

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

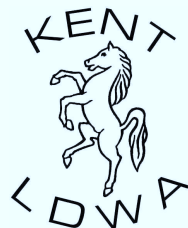
Aim: to further the interests of those who enjoy long distance walking

# ***NEWSLETTER***



Some of the Kent Group team at Slindon Checkpoint on the Wessex 100

**Number 79**



**August 2009**

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





Mike Ratcliff and Corinne Thompson & Graham Smith and Mike Pursey enjoying the Wessex 100  
Photo by Steve Clark (right)



The post Wessex 100 gathering at the Rose & Crown, Wrotham  
Photos by Bryan Clarke

## KENT GROUP SOCIAL WALKS AUGUST TO DECEMBER 2009

### **Sat Aug 1 South Downs Thirty**

c.30mls. Meet 8am at Eastbourne, western end of promenade (B2103) by South Downs Way marker post, GR 600972. Park near school on left. At least one pub stop! (bring packed lunch as food probably not available until c.22mls). Ldr: Mike Pursey.

### **Sun Aug 9 Cream Tea Walk**

c.20 miles. Meet 8.30am Pluckley BR station, GR 921433 Pub stop - food available. Ldrs: Neal & Jan O'Rourke.

### **Sat Aug 15 White Cliffs Challenge Marshals' Walk (54-mile only).**

For details contact Gordon Harker.

### **Sat Sep 12/13 White Cliffs Challenge Main Event**

See Events Diary in *Strider*.

### **Sun Sep 20 A Foray Around The Forstals (2)**

c.21mls. Meet 8.30am at Chilham car park, GR 661536. Probable pub stop. For further details contact Ldrs: Neal & Jan O'Rourke.

### **Sun Sep 27 The Medway Valley**

c.20mls. Meet 9am Manor Country Park (main car park), West Malling (GR TQ 689571). Pub stop at Nettlestead Green. Ldr: Mike Ratcliff.

### **Sun Oct 4 Another Minnis Meander**

c.18mls. Meet 8.30am at Ivy House, Stelling Minnis GR 147483. Bring packed lunch. Ldr: Liz Keeler.

### **Sun Oct 11 Tolsford Toddle Revisited**

c.20mls. Meet 9am at Hythe, Military Rd. GR 155347 (nr. Light Rwy. Stn.) – park on left. Maps: L/R 179 Exp 138. Pub stop. Ldr: Mike Pursey.

### **Sun Oct 25 Reculver and the Stour**

c.21mls. Meet 9am Minnis Bay c.p. (western end of seafront), Birchington, GR TR284694. Pub stop at Maypole. Ldr: Mike Ratcliff.

### **Sun Nov 1 Dover to Canterbury**

c.18mls. Linear walk. Meet 9am Dover Priory Stn. GR 314415. To Canterbury via the North Downs Way and return by train. Pub stop. Ldr: Graham Smith.

### **Sun Nov 8 Luddesdown and the Thames**

c.20mls. Meet 9am Holly Hill c.p. (off White Horse Road) L/R 178 GR TQ670629. Pub stop at Shorne. Ldr: Mike Ratcliff.

### **Sat Nov 21 Wadhurst to the The Rother (Joint walk with London Group)**

Linear walk. c.23mls. Meet 9.15am Wadhurst Station GR 621330. Walk to Robertsbridge Stn. via Bewl Water, Bodiam Castle and the Rother Valley. Pub stop at The Moor. Ldr: Mike Ratcliff.

### **Sat Dec 12 Christmas Cruise around Calais**

c.14mls. Meet 7.30am by SeaFrance desk, Dover Eastern Docks for 8.15am sailing. Ring SeaFrance reservations 08705 711711 for foot passenger day return. Don't forget your passport ! Please ring Graham for confirmation of times. Ldr: Graham Smith.

### **Fri Jan 1 New Year in Sussex Again**

c.23mls. Rye to Hastings & return. Meet 9am Rye Station c.p. GR 919205. Bring torch. Pub stop. Ldr: Mike Pursey.

