

Newlyn
2012

Dear WCFPS,

Many thanks for a very welcome surprise. So many memories came to mind as I read your letter. Memories of people, some long dead, and memories of long walks, from Porthleven to Newlyn, some shorter from Nut Lane to Carbis Bay, each and every one in rain or shine a pleasure devised by the walk leader, and the company always ready to welcome new members, always ready to discuss serious topics of the day, or join in often raucous banter, always friendly, never unkind.

Then there were the parties at Christmas, when we would all bring food and drink. I remember one occasion when we had a mummers play. There was a trip to Pendeen W.I. for a repeat performance, such was our fame. We were never invited again. Every year there was a coach trip beyond our parish, sometimes as far as Mount Edgecombe, or Fowey or Tintagel, out of our parish for a day. One dark day we were in Padstow when we were foolish enough to lose our president, Jo German. We hunted all over the bal looking for him and the coach driver hinted he was due back in Carbis Bay so, we abandoned the search and came home in a subdued mood. We found Jo walking along Penzance Prom. He'd got on the wrong bus, fallen asleep and woken at Penzance. He wasn't a bit concerned, he knew where he was. Come to think, a new walk leader lost him on his first walk up Trythall somewhere. Peggy Bentley used to make him walk around Porthgwarra every Boxing Day to shake down the turkey and pudding. It did us good, however much we hated being done good by.

One visitor on a walk latched on to me. I thought she was about fifteen, so I asked her if she were on holiday (you know how condescending schoolmasters can be) and she replied that she was on leave. I wondered if she were on probation or something, but she went on that she was in the Royal Navy and on leave. When I asked if she'd had sea time, she replied that she was on a frigate as the weapons officer, and had a key to press the red button if need ever arose. She was a Lieutenant-Commander and so older than I'd imagined. Then I knew I too was getting old.

I had hoped to lead a nonagenarian walk like some of my predecessors, but heart failure and other health problems have put a stop to such foolish aspirations. I can feel my pacemaker re-acting violently, even now. Similar reaction to a local banker, trying to unwrap a woman's legs from his neck in a sea of mud at Porthcurno. Prince Harry has got nothing on our society.

Somebody once said, "You are never alone with a map." It's true. One look at a local map and memories come flooding back of people, of incidents and how happy we were just to be out with a band of likewise friends. John Nicholls came to a halt in a corn field near Ashton, and when I asked if he were lost, replied, "*No. I aren't lost. I d'know where I'm too, an' I d'know where I want to be, but I don't know 'ow to be there*". The only chap I knew who could eat his lunch and talk without spraying a single crumb.

There was the group of Dutch walkers who joined us, and put up umbrellas when it rained. The custom didn't continue when they left. A lovely lady from the U.S.A., we think she was a C.I.A. agent, after a hard walk went into the art gallery at Newlyn and came out after a short period with a red face. She, being tired, had picked up a scruffy tubular chair from a pile on the floor, only to be roundly abused for disturbing a work of art.

Sorry for the delay answering your letter. Things get a wee bit fraught at times, then priorities become decisive.

Best wishes to all who walk,

Dan McCarthy