Editor’s Note

Dear Readers

Welcome to the Summer Newsletter which I hope you find both easy to follow and informative.

Look out for the following: our Chairman’s report, an account of the Spring Social, a compare and contrast look at group holidays with different walking organisations and a new feature, Nature Spotting with Don. Enjoy!

Felicity Brewis

Chairman’s Report

Hello Everyone

Hopefully, you have all enjoyed a good three months of walking since the weather improved during the last quarter.

Your Committee met in mid-May to review or progress the following items:-

Spring Social 27th March at Kings Weston House
An enjoyable evening was held when nearly fifty members visited this outstanding, local building for our Spring Social this year. See Rosanne Carwardine’s report and we thank her for organising the event.

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Bristol Walk Fest 2015 is Bristol’s third annual walking festival. This year, to tie in with Bristol’s status as European Green Capital, the Festival ran for the whole of the month of May. Being the UK’s largest urban walking festival, it featured over 160 walks with ‘something for everyone’ and was ‘brought together by Bristol’s Walking Communities’ to quote the Walk Fest brochure.

I enjoyed meeting new people on the walk I led on Sunday 10th May on behalf of Stoke Lodge Ramblers. We had eleven ‘guests’ for this walk and I think everyone enjoyed themselves, whether they managed six miles or the full ten.

Regrettably, only six of our members [including me] turned up. If, as an organisation, we are to attract new, walking members, we need to advertise ourselves better at such events. Otherwise, like it or not, Stoke Lodge Ramblers will increasingly struggle to find new, active members and leaders. As you will see from your next Walks Programme, there are a number of dates which remain unfilled due to a lack of leaders.

Margaret Ruse, Sunday Walks Co-ordinator
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Bristol Walk Fest 1st - 31st May 2015
See items from Margaret Ruse and Janet Thomas about this year’s FEST and the club’s contribution to it. Huge thanks go to Margaret for providing our walk as part of the month-long festival.

Annual holiday updates
2015 32 members have now booked for the HF House at Haytor in Devon for the weekend of 9th – 12th October. Walks to suit all levels are being planned and I will contact participants by the end of July with final joining instructions and details of the balance still owed. The deadline for payment is August 28th. Should others wish to come along as well it’s not too late to join us. We still have spare places so please contact me if you want to come.

2016 See my item comparing the offerings from HF, Ramblers Holidays and Secret Hills Walking companies for our 2016 holiday weekend.

AGM October 2015
We will be returning to Highgrove Church, Sea Mills, for this year’s AGM on Saturday 31st October, starting at 7:30 pm. As this is also Halloween Night members can bring their own costumes and ‘Trick or Treat ‘goodie bags!!

Christmas Lunch 2015 with walks
This year we will be going to the Kendleshire Golf Club at Coalpit Heath on Thursday 10th December for our Christmas meal and there will be the usual ‘short’ and ‘shorter’ walks on offer before our festive lunch.
Further details of menu choices, walks and payment will be communicated beforehand and at the AGM in October. I am grateful to Wendy Wise for suggesting the venue and making the booking and to Wendy and Gordon who have agreed to lead the two walks on the day.

Walks Leaders: where are you?
You will see from the new Programme for July – December 2015 that there are a number of blank dates for both Sunday and Thursday walks where no leader has come forward to fill the slots. I’d like to encourage members to offer walks to fill these gaps because without leaders the club is significantly diminished! If you are a new walks leader we are happy to give you plenty of support!

Please remember to visit our website www.stokelodgeramblers.wordpress.com for news updates and late changes to the published Walks Programme. Go to the NEWS UPDATE page and, for photos of recent walks, the PHOTO GALLERY page. Enjoy your walking.
Neville Brewis

Janet Thomas comments on Margaret Ruses Walk on Sunday 10th May
As part of the Walks Fest I was pleased that SLR was able to welcome eleven guests from various parts of Bristol. Margaret led us from Sea Mills Station along the river bank towards Bristol, through part of the new Avon Wildlife nature reserve alongside the Portway, up through the woods of Bishop’s Knoll and on to the Downs. We then traversed the edge of the Downs to the suspension bridge, through Clifton and on to Pero’s Bridge, Queen Square, Castle Park and Temple Meads. After lunch the walk continued via train to Redland and back to Sea Mills. How lucky we are to have such a wonderful walk right through the centre of our city. Margaret informed us of the many interesting features, ensuring our guests felt included. It made a pleasant change to have some different people to chat to as we went along.
Visit to Kings Weston House  27/03/15

Our speaker, David Martyn, provided us with a fascinating and lively tour of the ground floor rooms at Kings Weston House, explaining much of its colourful history.

