



Homesick and hot: how I trekked to the Highlands

Matt Lewin, a former Christ's College Finchley pupil who lives in Bedford Road, spent seven weeks in the autumn walking the 1,300km between London and Inverness to raise money for UNICEF and Help for Heroes. Here a footsore Matt, 24, sums up his solo trek.

My charity walk from London to Inverness was definitely the hardest mental and physical challenge I have faced so far in my life, from the heat of the West Country in late September, to the driving wind and rain of the Scottish Highlands in the depths of autumn.

I was very lucky with the weather, only having a handful of wet days, but when you're carrying about 22kg and walking 20-40km a day you can't really call any day easy, even if it is sunny.

I experienced some amazing sights along the way, from wild camping on the banks of Loch Lochy in the Great Glen

to climbing the fells of the Lake District with views as far as the eye can see. It was an incredibly life affirming and exhilarating undertaking but also quite a lonely one at times.

True grit

Whenever the magnitude of the distances I had left to travel or the feeling of homesickness came over me I had to think of why I was putting myself through this and what I wanted to conquer by the end of it, and just keep on walking.

One of my toughest days came in the Lakes when I tried, unsuccessfully, to reach the summit of England's highest mountain, Scafell Pike. Time

and low cloud were against me, which meant a long and slightly difficult alternative descent after a gruelling climb to over 900m.

I don't know if I'd ever do the whole walk again but I'm pretty chuffed that I managed to complete such a major challenge in the time I had planned. I would like to say a huge thank you to friends old and new who I met along the way, and everyone at home for their generosity and support.

You can still boost Matt's fundraising total by going to www.justgiving.com/H4hlondontoinverness or find him on Facebook at London to Inverness on Foot.

Butterflies, spiders and a whole year of the pasture

Long Lane Pasture, the wildlife haven looked after by volunteers, is hunkering down for the winter but still has plenty of stories to tell. Here are some of the highlights from the latest edition of its excellent newsletter, with thanks to editor Donald Lyven.



Butterfly bonanza

Although the summer wasn't a scorcher, it wasn't too bad either; certainly not the washout of previous years. Nineteen butterfly species were again seen, and although no new ones were sighted we haven't lost any.

The orange tip, brimstone, green-veined white, and painted lady were seen and the grassland species skippers, meadow brown, ringlet and gatekeeper were again in profusion during July and August.

Caught in a web

On the pasture we have seen 20 of the 650 species of spiders recorded in the UK. Seen in August was a white crab spider that sits on flowers and physically catches its prey when it comes within range. It had caught a gatekeeper butterfly, and was enjoying its meal of eating an insect that feeds entirely on nectar. Sweet!

Moorhen mystery

Our resident moorhens raised two broods during the year but sadly we believe none actually survived to adulthood. Of course we could be wrong and the one surviving juvenile we saw may have flown the nest. They are secretive birds and at one time we counted five chicks being fed at various hiding spots in the reeds around the edges of the pond.

Many hands

Once again we were delighted to have the services of a team of young people from the National Citizen Service who visited the pasture in October to carry out some essential tasks. Soil was moved about the site in barrows to fill uneven ground and drainage ditches cleared to ease winter flooding. Brambles were removed, cut grass raked away and compost heaps turned over and tidied up. Many hands do make light



work, and it's amazing what can be achieved in a few hours that would normally take weeks to complete.

Here's to 2016!

As usual, the Pasture Trust is producing a wall hanging calendar for 2016 with photographs of wildlife, views and activities on the pasture over the past year. On sale at £5 they will make excellent Christmas presents. Find out more at www.longlanepasture.org.



One of the stunning views Matt encountered on his journey. Inset: Matt Lewin.

Victory Autos pick-me-up

You may have read about the move of local garage Victory Auto Services from Fortis Green to Muswell Hill (*THE ARCHER*, Nov 2015). They are now in Coniston Road, N10, second turning off Alexandra Park Road when coming from the Colney Hatch Lane end.

Although outside East Finchley now, owners Mark and Wayne have said that any East Finchley customers who have a problem in getting to the new premises can phone them and they will arrange to give them a lift or pick up their car from home. The 102 bus is also very convenient and stops near to the garage. Victory Auto Services is on 020 8883 2242.

Snow guaranteed!

Martin School Christmas Fair takes place on Saturday 12 December from noon to 3pm, promising an exciting afternoon of games and activities, delicious home-made cakes, international food, stalls crammed with gifts and prizes, mulled wine and mince pies. And there will be the magic of Santa's Grotto with guaranteed snow. All are welcome.

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12 DECEMBER
10am-4pm

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CHRISTMAS
SHOPPING DAY
at our studio
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DO JOIN US THIS CHRISTMAS SEASON
EAST FINCHLEY METHODIST CHURCH
197 High Road, London N2 8AJ (opp. Creighton Ave.)

Carols by Candlelight
Sunday 20 December, 5.00 p.m.

Christmas Day Family Service - 10.00 a.m.

Full details of all our Christmas services are on our website
tel: 020 8346 1700 www.eastfinchleymethodist.org.uk