

# PENWICLE

Peninsula Wilderness Club meets on the second Monday of every month at 7:30 pm at the Kitsap Unitarian Fellowship Church on Perry Avenue in East Bremerton. The public is cordially invited.

## March 2001

*Monday Meeting  
March 12th*

### Puget Sound: Sea Between the Mountains

The beauty and enchantment of Puget Sound from Olympia and Seattle to the Strait of Juan de Fuca and the San Juan Islands will be the focus of Bainbridge photographer Tim Thompson's presentation. Thompson's work has been seen in National Geographic, Audobon, and Travel Holiday among other publications.

### Seeking: *PENWICLE* Editor

If you've got a computer and some interest and talent in desktop publishing, consider volunteering to edit the monthly *PENWICLE* newsletter. It's currently formatted in Microsoft Publisher, but could be done in PageMaker or other suitable software. Attending the general and interested members meeting to collect information is helpful. Members often contribute feature stories, so the need for creative writing is mostly limited to trip and miscellaneous announcements. Other members proof-read, address, and mail the newsletter, so there's plenty of support. If you're interested, please contact Teresa Sayers at (360) 895-8769 (email [tsayers@telebyte.net](mailto:tsayers@telebyte.net)) or Ron Croft at (360) 779-6250 (email [twocrofts@earthlink.net](mailto:twocrofts@earthlink.net)).

### Information Board

The club is trying a new communication tool. The Information Board will be in the lobby of the church at the Monday general meetings. It is intended to promote member-to-member communication on topics that may not be appropriate for the newsletter, such as news items, courses, environmental issues, etc. Since it's a new idea, the scope of its use hasn't yet been refined. PWCers can post items they'd like to share with fellow members.

## **Upcoming Outings**

### **Big Mountain Ski Trip**

March 4th thru 9th

Contact: Pat Gleason, (360) 862-8926

Email PGZyzz@cs.com

PWCers who reserved space on the Big Mountain ski trip will be enjoying the powder of the Rocky Mountains

### **Duckabush Trail**

Saturday, March 10th

Contact: Barney Bernhard, (360) 479-3679

The trail is about 7 miles with 2000 feet of elevation. This forest trail climbs over Little Hump then turns north to avoid the river's gorge, and ascends Big Hump, which is a rocky buttress on the flanks of Mt. Jupiter. From here, St. Peter's Dome is visible across the river.

### **Whidbey Island Beach Hike**

Saturday, March 17th

Contact: Rick Fleming, (360) 779-2275

An approximately 10 mile round trip hike along the beach below Ebey's Landing. We'll walk across the Port Townsend/Keystone Ferry to Fort Casey State Park. From there we'll walk the beach north to Fort Ebey State Park. This beach has been rated as one of the most picturesque and non-developed beaches in Puget Sound.

### **Theler Wetlands**

Sunday, March 18th

Contact: Diana Cripe, (360) 895-8213

Enjoy strolling broad and level trails along peaceful and scenic wetlands. This is a great way to spend a leisurely afternoon any time of year.

### **Spruce Railroad Trail**

Saturday, March 24th

Contact: Barney Bernhard, (360) 479-3679

8 miles round trip, with minimal elevation gain. On clear days the mountains across Lake Crescent provide an awesome backdrop to this winter favorite hike.

### **Hurricane Ridge Snowshoe**

Sunday, March 25th

Contact: Mac MacDowell, (360) 479-6333

All skill levels are welcome for a day of snowshoeing at Hurricane Ridge. The breathtaking, snowcovered vistas here are unsurpassed.

### **Dungeness Spit**

Saturday, March 31st

Contact: Dave Cossa, (360) 871-5577

Meet at the Hood Canal Bridge at 8:00 a.m. and drive to the Dungeness Spit Wildlife Sanctuary near Sequim. The hike will be along the spit for 5 miles to one of the oldest lighthouses in the Northwest, built in 1848. After lunch and a tour of the lighthouse, we will return and most likely have dinner somewhere in Sequim. 10 miles roundtrip (approx. 5 hours of hiking) with 100 feet of elevation gain (the stairs of the lighthouse). No pets allowed on the spit.

