

# ***LONG DISTANCE WALKERS ASSOCIATION – Kent Group***

**Aim: to further the interests of those who enjoy long distance walking**

# ***NEWSLETTER***



Brian Buttifant sees Christophe Delonge and Stephanie Le Men set off on their first 100

Photo by Patricia Durdey

**Number 76**



**August 2008**

**[www.ldwa.org.uk/kent](http://www.ldwa.org.uk/kent)**



A Walk with the Smugglers. Pictures by Eric Rolfe



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## **KENT GROUP SOCIAL WALKS - AUGUST 2008 to JANUARY 2009**

### **Sun Sep 7 WHITE CLIFFS CHALLENGE – Marshals Walk.**

28mls. from St. Margaret's village hall (GR 358455), start 8.30am.

For further details contact Graham Smith.

### **Sun Sep 14 THE MINNIS ROUND**

c.25mls. Meet Alkham GR 256422, c/p opp. Village Hall, for 8am start.

14 mls before lunch. Pub stop – food available.

Ldrs: Neal and Jan O'Rourke.

### **Sun Sep 21 SAXON SHORE WAY – PART 8**

c.24mls. Hythe to Rye. Meet 9am at Rye Station (GR919205) to arrange cars to drive to start of walk.

Pub stop.

Ldr: Graham Smith.

### **Sun Sep 28 WHITE CLIFFS CHALLENGE – MAIN EVENT**

See Events Diary.

### **Sun Oct 5 SAXON SHORE WAY – PART 9**

(Actually the Rye – Hastings walk; the first 11 miles is the SSW)

c.23mls. Meet 8.30pm at Rye Station GR 919205. Pub stop (or two!).

Ldr: Mike Pursey.

### **Sun Oct 12 ROUND THANET RAMBLE**

c.27mls. Meet 8am Palm Bay Avenue at junct. with Northumberland

Ave (GR 374714), post code CT9 3NR. Pub stop, food available.

Ldr: Gordon Harker.

### **Sun Oct 26 THREE PITS WALK**

(Visiting the former Kent mines of Betteshanger, Tilmanstone and Snowdown)

c.18mls. Meet 8.30am at Northbourne Village Hall GR 334523.

Pub stop. Ldr: Graham Smith.

### **Sun Nov 9 ANOTHER MINNIS MEANDER**

c.18mls. Meet at Ivy House, Stelling Minnis GR 147483 for 8.30am

start. Bring packed lunch. Ldr: Liz Keeler.

### **Sun Nov 16 A BIT OF A WHITE CLIFFS CHALLENGE**

c.14mls. Meet 9.00am St. Margaret's village car park GR 358447.

Pub stop. Ldr: Graham Smith.

### **Sat Dec 6 ANOTHER CHRISTMAS CRUISE AROUND CALAIS**

c.14mls. Calais to Escalles and return. Meet by SeaFrance desk, Dover Eastern Docks at 7.30am for 8.15am

sailing. Ring SeaFrance Reservations on 08705 711711 for foot passenger day return.

Don't forget your passport ! Ring Graham for confirmation of times

Ldr: Graham Smith.

### **Thu Jan 1 NEW YEAR ON THE SOUTH DOWNS AGAIN**

c.20mls. Meet 9am in Eastbourne at western end of promenade (B2103) by South Downs Way marker post,

GR 600972. Park near school on left. Pub stop. Ldr: Graham Smith.

### **Fri Jan 9 WINTER NIGHT WALK**

c.18mls. Meet 9.30pm for 10.30pm start at the Rose and Crown pub, Wrotham GR 612592.

Ldr: Ivan Waghorn.

PUB meetings are held on the first Monday of each month (except if that coincides with a bank holiday, when they are postponed to the second Monday) at the Rose & Crown, Wrotham. Meetings commence at 8.30pm. All welcome.

## **COMMITTEE MEMBERS**

Chairman – Brian Buttifant

Secretary – Bill Gillibrand,

Treasurer – Neil Higham

Members:

Bryan Clarke –

Joy Davies –

Gordon Harker –

Mike Pursey –

Graham Smith –

Footpath problems – Shirley Higgins,

Newsletter editor: Graham Smith –

## **COVER STORY - THE YOREDALE 100**

WALKERS from Kent Group put in a creditable and possibly unique performance at this year's Hundred in Yorkshire - with 12 starters and 13 finishers!

This was achieved by the persuasive powers of Brian Buttifant on former member Barrie Morgan, now living in Hereford. At the Kettlewell checkpoint he was induced into rejoining the Kent Group and actually paid his £3 subscription before being allowed to leave and complete the remaining 30 miles, taking with him the kudos of being a Kent member.

Most members who completed the Yoredale 100 attended a celebratory meeting in the Rose & Crown at Wrotham on Monday June 2, with Kent Group supplying food.

A total of 22 people attended. They were Bill Gillibrand, Bryan and Pat Clarke, Roger and Roz Dean, Dave and Jill Green, Merv and Fiona Nutburn, Stephanie Le Men and Christophe Delogne, Gordon and Carole Harker, Keith Warman and Shirlie Gill, Dave Sheldrake and Leslie, Julie Welch, Nick Dockree, Mike Pursey, Tom Sinclair and Ivan Waghorn.

Yoredale 100 details for Kent Group members:-

Andrew Boulden 28hrs 47mins (16 completed).

Roger Dean 33.40 (13 completed).

Merv Nutburn 34.05 (10 completed).

Jill Green 35.13 (19 completed).

Christophe Delogne 38.12 (one completed).

Stephanie le Men 38.12 (one completed).

Don Newman 38.14 (23 completed).

Julie Welch 38.33 - technically her membership has lapsed – but we're working on her! (one completed).

Keith Warman 45.37 (18 completed).

Mike Pursey 45.37 (five completed).

Gordon Harker 46.02 (four completed).

Avril Stapleton 46.02 (10 completed).

Barrie Morgan 47.59 (10 completed). (joined Kent at Kettlewell checkpoint).

## **THE YOREDALE 100**

**By Two Kentish Froggies (Christophe Delogne and Stephanie le Men).**

SAT May 24 2008: at last the day came.

On that morning, we were still unsure whether we took the right decision to enter the Yoredale 100, which was our first 100 miles ...

Not too surprisingly, our B&B (like many more in Skipton on that weekend), was filled with fellow walkers, and we got our first hint of motivation during our breakfast, as a fellow walker mentioned that we would miss the Eurovision Song Contest! After a nice breakfast we set off to the start – still nervous though!

Many smiling faces greeted us (e.g. Brian and Liz to name but a few), including the world-famous dog Parsley! We started the walk at the end of a long queue of walkers and walked peacefully along the canal... This was quite a relaxing stroll but unfortunately we knew it would not last.

The first serious climb happened between Malham and Settle but it was worth it: the scenery was absolutely stunning and kind of reminded us of our favourite holidays in the Spanish Pyrenées with a mixture of green and scree slopes.

After leaving Settle, for miles we were walking alongside Ingleborough, the main difficulty of the walk, without ever approaching it. We felt as if it was nagging us: we would have to climb it eventually! At Ingleton (last checkpoint before Ingleborough) we talked with other walkers but they reassured us: the climb would not be too steep. And indeed it was not, but the wind was soooo strong! Arriving at the top we had a last look behind us to enjoy the view and then hurried down the long descent to the next checkpoint (Horton in Ribblesdale) where we enjoyed, like so many others, a welcome warm meal.

