

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

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

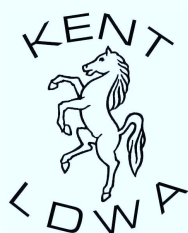
# ***NEWSLETTER***



**Andrew Boulden strides along the White Cliffs**

Photo by Eric Rolfe

**Number 77**



**December 2008**

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



The White Cliffs Challenge. Pictures by Eric Rolfe

## KENT GROUP SOCIAL WALKS - DECEMBER 2008 TO APRIL 2009

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

c.14mls. Calais to Escalles and return. Meet by SeaFrance desk, Dover Eastern Docks at 7.15am for 8am 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.

### **Sun Jan 18 VANGUARD WAY**

(East Croydon-Moorhouse Bank – A25). 13.75 miles. Meet 9am at Moorhouse Bank (GR 421533) to arrange cars before driving to start of the walk at East Croydon Station. Pub stop. For further details contact Graham Smith on

### **Sun Feb 22 VANGUARD WAY 2**

(Moorhouse Bank-Forest Row). 15.25 miles. Meet 9am at Forest Row car park (GR 426351) to arrange cars before driving to start of the walk at Moorhouse Bank. Pub stop. For further details contact Graham Smith on

### **Sun Feb 22 SEVENOAKS OUTCROPS WALK**

c.10mls. Start 10am from One Tree Hill c.p. Map: Landranger 188, GR 559532. Finish about 4.00pm. No pub stop, bring packed lunch. Short in length, plenty of incident. Ldr: Martyn Berry.

### **Sun Mar 1 SEVENOAKS CIRCULAR MARSHALS WALK**

Contact Brian Buttifant for details on

### **Sun Mar 22 SEVENOAKS CIRCULAR MAIN EVENT**

See Events Diary in Strider.

### **Sun Mar 29 VANGUARD WAY 3**

(Forest Row - Chiddingly) 19.5 miles. Meet 8.30am near Chiddingly Church (GR 544143) to arrange cars before driving to start of the walk at Forest Row. Pub stop. For further details contact Graham Smith on

### **Fri Apr 10 ANOTHER SOUTH DOWNS WAY LOOP**

(Good Friday) c26mls (or 20 alternative). Meet 9am at Eastbourne, western end of seafront (B2103) by South Downs Way marker post (GR 600972). Pub stop (or two!). Ldr: Graham Smith.

### **Sun Apr 12 VANGUARD WAY 4**

(Chiddingly - Newhaven) 17.5 miles. Meet 9am at Newhaven ferry terminal car park (GR 450009) to arrange cars before driving to start of the walk at Chiddingly. Pub stop. For further details contact Graham Smith on

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 –

PICTURES on the front cover and inside front cover were taken by Eric Rolfe during this year's White Cliffs Challenge. Pictures on the last page were taken during Jill Green's Glyndwr's Way walk (see article below).



## **POST-CHRISTMAS WALK**

BRIAN Buttifant is leading his annual shorter (15 miles) Sevenoaks walk on December 30. It will start at 9am from Ightham Mote, with lunch in a Sevenoaks pub.

## **ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

NEXT year's AGM will be at Bredgar Village Hall, near Sittingbourne, on Sunday January 25. Bob Field will be leading a short walk starting at 10am, with the meeting at 2pm. As usual, there will be a free meal before the meeting starts. Come along and have your say about your group.

## **KENT CHALLENGE WALKS**

### **Sevenoaks Circular**

THE date of the 2009 Sevenoaks Circular has been changed from March 15 to March 22, and will again be from Vine Cricket Pavilion in Sevenoaks. There will again be 30, 20 and 15-mile distances, and the route will be almost the same as it was this year, but with some minor modifications. The marshals' walk will be on March 1.

### **Andredsweald Circuit**

NEXT year's High Weald challenge walk is being organised by Neil Higham, taking over from Neal and Jan O'Rourke who previously ran the event for five years. It will be on July 12 from Forest Row, and will have two distances – 26 and 14 miles. All checkpoints will be outdoor. A date for the marshals' walk has not yet been decided but this is likely to be two weeks before the event, June 28. Neil will need lots of help, so please contact him on the above telephone number.

### **White Cliffs Challenge**

AS reported in the last newsletter, next year's WCC will be from a new venue – Fowlmead Country Park, between Deal and Sandwich, built on the site of the former Kent coal pit of Betteshanger. It will be held over the weekend of September 12-13. It will revert to being a 50-mile event and will be part of the KSS (Kent Surrey Sussex) Triple Challenge of the WCC, the Surrey Tops – which took place in March – and the Sussex Stride, which will be held in 2010 and last held in 2005. As this newsletter went to press, plans were being discussed for next year's WCC to include a shorter walk of 20-25 miles as well as the 50-mile one. More details about this will appear in the next newsletter.

## **WESSEX 100**

AS usual, Kent Group will be running a checkpoint, on the Hundred, and on the Wessex 100 we will be doing Checkpoint 6 – Coronation Hall at Slindon, 40.7 miles into the route. The CP will be open between 1900 hrs on Saturday (May 23) and 0530 on the Sunday. Kent Group members wishing to help man the checkpoint are asked to contact Brian Buttifant on the above telephone number.

