

Ken Triumphs Again

Trip to Northumbria June 2009

It's almost like arriving home. Except that someone has put in some new sofas and some vases of flowers as a welcome. As the house slowly fills up with people you know, it becomes even more like home.. Then, before even unpacking you have to do it....cross the garden, open the old gate in the wall and head down the grassy slope to arrive on the beach. Someone's even tidied up the rocks to make it more accessible, even for those of us with wonky joints.

A great meal at the Saddle on Saturday night soon had us loosened up. Thanks for arranging that Ken. And John's excellent Sunday dinner was well up to standard. Four courses, each one delicious. I didn't even know I liked broccoli and stilton soup, never tried it as it is made from my two least favourite foods. I am converted, whatever you did to them, John, you made them delicious. Thanks to John, not only for his super cookery, but also for organising the stock of basic items, which saved us all having to remember milk and stuff. Thanks also to those who skivvied in the kitchen, served at table, laid the table (no mean feat) and cleared up. Not to mention the generous washers and driers up, the dishwasher stackers and emptiers. Even people with newly manicured hands helped.

We all visited different places on different days, several intrepid souls taking more boat trips than was strictly necessary... though the bird pictures were well worth it. Karen and John took a vastly expensive trip to Bass Rock. John E., Ken, Pat, Keith and Mike took a different option and went for a very fast ride around Bass Rock. Ken seemed to be disappointed that he could not take photographs whilst clinging on for dear life. Perhaps that group should be called The Klingons in future. Janet, Liam, Ed. and Mark enjoyed their more sedate trip to Staples island, so even more superb Puffin pictures to look at if Janet's were anything to go by. Cy was up and out very early most mornings in search of new waterfalls to photograph, He used up lots of energy carrying equipment, but even he could not eat the enormous pizza he brought in. However, there were some helpful vultures in the house who helped him with it.

Many people found the most reliable light was in the evening, so we didn't really have any time for a slide show, as it was light quite late. Mark and Ed were particularly dedicated to late evening shots, any chance of some entries for the Dusk til Dawn exhibition? After a day out on Lindisfarne, Pat, John M., Liz and Karen decided to carry out their intention to have a barbecue, in spite of very heavy rain. I suspect the food was smoked rather than barbecued, but they can't be faulted for trying.

We had a great evening's entertainment from Elizabeth and Richard, in the form of a wine tasting session.(No, not our usual indiscriminate sloshing of any wine in sight) This was very well presented, informative, and gave us the opportunity to try a variety of French wines from the Southern Rhone area, whilst hearing anecdotes from Richard and Elizabeth's regular trips to France. Naturally, several of us discovered that we liked the more expensive wines best, and I particularly enjoyed the Muscat, although I rarely drink desert wine. All of us who took part enjoyed the evening, and much appreciate the trouble that Elizabeth and Richard took to provide us with not only a tasting glass for everyone, but also nibbles to help cleanse our palettes between tasting. The printouts were also useful for those of us who don't retain information so well these days! Now, would it be a good idea to arrange a wine tasting trip to France for us all, I wonder?

In the furtherance of photographic knowledge, John nobly undertook the 'bounce 'test on his Canon cameras. Fortunately, there was very little damage, so there's a recommendation for Canon equipment. John was less 'bounce proof', but his repairs will happen naturally and cost nothing. Beware of slippery green stuff on rocks in future, John.

The week ended in much the same way as it had started. We all went to the Saddle for a delicious dinner, although without Mark and Ed., sadly, as they had already left. Thanks to Karen this time for organising the meal, dealing with the bill, and making it easy for us all to enjoy ourselves.

So a disaster free week, really. No fires, for a change, unless you count the barbecue. Liz saw her first ever live puffin. Keith had an incident with a leaf blower at Cragside.(We won't enquire further) Ken photographed a sandwich tern, or was it a tern sandwich? And the rest of us? Well we just had a lovely time, as we always do at Grey Barns. Ken, we salute you for organising a super holiday for us.....when can we go again?

Joyce Hollows