



Newsletter No 9

March 2004

SPRING IS IN THE AIR...

In this Issue!

- BOINNG – spring is here.
- Financial advice—what else could you do for the price of a Knobbly Stick holiday?
- Stop worrying—our Agony Aunt, Penny Ghent, helps readers solve their walking problems.
- The ten eternal truths of rambling
- What we've been doing and what's coming up.



Spring—lambs, daffodils, blossom on the trees, young lovers, the Cheltenham Gold Cup...it also used to be the end of the football season, but now that happens about July, just before the beginning of the next season in August. Whatever, it's certainly time to be thinking about a Knobbly Stick break.

So...what's new and what's big in Knobblyland at the moment?

First of all, we're celebrating two years of Knobbly Stick—two years of wandering round making dreadful jokes ("truly awful" according to one guest), discussing weighty matters like was that a kestrel or not, is this mud better than yesterday's and what is the finest walk in England... because it might be this one, or we might be doing it tomorrow.

The celebrations are taking place in May during our 2 weeks at Keswick (from the 7th to the 14th and from the 16th to the 23rd). People who've been with us before (old friends as we like to think of them) have already been invited to a slap-up meal, but newcomers are, of course, welcome, and we're sure we'll find a way of making them feel special too. We may even wear silly paper hats (as opposed to the silly woollen ones we wear when out walking). Actually, they look perfectly normal

when other people wear them—it's just us. Something to do with the shape of our heads I suppose.

There's also our Yorkshire Dales break from 18th to 22nd July at the excellent Austwick Trad-dock. The hills here are a bit gentler than the Lakes and places are going well on this one.

Or, how about a week in Wasdale at the end of April? This is the one that featured in our coverage in the Times last year and is special, even by our standards. Splendid walking—some of the Lakes' best-loved hills like Great Gable and Scafell Pike, some little-known tops with spectacular views and some magnificent coastal walking around St Bees Head. The Low Wood Hall Hotel is rather special too, as are the evenings at either of the village's 2 pubs.

Plenty to think about in June too—we recommend the Grasmere holidays at the Red Lion (6th to 11th; and 27th June to 2nd July, and the Ullswater skyline break at the Glenridding Hotel (13th to 18th). Enjoy some superb walking—there's something for everyone in Grasmere and Glenridding—before the holidays of July and August. Traditionally, June is one of the best months in the Lakes, so "book now to avoid disappointment", as they say.

If You Don't Want a Knobbly Stick Holiday....

This is how you can spend about the same amount of money. You could, of course, go walking with another company - fair enough, we hope you have a great time. Here are some more suggestions...a cotton vest top and shorts set for £950 (that's nearly 2 holidays at Grasmere, say); or a pair of "wedges" (we think they're shoes, not things to keep the door open) for £400. We recently saw an advert for a mobile phone, for the price of nearly 5 KS holidays. Mind you it was streamlined, so maybe it would go further if you wanted to throw it away. For around 70 KS holidays, you can buy a luxury car, complete with DVD satnav with rear view camera...eh?

Or, do without 50 walking holidays and buy a jewelled brooch—sapphires and diamonds. It looked to us like a misshapen cuddly toy, but what do we know?

We could go on, but we think that a Dales morning, listening to the cry of the curlew, or a Lakeland sunset with the purple fells leading the eye out to the glittering sea, are simply beyond price. We believe they give a lasting joy way above anything a pair of shoes or a mobile phone could ever provide. Or, have we got it wrong? Please let us know what you think.

The Year So Far

Well, after the drama of last winter's pet rescue, it's been pretty uneventful and we're sorry to report no really momentous events. We've had some great walks, though, including some old favourites like the Fairfield Horse-shoe (which we did in snow in February), and some new routes in the Dales and Lakes. We've added several more areas to our repertoire and also found some new walks which would appeal particularly to nature lovers—on one walk, for example, we counted over 20 different species of bird, including merganser, siskin and goldeneye.

We started earlier this year as well—early January, in fact. The weather has been kind on the whole—glorious sunshine for most of our February break at Grasmere, although we did have one waterfall-filling weekend in the South Lakes as well. March so far has been blustery and invigorating.

The highlight for us, though, is the number of you that we have already seen again this year—or soon will do. It's really gratifying that so many of you do come back, so thank you very much. And, although we've said it before in our newsletters, the thing that really sticks out is how interesting and sociable the people who come on Knobbly Stick holidays really are.

Don't know what attracts you though...must be the hats.

Knobbly Stick's Ten Laws of Fell Walking

Some of you may remember that in an article he wrote for the Yorkshire Post last year, travel writer Steve McClarence mentioned the 10 Eternal Truths of Rambling as propounded by the wisdom of Knobbly Stick. Numbers 1 to 7 are listed in his original article, so we have spent some time contemplating infinity and sitting cross-legged making strange sounds to come up with the definitive list.

- 1) The top of the hill is always further than you think;
- 2) The item you want most from your rucksack is always at the bottom. (This applies particularly in cold weather if it's your gloves, hat or a hot drink you want).
- 3) Waymarks appear only when the path is perfectly obvious.
- 4) The wind direction always changes the moment you sit behind a sheltered rock.
- 5) You will only get lost on the fold in the map, or when one map joins another.
- 6) There are no problems, only challenges. (We think that's the wrong way round, and it should read "there are no challenges only problems").
- 7) Never wee into the wind.
- 8) Birds know when you are looking at them and will fly away at the precise moment they are about to become identifiable
- 9) Anyone who uses a mobile phone on the hills will usually talk in such a loud voice that he / she doesn't really need a phone at all.

This law does not, of course, apply to Knobbly Stick guides and guests.

10) There's nowt clever about walking fast.

11) The numeracy of the Knobblymen is sometimes suspect.

We'd be delighted to hear your suggestions for additions to this list. Printable ones will appear in the next edition of this newsletter—the difficult tenth issue.

France Update

Just to keep you in touch with the goings on in our International Division, we are leaving with a party of 6 for a week in the Pas-de-Calais on 3 April.

We're hoping for the same sort of weather we had last year for this trip, and will let you know how we fared in our next newsletter.

We've had requests for a trip to Normandy for 2005 so, if anybody else out there might be interested in that, please let us know. Obviously you won't be committing yourself to anything, but it would help us with our planning for next year if we had a feel for the likely level of interest.

Or, if anywhere else in France appeals to you, please tell us—we're nothing of not flexible! People tell us that a wine-tasting walk along the Loire Valley would be good; one day's gentle walking, followed by a day's wine tasting / sightseeing might be a pleasant way of spending a week or so.

NEW FEATURE!!—Readers' Problems—with your old friend Penny Ghent

Dear Penny: As an inexperienced walker, I'm worried about being left behind on a guided walking holiday. Can you help? Mr I M Nervous, Borchester

Dear Mr Nervous

Don't worry! Firstly, Knobbly Stick are not interested in breaking speed records (see Eternal Truth No. 10 above) and, because there are nearly always 2 walk leaders, the group can be split into two, so that each person can choose a walk to suit the way they feel. My advice is to give it a go!

Dear Penny: While out walking on the hills, I like to wear stiletto heels, use a mobile phone frequently, listen to a personal stereo, say "It's really boring, this" and then, when I get back, insist on drinking nothing but Bacardi Breezers? I've been told that people may laugh at me. Is this true? Butch Geezer, Weatherfield

Dear Butch Yes.

Dear Penny: How long is a Knobbly Stick walk? Anon

Dear Anon Depends on the mood of the party, the weather etc. Always back in time for dinner though!

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