## **HEART OF SCOTLAND 100**

OUR former chairman Paul Hatcher has been made Deputy Organiser for the 2010 Hundred, with responsibility for staffing the event as well as organiser of the marshals' walk. Paul has also been elected chairman of Cumbria Group, and a recent e-mail from Paul and Mary to secretary Bill Gillibrand reads: "We were hoping to get to the Christmas lunch this year. But I am afraid that we shall have to give it a miss as we are committed to coming down to Kent on Dec 21 for our grandson's christening and do not feel that we can make the journey twice in such a short space of time. Our best wishes to all in the Kent group and all the best for your meal.

"We have now had two trips up to Scotland checking the route and the checkpoint locations for the Heart of Scotland 100."

Cumbria group will be at Fortingall - 72 miles - and would like to invite any Kent group members along that wish to join them.

## **HUNDRED MILE EVENT IN OLYMPIC YEAR 2012**

SECRETARY Bill Gillibrand has met with Paul Lawrence, following a call from Paul to Bill to establish contact with the Kent Group.

The plan is for the 2012 Hundred to start at the main Olympic site at Stratford in East London, go south to the North Downs Way and round to finish near Windsor Castle after visiting as many Olympic sites as possible. Because of the need to deal with the Olympic Authority it is felt necessary for the matter to be handled by the LDWA at national level and not by a local group. Paul (who looks after long distance paths for the association – see Strider) has been appointed to be in charge.

Meetings have already been held with the OA who are supportive of the idea as they are keen to promote walking. There will be no car parking at the main site and spectators are expected to travel by public transport and walk from the stations. After asking for a written proposal for the event, the OA was taken aback when quickly presented with a clear and positive scheme as a result of our established guidelines and past experience of hundreds.

All names with regard to Olympics (and even 2012) have been registered for the protection of the interests of the major sponsors, so the choice of a name for the hundred remains to be decided. After the large financial interests there are bodies, such as the LDWA, who are contributing towards the success of the Olympics so discussions are ongoing. The route will start near the main Olympic site at Stratford and head south following the Lea Valley and then through Docklands to cross the Thames via the Greenwich foot tunnel. Greenwich Park (site of equestrian events) will be visited, the Dome and then Woolwich Barracks (shooting ranges). A factor to be considered is that all of these sites may be active with contractors desperately trying to meet completion deadlines. For that reason and also for site security, the exact start point has still to be settled.

From Woolwich the route will head south along the Green Chain Walk or London Loop, through Oxleas wood to Eltham College at Mottingham, where the Eric Liddell centre may be used as a checkpoint. Eric Liddell (Chariots of Fire) was a former pupil and won a gold medal (400m) at the 1924 Olympics but did not take part in the 100m heats as they were run on a Sunday. From here to Chislehurst then south to Biggin Hill and past Downe House, the home of Charles Darwin. Much of the walking so far has been in built-up areas but now it picks up the North Downs Way. The route continues east to areas of the Founders' Challenge and the Tanners, eventually through Virginia Water and Windsor Great Park. The park is usually closed at night so special permission will be needed or a diversion made. The finish will be in sight of the castle.

The route leaves the London postal district and nominally comes into Kent although still in the London borough of Bromley. London Group will probably be fully committed at the start and other groups of the home counties have been involved and will be looking after the walkers in their patches. Marshals are needed not only for checkpoints but to help at some of the more difficult road crossings. It is likely that helpers from outside the LDWA will be forthcoming from local areas along the route.

There is great scope for publicity arising from this event and the start time will be the same for walkers and runners as it should be a newsworthy occasion. Obviously this will affect checkpoint opening times but those in our patch will comparatively brief. It is being considered whether to have a dispensation from the usual 500 max as there are likely to be many entrants, possibly from overseas. The thought is to have 500 places for members and possibly another 500 for non-members. There needs to be a qualifier to prevent unsuitable entrants who could be a problem.

Support from Kent Group will be to run a couple of checkpoints where more hands than usual will be needed but not for long shifts. Brian Buttifant has already volunteered. Marshals are also needed at road crossings. Some limited financial help may be sought for deposits on checkpoint bookings but that would be only for temporary loans.

## **DAVE GREEN – MEMORIES OF A GOOD FRIEND**

ALL Kent Group members – indeed members throughout the LDWA – will have been saddened by the death on September 28 of Dave Green, husband of Jill and an excellent walker himself. Dave, like Jill, was a member of Kent Group. Brian Buttifant and Keith Warman, who attended Dave's funeral, sent these tributes to Dave.

DAVE was always very helpful and good company. He and I went back a long way, as they say in the walking world. This year Dave and I walked the 20-mile route of the Punchbowl and we both had an enjoyable walk.

Dave was one of the first to offer help for our checkpoint at Kettlewell on the Yoredale 100 in May. He helped me on the first shift through the night when we had to sort out the loss of lights and power half an hour before the opening time – an interesting night but fun.

At two of our three events this year – the Sevenoaks Circular and the Walk with the Smugglers – Dave was seen walking with Jeff Campbell's son Oliver on the 14-mile routes. I was checkpointing and chatted with them both. This was typical of Dave, and so many of us would agree that it is so good to encourage young people. I am reminded of 23 years ago, when I and my youngest daughter were on the Isle of Wight for the International Walking Festival. While I did the 30-mile route, Dave encouraged Fiona and Jenny on the shorter route.