### **Fri Jan 8 A Night on the Terrace**

c.20mls. Meet 9.30pm for 10.30pm start at The Wheatsheaf PH, Kemsing GR555587 (L/R 188). Ldr: Dave Sheldrake.

## **COMMITTEE MEMBERS**

Chairman – Brian Buttifant,

Secretary – Bill Gillibrand,

Treasurer – Neil Higham,

Members:

Bryan Clarke –

Joy Davies –

Christophe Delogne/Stephanie Le Men –

Gordon Harker –

Mike Pursey –

Michael Ratcliff –

Graham Smith –

Footpath problems – Shirley Higgins, – position about to become vacant, see below.

Newsletter editor: Graham Smith –

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.

## **NEW MEMBERS**

THE following people have joined Kent Group of the LDWA. We extend a warm welcome to them all.

Andy and Tammy Arnold, from Margate; Tony and Posslyn Brady, from Shadoxhurst; Graham Fryatt, from Erith; Malcolm Johnson, from Westerham; Jason Parvin, from Northfleet; Roland Twiner, from Sevenoaks; Nigel White, from Boughton Monchelsea, near Maidstone; Mark and Trish Winter, from Boughton Aluph, near Ashford. The group now has 110 members.

## **NEWS OF KENT CHALLENGE WALKS**

### **Sevenoaks Circular**

NEXT year's event will again be from the Vine Cricket Pavilion in Sevenoaks, with distances of 30, 20 and 15 miles. The same routes as this year will be used for the event in 2010.

A date has not yet been finalised for next year's event.

This year's Sevenoaks Circular made a profit of about £600. We are to make a donation of £200 to Kent Air Ambulance.

Bryan Clarke plans to give up responsibility for the computer and the results after the Sevenoaks Circular in 2010. Bryan and Pat have done magnificent jobs at events for many years and for which the group is very grateful, and replacing them will not be easy – anyone interested is asked to contact Brian Buttifant or Bill Gillibrand on the above telephone numbers.

### **Weald Challenge**

THIS year's Weald challenge walk – the Andredsweald, held on July 12 – attracted the tremendous number of 139 entries. Much credit is due to Neil Higham for organising such a successful event, and to the marshals for helping him.

Neil has, of course, given himself a problem because he's agreed to organise next year's Weald event. As this newsletter went to press, the committee had just decided it will be the Heart of the Weald challenge, which has distances of 26 and 14 miles, and is based at Wadhurst. It will be in July at a date to be arranged – more details in the next newsletter.

And in some future year, we may put on the Tunbridge Wells Circular again. This walk has not been put on by Kent Group as a challenge for a few years. If any members would welcome a return to the TWC, perhaps they could let committee members know.

### **White Cliffs Challenge**

WE'RE getting close to this year's WCC, based at Fowlmead Country Park near Deal on the weekend of September 12/13. There will be two routes – 54 miles and 22 miles – with the marshals' walk on August 15, from Shepherdswell.

Arrangements are well in hand, and Graham Smith is in the process of contacting Kent Group members to ask for volunteers to marshal. So don't wait for Graham to ring you – feel free to ring him with offers!

Several people have already offered, and Sussex and Surrey groups are being asked to marshal at checkpoints 1 (Kingsdown) and 3 (Capel) respectively.

The WCC is, of course, a qualifier for next year's 100, and the second leg of the Kent Surrey Sussex Triple Challenge we are organising with Surrey and Sussex groups.

### **ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

ARRANGEMENTS have provisionally been made for the 2010 AGM to be held at Detling Village Hall on January 31. As always, there will be a walk before the meeting – and it should be a very pleasant one, as Detling is on the North Downs Way. So put January 31 in your diaries!

### **CHRISTMAS FAMILY LUNCH**

BY popular demand, we will be returning to the London Beach Golf Hotel, located on the A28 between Ashford and Tenterden, for this year's family gathering. Date is December 6 – so put that in your diaries now.

This will be the third year running (or rather walking!) we have visited the London Beach Golf Hotel, and we really couldn't wish for a better venue. The food, service and surrounds are simply superb.

As usual, the lunch will be preceded by a walk of 5-6 miles. The three course meal – same menu as last year – will be £20 per head, which is excellent value.