### **Utah Spring Telemark Festival**

Alta Ski Area in Alta, Utah

April 12th thru 15th

Contact: Pam Sargent, (360) 697-5545

Email psargent@ix.netcom.com

Event fee is \$300 which includes 4 days of lift tickets, clinics and instruction, use of demo gear, daily socials. Clinic sponsor is Exciting Escapades. Their website is [www.excitingescapades.com](http://www.excitingescapades.com). All skill levels are welcome. You can just come along and ski without signing up for the clinic too. Food, lodging, and car rental will be shared. Flights to Salt Lake City are approximately \$200.

### **Hugo Peak Hike**

Saturday, April 21st

Contact: Steve Vittori, (253) 858-8191

An easy to moderate, 5 to 6 mile round trip hike with about 900 feet of elevation gain—this is an excellent hike to prepare for the upcoming joys of Spring and Summer.

### **Mt. Shasta Climb**

May 24th thru 28th

Contact: Pam Sargent, (360) 697-5545

Email psargent@ix.netcom.com

The 24th and 28th will be driving days. Route will be determined by the skill level of those that sign up—either south side or a more technical route on the southeast side. Basic snow travel skills and intermediate backcountry ski/boarding abilities are required at a minimum. Will set a high snow camp and climb and ski from there.

## Upcoming Events

### Washington Trails Assoc. (WTA)

#### Trails Fest 2001 March 2nd & 3rd

Seattle Center Flag Pavilion & Center Pavilion

Friday, March 2nd 4 p.m. to 8 p.m.

Saturday, March 3rd 9:30 a.m. to 6:30 p.m.

Exhibits, Speakers, Workshops, Equipment

For more information visit [www.wta.org](http://www.wta.org), or call (206) 625-1367.

### Chief Kitsap Snowsport School at Stevens Pass

Saturdays, March 24th and 31st

Contact: Doug Savage, (360) 698-9774

Jon DeArman, (360) 697-1352

Beginner and intermediate telemarkers will enjoy two Saturdays of instruction at Stevens Pass. Instruction will be given from 10:00 a.m. to noon with informal instruction in the afternoon. The cost is \$25 per session (plus lift ticket, etc.).

### Lake Havasu

#### April 28th—May 3rd

Contact: Dave Cossa, (360) 871-5577

Plans for a Lake Havasu trip will be firmed up on March 15th.

Fly to Las Vegas, rent a van, and drive to Kingman, Arizona on April 28th. Then we'll drive approximately 100 miles to Hualapai Hilltop where Indian packers will take our gear. We'll hike with daypacks 7 miles to the Indian village of Suapi where we must check in and pay entrance and camping fees. We will then hike an additional 3 miles to base camp where our gear will be waiting for us.

We'll spend 3 days exploring the area including a 7 mile (one way) hike to the Colorado River. This is one of the most beautiful places imaginable, but shoot—don't take MY word for it—just ask any of the 45 club members I've taken there over the years! We'll hike out on May 2nd and fly back to Seattle on May 3rd.

### Nepal

Leaving Approximately June 22, 2001

Contact: Brian Steely, (360) 297-3825

Email: [steelcra@telebyte.com](mailto:steelcra@telebyte.com)

Treat yourself to an awesome 2001 adventure in one of the world's premiere trekking regions, Nepal. Three options for trips...

**Mustang...** The remote Mustang region. Close to Tibet and similar in culture.

**Annapurna Circuit...** Three-week trek around the Annapurnas. Up one river valley and down another, walking through various cultures along route.

**Jomsom...** Fly into Jomsom and hike out. If you're on a tight timeline, this is the shortest of the treks.

### Trip Sponsors...

PWCers sponsoring club outings will get extra chances at the monthly door prize. As a thank-you for sponsoring club activities and to encourage participation, you'll get an additional entry in the monthly door prize drawing for each club activity you've sponsored since the last monthly meeting.