Encouraging others is something we shared. — **Brian Buttifant**

SHIRLIE and I went to Dave's funeral and it seemed that the LDWA was well represented. Mourners included Kent Group members Ann Sayer (also an LDWA Vice President) and Don Newman as well as Shirlie and me. Other LDWA members noticed included Jeff Campbell, Reg and Janet Chapman, Julie Welch, Graham and Marie Doke, Roger Moss, Glenys Kirkpatrick, Dave and Jenny Howse, Sue Clements, John and Janet Whiteman and Paul Lawrence. The church was packed with many standing around the perimeter. I overheard someone suggesting there were 150 people present and this was no surprise bearing in mind Jill and Dave's many interests and friends. There were many

Centurion (race-walkers) there, as well as people from the Isle of Wight's bat group and many of Dave's work colleagues from an aircraft company in Surrey. The latter had flown into the airport in Sandown in two jets. The minister mentioned Dave's family life and his involvement in the walking, aircraft, bat and wildlife worlds. A man from the bat group gave a very touching eulogy to Dave's work with the group.

After the service in Sandown, we got a lift to the crematorium for the short service and then to a nearby pub for refreshments. In the pub, an announcement was made that there would be a fly-past at 3:15 pm, so everyone went outside into the car park and stood motionless in the drizzle. At the appointed time, the two jets roared overhead, just a few hundred feet above us. They circled and three more fly-pasts were made. We then learned that the aircraft company had just taken delivery of the two jets (from new) and they wished to name them in Dave's honour. One was to be called Poppet (Dave's pet name for Jill) and the other Buddy (which Dave called his closest work colleagues). What a lovely gesture.

I think that Jill and her family were genuinely touched at the level of the turn-out and our thoughts are with them at this difficult time. Shirlie and I were pleased to be able to go and pay our respects to a friend and fellow Kent Group member. We are glad we went. — **Keith Warman**

## **STRIDERS AND GROUP NEWSLETTERS**

**by Ernie Bishop**

IN 1978 Celia and I joined Chris and Margaret Steer for the weekend of the seventh AGM at Marlow. A walk and talk on the Saturday, while having a good time by the Thames, and a good meal in the evening, prepared us for a good discussion on the Sunday. Among other things it led to the need to recruit three members for the committee, who were Mike Powell Davies, Sue Cole and me. The committee got together every year to discuss matters for the LDWA and carried out whatever was needed to make changes where and when necessary.

Alan Blatchford during his time clambered many of the favourite hills in the country and was particularly happy to complete the Three Peaks Walk on a number of occasions. When staying near Settle he decided to circle the three walks (Pen Y Ghent, Whernside and Ingleborough) together with his 10-year-old son Ian. They started at 10.20am and successfully finished after about nine hours.

Bob Graham was the first person to complete 42 summits within 24 hours, starting and finishing at Moot Hall, Keswick. The challenge is known as The Bob Graham Round. By 1978, Joss Naylor held the record for summits ascended with 72 peaks in 23 hours 11 minutes, which amounts to an astonishing 105 miles and 37,000 feet of ascent. Apart from him, quite a number of good runners who spent their time in that area were also to be seen. Some could be seen running at times in the Lake District, but often running in events in the Midlands or South.

It was good to have a Kent Walker Phil Hastings giving us details of a 50-mile road walk as far away as Cape Town. It was a Bank Holiday and had quite large groups watching in certain places outside of the Cape Town area. Generous offers of drinks, salt tablets and oranges were made by all sections of the community. In time rain started falling and Phil ended soaking wet. He finished in 10 hours 55 minutes, an improvement of 17 minutes on his previous attempt, 23 years before.

In Newsletter No. 22 Tony Cresswell (Local Group Co-ordinator), had 10 pages, one of which showed the separate areas of all the counties where the individual LDWAs were located and blank areas where there were none. In December 1978 the then number (16) were marked according to the area they covered. By August 2008, the Group News in Strider gave information from 41 Local Groups, each with a number of events, from short walks to something more strenuous, possibly 100 miles.

More to come

## **SUSSEX STRIDE**

THE 2010 event – part of the Kent Surrey Sussex Triple Challenge of 50-mile walks (see above) will be the first Sussex Stride since the event was discontinued in 2006. It will be held in September 2010 although the exact date has not yet been decided.

Kent Group members may be interested to know that Sussex Group secretary Anthony Mitchell is organising a self-supported Sussex Stride as a training – and, for anyone needing it – qualifying walk for the Wessex Hundred, being run jointly by Wessex and Sussex groups with help from Surrey Group. Anthony's walk is going to be in March (he had not decided on a date as the newsletter went to press). Any Kent Group members wishing to take part should contact him on 01342 811361.

## **ON THE SEVENOAKS CIRCULAR (MAYBE)**

**by Ivan Waghorn**

A WOMAN is in bed with her boyfriend while her husband is at work. Suddenly she hears his car in the driveway. She yells at her boyfriend: "Quick, grab your clothes and jump out of the window."

