

Activities in 2017

ACTIVE ADVENTURERS - ACTIVITIES IN 2017

Murmuration

6 Dec 2017

[More about this](#)



Morgan Factory Visit

21 Nov 2017

[More about this](#)



Ten Pin Bowling

10 Oct 2017

[More about this](#)



Skid Pan Driving

4 Sept 2017

[More about this](#)



Coracle Racing

28 Aug 2017

[More about this](#)



Archery

16 Aug 2017

[More about this](#)



Caving

21 July 2017

[More about this](#)



Quad Biking

21 June 2017

[More about this](#)



Glass Blowing

12 May 2017

[More about this](#)



Clay Pigeon Shooting

26 April 2017

[More about this](#)



Indoor Sky Diving

2 March 2017

[More about this](#)



Climbing Wall

11 Jan 2017

[More about this](#)



[Activities in 2017](#) > [Murmuration](#)

MURMURATION 6 Dec 2017

In December we visited the RSPB Wildlife reserve at Ham Wall on the Somerset Levels to watch the famous murmuration. The two RSPB volunteers who led the group shared their comprehensive knowledge of birds, habitats, conservation and wetland management. Adverse weather reduced the visibility and inhibited the starlings activity illustrated in the photo. A loud noise of running water was in fact the sound of these incredible birds roosting in the reeds. Altogether an amazing experience.



Photograph by Dave Barrett

ACTIVE ADVENTURERS - MORGAN FACTORY VISIT 21 Nov 2017

WIND-IN-THE-HAIR CARS IN ANY COLOUR

We went back to the days of hand-built bespoke sports cars as we were shown round the Morgan car factory. The engine and drive train are bought in but the bonnet is beaten into shape by hand, and the aluminium panels and box chassis are assembled by hand with adhesive. Traditional coach building skills are used for the wooden body frame, although the wings are formed by a modern method of applying air pressure to mould them into a die. Unfortunately none of us could quite raise the money to buy a Morgan, not even a frighteningly fast three wheeler that they make.



Laminated ash for the curved parts of the wooden frame is shaped by heating in a jig.



The wooden frame is assembled by hand and finished with a traditional spokeshave and sandpaper.



On the larger models the box chassis and panels are aluminium joined by adhesive.



The ash frame is added to the chassis, and wings and trim are put on. Any colour scheme can be chosen.

ACTIVE ADVENTURERS - TEN PIN BOWLING 10 Oct 2017

ACTIVE ADVENTURERS - STRIKE AGAIN ... and AGAIN

Ah! What it is to recapture the heady days of being a teenager once again. It only takes 10 pins and a bowling ball or three to have that much of an impact on us. Two evenly matched teams used various techniques that included a leg spinner from Kathy, bouncers from Ruth and the pendulum swing from Derek to knock the pins down or scare them enough to fall. After the first game the scores were tied at 419 so a deciding game had to be played. Who said we're not competitive? Tony sought inspiration from a side bet. None of the opposing side took him up on his offer as we discourage gambling. Alcohol is a different matter although on this occasion it wasn't required as the adrenalin rush was sufficient. Largely in part to a remarkable double strike by Cindy, Team 12 won by a narrow margin 444 to 418. Top scorer over the two games was Richard with 245 for Team 11. Everyone had a great time!



The ball is thrown. Now we hope.



There were a variety of techniques.



Willing it to get the remaining pins down.



Waiting for our next turn and viewing the competition.

