



GET THE OUTDOOR HABIT IN THE NEW MILLENNIUM

NOGS HIT THE RIDGEWAY (July 12th to 14th)

By Stella Goodreid (Photos by Nigel)

It was the eleventh hour when Chris and I decided to go on the Ridgeway trip. Off we set, with Molly the retriever, on her first NOGS weekend away, heading for Wantage. It was dark when we arrived and the others were already supping ale in the nearby pub at Letcombe Regis: Nigel, George, Sophie, Dawn, Janice and John Cullen. As we discussed plans for the weekend, Chris got talking to the landlord, who was a very nice man! So nice, in fact, that he let her set up tent in the grounds of the pub.



The rest of us parked ourselves at the nearby hostel which consisted of a number of old wooden barns which had been relocated and now looked out onto a huge flat plain of patchwork fields. Us girls were in "room with a view" (which even had a little wooden balcony) and Sophie and Dawn had beds which sat in the window at the end of the dorm.



On the Saturday morning, once the guys were able to get up and join us, we were ready for action! Some of the group headed over for Thorpe Park for a day of ten-loop-roller coasters and backward rides in the dark.

For Chris, Sophie and myself it was a serene day of walking along the Ridgeway, a poor orienteer's dream, with a path that just led you along effortlessly. It was a hot day and the sun was strong. Molly made the most of every puddle she found, however dirty, taking her time to lie down right in the middle of it! We passed several gallops and were able to admire some of the fine looking horses going past. At lunch time we arrived in tiny

West Ilsley, an attractive small village full of thatched cottages, laden with roses. We walked past the duck pond, with its adjacent lawn being lovingly trimmed by a local; the village green, prepared for a summer fete the next day; and onto 'the Harrow' where we stopped for a refreshing drink.

***"...O for a draught of vintage!
that hath been
Cool'd a long age in the deep delv'd earth,
Tasting of flora and the country green..."***

Tempted by glimpses of huge plates of feta salad being carried out, we decided to return that very evening and spent a very enjoyable wine packed evening having excellent conversation, as you'd expect with three such charming ladies present.

Sunday was aptly named, and possibly even hotter than the day before. This time the whole group set off together, led by fearless Nigel, from the small





village of Ashbury. Our walk took us past the ancient white horse of Uffington, as ancient as time itself, unique, and precious. Molly the NOG dog liked it too, especially the way little puffs of chalk rise up as your paws run over it! In the afternoon we dropped down into the village, where some of us stayed, perched in the garden pub, chatting with locals, keen to share their stories, one of whom turned out to be the nephew of the poet, Pam Ayres.

The weekend finished with a farewell in the car park as the intrepid walkers arrived

back: Sun beaten, a little tender footed for some, but pleasantly contented.

Editor's Note:

The footpaths in the area were found to be quite overgrown with nettles and other stinging nasties, possibly a throw over from the Foot and Mouth problem last year. Nigel in particular, as walk leader, took the brunt of the nettle attacks on himself. However, protected with only his trusty shorts, it's hardly surprising that the nettles won the war (as testified by the photo of poor Nigel's leg to right, shown after 24 hours had elapsed since the trek was undertaken.) Well done Nigel, for such devout adherence to duty in the face of fearsome odds!



WELCOME, BABY SEREN.



Our congratulations go to Karen and Chris Jones, on the recent birth of their daughter, Seren (a sister for Hannah). Seren - see picture to the left - was born on July 16th (the day after the NOGS annual BBQ) and weighed in at 9 lb 12 ½ oz.

THE END IS NEAROR IS IT?

Is it the end of the NOGS? A meteor is about to strike the Earth and cause mass destruction..... in 17 years time! Will the NOGS still be going then? Will they survive? Watch this space (excuse the pun!).

OBITUARY

It is with great sadness that NOGS NEWS records the passing away of David Bartholomew. David came to the group several years ago, on reaching retirement. He was a keen and regular member of the group, and attended many weekend hostelling trips, before being incapacitated by illness. He will be sadly missed.

NOGS BBQ

As usual, the NOGS BBQ at Cwmbran Boating Lake on July 16th provided a chance for us all to get stuck in to some outdoor cooked grub, and fun was had by all - even by Dai and Chris (lower left).

Although it didn't rain on this particular St. Swithin's Day (and hopefully keeping at bay 40 days and nights of continuous rain), nevertheless some strange meteorological phenomenon did take place, and



was even observed by some sharp-eyed NOGS, as evidenced in the photograph shown on the right.

Can anyone identify what it is and what it all means? Or has the news of the imminent meteor strike on the Earth finally cracked the normally steel-like nerves of some of our members?