The boyfriend looks out of the window and says: "I can't jump out of the window, it's raining like hell."  
 She says: "If my husband catches us in here he will kill both of us."  
 So the boyfriend grabs his clothes, jumps out of the window and finds himself in the middle of a challenge walk.  
 He starts walking alongside the others in the nude, carrying his clothes on his arm.  
 One of the other walkers (Dave) asks him: "Do you always walk in the nude?"  
 He answers: "Oh yes, it feels so free having the air blow over your skin."  
 Another walker (Brian) then asks the nude man: "Do you always walk carrying your clothes on your arm?"  
 The nude answers: "Oh yes, that way I can get dressed at the end of the walk, get in my car and drive home."  
 A third walker (Gordon) then asks: "Do you always wear a condom when you are walking?"  
 The nude answers: "Only when it is raining."  
 # The names have been changed to protect their identities.

## **THE THREE PITS WALK**

**by Graham Smith**

I HAVE to say that I have been doing a Three Pits Walk since long before the White Cliffs Countryside Project thought up the idea for a Miner's Way Trail (not that I want to claim bragging rights over the WCCP, which does an excellent job – but come on, credit where it's due!).

The walk visits the sites of the former Kent pits of Betteshanger (closed in 1989), Tilmanstone (closed in 1986) and Snowdown (closed in 1987), so it enables walkers to see an important part of our county's industrial heritage. Fifteen of us turned up at Northbourne, near the site of the Betteshanger pit, on October 26. The weather was a bit overcast and the forecast was rain – which we got, and plenty of it, although it was never heavy.

From Northbourne we took a track to the Betteshanger site, which gave us views of Fowlmead Country Park – venue for next year's White Cliffs Challenge (see above).

Then we crossed fields and took a lane past Ham to the village of Eastry, where we picked up a bridleway. We followed this for a mile and a half before taking some quiet lanes and then turned off on a very pleasant path to Goodnestone. We had a quick stop outside the pub (we couldn't go in because the time was just after 11am so it wasn't open).

We then took a track through the grounds of Goodnestone Park before crossing fields to a minor road which took us into Aylesham, the village which served Snowdown. We passed a commemorative statue of a miner and his son, with three trucks of coal, and continued going down the road to the site of the pit itself. Of the three former pits, the site of Snowdown is the only one which has not been redeveloped, so quite a bit of the pit head area is still visible through the barbed wire which surrounds the site. Then it was along the road for just over a mile to our lunch stop, the Royal Oak at Nonington, where we spent a pleasant 45 minutes.

After lunch it was minor roads and paths to the site of the third ex-pit on our route, Tilmanstone. Most of Tilmanstone's site has been redeveloped as industrial units, but as we got to the top of one hill what was the mine's slag heap became clearly visible. Then it was more pleasant paths to the village of Tilmanstone, a mile from the pit which bore its name (Elvington, which our route bypassed, was the actual village which served the pit).

At Tilmanstone we crossed the A256 and took a path through trees to the hamlet of Betteshanger (which, of course, gave its name to the first ex-pit we had visited). After that we followed more paths – and disturbed loads of pheasants, which are bred in this area – and a miners' track back to Northbourne. After lunch the rain had become quite constant, so we moved at a fair pace, and got back to the cars shortly after 3pm, having walked 16.8 miles, according to Brian Godden's GPS.

There were, actually, four pits in Kent. Chislet, near the village of Hersden – on the A28 Canterbury-Thanel road – closed in 1969. The site of Chislet is a few miles from the other former pits, and involves crossing and re-crossing the River Stour, giving an estimated distance of 36-38 miles. Seven Kent Group members completed what we reckon was the first walk to link all the former Kent pits last year. I have put this Four Pits Walk on our Social Walks Programme for May 2 next year – full details will appear in the April newsletter.

## **THE SALISBURY 5-4-3-2-1**

**by Liz Keeler**

ON a recent trip to Wiltshire I was able, with daughter Jane, to enter the Salisbury 5-4-3-2-1 26-mile challenge walk, organised by Fire Service Charities and advertised in Strider. I paid the money and received lots of information on do's and don'ts etc, and our numbers. So far so good.

We arrived at the fire station to be greeted with "No, we don't want your number – schedule over there. But fill in the back of your number." The number I carry all day with me. Alarm bells are beginning to ring. Nevertheless we start off and the second sentence of the schedule says 'Walk on cycle path, pass the swimming pool with allotments and race track on your left.' They were on the right. I now have to confess to Jane that it's not an LDWA event, which I have



always told her are so well organised and the route descriptions are extremely good. Anyway she dubiously carries on and at 500 metres directional arrows appear and they were exceptionally good. We could have managed without the written word but it did have notes about the area.