It was about to get dark, we were still feeling OK and soon we set off along the Pennine Way in the direction of Hawes. The climb was quite gentle but the wind was against us (and so it would be until the end of the walk – the wind kept turning so that it always faced us! What a cunning Yorkshire wind!). The night finally came and the temperature dropped, especially due to the windy condition. We were apprehensive of the next checkpoint, which was to be a tent in the middle of nowhere and probably with only cold drinks. In fact this checkpoint was likely a life-saver for many people wearing shorts, or others like us as it provided a warm shelter against the wind, packed with cold and hungry walkers! After a nice hot dog and a boiling soup, we then reached Hawes for the 'breakfast' checkpoint. The first thing we saw was a runner under a thermal blanket, surrounded by three paramedics. He had been suffering from hypothermia, and apparently similar cases were reported during the night and even during daytime due to the freezing wind. A quick breakfast and we were up for the second part of the walk, another 50 miles to go! This appeared a bit more gentle on the map, despite a few more climbs, especially to reach Buckden (Staffordshire oat cakes were a delight: and if like us you enjoyed them, go and do the Six Dales Walk: it is great, and you get loads of oat cakes too!)

On this section, we started to feel tiredness catching us up, and Christophe had blisters, so our aim was to reach the Kent checkpoint at Kettlewell (72.8 miles) where we thought we could retire.

A long stretch following a river and we reached Kettlewell CP. Brian Buttifant greeted us but no way for him we would ever

retire here. Hence once blisters were taken care of, Brian sent us on a mission to finish the walk.

He was right to do so, since as soon as our tiredness went away, we almost felt like other tourists, leisurely watching the Linton Falls! Well, quite not as such, as our feet were tired of course. This is where we began following two friendly Cornish walkers.

Still following a never-ending, although beautiful, river we eventually reached the 93 miles checkpoint (Addingham) with them. Christophe being aware of the change in CP location (near a pub called the Swan), asked a local where the pub was (not that we wanted to have a few beers!), but we soon found out that this friendly person had his share of drinks all afternoon long apparently, and hence our arrival at the checkpoint was not unnoticed!

There we met another Kent Group walker, Don Newman. And after a well-deserved break with a nice cup of tea, we decided to finish the walk together. It was still daylight and the climb out of Addingham quite gentle. At the top Stephanie discovered how much energy she still had by being able to play and run after a dog!

We hence reached Skipton in no time and even accelerated to the welcome finish! We could not believe we made it and were extremely happy!

Overall we have a lot of people to thank: Graham Smith for strongly encouraging us to do this stunning walk, Brian for convincing us to continue after Kettlewell, Bobbie and Chris that we met from time to time along the way and who encouraged us while having themselves a nice ice cream! (thanks for the fresh can of Coke by the way), all of those nice and hard-working people at checkpoints who must have ran 100 miles going back and forth to the kitchen while helping walkers, and last but not least the organisers for a three-year hard job to prepare everything, particularly to John Sparshatt who drove us back to our B&B at midnight!

So thanks to all: we really had an amazing time!

We cannot wait to meet you all next year in the South Downs Way.

## **YET MORE NOTES FROM A COMMON MAN – THE YOREDALE 100: May 24-26**

### **By Keith Warman**

AT the start So, here I was again, by 'eck, in the hall of Aireville School, Skipton, not quite believing that 12 months had passed since I joined the scrum at the start of the previous Hundred in Llandrindod Wells. Here, the usual frenzied and feverish activity was witnessed and I met several of the usual suspects – just what is it about this Hundred lark which, year after year, captures the imagination of so many people (marshals and organisers as well as entrants)? This year, the LDWA's ultimate test of fitness, stamina, navigational ability and downright stubbornness was a clockwise tour of the Yorkshire Dales via Malham, Settle, Ingleton, Horton-in-Ribblesdale, Hawes, Buckden, Grassington, Addingham and back to Skipton. The total ascent (and descent) was claimed to be about 12,500 feet.

There was much talk about how dry the area was and how hard the paths would be. I was later to vouch for this latter remark with the painful truth. As I queued to register, John Sparshatt (the organiser) came across to greet me as follows:-

“Hello Keith, good to see you again.”

“Nice to meet you too, John.”

(Smiling) “You’re disqualified!”

“But...but... I haven’t even registered yet, let alone started...”

“Doesn’t matter – you’re disqualified!” (Chuckle, chuckle!)”

What a lovely Yorkshire welcome! Some claim that Yorkshire folk are cold and unfriendly but I don’t agree. The author Bill Bryson said once (of Yorkshire folk), “If you ever wish to know your shortcomings, you couldn’t wish to meet more helpful people...”

I was pleased to meet Martyn Hollingworth, who has produced excellent videos of four previous Hundreds. He was doing the same again this year, gently mingling among the throng with a large camera perched precariously on his shoulder, thrusting his dead furry live microphone at unsuspecting individuals.

The marshals’ walk attracted 31 entries, 30 starters and 25 finishers. For the main event there were to be 529 entries, 489 starters and 376 finishers. Sixteen people were awarded a 10 x Hundreds badge.

Suitably prepared, I sauntered down to the nearby Aireville Park for the start to find that the field had already gone and was halfway to Gargrave. Shirly and I were joined by Mike Pursey and Gordon Harker and the three of us set off towards the Leeds and Liverpool canal, along whose towpath we were to follow for the first five miles – a gentle introduction to the route. 1 mile . . . With Mike and Gordon about 100 yards ahead of me, I was aware of the fierce wind blowing from the north-east. It was to become a constant feature for the majority of the event for me. Sky overcast but not threatening.

3 miles . . . Gradually caught up with and slowly overtook a canal narrow boat which was heading for Wigan. The driver told me that he was doing exactly 3 miles per hour.

5 miles . . . Arrived at checkpoint 1 at Gargrave. Very sorry to meet Jim Ayling (with whom I’d walked through the first night last year on his 10th Hundred) who’d had to retire.

6 miles . . . Caught up and walked with Mike Pursey. We joined the Pennine Way, which was to be our companion over Eshton Moor into Airedale and up to Malham. Despite the dryness, everywhere was verdant and lush and the skylarks and pipits were singing their hearts out. First of the runners overtook us.

8 miles . . . Joined the delightfully gurgling River Aire just after encountering a herd of cows which had thoughtfully gathered

in a field corner and completely obscured the stile. Picture the scene, if you will – Mike and I meandering around and squeezing between the bovine mass, seeking our escape. “Found it!” exclaimed Mike.

10 miles . . . While striding through pastoral fields, who should be walking towards us but Paul and Mary Hatcher. They joined us as we left the Pennine Way, temporarily, at Hanlith Bridge to visit Checkpoint 2 at Kirkby Malham. Mike didn’t stay long but I rested my warm feet.

12 miles . . . Re-joined the Pennine Way to pass a converted water mill and the path skirted the mill-race upstream. There, quietly going about his business, was Martyn Hollingworth filming the moving water.

13 miles . . . In a tumble of rounded boulders, the River Aire was gushing up from underground at Aire Head Springs. The subterranean river had travelled from beyond the distant Malham Cove, a few miles away. Civilisation returned as we passed the visitors’ centre at Malham.

14 miles . . . The first big climb loomed ahead; Pikedaw Hill and the crossing from Airedale into Ribblesdale. There were several people around now, including the bustling brummie, Tony Francis, who despite now living in Worcester, certainly hasn’t lost his rich accent. On the steepening ascent, we walked together and I got out of breath listening to his yarns and tales of putting the world to rights. Out of the blue, up from behind us came Tony Lewington, having taken the 11 o’clock start. His easy breathing was in stark contrast to our gasping which showed just how fit he really is. Tony Francis enquired “Are you doing the Malvern Marathon in June, Tony?” “No, I’m marshalling this year” Tony replied. With rapier speed, Tony Francis quipped back “What, is it getting too much for yer, these days?” Wonderful stuff, his Worcestershire sauce.

16 miles . . . A ferocious wind was against me on the high-level traverse towards Ribblesdale. Near Stockdale Farm, my map-case containing twelve sheets of route description was swept out of my hand and the pages flew about like confetti. I was very lucky in that, just ahead of me, a group of six were bombed with paper and they all managed to tread on one or two sheets. They were then gathered up by Betty Lewis, who last year became the oldest lady ever to finish a Hundred. Here she was again, trying to break her own record (she did finish) and proudly returned the pages to a rather embarrassed and extremely grateful Warman. With a wonderful example of British under-statement, she said “Here you are, but I do apologise if they are not in the correct order...”

