking in the enigmatic Silbury Hill, a return to the car park to rescue Hilary's phone left on the dashboard, & a tour of the Avebury stone circle – the biggest stones of the weekend. All nicely rounded off with cheese scones in the National Trust tea room.

Photos here of Silbury Hill and Avebury stones

NB: With no Meets in February unless you send content, there will be no new info / pictures in the March Newsletters. Ed

Out Walking Reports and / or Photos . . .

Wednesday 19 October 2022 – Thame to Oxford – Charles Harrison

Introduction

This walk of 14 miles is an exploration of the former railway line between Thame & Oxford (part of the Wycombe Railway). Unfortunately, the M40 has been built over the line of the railway so a detour along the verge of two 'A' roads is necessary. Thame can be reached by bus No 280 from Haddenham & Thame Parkway; at Blackbird Leys Road, you can catch bus No 1 or 5 to Oxford City Centre.

History

The Wycombe Railway was a line from Maidenhead to Oxford that opened fully in 1864 (the GWR took over the Wycombe Railway Company in 1867). Three parts of the route are still in operation – effectively the start, middle & end: Maidenhead to Bourne End – part of the Marlow branch line; High Wycombe to Princes Risborough – part of the Chiltern main line; Cowley to Oxford – which serves the BMW MINI Plant Oxford [currently freight only but there are plans to reintroduce a passenger service]. The closed sections are as follows: Bourne End to High Wycombe closed in 1970 [we explored this in the High Wycombe to Marlow article, LMC Newsletter, December 2020]; Princes Risborough to Thame closed in 1991 & has become the Phoenix Trail – a walking & cycling path. Thame to Cowley (the Morris plant until 1984) closed in 1968 & is the walk below.

Route



Head south from the centre of Thame (via Southern Road & Moreton Lane) to reach the Phoenix Trail then turn right to head for Oxford. At the edge of Thame, the paths are signposted left & right but go straight ahead to reach the A329. Turn right to reach the roundabout & join national cycle route 57 heading west alongside the A418. At North Weston the cycle route turns right along

Mill Road (take this as there is no footway on the A418) then left along the footpath by the River Thames to cross the road by Colesheath Copse. Go straight ahead where you will find some steps up to join the trackbed heading west. After a short distance, turn left to reach Home Farm then right onto the Oxfordshire Way to reach Albury & St Helen's Church >>>>>



Go straight ahead on the road, then between the cricket ground & embankment to reach Albury View; turn left up the hill then right on the footpath which will take you to the A40. Turn right to reach the A418 then left (on the left hand verge) for half a mile to reach the roundabout where you cross over the M40. At the second roundabout there is a footpath on the north side (next to the slip road down to the motorway) where you join a footpath over the field. When you reach the far side of the field, the stile is incomplete, so bear left to find the gate. Go ahead then left through the tunnel under the A40 & aim to the right of the fallen tree where you will find the stile. Turn right on this road to reach the Kings Arms in Wheatley then fork left onto Church Road. At the end, this road bears round to the left then right (now Littleworth Road) & at the fork, take the higher road to the left where you reach a bridge over the trackbed. Continue along through the village until the road turns half left then take the footpath straight ahead through the field (& alongside a deep cutting where the railway entered a tunnel) to reach Gidley Way. Follow Gidley Way down the hill & turn right along



Cuddesdon Road, under the railway bridge into the centre of Horspath (& the Co-op if sustenance is required). From here it is a walk along Oxford Road & Horspath Road to the Oxford Ring Road (A4142). The first part is alongside playing fields (including the Oxford United FC training ground) then past the MINI Plant Oxford to the junction with the A4142. Tours of the MINI Plant are available. I turned left to walk along to Sandy Lane Recreation Ground then left into Blackbird Leys Road to reach the railway bridge with this view back towards the Plant.

<<<<<<<<

Cross the road for buses towards the City Centre & station.

Other Events / Items . . .

Bruce Oakley

As some of you will know already, we recently received sad news from ex-LMC member Paul Tolliday that Bruce Oakley (otherwise known as Wombat) suffered a pulmonary embolism & died just before Christmas. We have many happy memories of Bruce from the mid-1970s onwards to share with his partner Sue. Of particular note are 'Wombat Tower' – the climbing frame he erected which we ran at the Lensbury Club fair at Teddington in 1977 plus 'Wombat Catering' – his stellar provision of meals at several locations including N. Wales, the Lake District & also I think in France. Early LMC members have epic memories of climbing with Bruce.

Photo here of 'Wombat Tower' at Teddington in 1977

Photo here of Bruce, Paul Tolliday & Andy in Paris on our way back from the Pyrénées in 1978.

We met up with Bruce & Sue a couple of times in 2015 (including at the LMC 40th Reunion at Teddington in November 2015 which many of you also attended); Andy saw him again at Jim Gretton's funeral in January 2018.

There will be a memorial gathering for Bruce in Dunster in Somerset (where Bruce & Sue lived) at 2pm on Sat 25th February. Andy & I intend to be there. If you would like further information, please get in touch with us. **Kirsty & Andy**

Extra Elements: Books, DVDs, Films, other Walks / Climbs – views & comments . . .
If you've read any walking / mountaineering / travel books which you've enjoyed, please share.

The Kendal Film Festival is playing in two London cinemas on 1st & 2nd March:

<https://tickets.kendalmountainfestival.com/events/search?type=&location=London&date=>

Thanks to Angela for this information - Ed

- Extra Elements to Sarah -

LMC Newsletter link to send to interest future possible members:

<https://www.hillsandvalleys.co.uk/LMC/LMCdownloads.htm>

BMC: <https://www.thebmc.co.uk/>

BMC Newsletter at: <https://www.thebmc.co.uk/newsletters>

END