**REMINDER:** If you're expected to attend an outing that has limited capacity, please remember to call the trip sponsor if you're not going to be able to go. There are often people waiting as alternates who could fill your vacancy with a little notice. *Thanks for your consideration.*

# Olympic National Park Beach Clean-up

April 28th & 29th, 2001

To register or receive more information, contact: Jan Klippert, (206) 364-2689  
Email: [jpklippert@aol.com](mailto:jpklippert@aol.com)

The clean-up is energized by a partnership of community service organizations, businesses and government agencies. Volunteers will comb 60 miles of Olympic National Park (ONP) coast from Shi Shi Beach on the north to South Kalaloch Beach. Marine debris will be hauled off the beaches and piled at trailheads or cache sites designated by ONP staff for disposal at a later date. This community/volunteer effort will help preserve the natural beauty of this unparalleled Washington wilderness resource. Last year 360 volunteers removed 17 tons of debris.

Volunteers are urged to select a beach and register their participation by April 16, 2001. Beaches easily accessible by car or a short hike are appropriate for a one-day outing. Some beaches will require a single overnight stay. More remote beaches will require a several day commitment from volunteers with no-trace wilderness backpacking skills.

Volunteers will register at one of five field operation sites including the Forks Information Center, Oil City trailhead and ranger stations at Mora, Ozette, and Kalaloch. At these sites volunteers will receive information about the beach they will be working.

Volunteers at designated research monitoring beaches will record data about the debris they collect. The information will provide a snapshot record of the coast and help identify sources of the debris. The data will be used for oceanographic research of interest to naturalists and marine scientists from the Olympic Coast National Marine Sanctuary and Olympic National Park.

## Contra Dance Schedule

**1st** Saturday of the month Port Orchard (360) 830-0319 and Silverdale (360) 780-2220

**2nd & 4th** Saturday thru May Port Townsend, Palindrome Hall (360) 385-5559  
(Mar. 10th & 24th, April 14th & 28th, May 12th)

**3rd** Saturday for March & April Bainbridge Island, Island Center Hall (360) 697-6192  
(Mar. 17th, April 21st)

**May 25th thru 28th** (Memorial Weekend) Contra dancing will be one of the featured activities at the Seattle Folk Life Festival at Seattle Center. This festival generally draws lots of beginners, and is one of the most popular contra dance events held on the West Coast.

Beginners are welcome; all dances are taught. Wear leather-soled shoes and light-weight casual clothing. Bring a snack and water bottle and prepare for fun. For general information or carpooling, contact Tom Banks (360) 697-7708.

A number of PWC members attend the contra dances in our community. It's fast-paced, informal, fun, American folk dancing.

## March

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4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
24	26	27	28	29	30	31

# March



## April

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
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8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30					

Date	Outing	Contact	Page
Mar. 2nd & 3rd	WTA Trails Fest	Seattle Center, <a href="http://www.wta.org">www.wta.org</a>	3
Mar. 4th- 9th	Big Mountain Ski Trip	Pat Gleason, (360) 862-8926	2
Mar. 8th	Interested Members Meeting	Lynn Howat, (360) 598-3087	5
Mar. 10th	Duckabush Trail	Barney Bernhard, (360) 479-3679	2
Mar. 12th	Puget Sound Photography	Tim Thompson at Unitarian Fellowship Church	1
Mar. 15th	PWC Double Discount	Mt. Constance Mountain Shoppe from 8:30 to 10:00 p.m.	insert
Mar. 17th	Whidbey Island Beach Hike	Rick Fleming, (360) 779-2275	2
Mar. 18th	Theler Wetlands	Diana Cripe, (360) 895-8213	2
Mar. 23rd	Potluck	Doug & Venita Savage, (360) 698-9774	5
Mar. 24th	Spruce Railroad Trail	Barney Bernhard, (360) 479-3679	2
Mar. 24th & 31st	Snowsport School at Stevens	J. DeArman, (360) 697-1352 or D. Savage, (360) 698-9774	3
Mar. 25th	Hurricane Ridge Snowshoe	Mac MacDowell, (360) 479-6333	2
Mar. 31st	Dungeness Spit	Dave Cossa, (360) 871-5577	2

### Interested Member Meeting

Thursday, March 8th, 7:00 pm

Contact: Lynn Howat, (360) 598-3087

March's Interested Members meeting will be at Lynn Howat's home in Suquamish. Plan upcoming trips and discuss club business, followed by socializing.