ACTIVE ADVENTURERS - SKID PAN DRIVING 4 Sept 2017

Having always wanted to try out a skid pan and drive like a Top Gear star, 9 experienced car drivers met on 4th Sept at the Castle Combe Race Circuit. Under the expert direction of Barry and Craig of Drive-Tech we learnt about the methods of controlling a skid and managing an emergency stop. We already knew how to get into one which pleased Barry. In groups of 3 the theory was then put into practice each taking a turn behind the wheel to be cheered, applauded, barracked or egged on by 2 passengers to take the turns tighter and drive faster to make their back seat driving ride a thriller. "Donuts" (360 degree spins), stalls and skids in abundance with only 1 traffic cone hurt in the process was a creditable performance. The controlled emergency stop and swerve was next. This led to the occasional fatal injury to the pedestrian cone. Well it shouldn't have been there. Then on to the finale, the inevitable time trial on a course re-designed to test our nerve and new skill set. Remembering the course and then driving round it at high speed without incurring time penalties for errors was the aim. All difficult enough even though we were only driving in 2nd gear. Bridget walked away with the engraved ice scraper in first place (come on it's becoming a habit boys). The rest of us left making excuses but still buzzing. Bring it on Clarkson !!!

A second group went to the skid pan on 21st Sept. The video below was taken then. Watch the black BMW. Graham won the time trial at the end.

Unfortunately your browser doesn't support embedded videos.



Coracles, Extreme Wines and Petanque

August Bank Holiday weekend saw an intrepid band of 10 Adventurers facing the Extremists from U3A Weston Turville in coracle races. This involved paddling across the River Severn at the Ironbridge Coracle Trust Annual Regatta. One minute's tuition and a short practice run revealed it was harder than it looked. A strong current, the hot weather and one's inability to make a coracle go forward rather than sideways in spite of using alternative paddling techniques affected our performance. Cheered on by our 3 spectators only Bridget Holdship succeeded in safe passage, narrowly missing a place in the Novices Final. As for the remainder of the team, 3 tipped over (all safely rescued) and 3 needed a tow back to shore. It was quicker. Meanwhile the Extremists showed how it was done, winning 1st prize. On to the anxiously awaited evening's Extreme Wine tasting. Under the expert tutelage of Dr John Freeland from Kibworth & District U3A, a particle physicist with WSET Honours Dip and a great sense of humour, we were treated to the delights of wines from lesser known vineyards of Lebanon and Turkey together with those of more familiar origin. The variety was astonishing, as were the retail prices, alcohol contents and some never to be forgotten inappropriate labels. The Extremists know how to have a good time; we just couldn't match their performance on the night. Newport U3A Shropshire organised a petanque tournament the following morning to clear the headaches. Yes the Extremists won on the final round but there were good performances from the Adventurers, particularly Mike Henbury who'd obviously been practicing. What a fabulous weekend making new friends, a chance to sight-see in Ironbridge and raise funds for cancer charities, this was an unforgettable adventure. Anybody want a used coracle?



On the 16th August a merry band of Active Adventurers gathered at Wellow Trekking Centre to discover if they could match the archers of Henry the Fifth. Hester (3 bull's eyes) and Mike each topped their individual team's performance, with Bridget also starring for the winning ladies team. However, after a delightful morning in the Somerset sunshine, the Adventurers could only marvel at Henry's archers ability to exceed a 200 yard range, 150lb draw strength and 16 arrows/minute release rate!



Hester and Mike showing how it should be done.

ACTIVE ADVENTURERS - CAVING 21 July 2017

In July a group of Active Adventurers went caving in the Mendips.

At Burrington Combe we met up with our guide, Ian of [Aardvark Endeavours](#), to face our first challenge of the day - getting into our protective all-in-ones. Should you put your foot through the ankle opening with footwear in place or take your boots off first? Having overcome this initial obstacle, much to Ian's amusement, we then donned helmets and belts and made our way through the woods to the entrance of Goatchurch Cavern.

Once inside we switched on our helmet lamps and began a gradual descent through a series of caves and passageways, some of which had been given names. We passed through the "Blob", descended the "Dwarf Steps" and despite the slippery and uneven ground quickly made our way through "The Coffin".

Although Goatchurch Cavern is classified as a "beginner's" cave it was not without its challenges. At one point we used ropes to slide down a hole in the ground to descend into a lower chamber. Every so often we squeezed through openings which were rather narrow. There was also an optional detour which entailed wriggling sideways through a narrow gap, slithering on stomachs for a few metres before crawling out of the exit on hands and knees. Naturally two of the party had to try it out and emerged looking very pleased with themselves - show-offs.