17 miles . . . A fiercely steep descent down into Settle, (the same path used to finish the 1996 Dales Hundred with Neil Higham). This time, Paul and Mary were waiting at the bottom with, for the first time, Shirlie. My feet were beginning to get hot and shoes were removed for a breather at Checkpoint 3 in the Methodist Church Hall.

20 miles . . . A wonderful grassy path over several fields to Feizor, stoically heading alone straight into the biting teeth of the wind.

25 miles . . . On the descent into Clapham in early evening sunlight, I met Paul, Mary and Shirlie again and they escorted me into Checkpoint 4 in the Village Hall. What a delightful place is Clapham. Departed alone from checkpoint with temperature dropping.

27 miles . . . A strange loud whistling noise was heard – it was the wind blowing through the gaps in the stone walls.

28 miles . . . I had been seeing Ingleborough off to my right for some time and was slightly apprehensive about climbing up and over it in these conditions. I was hoping to make it before nightfall. While crossing two of the very few arable fields on the whole route, I struggled to stay upright and progress was reduced to a rather unstable meander to the safety of the road at Cold Cotes Waste.

30 miles . . . On the approach to Ingleton, I became aware of a painful blister on my left small toe. In fading light, I entered the village to be met by Shirlie and we strolled into Checkpoint 5 in the Community Centre, passing Gordon Harker on his way out. This was to be my lowest point (psychological, not altitude). Blister attended to and trousers and torch donned, I left at exactly 8pm and set off, with Shirlie for company for a while, up the steep road out of the village.

32 miles . . . The graceful silhouette of Ingleborough seemed to be getting no closer as I battled alone against the elements up the lonely track past Crina Bottom (farm). I could see tiny figures ahead on the final ascent to the summit plateau and realised that, all being well, I would be up there before darkness descended.

33 miles . . . A really eerie atmosphere as, on the stone steps immediately below the summit, I plodded steadily upwards and turned to watch the sun set behind distant grey hills. In the howling gale, the sepulchral glow turned a peculiar shade of pink as I reached the open stone refuge with a huge feeling of relief and gave my checkcard to the two marshals there, bravely masquerading as Checkpoint 7. It was 9:35pm. The ascent from Ingleton village had been 1,963 feet in 3.47 miles. There were a few other walkers there, taking advantage of what little respite from the wind the stone shelter could offer and taking their own refreshments, but I just wanted to get off the top. The rounded boulders on the plateau resembled a lunar landscape and roadmenders’ tape had been laid across to guide us to the steps at the start of the descent. The tape was wound several times around stones at regular intervals to prevent it becoming history and a few flashing orange lights had been thoughtfully and strategically placed to assist us.

35 miles . . . In the last vestiges of light, I caught up and overtook Avril Stapleton and Ian McLeod who seemed to be progressing steadily. For the first time on the route, the wind was not in my face and I took advantage of gently downhill gradients across short-cropped grass and limestone pavements around Sulber Nick to stride out.

37 miles . . . The footpath took me to the end of the platform at Horton-in-Ribblesdale railway station which, as any anorak worth his salt will bore you with, is on the Settle and Carlisle line. At 850 feet above sea level, the isolated station is beautifully maintained by the Friends of the Settle and Carlisle Line with brightly-painted maroon buildings and manicured

flower beds.

38 miles . . . Along the road now, past the Pen-y-Ghent Café and a local leaving a pub who told me that I “was b\*\*\*dy mad”. Hmm. Arrived at checkpoint 7 in the Village Hall at 11:30pm. Several walkers seemed to be licking their wounds here, but I am sure that all were glad to have got over Ingleborough in one piece. Fortified with pasta in tomato sauce, apple pies and custard.

39 miles . . . The next stage was the longest on the route, 8.88 miles with 1,533 feet of ascent, all along the Pennine Way to Checkpoint 8 at Kidhow Gate. I set off alone up the wonderful enclosed green lane from Horton and was soon joined by a lone torch which was attached to Wayne Bartlett, from Bournemouth. It was his first Hundred and he was in good spirits and we walked together for the next two stages to the breakfast point at Hawes.

44 miles . . . Route-finding was straightforward, but avoiding the wind was not. After the first self-clipper point, we took a breather and a drink at a stone bridge by Ling Gill.

45 miles . . . We reached Cam End and followed the Roman Cam High Road on the tedious upward plod. On turning around, several torches were spotted strung out like pearls across the blackened wilderness, but it did not seem to be a particularly dark night.

47 miles . . . Checkpoint 8 was reached, being a windswept tent at 1,900 feet above sea level. As at every checkpoint, Raynet was present. We left at 3:45am and, yes, it was starting to get light.

49 miles . . . An easier section as, still on the Pennine Way, we skirted Dodd Fell, turned off our torches and began the gentle descent into Wensleydale.

51 miles . . . A few tricky fields with changes in direction required a degree of alertness which was beyond Wayne and me – we stumbled down off the fields onto the road at Gayle, passed the Wensleydale Cheese Creamery (looking for Wallace and Gromit) and arrived at the breakfast stop, checkpoint 9 in Hawes Primary School, at a silent 5:35am. I feel asleep on the floor for about 45 minutes, then washed, changed and fed and was ready to leave just before 7am. Wayne was nowhere to be seen, so hopefully he would be striding out down Wensleydale on his new quest. I telephoned Shirlie at 7am, as arranged, to tell her where I was. She was pleased with my progress, but not quite so amused with my timing as she claimed the arrangement was for me to contact her at 8am and, oh dear, I had woken her from her slumbers. We were to meet again at Buckden.

52 miles . . . I left the checkpoint, strolled along the deserted High Street and was soon heading for the hamlet of Sedbusk on part of the route used for the White Rose Hundred in 2003. Guess what? The wind was still blowing. Mightily!

54 miles . . . Amidst the lushness of Wensleydale, where spring had certainly sprung, I was crossing a grassy field with no clear footpath when I was stopped in my tracks by a small black object on the ground. It was a digital camera, so I carefully placed it in my pocket thinking that it must have been dropped by a fellow Hundredeer.

56 miles . . . A gentle mile along the trackbed of a disused railway (the Wensleydale line from Northallerton to Garsdale Junction). Plans are afoot to re-open this line subject, presumably, to funding and access agreements. In the meantime, however, there were no trains on this morning, only my ghostly imagination of how it might have once been.

58 miles . . . Into the picture-postcard village of Bainbridge and up to the Temperance Hall and checkpoint 10 run by Northumbria Group. I handed the camera to a marshal and hoped it would be reunited with its owner in due course (it was). Here, I met Mike Pursey, Gordon Harker and Wayne and, for the first time, I had caught up with Tim Glenn. The banter was good as I recalled an e-mail I had received from Tim a few weeks previously in which he expressed some concern over his level of fitness for this Hundred. He told me then that he had done “little swotting for the big exam of the year” but the shower at the finish should give him the opportunity of testing his “accidentally-acquired hotel soaplets”. He had wished me well and, knowing that he is usually faster than me over the first day, said that I would “catch him up somewhere on Landranger 98”. Good stuff! I stopped to air my increasingly hot and painful feet and the others bade their farewells.

59 miles . . . Leaving Wensleydale, I was heading south now into the wind up a short but sharp climb with the River Bain down to my right. This claims to be England’s shortest river – it flows from Semer Water to the River Ure, a distance of about three miles. The navigation was a bit trickier now, with several fields and the much-loved Yorkshire gated stiles to negotiate.

