

Mid Wilts – Week of Walks in Pembrokeshire

Once again we had a most enjoyable week of walks, this time based at Fishguard. We had three linear walks along some of the best parts of the Pembrokeshire Coastal Path and two circular walks inland. For the linear walks we made use of the local bus service which caters for walkers extremely well, although we did wonder how full the buses became in high season. The weather was fairly kind, we had a few short sharp showers which dampened down the dust and the pollen but did not dampen our spirits. We were joined by two new members who had never done a week of walks before and they thoroughly enjoyed it.

Fishguard is a fascinating little town with its fortress, complete with (disarmed) cannon;



its limekilns and its story of the Last Invasion of Britain in 1797. The Gorsedd Circle might appear to be Fishguard's answer to Stonehenge. However Gorsedd Circles are groups of standing stones constructed for the National Eisteddfod and found throughout Wales; the one in Fishguard was built in 1936. The stones were contributed from various parishes. Confusingly the pictures on the internet do not seem to show the same stone circle as the one in Lota Park just behind the Co-op!

On Monday we walked from Strumble Head with its impressive lighthouse to Goodwick returning to Strumble Head by 'The Strumble Shuttle' bus. The views were stunning as we walked and sometimes scrambled along the path. There was a wonderful display of gorse, bluebells, thrift and campion as well as orchids, spring squill, dog rose, etc.



Descent into a wooded valley made a lovely contrast and a brief respite from the strong breeze. Nearing Goodwick we saw the Stena Line ferry leaving for Rosslare.

Tuesday saw us in the Preseli Hills doing a circular walk from the Cwm Gwaum Valley. An easy stroll along quiet lanes and tracks was brought to a sudden end when we were faced with what appeared to be an almost vertical rock face! Fortunately once we had scrambled up a short section the path flattened out and once over the top of Carnigli we had a splendid view of Newport Sands and Dinas Island. On our way up we passed the remains of an old railway or tram track which had probably been used to take stones and rock down to the valley.



On Wednesday the weather was perfect, a few clouds and a cooling breeze. We walked along Whitesands Bay and then along the cliff path.



Again the flowers and birds amazed us with their profusion and variety, this time including many cowslips and possibly a fulmar. The water between Ramsey Island and the mainland looked extremely treacherous, flowing in different directions and glinting menacingly in the sun. At Pen Porth Clais we stopped to admire the lime kilns when a bus, the 'Celtic Cruiser', turned up. Some of our group jumped on this and went straight to St David's while the rest of us walked there through fields and lanes which made a pleasant contrast to the rugged coast path. While waiting for the bus back to Whitesands Bay, some of us indulged in the most enormous ice creams I have ever seen!

We did another circular inland walk on Thursday through the Treffgarne Gorge, Treffgarne village and over Great Treffgarne Mountain. In the gorge we crossed the barely visible remains of a railway which was to be built from Fishguard to London but was abandoned, apparently due to the Irish Potato Famine. This was another walk of contrasts with the thickly wooded gorge and the open farmed upland of the mountain, from where we could just make out the oil refineries of Milford Haven. We admired the rocky outcrops of Maiden Castle and Poll Carn and had lunch sheltering from the wind at the foot of the latter.



On Friday we caught the 'Poppit Rocket' bus from the western neck of Dinas Island to Newport Sands. A gentle stroll along the estuary at low tide was enhanced by several wading birds. Then we began the cliff path walk which again was stunning in its variety of cliffs and bays with rocks which had been tipped up almost vertically in places, millions of years ago. We saw seals, razor bills by the thousand on the rock at the tip of Dinas Island, guillemots, gulls, fulmars and choughs. Again the flowers were beautiful; May is such a lovely time of year.



Some of the group took a short cut across the neck of Dinas Island back to the cars. Our group always tries to cater for varied tastes and abilities so these splinter groups often form with the agreement and guidance of the rest of the group.

Finally on Friday evening we all gathered in The Royal Oak, the site of the signing of the surrender following the Last Invasion and the Battle of Fishguard in 1797. We simply had a very pleasant meal!

During the week various members of the group decided not to walk but to visit local sites of interest, the most popular being a boat trip either to Skomer Island to see the puffins or to Ramsey Island, another bird paradise.