Linux Beer Hike 2000

LOTS OF BEER, LOTS OF LINUX CHATTER

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The annual Linux Beer Hike this year took place in Coniston in the Lake District from the 29th July to 6th August. As usual, it was a very jolly occasion. 150 people attended and quite a lot of beer and Linux software was consumed. At the end no-one was quite sure which of the two was more important.

Three days of sun more than made up for the four days of hacking away at a keyboard in Coniston village hall. The best walk of the week was the Old Man of Coniston. The delights of the Lakeland scenery were as much in evidence as the Linux users who surrounded me and engaged in long chats about the latest stuff. The beer hikers came from all walks of life and many countries. Some were IT professionals who would like to know more about Linux. Others were scientists and engineers who use Linux for their work. Some were home users who just wanted to live a bit. The general idea of the event was that if you wanted a structured week then you could have that with tutorials and other lectures plus guided walks with people who knew about the hills around the Lake District. If you just wanted to wander between talks about space physics or solid state materials and the local pub then you could do that as well. Plenty of choice for everyone!

There were many good lectures. Jenny Bailey gave us a really good talk about SETI and Radio Astronomy with a bias towards Linux. Jenny says that she would like to get more people and institutions to point more dishes towards the skies so that more useful data can be collected. She thinks that Linux is a useful tool for getting through to the right sort of technologists who might be interested in SETI related projects such as radio astronomy and

Beowulf. If you want to get in touch with Jenny then please do send her an email: her address is jennyb@jsquared.co.uk. The lectures about Apache and Linux Security concepts were also very good and certainly the kind of thing that would make me want to go to the next beer hike next year.

We made an attempt at producing a Beowulf cluster. This of course caused a few problems on the way through. One of these was the question of which distribution do we use ? This was followed by the usual hardware problems and finally the end bit where everyone downed many pints of beer. We used Debian for the cluster with laptops, 486s and Sparcs Well worth a pint. There was a question and answer session at the end of the week which involved almost 40 minutes of discussion about our difficulties with hardware and software that just refused to work. It more than made up for the technical difficulties and we were able to laugh a little bit before wandering along the road for another beer. At this point a reporter from the Wall Street Journal arrived and interviewed a few people for a report about the beer hike which was published shortly afterwards.

Well, where will the event be held next year? The jury is still out on this one and none of us are too sure. Suggestions made so far are Holland or Belgium. Wherever it is, we sincerely wish that we will see you there and perhaps we might even buy each other a beer or two? If you want to know more you can visit the Linux Beer Hike web site and subscribe to the discussion list whereupon you will find that many of us are still ranting on about all sorts of things.