We walked through Longford Castle, home of Lord Radnor (of Folkestone connections) and an SSSI great yew forest. It was fantastic. I have never seen so many wonderful trees. The forest was planted by the Normans in the 12<sup>th</sup> century. We had to navigate our way following a piece of string. This was the halfway CP and nobody had asked for our numbers, and we had seen no evidence anywhere. So I asked the marshal how many had been through and how many were to come. He had no idea – maybe 250! To please me he clipped our numbers and added them to a white card which had numbers written at random (I would not like to look for a special number). Here we had water and lemonade and a piece of bread pudding – all the previous CP had was water and jelly babies. I had read the small print on the information so we did have a picnic. The CP here and the next CP appeared to be closing earlier than stated. At the 30km CP Jane and I decided to leave the route. Nobody was interested, so we wrote our numbers on a piece of paper. The countryside was lovely – over drove roads on the Downs along the race course, and into Cathedral Close. We had tea in the cathedral refectory and enjoyed the architecture and also all the lovely houses in the vicinity, finally arriving at the fire station at 5.30 (schedule says CP closes at 1800 hours). The doors facing the road on the fire station were all closed, so we wandered around the back between fire engines, and found a few people at a table. No, they still did not want our numbers, so we said goodbye and left.

We did enjoy the walk, but I must say LDWA walks have been on average 100 per cent better organised. At times I used to think all the paperwork was excessive but I now know how important it is. Also how nice it is to be greeted at the end of an event and to chat with others over a drink etc.

## **GLYNDWR'S WAY - A WALK THROUGH MID WALES**

**by Jill Green**

I HAVE kept all the route descriptions for the LDWA 100 mile events - they are always beautiful walks. I think I will one day enjoy them over several days as a holiday walk rather than an endurance test, but somehow that seems to get crowded out. The beautiful route in Wales for the 2007 event was no exception.

When Ann Sayer and I were looking to do a holiday walk, I suggested the Glyndwr's Way. I knew part of it from the 30+ miles I had walked during a very wet, cold 100 last year, so I looked forward to enjoying the complete 137 miles (217 km) in more favourable conditions.

Ann and I had both enjoyed the Yorkshire Wolds Way last year. We held a couple of "plotting" meetings and worked out an eight-day walking holiday (or ten days if you add on the travelling days). Ann made the telephone calls for our accommodation and sent off the deposits and, as I had done all that for the Yorkshire Wolds, it was her turn. Our daily distances varied between 15.25 and 21 miles.

I made certain I had up-to-date maps and Ann had the guide book, so with advanced train tickets all booked up we were ready and prepared.

Then I got a phone call from Ann with bad news: she was not well and undergoing tests. She had been advised not to go away walking. It was very short notice to find anyone else to accompany me. I decided to go alone, then my husband Dave said he would join me for the second half. He booked a ticket to Machynlleth, where he would join me. On a very hot July 25 I set off from the Isle of Wight with my rucksack packed very carefully to carry less. A really heavy pack can spoil a holiday and damage knees. It's amazing what can be dispensed with when one has to carry it all. I arrived at the border town of Knighton and, having dumped my rucksack at the B&B, I was in good time to visit the Offa's Dyke Centre, get the town walk leaflet and explore this interesting old place.

I ended up in the pub for a drink and a meal. I do find people chat to you when you are alone, however I still feel uneasy in a pub by myself. In this pub I met a lady who comes to Knighton for treatment every eight weeks. She was poisoned when the hospital where she was working nights was fumigated for cockroaches. Also, I met a local schoolmaster who told me what a nice place this was in which to both live and teach. In fact, I spent a long time in the pub because the weather broke and a thunderstorm was raging. My waterproofs were in the rucksack back at the B&B! On the first day, I walked to Felindre. The previous day's storm had cleared the air and the views were lovely. I had a chat to a local man at Nayadd Fach near Llangunllo. He had gone back to using wood for heating. He certainly had an enormous heap stockpiled – it was bigger than his house. The rain set in at lunchtime and I thought the hot summer was over.

I arrived at Brandy House Farm like a drowned rat. Richard, my host, looked after me well. He took my socks and dried them, then produced a lump of cake and a pot of tea for me. In the evening, he took me to the pub and said he would come back for me. I bought him a pint and asked him to stay as I didn't want to remain in the pub by myself. Richard takes the bookings for Felindre Village Hall, so he knew the LDWA from the Hundred last year. He has a booking for the Shropshire Summits in February 2009 and he is thinking of doing the event, so we had things to talk



about.

The next day was to Abbey-cwm-hir where, having enjoyed a pleasant walk in spite of the rain, I stayed at Mill Cottage. The highlight of the day for me was the small community shop in Llanbadarn Fynydd. I went a bit off route for it (as I saw a notice advertising that it did hot drinks) and I got some provisions and two mugs of hot tea. Local people ran this shop as volunteers. It is such a success that Megan is employed full-time and she was quite busy all the time I was there. She said I would be able to see her house from my path, so I went taking my bits of food and leaving two puddles behind.

Nita Morris at Abbey-cwm-hir put on the heating for me to dry out my things and then she made me a very acceptable vegetarian meal. I spent a pleasant warm evening talking about the Romans with her husband, Brian. He told me that my next stop at the Lloyds Hotel in Llanidloes was posh.

The following day, the rain was relentless and very heavy with wind in the afternoon and there was local flooding reported all over this area. When I came into Llanidloes, I decided I would find my hotel and, before I went in, I would buy food for a meal in my room, as I really couldn't face going out again and the meals would be very costly in a posh hotel. The Lloyds was nice - well worth the money. Tom took my boots away and dried them and he fixed up a line above my bath for my wet stuff.