### February Potluck!

Friday, March 23rd, 6:30 pm

Contact: Doug and Venita Savage, (360) 698-9774

Join Doug and Venita for a fun evening of socializing and food. Bring you favorite main dish, salad, side dish, or appetizer. The host and hostess will provide dessert.

### PWC Climbers Group

An informal gathering of climbers meets the last Monday of the month at 7 pm at the Silver City Brewing Company in Silverdale. All are welcome to join us for general socializing and discussions about past and future mountaineering excursions. For directions, call **Tom Banks** at (360) 697-7708. For a list of climbers, send an e-mail to **Jim Morrison** at: [jimjuliem@yahoo.com](mailto:jimjuliem@yahoo.com) or phone (360) 638-2705

### ⇒ A Word About Outings

The persons sponsoring trips organizers and should not be considered instructors. If you are unsure of your abilities, skill level, or equipment, discuss the trip thoroughly with the organizer. Often, friendly guidance is available on the trip; however by preplanning you will help ensure everyone has a safe and fun adventure.

# Club Business

## Joining the PWC...

⇒ Membership is open to anyone interested in muscle-powered, outdoor sports. Dues are \$18.00 per household per year. Send a check or money order to **Peninsula Wilderness Club; P.O. Box 323; Bremerton, WA 98337-0070**. Include your name, mailing address, phone number, and email address. If you do NOT want to have your information included in the annual membership list distributed to fellow members, please indicate so when you join. PWC members get a 10% discount at Mt. Constance Mountain Shoppe, The Ajax Café, and Commander's Beach House B&B in Port Townsend. (See back of newsletter.)

## Officers & Staff

President:	Ron Croft	(360) 779-6250
Vice Pres:	Nancy Meyer	(360) 297-1298
Secretary:	Kathy Weigel	(360) 871-0291
Treasurer:	Gail Christensen	(360) 373-7069
Board of Directors:	Lynn Howat	(360) 598-3087
	Kevin Kilbridge	(360) 871-2537
	Joe Weigel	(360) 871-0291
Entertainment:	Joe Weigel	(360) 871-0291
Events:	Nancy Meyer	(360) 297-1298
Refreshments:	Laura Croft	(360) 779-6250
Scrapbook:	Linda Lester	(360) 613-5143
PENWICLE:		
Editor:	Teresa Sayers	(360) 895-8769
Member Database	Venita Goodrich	(360) 698-9774
Mailing Hosts:	Joyce Kimmel	(360) 876-1497
	Doug Savage	(360) 698-9774
On-line Services:	Bert Cripe	(360) 895-8213

## Membership Renewal...

⇒ Renewals should be sent to the club's post office box listed above. The Treasurer receives transactions through this address. This will ensure the quickest processing of your dues. If you don't want to be listed on the distributed membership list, indicate so when renewing.

## PWC On-Line...

⇒ Bert Cripe maintains the club Website and the email list. Contact Bert for your on-line needs. Phone: (360) 895-8213 email: [bcripe@telebyte.com](mailto:bcripe@telebyte.com)

⇒ **PENWICLE** is on-line at <http://kendaco.telebyte.com/~bcripe/>

⇒ Submit photos of PWCers and your favorite recreation activities or destinations to Bert for posting on the club Website. If you've already got them in a computer file, email them to him at [bcripe@telebyte.com](mailto:bcripe@telebyte.com). Otherwise, send the actual photo(s) to him at 2398 Jefferson Ave. SE; Port Orchard, WA 98366 and Bert will scan it in.

## PENWICLE...

⇒ Deadline for newsletter submittals is the 15th of the month. Send articles, trip reports, stories, announcements, etc. to: Teresa Sayers, 4130 Harris Rd. SE, Port Orchard WA 98366; phone (360) 895-8769; email [sayers@telebyte.net](mailto:sayers@telebyte.net).