60 miles . . . Alongside Semer Water now in a sylvan setting and heading to Checkpoint 11 in the village hall at Stalling Busk. This quaint but homely venue has been used as a checkpoint in the two previous Yorkshire Hundreds in 1996 and 2003, so I knew roughly where I was heading.

61 miles . . . Tim, Wayne, Gordon and Mike were all resting inside the checkpoint, all glad for the brief respite from the wind. Eyes were squinted for protection. My feet were now throbbing and shoes were removed again for airing them. Seven miles over Stake Moss to the head of Wharfedale and along to Buckden followed so we all made sure that plenty of fluid was taken onboard. From the checkpoint, there was a steep climb up a vicious stony track to join a green lane.

62 miles . . . The wind was swirling the dust around on the green lane, like mini tornados. It was virtually impossible to keep the dust out of my eyes. I had kept my trousers on and not changed into shorts (which I would have preferred to wear) as I did not want a repeat of last year when I got quite cold in shorts on the Sunday.

64 miles . . . On the final pull up to the highest point of the pass, Tim joined me. We passed Gordon, who had stopped on the wayside to deal with blisters.

66 miles . . . A golden moment, much to Tim’s embarrassment. On approaching a field gate in a stone wall, he announced that he needed a quick call of nature. I went through the gate and he stood in the corner attending to his mission. A few seconds later he let out a loud cry and, thinking he was in trouble, I turned to see that, while he was safely mid-stream, the wind had

swept his beloved hat off his head and had blown it over the adjacent stone wall and halfway down Wharfedale. His pit-stop completed, we searched for a gate for him to retrieve his hat, but to no avail. He then unceremoniously clambered over the wall (with a barbed wire topping), rescued his faithful headgear and clambered back to the track and his deposited rucksack. He was not impressed when I suggested that he attaches pretty pink ribbons to tie in a large bow under his chin in future.

68 miles . . . The track down into Buckden was extremely stony and I was taking things very gingerly. Near the car park on the village outskirts we were delighted to meet Shirlie, who led us through the narrow streets to Checkpoint 12 in the Village Institute. Mike and Wayne were here, tucking into delicious Staffordshire oatcakes stuffed with melted cheese nicely prepared by the group of that name. Hot feet.

69 miles . . . Shirlie joined Tim and me down the lane to the River Wharfe. We bade our farewells and strolled along the beautiful, lush riverside path which is also the Dales Way. It was very popular and I hadn't seen so many human beings since Settle, over 50 miles back. There was no let-up in the speed of the whistling wind, but I had hoped that this more gentle section of 28 miles down Wharfedale would give us some respite.

71 miles . . . The day was becoming warm, so I finally gave in and stopped and changed into my shorts. Gordon caught up and soon the three of us were steadily wending our way through the many small fields, each connected with the ubiquitous gated stiles.

73 miles . . . Met by Shirlie on the outskirts of the busy honeypot of Kettlewell. Checkpoint 13 in the Village Hall run by the Kent Group, whose marshals were resplendent in bright red T-shirts. Met Bryan and Pat Clarke, Liz Keeler, Bill Gillibrand, Brian Buttifant, Duncan and Ann Brice (sorry if I've missed your name, but you all made us very welcome). Feet getting more painful and still 28 miles to Skipton. In afternoon sunshine we left at 5:15pm for a mile-long plod along a lane.

75 miles . . . With the wind back in our faces, Tim and I caught up another group, ascending a track beside a verdant wood. Halfway up the valley side, we joined a glorious high level footpath (the Dales Way again) and followed this for four miles on closely-cropped grass. The views over Wharfedale and the rolling hills beyond were magnificent and, above us, limestone outcrops and scars were our companions.

77 miles . . . Just after one particularly delicious outcrop, known as Conistone Pie, we found the second and final self-clipper point.

79 miles . . . Skirted around Grassington and crossed the River Wharfe via a large stone roadbridge.

80 miles . . . A stiff pull up a lane to be met by Shirlie at Checkpoint 14 (Linton) in the wonderfully named "Arthur Anderton Memorial Institute and Men's Reading Room". The size of the hall belied its grandiose title and we could not work out where the good ladies of the village went for their reading. A cosy checkpoint run by Cornwall & Devon Group and another chance to rest my now bruised and painful feet. Torched up here as I thought it would be dark before we arrived at the next checkpoint and left with Mike, Tim and Jean Bobker from Lancashire.

81 miles . . . We crossed Linton Falls on a wooden footbridge and, even though the river was rather low, it was still an impressive sight. Re-joined the Dales Way on the worn riverside path where the biggest obstacles were exposed tree roots and trying to stay awake.

83 miles . . . Crossed the river to the western bank via a narrow suspension bridge. The river was silent and menacing and full of fish taking flies. Through another picturesque village, Burnsall, where a lively party in a hotel was spilling out onto the footpath. What did the revellers make of us, we pondered?

85 miles . . . In failing light, we arrived at Checkpoint 15 in a large marquee on the route at Appletreewick. We had a warm welcome from Norfolk & Suffolk Group and Phyllis Facer saw to our needs. I managed to fall asleep in a picnic chair, which was leaning at a precarious angle when I awoke.

87 miles . . . Tim and I were into our second night now as we entered the Bolton Abbey estate. Route finding was relatively straightforward but we were both feeling very tired. Tim managed to fall asleep three times while walking and tumbled to the ground each time. Owls were screeching away as our torches bobbed along the riverbank.

88 miles . . . We caught up a group resting by The Strid, which is a dramatic and steamy tumble of the river through a deep, narrow gorge among mossy woodland. The cacophony made hairs on the backs of necks stand up. The Strid is about six feet wide in places, but there are lifebelts on trees and several notices warn you not to attempt to leap across as "lives have been lost here".

89 miles . . . Bolton Abbey was hauntingly beautiful, and the bank holiday crowds were safely tucked up in bed to leave the Hundreedeers slowly shuffling alone through the empty landscape. The night was not too dark, although no moon could be seen and still the wind was roaring through the creaking and groaning trees.

90 miles . . . We left the riverbank and, beckoned by the distant lights, crossed Bolton Bridge cricket pitch (from third man to long off) to Checkpoint 16 in the pavilion. Arrival time was 1:41am. The marshals had thoughtfully installed some loud noise of the music variety but this did not deter Tim from crashing out again in the visitors' dressing room. Shirlie met us here and her cheery disposition helped a lot. My feet now felt blistered but, with 11 miles to go, I couldn't be bothered to try and deal with them so, our luncheon interval over, Tim woke up and we staggered out into the night once again.

92 miles . . . The wind had taken its toll on our progress and we were both tiring of it, but at least it had not rained (yet). After a tricky road section we re-joined the riverbank to pass a wonderful sign nailed to a tree. In order to deter camping, most landowners erect a gentle "No camping" sign or similar, but this was Yorkshire, where a spade is called a spade and, apparently, men are men. We saw a tin sheet with a crudely-painted sign advising that "TENTS WILL BE MOVED". Into

the river presumably and, if the occupants are in occupation, it will save them a trip to the public baths.

94 miles . . . We had followed the serene River Wharfe for about 28 miles and now bade our farewells for the last time as we shuffled through residential streets of Addingham. Shirlie was in the High Street at 3:20am, as we sought out Checkpoint 17 in the Old School and Parish Room, a cosy first floor room with a rear stepped access akin to Nora Batty's cottage. We were not driven away by a broom but welcomed by Terry Griffiths and his helpers. Overstayed our welcome in terms of time, but my feet were grateful for the temporary halt. Upon leaving, the glimmer of first light was apparent and we turned off our torches.

95 miles . . . A long slog with 722 feet of ascent up to the final checkpoint and the first two miles were on tarmac. Tim and I were on autopilot now but he was still keeping me entertained with stories and yarns.

96 miles . . . In an atmospheric morning with the sun rising above distant milky hills, we followed the line of an old Roman road across Draughton Moor.