I arranged an early morning breakfast as I wanted to try and walk 26 miles the next day, so that Dave would have 15 rather than the 21 on his first day with me. Ann Sayer had arranged a lift from Aberhosan into Machynlleth and returning us the following day. I still had the taxi number so, if I had problems, I would be able to revert to our original plan.

My wet clothes didn't dry out on the line above the bath and the rucksack was still heavy with water. I put on my wet clothes as I remembered to always keep a dry set when you arrive soaked. You must have dry things to put on - in the winter there are hot radiators but these didn't come on in the summer.

The posh hotel's residents were in a breakfast room with white tablecloths, but I was set up in a little lobby as, clearly, I would lower the tone! I took the leaflet about all the many walks one could do from Llanidloes. Back in 1872, the Lloyds was Humphreys Commercial Temperance Hotel. I would definitely stay at the Lloyds Hotel again.

I set off about 7.30am and at 7.30pm I arrived at Machynlleth. On the way, it rained on and off, but it was joyful sunshine from 3pm. Ann phoned me to see how I was getting on but, although she wasn't to know, this was unfortunate timing. Having met Dave, he was champing at the bit as he had found a place for us to eat and it would soon be shut. It was! We found a pub instead. Machynlleth is the ancient capital of Wales and the place that Owain Glyndwr had set up a parliament in 1400.

Ann seemed horrified I was using just the map and no guidebook or leaflets. I had hoped to get some at Knighton at the start of the Glyndwr's Way, but they were interested only in the Offa's Dyke Path.

We set out the next day in perfect conditions with wonderful views. I had a job to keep up with Dave - my 26 miles with full pack the day before had taken its toll and Dave was all fresh. At Abercegir, we came across a very nice B&B run by Paddy and Paul Bailey. I called in for a card and Paul gave us a pot of tea and cake free, which we enjoyed outside in the sunshine. As now we didn't have 21 miles that day, we had time for such things. Suitably refreshed, we left £3 in his charity box and set off with a warm glow.

We arrived at Gwalia Farm (north of Commins Coch) early and could dump our rucksacks so that we could go for a delightful evening stroll. Olivia gave us a nice evening meal, made with all her own produce. She had her three-week-old baby grandchild with her with which, naturally, she was preoccupied. Dave had a camera and he took some good photographs during the four days he was with me.

The next day was 19 miles to Foel, which was off the route. Dave decided we could walk into Foel via a ford - well, we couldn't. Then he found some stepping stones on the map, but personally I was dubious about using them after all that rain and localised flooding. I was all dry and didn't fancy being all wet again, but we got across the stones in spite of the first few being under water.

During the day, we met a farmer who had a lot of Stockholm Tar on him from attending his animals. He offered me a lift on the back of his bike thing. I'd have accepted but didn't as I had Dave with me.

The perfect cool, clear weather of the last couple of days didn't last and we left Foel the following morning in rain.

We made a stop at Llwydiarth Post Office for tea and Welsh cakes, and this seemed to cheer Dave up more than the wild strawberries and raspberries had done. Eventually, we arrived at Meifod to Elaine Breeze like two drowned rats. Our final day was now just 10 miles to the end in constant heavy rain. I would have loved to go on the Welshpool & Llanfair Light Railway. Instead, we visited the shop to read about its interesting history, then made our way to the pub in Welshpool where we were booked in.

Welshpool looked an interesting town. I had my photo taken by Dave at the post to mark the end of the walk - I was wearing two waterproof tops and waterproof trousers. The grand station has been sold to become shops, the track bed

is in a road, and the new station is just a hut on an empty platform. The train came and took us home. I'd love to see this wonderful area in good weather. I really wouldn't mind doing it all again one day.

## A WHITE CLIFFS EXPERIENCE

by Mike Burgess

AT 9am on Saturday September 13 I set off from St. Margaret's Hall clutching a marshal's copy of *The White Cliffs Challenge Walk*. I should explain the reason for my attempting this walk some 15 days before the scheduled event: I had always wanted to walk in this area but living in Tyne & Wear, some 380 miles north, the journey would be rather expensive for a single event. However, as my wife Muriel was competing in the Kent Veterans Badminton Championships in nearby Folkestone I accompanied her as a part-time supporter – when not walking. My plan was to complete the full 28-mile route with the option to take the 6pm shorter alternative route should anything untoward happen. My only doubt was my left Achilles and lack of stamina incurred during 16 months of reduced walking. Back to the walk! The popularity of the area soon became apparent as I met several people in the short distance to the South Foreland Lighthouse. When almost at the cliff edge I paused to take in the view before continuing in the direction of Dover. Although I had stopped several times to admire the scenery, I still made reasonably good progress. However, when Dover harbour came into view I did spend some time scanning the area with a small pair of binoculars – I have never taken them on a challenge walk before, but the occasion seemed to warrant it. At the foot of the steps I spotted another walker at the top: she stopped and beckoned me up. While exchanging pleasantries I learned that she was going to work – at the lighthouse! The Visitor Centre and National Trust car park were filling up, the latter with walkers preparing for their walk: eating, drinking, and putting on boots.