A booking form is enclosed with this newsletter.

### **FOOTPATH SECRETARY**

DUE to an old ankle injury which has been giving her severe discomfort, Shirley Higgins is having to curtail her walking. Sadly, this means that she will have to resign as our footpaths officer – a role she has performed most efficiently for several years, and particularly commendably for the last few months, when her injury has been giving her quite a bit of pain.

We will not be replacing Shirley as footpath officer. Members are being encouraged to report footpath problems themselves. The county rights of way office is now based at Brabourne, and the number to ring to report problems is 01303 814534. Say which area the problem is and you should be put through to the relevant rights of way officer.

On the subject of footpaths, members will be interested – and probably a little concerned – to know that there may be problems with social walks due to a pipeline being laid underground throughout Kent which would close 27 paths. There are details on the Kent County Council website.

### **TOM SINCLAIR**

EARLIER this year Tom underwent an operation. All Kent Group members will be pleased to know that he is recovering, and is looking forward to seeing us all before too long.

Tom has written an excellent account of his Sri Lankan safari, which will be appearing in the next newsletter.

### **THE WESSEX 100**

THIS year's LDWA Hundred, held on the bank holiday weekend of May 23-25, was something of a triumph for Kent Group. We had one of our highest numbers of members taking part in a hundred – 16, with everyone completing the event apart from two.

Particular congratulations go to Mike Ratcliff, Nicola Foad and Alan Stewart, who all completed their first hundreds. Mike Ratcliff – not only taking part in his first hundred but actually his first proper challenge event (see his own account below) – got round in a remarkable 28 hours 29 minutes.

Most members who completed this year's hundred attended a most enjoyable buffet held at the Rose & Crown in Wrotham on Monday June 1.

#### **Kent Group entrants and times**

Michael Ratcliff, 28:29.

Andrew Boulden, 28:49.

Roger Dean, 30:54.

Christophe Delogne 33:47, Stephanie Le Men, 33:47.



Graham Smith, 36:30.  
Don Newman, 36:38.  
Merv Nutburn, 37:45.  
Gordon Harker, 41:37, Mike Pursey, 41:37.  
Nicola Foad, 42:59.  
Keith Warman, 45:45.  
Roger Munn, 45:57.  
Alan Stewart, 47:13.  
Jane Dicker, R9, Martin Brice, R9.

THE Wessex 100 became a very special occasion for Andrew Boulden, who moved from Kent to Hertfordshire some years ago but still belongs to our group. Andrew gained the distinction of recording the 10,000<sup>th</sup> Hundred completion. The occasion was marked by Andrew – who had no idea beforehand that he was in the 10,000<sup>th</sup> position – being presented with a copy of the Walkers' Companion. Andrew has now completed 17 Hundreds.

SEVERAL Kent Group members who were not taking part in the 100 made the trip to Hampshire to man Checkpoint 6, at Slindon, 40.7 miles into the route.

The following letter has been sent to us from Janet Chapman, the event's food and menu organiser, from Surrey Group, one of the Wessex 100 organising groups:

Please pass on the Wessex 100 Committee's thanks to all your group members who came and worked so tirelessly on the CPs. Without you no 100 would happen.

You may have already read the praises placed on the forum thanking the CPs for all their friendliness and TLC.

Many of you have already e-mailed and written on behalf of your group, congratulating us on the event, but you also deserve praise. I did on the day try to visit as many of the CPs as possible to confirm all was OK, but had to abandon some visits to pick up 'bodies' to return to Alton.

Apologies to those of you who ran out of some items of food and congratulations for the way you managed the deficiencies. However one area I over catered in was at Rowlands Castle, there were enough breakfast supplies over for folks to have breakfast again at Alton.

Once again a big THANK YOU to you all

Regards, Janet Chapman, Food and Menu Organiser.

### **A FIRST TIME FOR EVERYTHING!**

**by Mike Ratcliff**

HAVING only been involved with the LDWA for around two years, the feeling of entering and experiencing a challenge event is certainly still a real novelty for me – especially as I started my club walking like so many of us, with the Ramblers where the attitude and approach is equally positive but just so totally different.