97 miles . . . Cumbria Group were manning Checkpoint 18 at an isolated lane crossing on Draughton Moor. Paul and Mary had done their duties and had retired for a night's sleep. With a quick drink and more encouragement from Shirlie, I left in the company of Tim and Mike Pursey and we glowed with the satisfying knowledge that, barring an accident or falling into the Leeds and Liverpool Canal through Skipton, success was within our grasp. We heard that Gordon was not far behind us.

99 miles . . . The bridleway was very rutted in places and a short woodland section meant more slalom work around exposed roots. Ahead of and below our stumbling threesome, the lights of Skipton drew us onwards, but we all disliked the wicked descent from the moor which saw us slithering down a grassy bank for about 200 feet, followed by an equal distance of stony track. What memories I have of these tracks, perhaps accentuated by the state of my feet.

100 miles . . . The outskirts of Skipton and we met John Sparshatt, taking a breather from the headquarters. The town centre was silent and we were instructed to cross the canal, follow an alleyway and join the towpath "in the direction of Liverpool"! We had just half a mile along the canal before retracing our outward steps into Aireville Park. Shirlie was waiting by the gates and she and a crying curlew welcomed the three of us home.

101 miles . . . Back into Aireville School, a warm welcome and I took those shoes off for the last time. We sat, had refreshments, chatted and rested. Gordon finished soon after us, also Avril Stapleton (her tenth completion) and Ian McLeod. I was pleased to meet Wayne again and learn that he had finished 20 minutes ahead of us for his first completion. He said he has been bitten by the Hundred bug, as had a glowing Julie Welch who joined us fresh from a sleep. Tim has now started and finished the last 25 Hundreds – what an achievement for such a young man! We thanked each other for the company.

Upon returning to our lodgings, I was not surprised to discover seven nasty blisters on each foot and they were to take several weeks to heal (or heel?) completely.

It was an excellent Hundred and from what I saw, all seemed to run as a well-oiled machine. Not for the first time, I would like to thank sincerely everyone who had a part, however small, in the running of this event. It is all done purely for enjoyment, with the first finisher home receiving no greater accolade than the last and I hope that those involved got as much satisfaction from the event as I did. Thank you, especially, to John Sparshatt and West Yorkshire Group.

Once again, Shirlie provided me (and those around me) with much support for which I am most grateful. I know that several Kent Group members manned the Kettlewell checkpoint and my thanks go to all for their help and commitment.

## **YOREDALE 100 - CHECKPOINT 13, KETTLEWELL VILLAGE HALL**

**By Brian Buttifant**

THIS checkpoint, at 72.6 miles into the route, was manned by three teams of Kent members and friends. We were open from 02.00 to 20.00 hours that Sunday evening. The teams worked hard on each of the shifts and were a credit to the group. Each person wore a red T-shirt with the Invicta horse and lettering in white. And kitchen/waitering staff wore black and white check aprons as well - they did look impressive.

Just prior to our opening all electrical power went in the hall. After some checks we had no alternative but to call out the caretaker so we could open on time - phew!

Our Trig. Trophy, displaying the names of Kent Group members who have completed 10 Hundreds and donated to us by Jane Dicker, was on display, to be seen by our out-county members and to be an inspiration to members walking who had not got their names on yet.

Kent Group success rate was 100 per cent, so congratulations to all 12 finishers. Avril Stapleton, Barrie Morgan and Merv Nutburn all completed their 10th 100. For first timers Julie Welch, Stephanie Le Men and Christophe Delogne, well done. Other finishers were Don Newman, Jill Green, Keith Warman, Roger Dean, Mike Pursey, Andrew Boulden and Gordon Harker - well done.

Our staff were Liz Keeler, Jane Dicker, Martyn Berry, Nick Dockree, Dave Green, Ann and Ivan Waghorn, Ann Beeching, Ron Roweth, Roz Dean, five of Ivan's friends from Manchester, Pat and Bryan Clarke, Ann and Duncan Brice, Bill Gillibrand, Ruth Hall and myself.

Thanks again for a great effort. Next year we have agreed to man Checkpoint 6 on the Wessex 100 on May 23 at Slindon Village Hall - Sat 19.00 hours to Sun 05.30.

Please note the date and venue and offers of help would be appreciated.

## **NEWS OF KENT CHALLENGE WALKS**

### **Sevenoaks Circular**

Next year's Sevenoaks Circular will be held on Sunday March 15, with the marshalls' walk being held two weeks previously as usual – Sunday March 1. The route will be the same as this year's, and there will again be 30, 20 and 15-mile distances. Further details will appear in the next newsletter.

### **High Weald Walk**

This year's High Weald Walk – the Walk With The Smugglers – was the last organised by Neal and Jan O'Rourke and many thanks are due to them. Next year will be the Andredsweald Circuit, which Neil Higham has offered to organise. The date will probably be Sunday 12th July 2009, with two routes – 26 and 14 miles.

### **White Cliffs Challenge**

This year's WCC will comprise two routes – 28 and 14 miles – and will be from St Margaret's Hall, just outside Dover, on Sunday September 28. Marshalls are needed, so volunteers are asked to contact Mike Pursey.

Next year's WCC reverts to the event's 50-mile format, and will be the second leg of the KSS (Kent, Surrey, Sussex) Triple Challenge – see below. It will be on September 12-13, and will be based at a new venue – Fowlmead Country Park, just off the main A258 road between Deal and Sandwich. Fowlmead is an impressive place, which has been built on the site of one of Kent's former coal mines – Betteshanger. It already hosts several running and cycling events, and one of several advantages for us in using it for our 50-mile event is that it is much easier to get to for people coming from outside Kent than Betteshanger Sports and Social Club, where we staged the WCC in 2005, 2006 and 2007.

Surrey and Sussex groups have already offered to organise checkpoints for us. More details about next year's WCC in the next Newsletter.

## **KENT GROUP WELCOMES YOU**

LDWA members reaching the checkpoint organised by Kent Group on the Yoredale 100 must have been impressed with the red T-shirts worn by our members bearing our white horse logo with the message KENT GROUP WELCOMES YOU.

The T-shirts were ordered by Joy Davies following a suggestion by chairman Brian Buttifant. Kent Group members are allowed to keep them but are asked to only wear them when marshalling on LDWA events. They proved so popular that another batch is to be ordered.

## **A WEEK IN FRANCE FOR £130**

IN June Liz Keeler organised a week's walking holiday in the Vanoise National Park in France. The walking, scenery, weather and hotel were superb and the price - £130 for accommodation, evening meal, continental breakfast, packed lunch AND beer and wine – was nothing short of amazing.\*

Several Kent Group members went along, and they enjoyed it so much that Liz is planning to organise the trip again next year. Any members interested are advised to contact Liz asap for more details.

\*This does not include the price of getting there, which is around £110 on Eurostar

## **STRIDERS AND GROUP NEWSLETTERS By Ernie Bishop**

NEWSLETTER N° 17 was full of a variety of routes which attract those who look for hills. In particular the four Lake District peaks, each over 3,000ft and 45 miles to cover, is quite strenuous. The event started in the early hours before daylight, following the path up Skiddaw (3,054ft), down through Keswick, then Borrowdale. Ahead, off the road to Scafell (3,162ft), a drop then up to Scafell Pike (3,206ft). Down to Esk Hause, across to High Raise (2,500ft) having struggled up about 1,000ft of grassy hillside. Then down again to cross the Ambleside road and a final climb, which is really tiring, to reach Helvellyn (3,116ft). From there it is five miles back to Keswick. Twice I've entered, once with Chris Steer and once by myself, but I have no record of the actual years when I participated.

On a Friday in May, Celia and I joined others of a group, mainly from Surrey, to travel by coach to Snowdon. Two different groups for walking but both to join at a certain point. However, once we got out of the coach it started raining and a quarter of an hour later it started pouring. After about half of the distance in the pouring rain we all made for the coach. We changed where we could, had something to eat, then the coach made for home.

