

## A Tradition of Wandering by Anthony Gilbert

The Jews are a nation of wanderers. From the travels of Abraham in today's Middle East, the years of Moses' meandering in the desert, the scattering of Jews throughout the world by the exigencies of history to the return to modern Israel, the Jews have always wandered. And tradition being so much part of the Jewish way of life, it should come as no surprise to report that a number of us have been careful to maintain the 'spirit of wander' latent in all of us.

We have the good fortune to live in a city surrounded by glorious countryside. Within easy reach of Edinburgh are the hills of the Pentlands and the Borders, and the gently rolling terrain of East Lothian; even inside the city boundaries, there are numerous attractive parks and routes well worthy of exploration.

Recognition of this has led to an assortment of members of the community gathering together on perhaps half a dozen or more Sundays of the year in order to go for a ramble. This has been quietly taking place now for a number of years, the initial impetus for this coming, I am fairly certain, from Hilary and Arnold Rifkind. With the passage of time, the number involved in this activity has increased markedly, peaking last *Pesach*, when 25 of us assembled for the annual *matzoh*-ramble. This was a splendid event, encompassing a very broad age spectrum of Community members, from the youngest Winetrobe to those with bus passes, but not yet wheel chairs, and including a substantial proportion of the *Cheder*. On more modest occasions, we still customarily muster ten or more souls for an enjoyable meander.

The walks are not especially arduous. We have no aim to break any records; we just hope to enjoy the company, the conversation and the surroundings. In the most ambitious, we have done something on the lines of a few of the tops of the Pentland Ridge, and even this has generally been after the group has done a voluntary split into a more adventurous 'flying column' and the remainder taking it all a bit more leisurely. The reward of the hilltops is of course the view. More down to earth in all ways, we have had walks along the canal, beside the Forth by Dalmeny, after an exciting voyage on the trans-Almond ferry, and along the disused railway up to Balerno. The activity tends to quieten somewhat in the winter months, but I can recall a lovely snowy walk starting at Peebles and returning beside the Tweed by Castle Neidpath.

There are still masses of good, new walks that await our investigation. Among those that I would like to explore some time are the Esk inland from Musselburgh, former railway tracks east and south of Edinburgh that have become walkways, the hills above Gladhouse Reservoir and more of the Tweed Valley and the hills overlooking it.

With the longer walks, we have customarily made a morning start, put a light sack on our backs and taken sustenance with us; the *Matzoh* walk has not been so called for nothing; I just hope the stuff is biodegradable. For the shorter walks, the reward is the tea at the end of road; our greatest coup in this department was to go to the pub just up from Colinton Dell and to collectively demolish twelve cream teas. On such trips an

essential companion is John Danzig; his skill in sniffing out the dainty tea room is quite unsurpassed.

If you are tired of the obligations of grinding through the remaining 85 pages of Sunday's *Observer*, if your heart yearns for something just a bit different from pulling up last winter's dahlias, why not give the Ramblers a turn? If there is a favourite bit of the locality you want to go back to, share it with us. Let me know of your interest at any time, and I will keep you posted about any forthcoming walks. I maintain email lists, which are a handy means of proposing and advertising forthcoming walks, but it is not necessary to be connected up in this way; please just let me know of your interest, and I am very hopeful I will find something to enjoy.

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