Entering this year's Wessex Hundred meant several walking firsts for me as not only was it my first hundred mile walk but as a social walk addict – was also my first proper challenge event! Thankfully previous to this I'd participated in a few LDWA challenges following a typical route description but all had been marshals' walks. So my level of anxiety on that hot May morning in Alton was uncomfortably high early on.

However, I'm sure all who were there, and in fact anyone who's ever walked an LDWA Hundred, can surely testify that the atmosphere before and during the event is one of absolute goodwill and collective support – not to mention fun and excitement. So thankfully most nerves I had were soon outweighed by the thrill of the occasion and the mass of buzzing people.

By the strangest of coincidences, this year's hundred began just a few miles from the start of my first ever LDWA experience nearly two years ago – a social walk with the Wessex group which to this day remains probably the wettest and coldest walk I've ever done. So confronted with the glorious conditions at the start of my big walk things were certainly looking up. Indeed, walking through Saturday among great company and so many friendly faces both familiar and new, fulfilled all my best hopes for the longest walk of my life. However, I have to admit to one particular fear that I dragged with me right from the start of the walk, and that was the prospect of ending up entirely by myself at nightfall and the uncertainty of having to navigate through the darkness with no one nearby. Surely I can't be alone in feeling this? Unfortunately for me this was precisely what happened as the field of people around me seemed to get strung out much earlier than I

had been expecting.

The ride of highs and lows that so many experienced walkers had warned me of certainly became evident for me here though, as my initial horror at the loneliness of the night was replaced by a new confidence in myself that resulted from my enforced self reliance with the navigation. And what's more, I actually seemed to be making good time, first passing Goodwood Racecourse around midnight and later making it to the long awaited breakfast stop at Rowlands Castle well before dawn, which both delighted me and unnerved me in equal measure.

In hindsight, being a first timer was probably both a curse and a blessing together, having no previous experience to gauge against. Finding myself having such an early breakfast produced a real contrast of feelings. Alarm bells were ringing in me - maybe I had horrendously underestimated the task ahead and completely overdone it for the first 60 miles and now the pain and suffering would begin in earnest? On the other hand my mix of naivety and wishful optimism assured me that by sticking to my initial game plan of taking things easy and maintaining my own happy pace at all times would surely see me home successfully with a relatively low pain level. All there was to do was to keep plodding on.

And that really seemed to be the key to it – just plodding on forever, as Ranulph Fiennes recently said after conquering Everest for his first time. I turned out to be both correct and deluded in my mental ramblings. Sticking strictly within my own comfortable pace did prove to be a good approach and eventually did see me to the finish, but relatively painlessly? – no chance! I realise now that that's simply impossible over this distance. I couldn't have asked for more from my body at two thirds distance with any significant aches and pains showing no real signs of setting in – fantastic! Even by 70-odd miles I was still feeling OK but when things did start to creak a bit from around 80 miles on, they really went pear-shaped.

I recently read that the average male age in this years hundred was a little over 53 and me being nearly a quarter of a century younger than this makes me almost embarrassed to admit that I really did suffer badly in the final stages. But I shouldn't really because this fact only goes to show what a truly awesome event this is – a real challenge in every sense of the word. I realise now so vividly that no matter what your age or level of fitness, to walk 100 miles in one go can never, ever, be taken lightly.

Not that I did, thank goodness, as the last 20 miles demanded that I dig in deep and show some resilience against the now rapidly worsening conditions. Despite the first day's walking having been beautifully clear and sunny, it was a little too hot for me, but by Sunday it had begun to swelter – at the time, the hottest day of the year! As well as this, all who took part will remember the way we were presented with some very long and laborious drags along bone dry flinty tracks and tarmac lanes – tough walking at any time but with a scorching midday sun overhead and with 90 miles in my legs it was fast becoming murder. I found myself less and less willing to stop for any length of time at the later checkpoints as my desire to finish became overwhelming and a new fear crept in that if I did stop to rest I would simply seize up and only make things harder for myself. Maintaining momentum through to the end felt the only logical solution.