When we finally emerged into daylight again we realized that we had been underground for over two hours. Although it was more physically demanding than we had anticipated, everyone agreed that this adventure had been well worth the effort.



A cavern provided an opportunity for a group shot.



Making our way along an easier part of the route.



Some sections were too steep and slippery to climb without a rope.



In between the difficult sections we stopped and regrouped and our guide discussed where we were going next.



Coming up from another steep and narrow section.



Taking in the view in a cavern and listening to information about the cave from our guide.

ACTIVE ADVENTURERS - QUAD BIKING 21 June 2017

What a glorious day to go quad biking in the Devonshire countryside. Wearing blue rinse hairnets (so that's what real bikers wear under their crash hats) that any biker would be proud of, long sleeves, stout shoes, and denims the Active Adventurer Quad Bikers, newly formed from the Hells Angels Chapter of U3A in Bath, took to the road (well narrow forest tracks and the meadowlands of the Devonshire countryside actually). We thought the practice rides were tough. It was more about getting to grips with the thumb controlled accelerator, accelerating to go downhill (according to Devonshire Leisure's expert Stewart, the means of slowing down and not using the brakes), not falling off or tipping over and the nasty turn thrown was all part of the fun.

Having "mastered" the controls and techniques in short 3 laps we went on "safari" along the steep angled hillside, over very rough terrain, bouncing in the ruts and over the tree roots lying at various angles in the dense woodland. Two ladies took advantage of being chauffeured, rather than driving themselves. They claimed they felt safer but we all knew it was just an excuse to throw their arms around the waist of Michael, the other expert.

Quad bikes, we were assured, could handle anything and so it proved, foiling Sian's best efforts to demolish the obstacle race track single handed. Yet more high octane fuel enjoyed by everyone. Some were still on a high hours later. Fortunately nobody got a speeding ticket on the drive home although the organiser did manage to somehow lose half the group on the way to the Highwayman's Haunt . Segway Riders eat your hearts out, the Quad Bikers Rule OK?





Active Adventurers Blow Baubles

Nine of us tried our hands at blowing baubles at Bath Aqua Glass Studios. This was not the most daring thing we have done but it was interesting to see the techniques of glass blowing and to have a go ourselves. We started with a demonstration given by one of the glass blowers who made it all look very easy, even though it obviously needs great skill. They give the health and safety inspectors a hard time because they have to use bare hands to hold the blowpipes and tools. Gloves would not allow the dexterity that is essential. They also have to keep the furnace containing the glass continuously on except for a once a year maintenance shutdown because it takes days to get up to temperature.

Getting enough glass on the end of the blowpipe requires repeated dips into the molten glass in the furnace, each followed by blowing to a progressively larger size. The blowpipe has to be continuously rotated to prevent the glass from drooping to one side. Shaping is done by rolling the pipe along an edge while pressing a pad of wet newspaper against the glass - with a bare hand! The glass has to be kept hot by regularly pushing the end of the blowpipe into a second furnace. The glass on the pipe can be elongated by swinging the pipe around with gay abandon. Do this too vigorously and the glass will fly off! Towards the end of the process, the glass is dipped in a tray of mineral to colour it (bottom picture below). For vases and suchlike, a steel rod is pushed against the outer end so that it sticks and the glass is then parted from the blowpipe so that the mouth can be shaped.

Needless to say, we did not do all this! For our baubles, the blowpipe was presented to us and we blew while the chap rotated the pipe (first picture below). They then finished off the bauble (second picture below) and put it in a kiln to slowly cool.



Blowing the bauble.



Finishing it off.



The tools of the trade, including the wet newspaper.



The minerals for colouring the glass.

Active Adventurers - Pull !