Another backpacker was Tony Youngs, whose obituary was on pages 10-11 of Strider N° 110. I met Tony Youngs through a few meetings with Chris Steer and although I hadn't seen him for quite a while, the obituaries in the latest Strider made him appear to be exactly as he was in the past. 'On the F3' by Tony Youngs, LDWA 626, 'Backpacking on the Pembrokeshire Coastal Path'. It was three pages, including four small sketches. According to Tony it was to start at Tenby and stop at St. Davids.

Newsletter N° 18, among other results, was able to give details of The Downsman 100. The first three runners were Boyd Millen and Keith Arnold (18hrs 31mins) and Alan Blatchford (19hrs 40mins), all well known in the front of the runners. The first walkers were Richard Beard (23hrs 30mins) and John Leather (23hrs 35mins) I was some way back, but satisfied with the result.

This was the first time that 50 of the applicants could not be accepted. Three hundred applied before the day, but it had been decided that only 250 could be taken. Efforts were made to ensure that in future years sufficient space would be available to

take a larger entry and, in some cases, provide resting areas.

The Surrey Summits 100KM walk (Rules - No Running) April 1977. Five Surrey walkers did not finish together and were not able to form a team to win the trophy. However, a Kent Group team of three, Chris Barton, Ernie Bishop and Phil Hastings, managed to gain the trophy.

A month or two earlier, Ann Sayer, Mike Powell-Davies, Dave Jeffery and Alan Barber walked every part of the Pennine Way in six days 13.5 hours. The speed of the party was governed by the slowest member at any one time. Jeff Ellingham with transport was the supporter who moved ahead and helped with food and arranged bed and breakfasts.

One report was a personal view from Leslie Atkinson of his taking part in the High Peak Marathon with three others and who had failed to complete the distance on two previous occasions. They managed to get to the finish on the third attempt (1976), in a time of 19 hours 25 mins.

Writing this, I looked up some old papers and realised that 1977 was the first time I had a chance to enter. I joined three partners, Phil Hastings, Jack Rossiter and Martin Stone. I'm not sure, but I believe that Martin was missing due to the fog for some time, and it was pointless to carry on because we were considerably behind, bearing in mind it was not known to us, in the middle of a foggy night. Going around in circles. It was better in later years, although we never compared with some of those who were extremely good over that area.

Reading Newsletter N° 17 I came across an article, 'The Viking Way.' The official opening of the first sections took place in September, 1976, and the article was contributed by Brian Atkins (LDWA 1786). This section starts at Grantham along the Way, then North East to Sleaford, Horncastle and the Wolds, with a finish at Grimsby, or if you look for a further distance, carry on to Bridlington or Scarborough. Although there are quite often walkers who make it their aim to tackle the high hills, there are some who enjoy an easier walk with enough time to look at the surroundings.

More to come.

## **THE OTHER HALF OF THE HUNDRED**

**By Graham Smith**

LAST year I was one of scores of people who pulled out of the Cantcanolbarth Cymru. It was the third Hundred I had attempted, and the first time I had retired. My problems were bad nausea brought on by strong painkillers I was taking to deal with an arthritic big toe joint, plus general wretchedness caused by the appalling weather. I didn't like pulling out, I thought long and hard as I sat miserably in the village hall at Felindre (checkpoint 7 – 51.5 miles) but I concluded there were more cons than pros in me continuing.

Until the weather changed, I had been thoroughly enjoying the walk. I had never walked in Mid Wales before, and it was great route. So I decided to return to complete the walk. It was unfinished business.

I couldn't enter this year's Hundred, as last summer I had an operation to sort out the toe joint mentioned above, which put my serious walking on hold for a while. Once I started going on LDWA walks again I felt it was wise to complete at least one 50-miler before considering the Hundred. I did the Surrey Tops marshals' walk early in March and the toe was OK. The problem was, entries had by then closed for the Yoredale 100.

I politely declined Brian Buttifant's offer of going to Yorkshire with other Kent Group members to help run the CP at Kettlewell, because I felt the bank holiday weekend of the 2008 Hundred would be ideal for me to complete the 2007 one. So on Friday May 23, while other LDWA members from all over the country had either arrived in Skipton or were on their way, I left my home in Deal just after 8pm, and reached Felindre at 2am. I made myself a cup of coffee, left my car in the village hall car park, donned my walking gear, and with the OS map and last year's route description in one hand and a torch in the other, I set off.

It was quite a nice night, but it wasn't long before I made my first navigational error. I had missed a marker post where I should have returned to the Glyndwr's Way route. I got out the compass to check that I was travelling in roughly the right direction, and arrived at a farm where the path stopped. It was just about light, albeit very murky, and I was lost. I headed left, thinking that was the correct direction, but some barking dogs made me realise it wasn't. I tried going ahead but that just led to fields, so I took the track right, which became a metalled road leading to a junction. I still didn't know where I was but the compass told me my direction was south so I turned left, and after a few minutes found myself in Llanbadarn Fynydd. Somehow, I don't know how, I was back on the route.

I had decided to stop at last year's checkpoints, even if they weren't open, so I sat outside Llanbadarn Hall for a few minutes and then set off. It was getting lighter all the time, but it was now beginning to drizzle. The route was now going uphill, and the higher I went, the breezier it got. Also, I hadn't had any sleep, and I was starting to feel very tired. I got into plod-plod-plod mode and I couldn't even be bothered to divert 50 yards to touch the trig point going over Ysgwyd-ffordd – which, as Mike Pursey will concur, is most unlike me. The rain was getting a bit heavier, and making the ground slippery, and I took a tumble going down a muddy path. I wasn't feeling too brilliant when I reached the next CP, at Abbey-cwn-hir. The community hall was closed, of course, so I sat in the doorway of the village church. I shut my eyes for a couple of minutes and then had breakfast of a can of Red Bull (which I do find perks me up if I'm feeling very tired) and an egg sandwich.

Feeling much refreshed, I set off on the next 3.4 mile stretch, which continued along Glyndwr's Way, and was quite pleasant rural walking. After a quick rest outside the hall in the hamlet of Bwlch-y-Sarnu I set off briskly along the road, and missed the track left. By the time I realised my error I really didn't want to turn back, so I looked at the map and worked out that some rapid road bashing would get me back on course. The rain had now passed and the sun was coming out, so I took off my

waterproof jacket, put it into my rucksack, and marched on. The time was now about 9am, and the weather was getting better all the time.

Next CP was in a small otter hide just before the Wye Valley Walk part of the route. I was now walking in bright sunshine, so I put my trousers away and donned my shorts. This next leg was, for me, the best part of the Cantcanolbarth Cymru. As the route description says, it 'embodies the protestant work ethic that there is no true pleasure that does not require toil to earn it – be assured that you will have much pleasure.' The first part of this stretch follows delightful paths by the River Wye, surrounded by the imposing Cambrian mountains. Then there is a steep, steady climb which offers magnificent views. After that it was superb walking over open moorland, with fine views all around. I was in my element, and realised I was probably enjoying this part much more than anyone did on the Hundred last year. My only problem came when I tried to follow what the route description calls a 'bushwack' over open moor to 'an obvious mountain bike track.' I must have taken the wrong line, as I found the mountain bike track but followed it for far too long, missing the turning leading to a track for the Craig Goch reservoir and CP12. Getting back on course meant a fair bit of free-ranging over the hillside – which I am used to doing with Mike Pursey in Scotland – and I reckon this mistake put on the best part of an extra mile.

The next leg follows the reservoir paths to Elan Village, and is as easy as the route description said. It also made for rapid progress, and it must be said it also makes for a most enjoyable 5.6 miles.