Possibly the nicest and most needed boost of all came for me with just over seven miles left when I found myself at the penultimate checkpoint – that of London Group. Feeling privileged to have two 'home' checkpoints en route, being greeted by a whole crowd of treasured walking friends and being treated like royalty by both my Kentish friends at 41 miles and now by my London gang was pure euphoria – possibly too much so as I left feeling very emotional and mixed up, with the finish now looming. But surely all was to be well?

Well actually – brilliant! Walking through those doors of Eggars School hall to a round of applause was simply everything and more that I had wished for and definitely reinforced in me why I was there in the first place – for the fun and sheer joy of it. Yes, sheer joy indeed. And all the better, I had made it back in time for possibly the most welcome Sunday lunch of my life.

I guess Scotland next year will be an indescribable contrast to this year's event but surely that makes it all the more exciting and alluring. I certainly want to be there all the more after everything I experienced this year. A million thanks and well done to everyone who had anything to do with the Wessex Hundred and let's all look forward to a great walking year ahead!

## **THE OTHER HALF'S HUNDREDS**

**by Sarah Smith**

IT'S a standing joke in our house that in the great worldwide web of life 'wife' is the last 'w' in my husband's priorities - behind work and, you've guessed it, walking.

And even when he's not actually putting one foot in front of the other with the LDWA or the White Cliff Ramblers, walking still dominates our lives with numerous phone calls and meetings in the house to talk about route descriptions, marshals' walks, deadlines for newsletters, distances between checkpoints, food for checkpoints (which ranges from fruit and snacks to the full Monty of eggs, bacon, sausages, beans and tomatoes) and the logistics of 15 people car sharing on a linear walk (sadly, I'm even starting to understand the terminology!).

So it must really come as no surprise that 'hundreds' feature strongly on the horizons of both our lives. He's now done four – two without me being anywhere near and two when we combined the walk with a holiday. For the first 'shared' walk on the Scottish Borders (recounted in a feature The Other Half's Hundred in Kent Group's August 2006 newsletter) I was there to see him striding off happily with hundreds of other slightly mad people and was there to scrape him up at the end and ease him into the car for the long journey back to Kent.

That was followed by the Mid-Wales Hundred which we combined with a visit to a friend of mine in Oswestry. Pain caused by an arthritic joint in his foot put a question mark over the prospects of completing the walk and for me would have been an ideal cop-out. But armed with lots of pain killers and buoyed up with his usual determination, he set off.

I know Wales is noted for its rain and I know this makes the grass greener and Welsh lamb more succulent, but it doesn't do a lot when you've got to walk 100 miles in the stuff. And did it pelt down!

The atrocious weather and increasing pain in his foot meant the Wales 100 defeated my husband and I found him fast asleep in my friend's house when we returned sodden from an all-day dog show. He'd walked about 50 miles.

But defeat isn't really a word in my other half's vocabulary and he returned to finish the walk the following year. It involved driving through the night, a journey in a taxi and sleeping in the car before driving back to Kent. (Don't ask – I really don't know how it all worked!).

As his fourth and latest 100 drew closer, it provided an ideal excuse to do other long walks on the pretext of being 'good practice for the 100' and the three Ws became an acronym for Weekend Walking Widow.

The fourth hundred started, in fact, not far from some of my many aunts and cousins. But because going together would have meant taking our own three dogs into aunt's house that already had three of its own, I decided to stay behind. I saw him off, of course, was there to offer congratulations on his triumphant return, witness his various stages of recovery and wash the clothes he'd walked 100 miles in.

But I'm not really complaining. I've got my own hobby of dog training and going to dog shows and I'm sure the behaviour of the 'doggy fraternity' must sometimes appear as unfathomable to walkers as the sight of allegedly sane men and women walking 100 miles without stopping (OK, I know you all stop at checkpoints, but that's not what I mean) does to me.

As Christophe and Stephanie would say: Vive la difference.

### **HEART OF SCOTLAND 100**

FOR the Scottish Hundred in 2010 the group will join with Cumbria to run a checkpoint.