Its wealthy owners after the Norman Conquest included the Berkeley family and Sir William Wynter, a prominent Bristol sea captain who transformed the house from medieval manor to Elizabethan mansion. Later Sir Robert Southwell from Kinsale, Ireland, a well-known and energetic figure at the Court of King Charles II, settled here because it took him less time to reach Ireland by boat than London by coach! The Southwell family portraits currently adorn the entrance hall.

We learned of the transformation of the old house under the illustrious 18th century architect, Sir John Vanbrugh, into a Baroque-style mansion. The only such house outside London, its decorative plasterwork ceilings were re-modelled by architect Robert Mylne and an unsupported, hanging staircase over three levels, was built. The only similar one in the world is in St. Petersburg!

We enjoyed our buffet supper in the elegant surroundings of the Vanbrugh Room and it was very heartening to learn that the house and grounds, for years relatively neglected by the many organisations owning the property, are now being maintained and re-developed by Kings Weston Action Group.

There are plans to restore a Georgian viewing terrace, re-instate more of the original parkland features and improve the network of paths in the 300-acre estate.

My thanks to Sue Hazelden whose inspiration it was to suggest KWH in the first place. It was a memorable evening.  

Rosanne Carwardine

Nature Spotting with Don

We asked Don Walter to suggest things to spot in the countryside this summer.

He writes:
How about looking out for the Cinnabar and the Burnet, two day-flying moths? Both have an unmistakable combination of magenta red and black, and both fly between June and August.

To recognise the Cinnabar look for its black forewing with two red spots at the rear and a red band on the forward edge. Its hind wing is mainly red. Eggs are laid on Ragwort which is well chewed by the black and yellow caterpillars.

You may come across the 6-spot Burnet in its preferred habitat i.e. grassy places of all kinds, including waste-land. Its favoured food plant is Bird’s Foot Trefoil. This moth has six plain red spots on each forewing with the hind wing being mainly red.

While August is generally a peak time for seeing both butterflies and day-flying moths, by this stage of summer most British birds have started their annual moult, making them vulnerable to predators.

Moulting birds skulk in the undergrowth for two or three weeks and you may notice that some common birds fail to visit your garden. Swifts, however, leave this country preferring to moult in South Africa.

Good luck spotting wild life on your walks.

Don
Ramblers Holidays Walking Partnership

This is a reminder to all members who intend to book a Ramblers holiday for themselves, to kindly nominate SLR as their walking group before making their final payments.

At no extra cost to individual members, this brings in additional funding to our club which can then be used to promote walking activities and the purchase of maps etc.

We would like to thank the three members whose nominations resulted in us receiving an extra £70.00 from Ramblers during the period Oct 2014- April 2015.

Margaret Ruse

Stoke Lodge Ramblers 2016 Holiday Comparison Exercise

In order to get value for money from our annual weekend holiday next year, I asked three companies [Holiday Fellowship, Ramblers Holidays and Secret Hills Walking Holidays] to quote for the same trip. The specification was for a booking at St Ives over a weekend in early October 2016 for a party of 30-40. A mixture of single/twin/double rooms was requested for 3 nights on a Dinner/B&B basis, with packed lunches, a selection of guided walks each day and entertainment in the evenings. St Ives was chosen as all three companies have houses there.

The outcomes were discussed at our SLR committee meeting on May 14th with Secret Hills Walking Holidays being a clear winner in terms of cost, flexibility of walks offered and the overall package being specifically tailored to SLR members.

It was therefore decided to follow up their quote with a booking for a holiday 7th - 10th October 2016 at the Trehoylan Manor Hotel, St Ives.

Neville Brewis (Spreadsheet available on request!)

Money, money, money Sue Hazelden

I’m pleased to report that the club is in a very healthy financial position, although as a committee, we are looking to publicise our existence and recruit more walkers. This year we have 123 members, the vast majority being renewals. But we have room for more!

Reducing to two printed newsletters each year obviously saves costs and keeping you up to date through the website seems to work well. Some members now receive all our information by email and if that would suit you too, let us know. However, we will carry on printing as long as needed, so don’t panic if you prefer the printed word!

Our bank balance is boosted by earning ‘commission’ from Ramblers’ Holidays, so if you book with them, do mention our name. HF too will pay us for placing their advert in this newsletter.

Working out what to charge for activities can be tricky - how many will come, what will our expenses be? Christmas lunch, always popular, was good value for money, and we turned a small profit. This was subsequently swallowed up by the Spring Social at Kings Weston House and whether we break even for the coach outing remains to be seen. Plus there’s the Weekend in October to account for.

Any questions? Do get in touch - you may even see me on a walk from time to time, although I haven’t managed many this year! But at least the finances are in good shape.