A quick stop for refreshments at the visitor centre and I was off for another enjoyable leg: a pleasant walk through woodland, then an easy climb to open country followed by an excellent track over open country which ends with a descent to Llanwrthl. After a stop outside the village hall, the first 3-4 miles of the next – penultimate – leg were easy, following the Wye Valley Walk. I was making good progress, but then an error in the route description (saying I had to follow a hedge on the right when it was actually on the left) sent me in the wrong direction. I got out map and compass and retraced my steps to work out the source of the error. After that it was easy going to Newbridge-on-Wye, 3.8 miles from the end.

The last section is, frankly, the most forgettable of the walk, which involves crossing several fields and requiring close attention to the route description. Unfortunately, as I was tired, and eager to finish while it was still daylight, on three occasions I made navigational errors and took wrong turnings, probably wasting a good 15 minutes in the process.

Fortunately, there are waymarker posts to help, and with their assistance I eventually found my way to the main road going through Llandrindod Wells, reaching the pavilion – from where, with 500-odd others, I had set off a year ago – at about 9.15pm. I pulled off my shoes and socks and put my grateful feet into flip-flops and telephoned for a cab to pick me up and take me back to Felindre, where I had a fairly decent kip in the back of my car.

Being honest, part of me will always regret pulling out of last year's Hundred, but I made a decision and had to stick with it. But I am very glad that I returned to complete it, because it's a great walk in a delightful – and under-rated – area. By returning I had a truly memorable day in far better weather than all those heroic souls who endured the whole 100.5 miles did last year.

I can also wear my Cantcanolbarth Cymru T-shirt with a clear conscience!

## A NEW FRENCH CHALLENGE

By Graham Smith



The Kent party enjoy the fine viewpoint of Mont de Couple, with its toposcope. Picture by Eric Rolfe.

THIS year's cross-Channel challenge, on Saturday July 5, was the third version of a summer French walk organised by Kent Group. We started these cross-Channel forays in 1996, with the Channel Cliffs Challenge, when we would meet at Dover Hoverport at 5am, walk along the cliffs to Folkestone, catch the 8.30am Seacat to Boulogne and then walk to Calais before getting the last hovercraft back to Dover at about 11pm. After Hoverspeed pulled out of Folkestone in 2001, we had to make it a linear walk, so until this year we took a ferry to Calais and a train to Boulogne and just walked back along the coast.

But various factors – principally the time restrictions put on foot passengers by the cross-Channel ferry operators – conspired to make it difficult to continue Boulogne-Calais. So this year we decided to try something new.

Thanks to Joy Davies being able to get two discounted Le Shuttle tickets, we were able to take two cars, each full of five walkers, through the Channel Tunnel to Coquelles, 2-3 miles outside Calais. The price worked out at £7.50 each. We took the 7.50am Shuttle, arriving at 9.30am French time. We left the cars at the car park for the Auchan hypermarket, had a quick coffee in the restaurant there, and set off.

Our route initially took us through Coquelles to pick up GR (Grand Randonee) 128 to the village of Peuplingues, then we followed a minor road before picking up GR 128 again. We followed this to Mont de Couple, which at 530 feet must be one of the finest viewpoints in the Nord Pas de Calais region, and was certainly the highlight of our walk. We could clearly see the White Cliffs of Dover, and a toposcope on the summit tells you how far you are from some of the major cities in Europe, including Glasgow, Stockholm, Moscow and Leeds (which particularly pleased Joyce Dalton as that's where she comes from). From the summit of Mont de Couple we enjoyed a delightful ridge walk, keeping to GR 128 to switch back via good tracks to Wissant on the coast, a very pleasant town where we had our lunch stop.

We then dropped onto the beach, and Alan Sutton and myself took off our shoes and socks to splish-splash barefoot in the outgoing tide before leaving the sands when we reached the clifftop path. This we followed to our next big ascent – Cap Blanc-Nez, which has a monument to the Dover Patrol and which at 440 feet is another excellent viewpoint. We all reached the top comfortably enough (and without too many complaints from Joy, who tells anyone willing to listen that she hates hills), and then followed GR 128 back to Coquelles. We had plenty of time for some shopping at Auchan and a meal in the hypermarket's restaurant before getting the Shuttle back to England.

Eric Rolfe's pedometer reckoned the walk ended up 22.7 miles, very close to Mike Pursey's estimate of 22.3. All in all it was a very good walk in very nice French countryside, with an excellent focal point – Mont de Couple – and a very nice town – Wissant – in which to stop for lunch. The bonus was that we had time to make it a booze cruise as well.

Apologies to people who telephoned me the week before the walk, saying they wanted to go but were unable to do so because the two cars were full up. We will be putting the walk on again next year, and making different arrangements for the cars, so I hope to see you then.

### **EASTER 2008 – A BANK HOLIDAY WEEKEND OF TWO WALKS by Graham Smith**

WEATHER best described as challenging accompanied both Kent Group social walks this Easter. The annual trip to Sussex for the South Downs Loop had some of the fiercest winds this year, and two days later the planned third section of the Saxon Shore Way was greeted with snow, and we ended up doing the fourth section instead – but more later.

Fifteen of us met at the start of the South Downs Way at Eastbourne on Good Friday. The walk, which we must have been doing every Good Friday for a good 12 years, is put on jointly by ourselves and the White Cliffs Ramblers. We usually split into two groups, Joy Davies leading the 20-milers and me leading the 26-milers, but this time we had three groups. Audrey West led a group of three White Cliffs Ramblers' members on a shorter version of the walk which returned to Eastbourne after the Seven Sisters and Exceat.

The walk begins with a stiffish climb to bring you out on the clifftop and a lovely, open stretch on lush grass where you can really get your legs moving. As always, it was like walking on a green carpet. It was also exceptionally clear, which gave us some of the most extensive views we have ever enjoyed while we have been doing this walk. The problem was we were walking into the wind, which was very strong, and gave our faces a battering. And, of course, it was at its strongest on the higher ground.

We passed the Beachy Head and Belle Tout lighthouses before dropping down to Birling Gap, and getting some relief from the wind. Then came the Seven Sisters, which are always tough, but tougher this time because of the wind. Dropping between the Sisters was very pleasant as we could escape from the wind. At the end of the Sisters the clear conditions gave us magnificent views across Cuckmere Haven, up the valley and towards the South Downs. We dropped down for our usual coffee stop near Exceat Bridge, and then followed the River Cuckmere for a couple of miles to a bridge near Litlington. Here the parties split, six of us planning to go to Firle Beacon, the other six following the river to Alfriston before taking the South Downs Way back to Eastbourne.

We took a path up to the Downs, and then had to do a bit of uncomfortable scrub bashing on uneven ground before we picked up the main track for the Bo Peep car park, where our plan was to turn left to visit the superb viewpoint of Firle Beacon. Once we emerged onto that main track, we were walking into the fierce wind again. We were also exposed, and it was pretty strength-sapping for us all, particularly Henry Williams, who has undergone two hip operations in recent years and who – commendably – was doing his first long walk since September. Turning left at the car park would have meant we would have had the full force of that wind on one of the highest points of the South Downs, so we decided abort our plan to visit Firle

Beacon, had our lunch at the car park, then turned right to walk to Alfriston, with those strong winds behind us – and behind us they certainly were, fairly blowing us along.

At Alfriston we had our usual stop in a pub, this time visiting the Star, and then set off alongside and then over the river, to climb onto the Downs by Milton Street. Henry did not want to slow anyone down, and we agreed to let him make his own way to Jevington while the rest of us marched on to Eastbourne, from where we would drive to pick him up.

Instead of the taking what I reckon is a more scenic route, going to the top of Wilmington Hill and then dropping to Jevington, we instead followed the SDW, which is very good. Those fierce winds were behind us, so it was much more comfortable walking back than it had been walking out. The SDW route reaches Jevington past the Eight Bells pub – unlike the route we usually take – so we did not visit it this year. After that we pressed on, reaching Eastbourne shortly before six o'clock – a good hour earlier than we usually do.