⇒ You should receive your newsletter at the end of the month or the very beginning of the month. If you have NOT received your newsletter by the second business day of the month, it could indicate a distribution problem that we want to investigate and remedy. If this happens to you, please contact Venita Goodrich at (360) 698-9774 so another copy can be mailed to you immediately.

⇒ A small group of PWCers meets to prepare the newsletter for mailing. Call Doug Savage at (360) 698-9774 for specific location and time if you would like to help.

## Address Changes...

⇒ Send changes of address, phone number, and email to Venita Goodrich; 3661 Hyak Way, Bremerton, WA 98311; email: [vmnotbf@ix.netcom.com](mailto:vmnotbf@ix.netcom.com).

## Pet Policy...

⇒ Because some people may not be as comfortable with your pets as you are, you're asked to please leave them at home when attending PWC outings unless the trip is specifically advertised as welcoming them.





# Offa's Dyke Path

by Laura Croft

## Part 1: From Bristol Channel to Hatterall Ridge

Last summer Ron and I hiked one of England's designated long-distance paths, an experience very different from hiking in the Northwest. We didn't follow a coastline, mountain range, or other geographic feature, but instead, a man-made earthwork, a long mound and ditch known as Offa's Dyke. Built 1200 years ago by King Offa of Mercia to mark his boundary, it traces the border between England and Wales from Bristol Channel almost 200 miles to the Irish Sea. Historically, the border was an area of conflict and it's dotted with the defensive castles of wealthy barons and medieval churches that offered refuge to commoners.

When peace came to the border, medieval towns sprang up, and many domestic buildings survive—from stately mansions to timber-framed farmhouses and cottages. It was in such 13th and 14th century cottages and farmhouses that we stayed most nights. Our farmer hosts struggle to make a success of farming, and one of the ways they make ends meet is to run their farmhouses like B&B's for hikers. It was rewarding to see that our stays were of help to them at the same time they were so helpful to us.

An official association maintains the Offa's Dyke Path (ODP) and publishes a listing of farmhouses open to hikers, so we were able to call ahead each evening to arrange for the next night. When planning the trip, we expected dinners would be in local pubs, but usually we stayed in such remote rural areas, no pubs or restaurants were nearby. The farmers themselves fed us very well, serving hearty dinners, full English breakfasts, and packing lunches for us. It was a special part of the experience to share the old homes and spend time with our hosts, who usually greeted us with tea when we arrived and visited for awhile before and after dinner and again over breakfast. Most of our hosts seemed to really enjoy having hikers in their homes and thrive on it.

We had an unexpectedly diverse group of hosts—several sheep farmers; a retired dairy farmer who now raises Welsh mountain ponies; a retired ethics professor, now a book editor; a classical guitarist; a methodist minister; and a stone mason. And the path itself offered much variety—upland forests; the moorlands of the Black Mountains; the rolling, cultivated countryside of the Welsh foothills; and lush river valleys of the Wye and Dee. Along the way, continually accompanied by birdsong, we shared the path—with a few people now and then, with ponies and cows, and with lots and lots of sheep.

### Getting Started

We flew into Heathrow Airport and got a bus to Chepstow, the town closest to the start of the ODP. In just two hours we were there, early enough to walk to the official start of the path at Sedbury Cliffs, limestone cliffs that rise up at the edge of the River Severn at the Bristol Channel. We walked to the start, then back up to Chepstow, so the next morning we could be on our way without backtracking. In Chepstow, we saw the first of many castles, which was completed in its present form in 1293. After all these centuries, it's still a forbidding looking defensive structure. We spent a little time there, then set out for 15 days of hiking.

### Finding Our Way by Acorns & Arrows

Starting at the southern end as we did, the path follows the dyke closely for 14 miles, but it isn't a matter of simply walking along something easily recognizable. Sometimes it's a bank up to 25 feet high with a deep ditch to the west, sometimes no more than a hedgebank or a ridge across a plowed field. And for much of its length, it's almost completely eroded. Finding our way proved to be the big challenge.