Somewhere along Dover seafront I passed the site of CP1: despite my stoppages I had taken a few minutes over the hour. Continuing along the seafront under blue sunny skies with the sound of small waves breaking on the shingle it was tempting to go into 'holiday' mode and start sightseeing. Although I resisted the temptation I did notice some swimmers who appeared to be completing a large circuit around some small red marker buoys. A quick glance at the statue of the swimmers and I was heading inland. In the underpass my lapse in concentration became evident: halfway up the slope I had to retrace my steps – I should have turned left! I heeded this warning and paid more attention during the remainder of my walk. With Cowgate Hill behind me I soon encountered the uphill section with steps and kissing gates. Dutifully, as instructed, I paused at the top for views of Dover Castle and the Drop Redoubt and to be truthful, recover my breath. At about 10:40am I reached S/C Point A.

Passing Dover Immigration Removal Centre I was careful not to speak, the 'Lady of the Lighthouse' had identified me as a northerner. Would any authorities place me as coming from further afield? I admit that as a schoolboy I was never a great fan of Shakespeare and after tackling his cliff the position remains unchanged. But what wonderful views! All was going well as I reached the summit of Round Down and chatted to a family bound from Folkestone to Dover and returning by bus. Then just after the gate with the chain on the ground I was startled by three loud bangs. Unfortunately I instinctively glanced over my shoulder in mid-stride: picking myself up I felt extreme discomfort in my left Achilles region. After 15 minutes of massage and applying heat cream (does the LDWA allow advertising?) I continued at a greatly reduced pace. The next point of interest according to the route description was the WW1 Zeppelin detector dish, however some 110 yards before this structure to the left of the path there is an open book carved from stone. Just beyond the Lighthouse Inn and with the café in sight, I paused to eat a bun, as the café would not allow 'own food'. Seated comfortably in the café forecourt I enjoyed a long cool drink, consumed an anti-inflammatory tablet and assessed my position. I decided that in the absence of supporting checkpoints my main objective was to reach St. Margaret's without aggravating my Achilles and to enjoy the walk. Regrettably I decided to be safe and leave the route at CP4 - Maydensole Farm - and use minor roads to the finish. After soaking up the sun I headed for CP2: St. Radigund's Church in Capel-Le-Ferne.

With just a brief stop at the church I set off for Whinless Down somewhat relieved that my target had been adjusted to a very moderate pace. At the bridge over the A20 I parted company with two walkers that I had met at the start of the Satmar Lane section: they went left as I turned right in search of the fence posts. Perhaps I should mention that number 31 is only just visible from ground level. West Hougham is a delightful village and house number 6 is worthy of note. Keeping an eye open for the Chequers Inn it crossed my mind that a cool drink would not go amiss. But the inn seemed to have disappeared! Then I found it – under renovation and with no visible sign to confirm its identity. Fortunately two youngsters identified it as did the footpath sign just beyond it. Resisting the temptation to follow the obvious track across the field, a bearing of 10° directed me, as instructed, half-right along an almost invisible track. The remaining section to Whinless Down was very easy on the navigation and increasingly so on my leg, allowing more time to view the passing scenery. As I made my way between 'hedge and fence' my reverie was interrupted by the sound of approaching motorbikes: I had plenty of warning and managed to seek sanctuary in a clearing that avoided both bikers and prickly bushes. At the kissing gate that gave access to the 'chalk/flint track' I stopped for food, drink,

and to admire the view. I also noted that I had speeded up, not too difficult to do, but it was encouraging. Refreshed, I headed for Maydensole Farm determined to enjoy what was left of the 'official' route. The route took me downhill, through a paddock – a field to the uninitiated like me - then down again to emerge on a main road with shops. After wending my way through the built-up area I arrived at the Roman Road and as instructed, proceeded steadily – very steadily – uphill for 1000 yards. Eventually I reached the NDW arrow that directed me right. This section was a pleasant path enclosed by overhanging branches: halfway along the path a solitary walker approached. Despite my greeting he continued without displaying any sign that I existed. What a contrast when a few minutes later a couple of walkers approached. They were Welsh and were doing the North Downs Way. On the path that runs parallel to the A2 I encountered my first bit of mud. By the standards set back home during the last few weeks it hardly qualified: it certainly didn't make me homesick. At Pineham I tiptoed quietly past the farm in response to the 'Beware Dogs' warning in the route description. Either this tactic worked or they were asleep – perhaps a bit of both? From here the route was a combination of track and fields – sorry paddocks – before emerging just before crossroads and CP4 at Maydensole Farm. I admit that I didn't quite reach the checkpoint. I stood at the stile and gazed across the short distance to the farm buildings before returning to the crossroads. Having reached my revised objective, set at the cafe, I was very tempted to continue to Sutton and take a short cut to Ringwould. Eventually, after some refreshment, I decided to take the safer option and headed for West Langdon. A short distance beyond this attractive little village I reached a crossroads where a signpost indicated 'St. Margaret's 3 miles', then a mile further on at East Langdon the sign showed St. Margaret's to be 5 miles away! A hurried glance at the map showed this to be pure fiction. Relieved, I strolled on in sunshine. At the West Cliff T-junction another sign indicated a distance greatly inflated to that indicated by the map. Regardless of various measurements I arrived safely back at the car park with ample daylight remaining for my homeward journey to Folkestone. During this drive it crossed my mind to return the next day, walk to Maydensole Farm and complete the full route. However as our intended departure the next day was 3pm at the latest, I felt it unwise to even suggest it: I would dutifully watch some of the badminton. My overall recollection of the day was of a very enjoyable route with great scenery all supported by a well-written route description – even I could follow it. I would also like to thank those members of the Kent Group with whom I spoke during my preparation for this event. One last word – I shall return. *THANK you for this report, Mike. We're very glad that someone who lives so far from Kent enjoyed our White Cliffs Challenge so much, and we look forward to you coming back.*