We drove to pick up Henry - who in those conditions had done amazingly well for a man with two new hips – and then had our usual Good Friday post-South Downs Loop visit to Weatherspoons in Eastbourne.

TWO days later it was our usual Easter Sunday walk, and the plan was to do the third section of the Saxon Shore Way, a 20-mile stretch from Kingsferry to Faversham. The weather was cold, and the forecast was for some snow, although we didn't really believe it (or didn't want to believe it!) On these linear stretches of long distance paths we meet at the end of the walk and then arrange cars to drive to the start. On this occasion Nicola Foad had inquired about trains between Faversham and Swale Halt, the tiny station by Kingsferry Bridge. Our plan was to leave all cars at Faversham and travel by train to Kingsferry. So seven of us met at Faversham Station and got tickets for Swale Halt, getting on the train at 8.36am as planned. We had to change trains at Sittingbourne, and after we had board our second one we were informed it had a problem with its air, and would not be going anywhere. We had two choices – either wait for a bus to take us to Swale Halt, or cut our losses and do something else. It was then 9am, and beginning to snow, so in view of the weather, the time and the length of walk, we decided to do that section of the Saxon Shore Way another time, take a train to Herne Bay and do section 4 of the SSW, walking back to Faversham, at 14 miles a considerably shorter distance than we had originally planned.

When we emerged from the station at Herne Bay, the snow was really coming down – luckily it wasn't laying, but it was quite uncomfortable, particularly as we were walking into it. But we were determined to do our walk, and we trudged on to Swalecliffe, Tankerton and Whitstable, where we took refuge in a hotel and warmed our bodies and spirits with coffee and hot cross buns.

After our refreshments, the snow was easing, becoming sleet and later rain – still not very nice to walk into, but much better than the white stuff. After 3-4 miles we had another stop for refreshments, at the Jolly Sportsman pub at Seasalter, which is much nicer inside than it looks from the outside. We were all pretty wet, and it was good to dry off inside.

And once again after our refreshment stop, the weather had improved when we started walking again. In fact it had stopped raining, giving us clear views up the Swale to the Kingsferry Bridge we had originally planned to walk from. The five miles alongside the Swale and Faversham Creek hardly make up the most interesting walk, but there are no obstacles to impede progress, it is very easy going, and we were able to crack on. We reached Faversham shortly after 4pm. We hadn't done the walk we planned but we had reacted to the weather and the problem with the train, and made the best of it, so we were all quite happy.

All in all, it was an Easter to remember.

## **THE SURREY TOPS –FIRST LEG OF THE KENT SURREY SUSSEX (KSS) TRIPLE CHALLENGE**

MARCH 29-30 saw the Surrey Tops, the first part of the KSS triple challenge of 50-mile walks which also includes our own White Cliffs Challenge (see article above) and the welcome return of Sussex Group's Sussex Stride. Several members of Kent Group took part, and we also organised a checkpoint.

This report has been sent by **Keith Chesterton** from Surrey Group.

### **“Harder than a Hundred”?**

After the first event in 2005, we made a number of changes. We moved the event to the Spring (its original intended season), changed the start time from evening to the traditional morning start, had four checkpoints instead of three and made one of them in a hall and provide hot food. We also increased the quantities of food provided at CPs. These were intended to make the event less Spartan but still challenging. I hope you feel we got the balance right.

### **How did it go?**

We were very pleased to get 126 entries, but were surprised by the 20 per cent of no-shows. They must have known what it would be like! But this still gave us 101 starters.

As you all know, the weather was poor and it rained at varying strengths from 1pm at the runners' start till the event finished at 6am on Sunday. But what made the event so difficult was the condition of the ground.

Keith Michell said it should be called “The Slurry Tops”.

Julie Welch said “I can cope with all the climbing, but the endless squish and slosh of feet got me down. It's the hardest walk I've ever done”.

Another walker said it was harder than the Welsh Hundred.

Someone else said “If Jelley's Hollow gets any worse, we'll need crampons”

As Event Organiser, I remained at Chichester Hall, received reports from the different CPs and worried that we'd have loads

of retirees and might not be able to cope.

One walker worried us a lot – he hadn't been seen at CP2, no-one seemed to have seen him and no message had been received. As we asked other walkers we heard he'd been seen on the Drove Road by Hackhurst and had obviously missed the route. We did consider notifying the emergency services but realised they couldn't do anything till light and he eventually turned up at CP3 and finished the event – to my relief.

In the event, only 14 weren't able to do the whole 50 miles.

My sincere congratulations to all for struggling through so manfully and womanfully. Whether they did 50 or "only" 23, they all demonstrated great fortitude in such conditions.

And I'd particularly like to congratulate Jonathan Kirk who did his first 50-mile event at the age of 16. Well done.

In spite of the conditions, there was only one injury and that was to a marshal! George Evans went round to the side of Chichester Hall to get in, fell down the steps to the pavilion in the dark and sprained his ankle. Despite this he continued to help at the finish. Unfortunately, two of the lights had gone by the way in for finishers.

### **Marshals' Walk**

This took place on March 1-2. The weather was windy but the weather was better than on the main event. For pictures showing blue sky look at the ST Marshals' Walk on the Surrey Group website.

The walkers were ably supported by Reg Chapman and Elton Ellis, who supplied food and drink at the three checkpoints.

Lastly if you have any suggestions for changes, after your experiences, or any other comments, please let me know – either by letter or by email: Keith Chesterton, Firle, Chestnut Ave, Guildford, GU2 4HD. [chestertonk@guildford.gov.uk](mailto:chestertonk@guildford.gov.uk)

### **COMEDY CORNER**

**By Bill Gillibrand**

**OUCH!**

Two Mexican detectives were investigating the murder of Juan Gonzalez.

"How was he killed?" asked one detective.

"With a golf gun," the other detective replied.

"A golf gun? What is a golf gun?"

"I don't know, but it sure made a hole in Juan."

### **AND FINALLY**

**By Graham Smith**

AS this newsletter was going to press, I was waiting to go into hospital for a pretty big operation. From a personal point of view, it's going to put my serious walking on hold for at least two months and probably three. I've still got faint hope of entering next year's Hundred, but a lot is going to happen – and I will have to do a lot of training walks to prepare – before I can even consider it.

My operation will mean that I will not be able to go on most of the social walks detailed above which I am scheduled to lead. Mike Pursey and Joy Davies have kindly offered to lead them for me. I would like to thank Mike and Joy very much, and also to apologise to Kent Group members for any confusion. I know you will understand, and I look forward to seeing you on walks as soon as I possibly can.



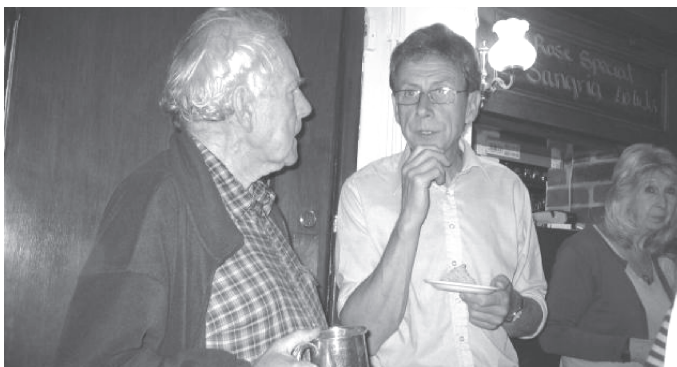
Kettlewell Checkpoint. Photo by Patrica Durdey



Kettlewell Checkpoint. Photo by Steve Clark



Kettlewell Checkpoint above and post 100 photos below and next page by Bryan Clarke







Picture taken by Eric Rolfe at St Margaret's Bay on the Sandwich-Dover stretch of the Saxon Shore Way on June 8.