

# Newsletter No 25

June 2007

## HEY NONNY NO (AND ALL THAT)

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Clare Island, Co Mayo



Arden Gill Viaduct, Railway Walk

### Summer Is A-Comin' In

Well it (the summer, that is - we're not sure about the hey nonny nowing) has been pretty good so far, in spite of an occasional wet day, but mainly the weather in Knobbly Stickland has been incredibly warm and welcoming.

### In the Summertime When the Weather Is Fine...

...you can reach right up and try a self-guided walking holiday?

We've had some well-satisfied self-guided Knobbly Stickers, commenting on how helpful and accurate our walk notes are, and how they have appreciated how we are able to tailor make their holiday for them.

One group even got a tailor-made change part-way through their circular tour of the Lakes when the weather looked a bit dicey. Does any other company do that? We don't think so! Comments from self-guiders on our holidays have been very gratifying -

"We would never have found some of the nicer parts of the routes without your notes!" And "You made every effort to accommodate our wishes and were always ready to give help and advice when needed."

From a French walker, we had, "The most important remark, I guess, is that I had a great holiday! So, many thanks for all your help. I'd been wanting to come to the Lake District for ages and was not disappointed; the rolling green hills, the honey stone villages and the occasional downpour. A picture postcard of England!" and "I've never seen such an impressive travel pack!"

And finally, from an English group again, "We will certainly use your service again and will recommend the holiday to friends."

Many people don't want to join a group, but feel that they would like some advice on where to go, and how to get there. We also take all the hassle and headache out of booking the accommodation and sorting out your baggage transfers. The Knobbly Stick self-guided holiday is an ideal answer for those looking for such a holiday, so why not contact us for further information?

Just to remind you, we offer single-centre self-guided holidays in all our Lakes and Dales towns and villages, and linear walks linking two or more places in a single journey. Or why not do what several people have done now, and combine the two? We are always looking to offer new routes and venues, so if any of you have a particular walk that you'd like to do, but would like somebody to do the "organising" for you, please get in touch, and we'll see what we can do.

### Birthday Boys!

We had, as many of you will know, planned to run a walking holiday at Glenridding (on the shores of Ullswater in the Lake District) to celebrate the fifth anniversary of our first ever holiday. That was at the Glenridding as well, so it seemed appropriate to mark the occasion at the same hotel and at the same time of year. After much worrying and thanks to a bit of gentle encouragement, we decided to break with tradition and run the holiday over a weekend so that we could have a "bit of a do" as well. Well, we were overwhelmed: by the number of people who came for the walking, and, perhaps, even more so, by the number of you who came just for the meal and "bash". We were genuinely touched by all the kind words we received, and, of course, by the cards and gifts we were given. Seriously, we had no reason to expect such largesse, and all we can say is a great big thank you to everyone who came and helped make the occasion so memorable. Sincere thanks also to those who couldn't make it, but still sent goodwill messages, and to those who brought gifts and good wishes later on. Many thanks also to our most regular Knobbly Sticker (23 holidays so far, yes twenty-three, with us) who proposed a very kind toast, in which he dealt with the technicalities of the noble art of gate lean-

# IS THAT WITH MAYO OR PICKLE?

Neither. When we say Mayo, we're not talking about the stuff that goes all down your front when you eat a sandwich. We're talking about County Mayo, on the west coast of Ireland, a relatively little known walkers' paradise. We went there in May, with a group, and it was just great.

Some glorious weather – Clare Island was spectacular, and lot of high class lolling was done. The ascent of the "Holy Mountain" of Croagh Patrick proved a bit more demanding and was successfully accomplished by those who wanted to do it. John, however, magnanimously volunteered to lead a splinter group who had a stroll a little way up (just to have a look) and then had a look around the shops in Westport.

We also had visits to Achill Island, where we were royally entertained by a local celebrity, Killary Harbour, (the only fjord in the British Isles, so we're told), Mount Eagle and the Letterkeen Loop.

Croagh Patrick could well claim to be one of the world's unusual mountains. A great cone of quartzite rising more than 2,500 feet above the shores of Clew Bay, it is certainly an impressive-looking hill from wherever it is seen. But what makes it such a surprising place is the large number of people—many of whom are pilgrims rather than hill-walkers—struggling up and down the wide "footpath" dimbing the upper slopes. The mountain was the "home" of St Patrick as he converted the Celtic people to Christianity, and has been a place of pilgrimage since the 12th century.

The last few hundred feet of the ascent are a struggle - but no more so than many other hills in the British Isles—but, being Knobbly Stick, we have found a much more pleasant way off!

Croagh Patrick apart, there are no crowds to worry about; in fact, some of the places we visit seem never to have seen walkers at all. We believe we have come up with an itinerary that will suit just about everyone. As usual, we offer a choice of easy and more demanding days. If this sounds like your kind of holiday, we've still got places on our trip from 8<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> September, so why not get in touch to find out more?

County Mayo really is a magical place, and there's all sorts of walking, and plenty of "craic" in the evening, so don't miss out.