### **ANYONE FANCY WALKING THE COAST TO COAST?**

JOHN Shale, a Kent member who lives in Margate, turns 50 next year and to mark his half century he has decided to attempt Wainwright's Coast to Coast walk. John is planning the walk around the end of May, but he would prefer not to do it alone. Any Kent LDWA members interested in keeping John company are asked to contact him on 01843 292926 or 07889 572015, or e-mail [j\\_shale@sky.com](mailto:j_shale@sky.com)

### **A WALK WITH THE VIKINGS**

NEXT year is the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the creation of a replica Viking ship near Pegwell Bay at Cliffsend, just outside Ramsgate. In October Gordon Harker, who lives in Margate, led a most enjoyable 24-mile Round Thanet Ramble in this very under-rated part of Kent. The walk visited the Viking ship, and some Kent Group members are considering turning Gordon's Round Thanet Ramble into an Anytime Challenge to coincide with the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Any members wishing to help Gordon with this project are asked to contact him on the above telephone number.

### **NEWS FROM AN IRISH FRIEND**

SOME members may know John Murphy, who lives in Dublin and has recently walked part of the Camino do Santiago – the Way of St James. In an e-mail to Bill Gillibrand, John says: "I recently completed 450 miles of this great trail, starting in Pamplona and finishing in Santiago. It was a super experience. 100,000 people now complete the minimum requirement of 100km each year. I lived well on 25 euros each day. I kept a log each day on the net which can be read on <http://sites.google.com/site/camino/>"

### **COMEDY CORNER**

**by Bill Gillibrand**

A MAN visits his new GP and asks for a full medical. After two visits and exhaustive lab tests, the doc told him he was doing "fairly well" for his age.

A little concerned at the ambiguity of that comment, the patient asked: "Do you think I'll live to be 90?" "Well," said the doctor. "Do you smoke tobacco or drink alcohol?"



"Oh no," the patient replied. "I've never done either."

"Do you eat steak, beef or cheeses?" asked the doctor.

"No," said the man. "I know all that red meat and dairy is very unhealthy."

"Do you spend a lot of time in the sun, like playing golf, sailing or walking?"

"Nope," said the patient.

"Do you gamble, drive fast cars or sexually fool around?" asked the GP.

"No," he said. "I've never done any of those things."

The doctor looked the patient up and down and asked: "Then why do you give a damn if you live to be 90?"

### **AND FINALLY – FROM THE EDITOR**

WELL, 2008 is drawing to a close, and it's been another very good year for Kent Group of the LDWA. As usual, may I take this opportunity to wish you all a very happy Christmas and lots of good walking in the new year.

This year has seen three more highly successful challenge events for Kent Group, and we've had another busy programme of social walks – including what in my view was our best summer French walk yet, when 10 of us did a most enjoyable 22.7 miles from Coquelles, just outside Calais, and were able to do some shopping in the Auchan hypermarket before returning home (the 2009 summer French walk will be on Saturday July 4, so put that date in your diaries now!). Another highlight for Kent Group this year was 12 of our members completing the Yoredale 100 (we actually gained another member en route). And as this newsletter was about to go to press we were eagerly anticipating another family lunch at the London Beach Golf Hotel, near Tenterden, following last year's highly successful one at that venue.

Sadly, we lost one of our members this year – Dave Green, husband of Jill. Christmas is always particularly difficult for people who have lost loved ones, and I am sure the thoughts and prayers of all Kent Group members will be going out to Jill at this time as she tries to come to terms with her loss.

Some Kent Group members will know that I had an operation for bowel cancer in August, which meant I was in hospital for five days, followed by four weeks recovery. I am glad to say the doctors have told me the operation was successful, although I've got to return to hospital for checks every four months, with a view to getting the all-clear in four years time. I obviously couldn't do much walking immediately after the operation, and I would like to thank Joy Davies and Mike Pursey for leading my social walks during my enforced rest.

I'm certainly getting back to normal now, having completed the Founders' Challenge in October and various social walks before and since, and my sights are firmly set on entering the Wessex 100 at the end of May.

I am sincerely grateful to all Kent Group members who sent me best wishes after my operation. Your messages really meant a lot to me. One message I received was from Jill Green – sent just three weeks before she lost her husband Dave, and I am sure she won't mind if I reproduce part of her letter here. Jill wrote: "Things like this make one so much more aware of how good life is, how lucky we are to appreciate the beauty of our countryside and the freedom to walk in it."

I couldn't agree with you more, Jill.

**Graham Smith**



The 2008 White Cliffs Marshals' Walk





Jill Green on the Glyndwr Way