

# Newport Outdoor Group



Putting our best boots forward since 1960

### Editors

Mike Alder-Woolf  
& Nick Meyrick

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**Get The Outdoor Habit!**

## HOSTEL WORKING PARTIES

By Norman Roberts

Over the years members of Newport Outdoor Group (previously Newport YHA Group) have participated in many working parties at youth hostels around the country, including Llwyn-y-Celyn, Poppit Sands, Port Eynon, Llanddeusant, Marloes Sands, and most recently Wye Valley hostel (still referred to as Welsh Bicknor).

In the early 1970's many weekends were spent working under the supervision of Chris Barber in restoring the old farmhouse at Llwyn-y-Celyn to a youth hostel to replace that at Storey Arms, as shown below right.

Attending a YHA working party has many benefits and enjoyment is almost guaranteed.

- There are no overnight fees – your stay at the hostel is free of charge.
- Breakfasts, lunches, and evening meals are optional and charged at a discounted rate.
- Travel expenses can be claimed on completion of the appropriate expense form.
- The work to be undertaken can vary from decorating to gardening to building work.
- You are notified in advance of what is expected and normally a briefing takes place at the hostel before work is started.
- All necessary tools and materials are provided, for example brushes, spades, and paint.
- You meet people from other YHA groups and also representatives from the various YHA regions.
- A working party allows you to put something back into the YHA, and you always feel a sense of achievement.
- You might even learn a new skill or two!

A list of forthcoming working parties is published on the YHA website, and you can book your selected venue in advance by contacting the event organiser.

In recent times, members of the Newport Outdoor Group have attended a series of working parties at Wye Valley hostel, where a major garden restoration project has been undertaken, commencing in April 2013.

Jackie, Norman, Brian, and Somesh have spent 2 or 3 of their weekends clearing overgrown vegetation in the hostel garden along with representatives from other YHA groups. The garden terrace is being cleared to make way for a drop in café facility to cater for both walkers on the Wye Valley walk and canoeists travelling by river. As part of the project, a large number of plants are being installed in the banks of the garden.

A picture of the garden before work commenced in April 2013 is shown in the right corner.

The NOGs at Llyn-y-Celyn 25<sup>th</sup> January 2014 (not a working party of course!)



Chris, Charles and person unknown working on septic tank 5th Oct 1974.



The large Beech tree at the back of the hostel has just been felled, 26th Oct 1974.



Phil Sargeant, Andrew Clabon and Robin Pugh work at the back of the hostel, Feb 1976.



During the initial clearance, we came across a hedgehog, a mallards nest, slowworms, and a full size mature grass snake. At our last visit, the steps leading down from the hostel to the river path were relaid, and the vegetation alongside cleared. An extract from the report that appeared in the **YHA Council Bulletin 42** in December 2013 is shown to the right (highlighted green.)

Brian Turner has also been involved recently with a working party at Marloes Sands hostel, following the storms earlier in the year. Here is an extract from the **YHA Council Bulletin 47** with information about the repair work:

### Storm Troopers

*Volunteers to the rescue! YHA Marloes Sands was badly damaged during the freak storm conditions on 12 February 2014. The chimney collapsed onto the roof of one of the buildings, windows were blown out, tiles dislodged on the roof, holes in the roof.....we could not access the hostel for over a month with all the debris and scaffolding that had to be put up to restore the building externally.*

*The interior of the building was only accessible the week before it was due to open. Luckily Sue McKinnon and her trusty band of volunteers were available, at very short notice, to come over and get to work at the hostel. They did a fantastic job of clearing debris in and around the building, cleaning, painting, and hanging all the curtains back up.*

*Many thanks also to: Margaret Lloyd, Peter Lewis, Brian Turner, Rosemary James and Lew Costello*

I hope that the information provided here encourages you and your fellow NOGs to take part in one or more forthcoming working parties across the YHA – DO GET INVOLVED...