# IN PRAISE OF KESWICK

Our week in Keswick at the end of April into May was also a highlight, with some truly wonderful weather. One of the admittedly small group opined that all those who hadn't booked on this holiday were "really stupid" which we thought was a trifle harsh on the recipients of our brochure and newsletter, but we understood what she meant.

Anyway, to avoid being insulted again, and to make the most of this terrific area of northern England, why not join us on our September holiday there (23<sup>rd</sup> to 28<sup>th</sup>)?

Top class walking, top class cuisine, and a lively, yet not tripperish little town. (Sorry, but there are no places now available on the 2 holidays we're running there in July).

For those of you who don't know Keswick, we feel that there is no finer place to experience the joys of walking in the Lakes. The walks we can do range from the almost completely flat (like the stroll round Derwent Water) to the more challenging bouldery slopes of the highest land in England. And there are walks of every grade in between.

# Mo's Monthly Moan

And I'll tell you something else, shall I? All these people telling you what to do. I know I can write what I like here, because nobody reads this stuff anyway, so I think I'll go for a proper mindless rant. There was an article in the paper the other day, (so it must be true), all about the proliferation of signs in Britain telling us what to do and not to do. The article said that, if people are so dense as to need telling by flashing signs that they should drive slowly and carefully past a school, because there are children there,

(there's a surprise), then no amount of signs is going to make a scrap of difference to them. And do you know what, I think they're right. No Smoking, No Ball Games, No Carrying Glasses of Beer Round this Part of Town, No Stopping, No Driving, No Fishing, No Waiting, Stop Here, Don't Stop Here, No Parking, No Wearing Woolly Hats, No Breathing, No Enjoyment, No Cycling, No Walking, No Dogs, the list goes on and on and on. That's one thing about those hills they've got up north—once you're up on them,

you can go where you like (more or less). We won't go into details about access legislation, because there isn't room, but you can, can't you? You know, just wander about up there with no-one telling you where to walk, and when to sit down, and when to blow your nose. And talking of notices, I've even heard of one somewhere in the Pennines near Manchester that actually said on it "Do Not Throw Stones At This Notice". And if that's not a waste of taxpayers' money, then I don't know what is.

# Yorkshire Dales and Eastern Lakes

The Yorkshire Dales are just down the road from the Lake District – in fact, Kendal, where Knobbly Stick Inter-galactic HQ lies, in many ways represents the point where the 2 areas meet. The Dales have fewer big crags, and more rolling countryside than the Lakes, but the area is just as interesting, and almost completely unspoiled.

We've just come back from the Settle to Kirkby Stephen Railway walk in the Dales, and once again, had a great time, in spite of some bizarre weather. It started very hot (27°C), and ended up with cold wind and rain (9°C), but that didn't stop us enjoying some fine walking (or hiking, as we had a US lady with us.) We're at the Falcon Manor in Settle to revisit this route in August (weather should be no problem then) but places are going fast, so get in touch now if you want to join us for 4 days' exceptional walking – you won't find a more interesting route anywhere, we think.

If you don't fancy railways, we've got plenty of room (at the moment) at the Austwick Taddock (have a look at their website for an idea of what sort of place this is: [www.austwicktraddock.co.uk](http://www.austwicktraddock.co.uk)) from 19<sup>th</sup> to 23<sup>rd</sup> August. If you want to spend longer in the north of England, why not combine 4 nights at the Taddock with 4 nights at the Greyhound, Shap from 24<sup>th</sup> to 28<sup>th</sup> August? We'll arrange a 'bridging night' (a lot cheaper than a bridging loan!) for you in Kendal if you like, so you can do some shopping and have a wander around this pleasant market town.

You can, of course, just come for a long weekend over the Bank Holiday at Shap, enjoy the unique atmosphere of the Greyhound and either have a look at the high fells round Hawes Water or quietly meander down some of the valleys and across some of the rolling fields around Shap Abbey. Away from it all in the Lakes at bank holiday time? Impossible, you say? Come and see!

## Did you know...

William Wordsworth used to win free beer at the Ratchers Tavern in Glenridding by betting anybody who would listen that he could drink the juice out of the pickled egg jar and eat a whole packet of pork scratchings in less than 30 seconds. No wonder he wandered lonely as a cloud. (He didn't really. We just made that up... it was bacon fries, not pork scratchings).

## Reasons to Book a Holiday With Knobbly Stick (Part 3)

All sorts of reasons, of course. If you like a bit of hill-walking, and you want a guided or self-led walking holiday, there are lots of companies to choose from – some very large and some very small.

So, what sets Knobbly Stick apart? Well, first of all, we give a genuinely personal and friendly service. We'll listen to what you want to do, and, if possible, we'll make sure that you have exactly the sort of walking holiday you want. If you need more information, give us a call or an email, and we'll get back to you straight away. No call centres and their "We value your call", no talking to someone who knows nothing about what you want. You'll be communicating with one of us – a real person who only wants to provide you with the best walking holiday experience.

Second, we charge no single supplement on our guided walking holidays. We believe that single/solo travellers suffer enough discrimination without being charged over the odds for their holidays.

Third, and still on the solo traveller theme, we pride ourselves on trying to give a warm welcome to all participants on our group holidays, particularly to new Knobbly Stickers. You'd possibly be surprised just how many people contact us to say that they are on their own and have never been on holiday alone before.