The terrain itself wasn't particularly difficult, but for several days there's so much up and down that it's the equivalent of a considerable mountain. The main difficulty is finding the approved route, which really should be followed because it crosses private lands, over hills and through mazes of hedges and fences and over all kinds of stiles. The most confusing sections are in the valleys and lowlands, among fields and farms,



where choosing a wrong stile can get you going way off course. The route is marked by special signposts, and each county chooses its own kind of stiles and signs. Most use an acorn symbol and yellow arrows with 'Offa's Dyke Path' printed on them, so for 200 miles we made our way by acorns and arrows. At times the signs are too faded to read and, often, official signs are replaced by farmers who put up markers that aren't clear. Then, too, souvenir collectors sometimes can't resist removing the signs altogether. So wayfinding is a big part of the journey, and we referred to our guidebooks all along the way.

### **The First Day Out**

To recover from jetlag, we'd planned our first day to be the shortest. There was a heat wave at the time and it was beautiful and clear, with temperature in the 90's as we made our way through the farms and fields and up through a wooded area called Tintern Woods. Once through the woods, we glimpsed Tintern Abbey in a valley below us and took a side trail down. It was built in 1131 according to the Rule of Cistercian monks in an "uninhabited place, away from the turmoil of Norman towns." Set in green fields on the bank of the River Wye, it's very peaceful, and wandering among the ruins it's easy to understand why this spot was chosen as a place for monks to pursue a spiritual life.

From the Abbey we hiked on to our lodging for the night. As we entered, a sign "beware of bulldog" greeted us, making us wonder what we were getting into. But the dog turned out to be a really sweet pitbull of our hosts, Alan and May Ward. Alan was quite the character and got us off to a wonderful start. He's been many things in his life and says his job now is to "take care of whoever he's with each day." They couldn't have been more welcoming and served us a gourmet vegetarian dinner and breakfast and a packed lunch. Before we set off, Alan advised us to hold hands often and, if we turned an ankle or decided we didn't want to finish the walk for any reason, to just give him a call from wherever we were and he'd come pick us up.

### **Sunny Days**

Another hot day walking through fields and farms found us at lunchtime looking down on the small village of Redbrook, which used to be an industrial area and the northern terminus of the Wye Valley Railway. The old railway bridge is still there, but the rails were taken up during the first world war and sent to France, and the line was never reopened. We crossed the bridge to our first pub, where we had what turned out to be the only pint we'd drink during a day of hiking.

Our thirst quenched, we went on through the quietude of the rural countryside and ancient village churches and churchyards, continually climbing over countless stiles. The path led us directly to White Castle, which dates from 1155 and, although roofless, the walls are intact and are still surrounded by a water-filled moat. Access to the castle is across what used to be a drawbridge, and from inside the walls you can peer through narrow arrow slits to the lands below. It's easy to imagine lookouts from bygone days standing sentry from this commanding spot, alert to attackers, and ordering the bridge be drawn when action from afar could be seen.

The path went on through countryside of patchwork greens, often between hedgerows that towered on either side. We passed heaps of derelict barns made of local shale now crumbling with age, and found our next night's lodging sitting in the midst of such ancient farm buildings. Dating from 1420, this was a 450-acre farm with 700 sheep and 400 cattle. As we found our way through a maze of ancient outbuildings, our first view of the house was with a motorcycle gang milling about the entrance. The initial impression made me leery but, again, going with the flow brought unexpected delights.

Our hosts Ann and Stuart Beaven welcomed us all into their working farm - Ron, me and the "Mid-life Motor Mice", the not-so-fearsome motorcycle gang who turned out to be four friendly, middle-aged Dutchmen cycling England together. Stuart gave Ron and me a tour of the crumbling farm buildings still in use, one from the 15th century that houses a

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horse-drawn cider mill. Part of the Beaven inheritance is stacked up outside: Black stone bricks, once the floor of a cow shed, are now a savings account of sorts. The value of these centuries-old used bricks is escalating, so he's holding onto them as long as he can.

With such open and caring hosts, it was hard to depart, but we had a long day ahead and would be leaving farm fields for the Black Mountains to hike along Hatterall Ridge.