Former Kent Group chairman Paul Hatcher is Deputy Organiser for the event, which will be based in Dunkeld, Perthshire. The CP we will be co-manning will be at Fortingall, at 72.5 miles.

At the last committee meeting, we discussed the possibility of hiring a mini bus to take marshals to Scotland, and then staying in a cottage, to make a proper holiday of the trip. Any Kent Group members interested in this idea are asked to contact Brian Buttifant on the above telephone number as soon as possible.

All Kent Group members taking part in this year's 100 will have been impressed with the excellent route map given out for the 2010 event – a shrewd bit of marketing.

We have just heard that entries for the Scottish Hundred open on October 1 with a close date of December 4 and a draw if required. You can enter via online Sportident if you so desire. Some contingency planning for a couple of the higher level sections of the route are being made and Paul says plans are going really well.

### **OLYMPIC YEAR 100**

FOR the event in Olympic year, 2012, the group may be asked to run the checkpoint at Eltham College.

As reported in a previous newsletter, Brian Buttifant and Bill Gillibrand have been in contact with organiser, and now LDWA national chairman, Paul Lawrence. 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.

The entry number may be as many as 1,000, with everyone starting at the same time.

So in view of this large expected entry, many more marshals will be needed. Paul is to be invited to address Kent Group at our next AGM (see above) to give us all the latest details of the event.

### **CINQUE PORTS CHALLENGE**

KENT Group members may recall that in 2006 Graham Smith organised a linear walk visiting the Cinque Ports (Sandwich, Dover, Hythe Romney and Hastings) and associated towns of Deal, Folkestone, Hythe, Lydd and Winchelsea. The walk was approx. 100 kilometres long and started from Sandwich and finished at Hastings, and there were some checkpoints en route.

Graham is planning to organise the event again, over the Saturday and Sunday of the first May bank holiday next year (May 1-2), but this time starting at Hastings (at about 10am) and finishing at Sandwich, where trains can be taken for walkers to return home.

The walk would be good training for next year's hundred, and anyone interested in taking part, or providing some back-up, is asked to contact Graham.

### **STRIDERS AND GROUP NEWSLETTERS**

**by Ernie Bishop**

HAVING had a good result in the Dartmoor Hundred and her world's best 24 hours race in France, Ann Sayer had agreed that with the help of Jeff Ellingham and Mike Powell Davies, she would attempt to beat the record of 7 days 11 hours and 40 mins for the British Three Peaks, in 1979.

Ann's attempt commenced at 5.56am on Saturday September 8 at Fort William. Up Ben Nevis and down, finishing at Crianlarich, 50.5 miles. The second day 61 miles to Hamilton. Celia and I went North and had arranged to collect a caravan on the way and arrived at Loch Lomond about an hour before Ann arrived. I walked with Ann or used a bike and passed food and liquids as needed. Jeff Ellingham mostly drove the caravan and Celia did most of the cooking. Ann took a short break (15-20 mins) for a warm meal once a day. A number of LDWA members, who happened to be close to the route, met Ann to urge her on. All went well until the outskirts of Glasgow, which I didn't know and I took her in the wrong direction. I felt terrible to have added extra minutes but returned to the correct road from a different direction. The next day was a long B road which was very quiet and was parallel with the main road. Then to Carlisle, with care taken with the roads, and on to Scafell Pike, where it was pouring with rain. From there south east, aiming for the Liverpool area, and the road to Caernarvon, 83 miles via Snowdon. Ann arrived at 6.27 on the Saturday morning and had set a new record of 7 days 31 minutes.

On October 3 1980 Ann Sayer walked into John O'Groats 13 days 17 hours and 42 minutes after leaving Land's End. It beat the previous women's best time by 3 days 4 hours and 13 minutes. The support party was Mike Powell Davies, Chris Dodd and Lillian Millen.

Strider 27 was published in August 1980 and Alan Blatchford's editorial centred on the developments made since he and Chris Steer had formed the LDWA. Walking or running from 20 to 100 miles had been added over the years and new members were keen to take part, some travelling fair distances in order to do so.