Visit

[www.yha.org.uk/volunteering](http://www.yha.org.uk/volunteering)

### With a little help from our friends...

*In April 2013 a working party at Wye Valley worked tirelessly to transform the upper garden terrace from an overgrown tangle of weeds and brambles into a useable garden space.*

*This autumn they returned to work on Phase 2 of the project. This was to create a rockery and alpine border, along with the first section of a gravel seating area; both designed to be low maintenance and keep nature tamed (no easy task!).*

*All involved did a fantastic job digging out nettle and bramble roots, & rebuilding the stone walls lining the rockery, returning the next weekend to complete the planting.*

*Special thanks go to Helen Maurice-Jones for her generous donation of plants, and to Lindsey Porter, Bill Grimes and all the rest of the volunteering team for their continued support of the Wye Valley Terrace project.*

*We can't wait to see how the border matures over the coming months, and look forward to welcoming our band of volunteers back in early April 2014 for Phase 3...*



## ZENA'S NEWS

By Zena Cook  
March 2014

Dear friends,

Most of you probably know I am in Israel at the moment. I promised some of you an update. So here goes.

After the first week of frenetic activity, with two birthday parties in Haifa, I have been pretty much in one spot, at Kibbutz Amiad, where my sister lives. I find I am more sedentary here than anywhere else, including where I live! Here, I have plenty of time for reading and writing. There are few distractions and lots of hours in the day. I am finishing up my Latvia write up. It is quite a long process.

I play scrabble with my mother quite often. She tends to beat me more than I beat her, adding to my admiration of her, but there is also a little competitive regret on my part. She is, quite obviously, enjoying herself! She comes to lunch every Saturday when all the local family congregate, otherwise I travel to her, about 8 kilometers north and east of here. Linda, my sister lives a fairly quiet life, and we are in the country with little entertainment. What can I say, it is good for me! We do receive good TV news channels, however, including 4 news channels in English from different parts of the world. We also have a BBC entertainment channel, so are not deprived some of my favorite TV programs, and including some that don't make it to the States for obvious reasons. English humor can be quite beyond the pale!

We get lots of interruptions from my nieces family, who live next door. They often need help of one kind or another, a family of special needs parents as well as one special needs child and two other children.

There are wonderful walks into the orchards and over hilltops through rocky terrain during the day. In the evening we can walk around the perimeter road. There is a fence surrounding the settlement for defense purposes and the gate is closed at night. It could be called a gated community I suppose!

We pick avocados, lemons and tangerines in the orchards and some local wild growing plants to use in salads. The purchased food is very expensive but of high quality. The meat is always kosher so it tastes a bit salty to me and the texture is different. There are so many good things to eat we don't need much meat. The milk products are excellent, as are the vegetables and fruit. It really is a land of milk and honey!



I noticed that there seems to be a lot of army vehicles on the road at the moment. We are situated within sight of the main Northern Road. I am reassured by a passer by however, that it is just a sort of change of the guard that is taking place, which happens every three months, nothing more serious than that...how reassuring!

Life will change soon when we stay in Jerusalem, my Lithuanian friends arrive and we show them around Israel. The plan is to spend the first chunk in Jerusalem, then north, then back south through Haifa. I will do a little visiting of friends too, but I do not feel highly motivated to fill my time like that. I enjoy seeing my grandnieces and nephews, of which I have many here. Two are coming to stay just before Passover. They are 8 and 9, perfect ages and even though our languages are different, we manage to communicate through playing ball games, which is my forte. By the way, Linda assures me that everyone thinks I am very eccentric here, in the land where women tend to behave more traditionally.

Ron arrived a few days ago and is just getting over jet lag. He is less content to live quietly so we use the car and travel around. Yesterday we were on the northern shores of the Lake Kinneret/ the Sea of Galilee and also drove up onto the Golan heights to a place called Gamla, very interesting ruin, which has a similar history to Masada, only from a different period.

The festival of Purim is coming up this weekend. Based as it is on the book of Esther, the idea is for everyone to dress up as bible characters, although many do not. There will be a big party for the adults on Friday night. It should be a lot of fun with music and dancing. It is also a nice time for families with children.

That's it for now,

**lihitraot** (see you soon),

Zena