## Part II: From Hatterall Ridge to the Irish Sea

### Stormy Weather

The high moorland of Hatterall Ridge, although not high by our standards, would take us to the highest point on the path: Hay Bluff at 2306 feet. On a clear day we would have seen vast views to the north of Wye Valley and to the east of the Herefordshire Plain and the Malverns in the distance, but the weather was ominous. Thunder storms were forecast and for the first time we donned our cagouls and had two days of hiking along an exposed ridge through rain, mud, and winds to 50 mph.

Coming off the ridge, we stopped for a hot tea break at an inviting old barn with a sign welcoming walkers and a spigot of fresh running water. Sheltered under the cave, I was studying the guidebook when an old woman came out from the house to talk. She told of her late husband who had painted the welcome sign and installed the spigot during a drought one summer when thirsty walkers came to their house for water. At the time, she opposed giving water away, afraid they wouldn't have enough for the toilet and laundry, but he had said, "We can't deny thirsty people water to *drink*." So the sign is still there, and the spigot is mentioned in guidebooks as the "friendly water tap."

### Books, Books, and More Books

After the spigot stop, the day turned sunny and we could view the River Wye below as we approached the quirky little town, Hay-on-Wye, which bills itself as the "used-book capital of the world." Not knowing just where to find the B&B we'd booked, I

asked a helpful local, who pointed the way. This was one of the few actual towns along the path, and after settling in, we went out to get a feel for the place. Hay is the headquarters of Booth Booksellers, the world's largest second-hand bookseller. Founder Richard Booth opened the local castle as a used book headquarters, and the whole town has grown into a used-book paradise, with specialty bookshops scattered everywhere. Our stay in Hay was most citified, browsing through bookstores, dining in restaurants, and relaxing over pints, but when morning came we were very ready to get walking again.

### More Sheep Than People

Leaving Hay, we followed the River Wye for a couple of miles, then up and down over moorland hills and valleys, sharing space with grazing ponies and sheep—so many sheep we came to hear different meanings in their ba-a-a's: the crying bleat of hungry babies, the agitated mom distracting us from her lambs, the quick alert to others about our approach, and the basic ba-a that seems to be their normal conversation. The highlight of this part of the path is Hergest Ridge. Hiking through bracken and gorse, we were treated to wide views of rounded green hills and Radnor Forest on the edge of Central Wales, not like our native forests, but rolling slopes blanketed with conifers planted by the Forestry Commission after WWII. Nearing its midpoint, the path rejoins Offa's Dyke and we followed along, sometimes walking on the earthwork itself, sometimes to one side, until we entered Knighton, the halfway point and home of the Offa's Dyke Association headquarters.

### We're Halfway There

Our hosts in Knighton were Annabelle and Angus, a Scotsman whose grandfather and great-uncle had made their fortune on the Klondike, so he knew all about the Chilkoot Trail. His house dates from the 1500's and was part of the law enforcement system then. So suspects could be moved from place to place, tunnels connect it to other "law houses" and a nearby castle. We were greeted in our own sitting room with a roaring fire, and treated to homemade breads and jams at breakfast. Then we were off to the train station to meet Alan and Catherine Searle and Lori Hudson, who joined us for the next few days of hiking.

Their first day was the toughest part of the route, made worse for them by jetlag and lack of sleep. Though barely higher than 1400 feet, there are lots of steep climbs and descents, but the scenic rewards are worth it, undulating green as far as the eye can see. The path follows the Dyke for much of the way at this section but it's heavily eroded in places and not always discernible. We had to carefully follow the sometimes confusing acorns and arrows which led us over stiles, through gates and across farm fields, over creeks and streams, even through a barnyard reeking of muddy dung. We walked on paved and unpaved lanes, along river flood banks, canal towpaths, and through cultivated farm fields. The path took us through and past a golf course, and through an old racecourse.

We had picnic stops on the side of the Dyke, among headstones in a centuries-old churchyard, and stopped at elegant Mellington Hall for a spot of tea. Our farmhouse stays continued to be warm and welcoming, and we were heartily fed by all our hosts. In the tiny village of Montgomery, Catherine got a train to the Welsh coastal town where her grandmother lives and the rest of us went on to Chirk Castle, built in 1310 and continuously occupied ever since. Over tea and scones with clotted cream, we said our good-byes before Alan and Lori left for Scotland and Ron and I hiked on together through rolling border country.