The majority of us reading Alan's editorial in Strider No. 28 probably had no idea that he was seriously ill. He died on the September 16 1980. For those who never knew Alan, he ran and walked the London to Brighton Event for a number of years, also the Tanner's Marathon and later the Punchbowl. Then came the LDWA, which Alan Blatchford and Chris Steer started and brought to its present development - and long may it continue so to do.

More to come.

### **SUSSEX STRIDE SPECIAL – March 7 and 8 (but April 4 for me) by Graham Smith**

THE Sussex Stride has been my favourite challenge walk since I first completed it in 1999. The South Downs are the closest we've got to real hills in the South East and, like lots of Kent Group members, I was very disappointed when the Sussex Stride was discontinued in 2005 – and, equally, delighted it is being restarted as part of the Kent Surrey Sussex Triple Challenge of 50-mile walks which also includes last year's Surrey Tops and our own White Cliffs Challenge.

Sussex Group secretary Anthony Mitchell decided to put on a Sussex Stride Special on March 7 and 8 for

members of both groups who may have wanted a qualifier for the Wessex 100. From Kent Nicola Foad, Roger Munn and Mike Ratcliff did it for the first time. I was going to join them but I had a heavy bout of man-flu that weekend, and didn't feel it would have been too clever to have attempted my first 50-mile walk for 10 months when I was feeling a bit under the weather.

Roger and Mike told me how much they had enjoyed the walk, and Nicola e-mailed me the route description, so I decided to go across to Sussex to attempt it on the first available weekend. That proved to be April 4 – by which time Dover Athletic Football Club (another of my great loves and whose games I watch home and away) had sown up the Ryman League Premier Division championship, and the prospect of the Sussex Stride had more appeal than visiting Heybridge in Essex (in the event Dover only drew that game, so I certainly made the right decision).

I wanted to take advantage of maximum daylight, so I went to bed at 9pm on the Friday, got up at 1.30am, left my home in Deal at 2am, and was parked by Longhill School in Rottingdean just before 4am, setting off shortly afterwards. It proved to be a great day.

I had to follow the route description carefully in the dark, of course, and I made my first navigational error shortly after joining the South Downs Way, missing a second gate I should have taken immediately after the first one. I followed a track downhill with that uncertain sinking feeling we all get when we are on our own, it's dark and we feel we are going wrong – a feeling which got stronger when I negotiated an electrified gate, and which was confirmed when I came across another one. I had gone about 200 yards and I retraced my steps – to find my mistake straightaway.

After that dawn started to break, which of course made navigation easier by the minute. Departing from the SDW I went over the summit of Blackcap but could not admire what the route description said was 'one of the finest views on the South Downs' because it was a bit cloudy. Still, it was a very good top, with excellent green carpet-style paths (typical South Downs) leading to and from it.

It was by now daylight, and the route brought me to the very pleasant town of Lewes. I went through the town, climbing up to the golf course, from where I took a familiar and good path – on another fine green track – over open downland before descending to the village of Glynde, and the Reading Rooms, where there has usually been a checkpoint during the event.

From there I had to cross the A27 and follow paths and lanes to Firle, after which I had to ascend the Downs. Unfortunately, it was now raining, although not heavily, but my main problem was heavy cloud which meant visibility was just a few yards. I was on the ridge near Firle Beacon and on the SDW again. I have walked that ridge scores of times, so I wasn't worried about navigation – it was just a shame that I didn't get any views, because in clear conditions that ridge provides a great walk.

I dropped down to near Alfriston, to pick up the SDW again. By now the rain had stopped, but it was still very cloudy, so when I returned to the Downs I still wasn't getting any views.

Almost as soon as the route left the SDW, following a good grassy path to East Dean, the sun began to peek through, and pockets of blue sky appeared as the clouds moved on. By the time I got to East Dean – at 29 miles, and my lunch stop – it was gloriously sunny, weather which stayed with me for the rest of the walk (until the sun went in, of course!).

After East Dean, I followed more good grassy paths to the Seven Sisters. Going over them wasn't as hard as I thought it might be. I was really loving the walking - and the weather! - by now, and went over them steadily. And at the end of the Seven Sisters, you have what I reckon is one of the best views in the South East – the Cuckmere Valley, with the South Downs behind.