We understand it takes a big leap of faith to book a holiday, especially if you're on your own, with an organisation you've not tried before but, whatever anybody may claim, we can promise you that we will do our utmost to make you feel at home. There is a piece in our 2007 brochure about the issues faced by single travellers, and one of our guests on a recent holiday says "This was the first holiday I have taken by myself. I was made to feel welcome right from the start. Thank you for a lovely holiday. I will return."

We prepare thoroughly all our walk routes so that all you have to do is come along and walk them! Another recent walker with us writes, "The most important aspect of a holiday with you two is our complete confidence in your organisation and reccy-ing of any route so that we can completely relax. We know that you will have chosen interesting and beautiful routes".

And, just to remind you that our self-guided holidays are well-known for their thoroughness and flexibility. "Design Your Own Walking Holiday", in fact.

And, to wrap up, once you've been once, you might well find it difficult to resist coming again. One of our Canadian guests says "Well worth crossing the Atlantic many more times" (We assume she means to come on the holiday, not to go home after it), and "We can't think of anything better than a Knobbly holiday". So there!

## From the Archives

While riffling through the Knobbly Stick Library the other day, our archivist, Dusty Nadgers, came across a learned tome called "The Art of Mountain Tramping" by one Richard W. Hall. Dating from 1932, this splendid book is chock-full of what, presumably, was cutting-edge advice 75 years ago. We thought you might like to see a few examples.

On the subject of equipment, Mr Hall daims that you cannot buy cheap boots. "The best way", he says, "is to go to an expert boot maker and have a pair of hand-made boots made to fit you". You can't argue with much of this. It would seem the height of madness to go to a boot maker and have a pair of hand-made boots made to a sort of random size, and then spend the rest of your days hobbling up and down Helvellyn. Having got your boots—and Mr Hall has much else to say on the subject—they need keeping in good condition. The recommendation is to use crude castor oil (1s9d a 3-gill bottle), and slap it on with a paint brush when the boots are new and dry.

Mr H. has strong views on clothing. "Most men wear too many clothes", he says simply. Not sure what he

means, but he adds that "the equipment of the boy scout appears suitable". He's a big fan of the tweed jacket, but admits that they are not wind-proof, saying it is better in windy conditions to wear a comfortably fitting cotton jacket of *closely woven tough* material. (His italics). And, most important of all, he warns that the ordinary waistcoat is the most useless garment for the out-of-doors. Well, of course it is. Haven't we been telling you this for 5 years?

Mr H appears happy to talk about quite intimate matters, not sparing his own blushes in the interests of comfort on the hills. "I find a woollen shirt too hot and wear cotton shirts winter and summer *and no other underwear*". (His italics again). Crikey.

And, for the ladies out there, we bet you can't wait to see what advice he has for you. "Godressed as a man", is the first thing he says, although he adds that "many girls seem to like a gaily coloured knitted jumper". He does talk about wide-cut tweed skirts and then there's a paragraph about undergarments, which we've tried not to read, in case we go blind. On a hot day, a cotton frock may be worn, he adds generously.

Patriotism comes to the fore in the section on maps and compass. "In Britain we are fortunate in having the best maps in the world. If you try to buy foreign maps you will realise the truth of this", daims Mr H.

And, for those who like to know how high up they are, he says there are many ways of doing so. He has spent "hours getting the boiling point of water with a finely set and scaled centigrade thermometer and comparing with the foot of the hill by the sliding scale of 936ft to a degree. However this is laborious". We'll bet it is. So he recommends an aneroid barometer.

There is a long section on tents and camping, but that need not concern softies like your KS guides who much prefer their home comforts.

Seriously, this is a gem of a book. It's easy to pick on the out-of-date bits, but it's amazing just how much of the advice still holds good today, such as a piece about reporting "new" conditions such as rockfalls and swollen rivers to other parties you may meet, and another bit about trusting your compass rather than your instinct. Superlative!

## Hill-walking to be available on prescription?

Finally (almost), we hear that walking is now going to be available on prescription! Yes, apparently, taking a walk in the country is better than taking pills, downing unpleasant tasting medicine and all the other nasty things that staying healthy can involve. So, a walking holiday will, in fact, and it's medically proven, do you good. And, of course, it's fun, as well!

## Competition Corner

Yes! It's the return of our hugely unpopular Competition Corner. While out on the Settle—Kirkby Stephen railway walk recently, we got talking about the valley and village of Dent...as you do. Well, as some of you may know, Dent was famous in the 19th century for its knitting "industry". The ladies of the valley would knit and knit and knit, when there was money to be made from selling woollen articles. So adept at their craft were these ladies that they were dubbed by Robert Southey "The Terrible Knitters of Dent". (This is a good example of the use of the word *terrible* to mean excellent, and not useless—as in, "This is a terrible good example"). All you've got to do is complete the limerick that starts like this:

"Those terrible knitters of Dent,  
Used needles exceedingly bent..."

Send in your entries in the usual way...there are no prizes this time, but we'll print the limericks in the next Newsletter.