

Newport Outdoor Group



Putting our best
feet forward
since 1960

Editors

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**Get
The
Outdoor
Habit!**

WILDERHOPE MANOR

February 15th to 17th 2013

By Allan Hartland & Richard Weeks

DAY 1: We arrived at the hostel at approx. 5-30 PM. It is 15th Century and haunted! On entering, we found the interior was rather austere, everything was so big! Our bunks were at the top of a 39 step, spiral staircase. Our dormitory was called "Long Mynd". It has a span

roof with large oak beams and joints. In the lounge, which had walls a yard thick and stucco plaster ceilings, we met Maggie, Jeremy and Brian. Maggie had brought some lemon cake that we all enjoyed. We explored the Manor, disappointed to find no television, radio or games. Whilst some stayed at the hostel, chatting and drinking, Richard and Allan walked 1.5 miles to the local pub called the Longville Inn. On our return, Colin, Sandy (Colin's dog), Jackie, Norman and Kevin and arrived.

DAY 2: Our walk commenced at 9.45 AM and it was a bright, sunny day. At Wilderhope Farm we met a huntsman and we all chatted to him, before wishing him a good "Tally Ho", and we continued

our walk where we picked up a mud trail, which got worse! And worse!! Our first coffee break was at Apedale, where Norman and Jackie had their photographs taken next to the Apedale sign post. The walk then continued through Coats Wood and a farm. At this point Jackie and Allan tried to avoid the mud, but ended up in a manure pile. Jackie sank to her knees and was pulled out by Allan, using her back-pack harness. MORE MUD and worse, we progressed across Millichop Park. Colin's dog, Sandy, was darting here, there and everywhere during the walk. Arriving at Munstow, we had refreshments in the Hundred House. We then continued, passing a blacksmith's shop at Beambridge on the main road. At Newhouse we rested by a fast flowing stream, in which Sandy the dog had a swim. We continued through Corvedale, up across water-logged fields and then back to the Manor, an 11 mile trek all told, and tired. As we got back, we were surprised to see a wedding reception. The bride looked gorgeous. (*The hostel is licenced for Civil Ceremonies - Ed*). In the evening most of our group cooked their own meals and had drinks at the hostel. Later Jackie, Norman, Kevin, Allan and Richard went to the local pub.

DAY 3: We awoke to another sunny day. Most of us had a hostel breakfast, and a few of our party headed home. Some headed north-east, along the Shropshire Way, visiting points of interest, through Easthope Wood to Hopkins Rock, and returned following a disused railway line, passing Lutwyche Hall, and back to the hostel - an 8 mile route. By the way, did you know that the Wenlock Edge ridge is the remains of a Coral Sea, some 350 million years old?

WILDERHOPE MANOR YHA FACT FILE

This 75 bed building is a stunning Grade 1 listed Elizabethan gabled manor house, ideally located for walking in the Shropshire Hills. It recently benefitted from a £500,000 refurbishment that enhanced many aspects of the original Elizabethan features, including a sweeping spiral oak staircase, large open fireplaces, ornate ceilings and period windows. It is not surprising, therefore, that it scores a 96% overall customer satisfaction rate on the International Hostelling website.



THE IMPRESSIVE WILDERHOPE MANOR (photo courtesy of YHA England & Wales at <http://www.yha.org.uk/hostel/wilderhope>)

A Winters Tail: The English Dog Who Went Up A Welsh Mountain And Nearly Didn't Come Down Again!

By Millie the dog



My name is Millie. I am a chocolate Labradoodle and I became an honorary NOGDog for a weekend in January 2013, following in the famous paw prints of Mollie, Gizmo, Sheba and Micky. It was my first time climbing a mountain, although my mum is from South Wales. And it was a big responsibility - Moll had stories about NOGs that would make your hair uncurl! She warned me they needed a lot of looking after as they were always wandering off and getting lost and never use their noses properly to get home. But I hadn't reckoned on a mountain rescue for my first walking group assignment!

It was all a bit strange: First we set off very early in the Car-kennel and travelled to an exciting place that was full of lots of new smells. One of the most exciting smells was Scruffy the Hostel Cat's breakfast, which I wolfed down on arrival (cats are such wasters- they never finish their food). There were lots of strange new people there, all milling around like sheep, but I didn't chase them. Some of them smelt a bit funny too, but they seemed friendly.....

Then we went off to a big park called Pen-y-Fan, which was high up and covered in snow, and we set off on a Very Long Walk (much longer than I get when at home). It all seemed to be uphill and my pack of humans split into two groups, but

I had to stay with the slower ones, even though I could have easily run all the way up. I didn't mind too much because mum had lots of dog treats. And pretty soon I found something smelly to eat - not sure if it was sheep or fox poo, but very tasty - but most of the good smells were hidden under the snow, which was a bit disappointing.

There were lots of humans going up and down the slope, and there were some excitable ones who came running down the slope towards us, dressed in funny green clothes and carrying big sticks, but when I tried to play with them they kept falling over in the snow and didn't seem very happy. I got put back on the lead; Dad said he hasn't got much faith in our British Army Defence Forces if they are so easily scared by a labradoodle! (As if anyone could be scared of me!) As we climbed higher there was more snow and nothing to see but humans slipping all over the place or picking their way up the path. (You would think that they would learn to walk on 4 paws instead of tottering around on 2!). It got steeper and soon I couldn't see the park at all and not much beyond the end of my nose. I had to go back on the lead for a bit, even though I was very good and didn't knock anyone over. I wasn't really frightened, but not quite sure what was going on: Why walk to a place where you can't see and you can't smell? Humans are very strange creatures!

After a while we got to a flatter bit which was very windy. The humans sat down in the wind and got out their food bowls. They weren't very generous at sharing and I wasn't allowed to scrounge, although I did get given some dog biscuits. Then, having walked all the way up the slope in the mist, they turned around and walked back down again! They took a different path down but I think that was a mistake (Another mystery: why don't humans just use their noses if they want to go somewhere?) It got steep and they were very slow; I had to go back on the lead again and wasn't allowed to look over the edge.

My humans fell over lots of times on the way down. It rained and got cold on the way back, but I didn't mind that, or getting wet in the stream that we had to get over, although Chris whined a bit. The weather was better when we got back to the bottom of the mountain, and you could actually see and smell things, but instead of going for a proper walk we had to go back to the Car-kennel.

On the way we passed a lady who was going up the mountain but she didn't have a dog, only a posy boyfriend with a snowboard. Dai said she looked like Victoria Beckham in fancy wellies and that she wasn't fit to go out walking in the snow dressed like that. (A bit rich for a man who can only grow hair on his head and can't even sniff his way off a mountain!). We drove back to Brecon where it was decided (by the humans) that I was too wet and smelly to go into the nice warm pub, so I had to stay in the car-kennel. I couldn't sniff out any food in the rucksacks so went to sleep. I did get to go to a dog friendly pub later, so I didn't mind too much, although it smelt as if the humans had eaten their dinner before I was allowed in, which I thought was a bit mean for a dog who has climbed her first mountain!

The next day we had a much shorter walk around the Brecon Mountain Centre, but it was much more fun as you could run around properly and there was lots of mud. And of course dogs have a sixth sense, so I knew that Mollie and the other NOGDogs were all running there alongside me, splashing through all the muddiest puddles and wagging their tails behind them!

And then we went home.

