

Rambling On

Judy Gilbert

How many times could you meaningfully combine the words 'work-top' and 'walk' in the same sentence?



During our lively CCC AGM, a charming Israeli voice, egged on by the cool American beside her whose idea it had been to raise money for something specific, suddenly interjected 'how about a sponsored walk?'

Now how many times could the words 'Jewish' and 'Food' not be said in the same breath? Thus it was agreed that new kitchen work-tops would indeed be a worthy cause.

We would all be happy to avail ourselves of the culinary delights produced on spanking new worktops and even sponsor people to effect this, but who would be prepared to do the 'foot work?' (faces turn towards Israeli voice) 'Well this mathematician I know is planning a twelve mile hike along the Water of Leith.'

Rambling club to the rescue! Sponsor sheets were produced at miraculous speed and a route, muscle aching planned, to accommodate the needs of those who might require resuscitation or at least a car lift.

Tony had planned, researched and minutely detailed the logistics of the walk, given that we all lived in different directions and that we had varying levels of stamina. Since the route was not a circular one he had to ensure that there would be a means of getting back to the start by car. Careful

planning was imperative.

On the 5th August a little after dawn had broken (six hours to be precise) fifteen intrepid ramblers set out on their exploration of the uncharted Water of Leith. Well that's what it felt like.

In the event, the campaign was carded out with military precision. Those living at the South side of town met up at Esti and Ron's where all but four would pile into Hilary and Arnold's car to drive to the meeting point in Balerno. Michael, Ron, Jonny and Tony would hasten to Leith leaving just enough transport in Leith, and all proceeded to Balerno in one car.

Soon Lawrence, Doreen, Lewis, Evelyn, David and Marilyn arrived. When we were all assembled in what we personally considered to be the appropriate haute couture of rambling, (note the natty knees of one member) we set off at a leisurely pace with sustenance on our backs. The weather looked promising and enthusiasm was high.

The walk consisted of a great variety of views, and terrains, from woody paths to functional tarmac and pavements. It is remarkable how countrified and even how

isolated some of the routes are despite the fact that one is never more than a short distance from the centre of town. I suspect that many people who have lived in Edinburgh for many years would be surprised at what a marvellous day out you can have right on your doorstep.

Our first landmark was Currie Kirk with its beautiful mown lawns and calm outlook. Crossing our first bridge we all agreed that although we were not over dressed for the slight chill in the air, the sky had a promising look about it and 'natty knees' was full of optimism.

Having passed by the brick-works close to Juniper Green and then over the bridge across the river in Colinton Dell it was 12.00 and time to stop for refreshments. All that chatting takes it out of you you know. The size and it must be said, the sociability of our group provided us with endless permutations of walking and most important talking partners; to keep the spirits up and for moral support you understand. The grass was a bit damp so thank goodness Doreen had brought her ubiquitous shower curtain. The most serious walkers would never go out without this essential piece of equipment!

Natty Knees





Lunch Break

Having reached the Visitors Centre some of us took advantage of the amenities which were more than satisfactory. There was no time to actually look round, but the centre looked sufficiently interesting to deserve a visit at a later date. A quick diversion up some steps by the centre leading to the canal, afforded an interesting view over the railway on one side and on to the Pentlands on the other.

One of the less salubrious sections en route turned into the untidy but productive Slateford allotments whose potato plants had seeded prolifically and sought refuge on the path we trod. There would certainly have been enough for several pokes of chips.

But onwards towards the Rose Garden at Saughton Park and a well deserved rest and stoking of boilers. Potentially beautiful, the garden could have benefited from some 'community weeding' perhaps from Her Majesty's guests residing nearby. Following

a quick look round the hot-house, we gathered our possessions and started towards Dean Village. The weather warmed up enough for us to shed those outer garments. Of course some of us, not naming any names, had fewer outer garments to shed than others.

As we neared Murrayfield, the strange sight that fifteen mature persons walking sometimes in twos must have presented, was confirmed when we passed a less than impressed gang of youths who loudly declared that it looked like Saga on a school outing. We were not deterred.

Past Roseburn the route is a treat with lovely tree lined paths with weirs and bridges and the sound of rushing water.

By the time we reached the back of the Gallery of Modern Art a suggestion that we stop for a cup of tea was mooted. However common sense prevailed when it was pointed out that if we so much as sat down



Dean Village

for more than five minutes we might become irredeemably rooted to the spot. So forward and getting closer to the comforting sound of the weir with its foaming water determinedly following its instinct towards lovely Dean Village.

A photo shoot on the pedestrian bridge also reveals the imposing and elegant domiciles of this most desirable situation. Now taking things even more easily than before, we stopped to admire a most unusual wrought iron gate. The bell after whose name the next street was named, was very cleverly spotted at some height above our heads cunningly set into a little alcove of a tall side of a house. A small voice tries again 'How about a tea stop?' Though there were signs of imminent capitulation the wavering dissenters held their ground. We were rather pleased to discover a plaque erected in honour of Meyer Oppenheim on the penultimate leg of our walk and agreed that should the same route ever be revisited it should be called the Meyer Oppenheim ramble. It was at this juncture that regret had been expressed as to the abstinence of a cup of tea and we hastily made our way to our final goal and a well earned rest. Despite the biting wind and by now dank atmosphere, we were invited to sit outside the 'Malmaison Hotel'. Apparently there was not enough room for us all inside but what was a little discomfort to hardened adventurers like us. Tables and chairs were hastily arranged, hot cups of beverage and puddings ordered to reinstate the flagging sugar levels and wonderful entertainment was provided by 'natty knees' struggling to get his novelty bottom halves zipped up to the tops of his shorts. Ah the joys of rambling in Edinburgh!

photography Judy Gilbert

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