### Nearing the End

The route soon followed the towpath of the Shropshire Union Canal, part of a system of canals begun in the late 1700's in an attempt to create a waterway connection between the Mersey, the Dee and the Severn rivers. This effort involved crossing deep valleys, and to avoid water-wasting locks, Thomas Telford built his famous aqueduct 121 feet above the river. Begun in 1795, it took 10 years to complete. It is a cast-iron trough 12 feet wide lying atop a row of stone piers. The awesome sight inspired Sir Walter Scott to describe it as the most impressive work of art he'd ever seen. It is 1007 feet long, the span of its arches 48 feet, and the stone blocks of its 18 masonry piers still have their original mortar which is believed to be made of ox-blood and lime. Its towpath offers expansive views of the river and valley below. Britain's 18th century dream of con-

necting the rivers never was realized, and the canals that remain are used for recreational and dinner boats.

We walked on beneath the limestone crags of Eglwyseg, over hillsides and scree slopes, through plantations and across the mistiest moor we encountered, a scene straight out of *Wuthering Heights*. It is the one place the guidebook warned where a compass could be needed for wayfinding across knee-deep heather in mist and rain, which proved to be the case. Ron took a compass reading and I walked off into the mist. Repeating this sequence several times, we found our way across the moor.

There was a long stretch of open hill walking, then through limestone quarries, and back into rural waves of green as we approached Prestatyn and the endpoint of our walk. A dripping rain began as we came into town and we were quite soaked by the time we reached the beach. The official way to end a walk of ODP is to take a dip in the Irish Sea, but it was cold and late by the time we arrived, and we were elated to simply stand on the beach and look out to sea.

This was our first long-distance walk, and it surely will not be our last. I took a couple of days to adjust to the uncertainty involved, walking for miles not knowing what were we walking toward. Who would we be spending the evening with? What would the accommodations be like? Would we get a hot bath or shower? Everything about the evening ahead was unknown, unlike backpacking when I know I'm headed for time spent setting up camp, cooking the food I know is in my pack, enjoying the camaraderie of those I'm hiking with, and finally sleeping in my own cozy bag. It really was a subtle life lesson, walking into the unknown, not knowing what lay ahead and not able to control it in any way. Once I got used to the lack of personal control, the experience was very freeing, and I look forward to repeating the experience on other long-distance walks to deepen the lesson.

For detailed information, see: <http://www.offa.demon.co.uk/offa.htm>

## How to Join the PWC (or renew your membership):

Membership is open to anyone interested in muscle-powered outdoor sports. Dues are \$18.00 per household per year. Send a check or money order to **Peninsula Wilderness Club, P.O. Box 323, Bremerton, WA 98337-0070**. PWC members get a 10% discount at Mt. Constance Mountain Shoppe, The Ajax Café, and Commander's Beach House Bed & Breakfast.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_

(Optional\*)

(Optional\*)

New Member? ☐      Renewing Member? ☐

*\* If you provide this information, it will be available to other club members through the mailing and email list.*

Please mark the activities in which you are most interested...

- |   |   |  |
|---|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mountain hikes up to 8 miles | <input type="checkbox"/> Kayaking/canoeing    | <input type="checkbox"/> Potlucks  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mountain hikes over 8 miles  | <input type="checkbox"/> Trail maintenance    | <input type="checkbox"/> Nature hikes (birdwatching, botany, geology, etc.)                          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lowland and beach hikes      | <input type="checkbox"/> Car camping          | <input type="checkbox"/> Special events (parties, picnic, annual multi-day trips such as Winterfest) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Backpacking                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Snowshoeing          | <input type="checkbox"/> Other? _____  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Rock Climbing                | <input type="checkbox"/> Snowboarding         | _____  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mountaineering               | <input type="checkbox"/> Downhill skiing      | _____  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Road biking                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Cross-country skiing | _____  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mountain biking              | <input type="checkbox"/> Telemark skiing      | _____  |

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