Wellow Trekking Centre hosted the Adventurers on 26th April. Dressed to kill, the hunters gathered at the café before descending in their 4x4's into the wooded valley in search of their quarry. No not the stone type, the feathered or furry kind! The gamekeepers Kenny and Graham selected their teams. Kenny's Rifles lined up to shoot it out with Graham's Guards. Controlling an unsteady hand, whilst keeping one eye shut and using the other to line up the sight, but keeping the head up straight with your legs evenly spaced for balance and the gun tucked into the shoulder space and the elbow raised level with said shoulder, trigger finger at the ready is unnerving. Graham - "Pull!", "Missed - says I". Graham - "Ahem, the gun isn't loaded yet". "Oh! So that's why it didn't bang then" – says I. The rams lying down in the paddock directly in front of us don't appear too concerned. I thought two were dead and feared for the life of the third even with an unloaded gun in my hands. The shotgun, now loaded with two cartridges, felt really heavy. Graham shouted "Pull! Mark!" - and the prey was miraculously released into the air. (Graham was also described as Mary Poppins by one Guard due to his ability to constantly produce cartridges in never ending numbers from his small shoulder bag) My first 6 shots hit 5 (clay) Partridges, apparently a good start. Beginners luck had nothing to do with it. Pheasant and Teal were luckier as they lost 4 of their number to my gun but those dratted rabbits were just too quick and so unpredictable. The Guards won by 2 but the Rifles had the two highest individual scorers, Sue and Mac, whilst Jackie reigned supreme in a shoot out with Mac, hitting a Pheasant and a Teal simultaneously with one shot ! And if you are wondering about the rams, they were unmoved. Are you sure they aren't dead?

Richard (aka Dead Eye Dick)

(No birds or animals were hurt in the making of this column)





Active Adventurers get off to a flying start.

On March 2nd 2017, we went to Basingstoke iFLY Indoor Skydiving Centre, where the group were aiming to 'defy gravity'. What is iFLY? It's indoor flying and sky diving, "where dreams of flight become a reality".

After a long time getting ready, having a safety briefing etc., then getting squeezed into a pair of overalls (with two frightfully large handles on the back), a helmet and goggles, we ourselves were ready for our first minute of flying. As can be seen in the picture below, the instructor was with us in the tunnel, standing so he didn't fly away, and he pulled and pushed us hither and yon to keep us from turning out of control or flying too high or too low.

For our second 'flight' the wind power was increased and the instructor gave us a demonstration of how it should be done. By then we had gained in confidence, many flying to the very top, limited only by the 'ceiling' and strength of the column of air. Others decided to play it safe and stayed nearer the ground. Staff kept saying: "The next time you come ...".

After all the excitement and euphoric feeling of successful flights and a lunch enjoyed by the very hungry group – mine the best chicken salad ever! - the skiers amongst us were fitted with ski boots by the instructor. It felt as though we were off to the mountains! Even to experienced skiers, Skiplex is a new experience and it took a bit of getting used to. We were on a gentle downhill slope on a wet astroturf carpet that was moving uphill underneath us. The video below shows what it was like. A few were quite nervous, but with excellent tuition everyone reached the top, several times. A second go and there were no falls & no submissions!! Promises were made for "The next time you come back".

The whole experience was enormous fun - and we have the certificates to prove it. Another box ticked and we're all eager to have another go!!"

The picture below shows one of us in 'flight'. The video below shows how the skiing worked.



Unfortunately your browser doesn't support embedded videos,
but you can [download ice_karting.mp4](#) and watch it with whatever
mp4 player you have installed.

ACTIVE ADVENTURERS - CLIMBING WALL 11 Jan 2017

Active Adventurers Go Up The Wall

Eighteen of us spent a couple of hours on 11th Jan at the Redpoint Bristol Climbing Centre scaling their very colourful walls. Under the watchful eyes of three instructors the climbs got progressively higher and more difficult as footholds became smaller and hand holds significantly fewer and harder to find. Finally, we climbed without belays (i.e. no ropes) but that was not too high and with a soft floor. It was safe and a great work out for everyone. Apparently this is as real as it gets without going to a rock face. Congratulations to one member, a new Adventurer who had a fear of heights but climbed the most difficult section and reached the highest point. This is what our Group is all about, challenging yourself and finding fun ways of doing it with new friends.