Descending to the river, with that view before you, is just glorious. The route then keeps following the SDW through woodland to the village of Litlington, where it leaves the National Trail and goes up to the other side of the Cuckmere Valley to reach the Downs again. There were then more good long tracks before a left turn brought me out on some paths which took me to the penultimate checkpoint of Norton (obviously, there were no checkpoints as such but I decided to have my stops at the CPs planned on the route – and I must say all eight were spaced at good intervals, 5-8 miles apart).

After Norton there were more long stretches on good paths in the evening sunshine. I was eating up the miles and loving every second. When I again rejoined the SDW, I was back on the South Downs ridge, less than a kilometre from where I had got onto the ridge in thick mist a few hours before. Now the sun was starting to go down but it was very clear and the views were great.

I fairly romped along the ridge – enjoying views to Newhaven to my left, the rest of the South Downs in

front of me and Lewes and beyond to my right – before dropping down to cross the River Ouse and following the lane to the village of Southease, and my last CP. Daylight was now disappearing pretty rapidly (although I was getting a lovely sunset) so I didn't stop long, as I was only a few miles from Rottingdean and I wanted to make as much progress as I could before the sun disappeared.

Going across fields to the final descent I made my last navigational error. I went through a gate but in my eagerness to move on (as well as the half-light I was now walking in) I neglected to turn right, as instructed in the route description. I carried on, to be confronted with a barbed wire fence. I went left and right before realising I had gone wrong, so I went back, read the route description properly and found I had neglected to turn right. This time I did TR but could not find the next gate the route description said I would arrive at. I reached another barbed wire fence, and after more investigations left and right I still could not find the gate. It was now just about dark, and I was using my torch. I knew I had to turn left, and had a gut feeling (which I usually trust) that I had to get on the other side of the barbed wire fence – but the fence was a bit weak, and I reckoned if I tried to cross it there was a fair chance my weight would bring it down. I moved down, looking for possible crossing points, and after about 40 yards I found a gap at the bottom of the fence I reckoned I would be able to wriggle through. Wriggle through I did, and shortly afterwards I found a faint footpath waymark, which confirmed my direction. The path gradually became a track, which in turn later became a metalled road bringing me out at Saltdean.

As it was dark, I felt it best to put away the route description, which took more paths, as I didn't want to run the risk of more navigational difficulties. So I followed the metalled road to a housing estate road and followed this to the main A259, where I turned right and took the pavement to Rottingdean, where another right turn brought me back to Longhill School, arriving just after 9.30pm.

It had been my most enjoyable and rewarding walk so far this year. The Sussex Stride had proved every bit as good as I had remembered it, and I'm looking forward to doing it again next year as the third leg of the Kent Surrey Sussex Triple Challenge.

I gather Sussex Group has provisionally arranged that the 2010 Sussex Stride will be held over the weekend of September 18-19, with the marshals' walk earmarked for the August bank holiday weekend, which, of course, is when the event has been held in the past. So as soon as I get a diary for next year, those dates will be put in it.

## **1066 COUNTRY WALK**

**by Neal O'Rourke**

HAVING arrived at Pevensey, we set off to pass The Old Mint House which was built on the site of the Royal Mint some 600 years ago, and Pevensey Castle, first built by the Romans in the third century AD. We soon picked up our route which then followed various waterways and passed through Rickney and continued in front of the impressive 15<sup>th</sup> century Herstmonceaux Castle. Unusual because it is built of Flemish brick. We continued to pass the Science Centre which was formerly The Royal Observatory. We had a short drinks stop at Boreham Street and then proceeded up through delightful Brown Bread Street. Over Tent Hill with lovely views all around and along through Catsfield, where in the churchyard is buried Thomas Brassey 1805-1870 - the engineer who built most if not all the railways around the world in the British Empire, at times having up to 80,000 men working under him.

We arrived at Battle for lunch. Suitably refreshed we pressed on again, making our way across the town which around 1,000 ago would have been a battlefield. We continued on through Great Wood, Westfield and Icklesham then on through orchards past a smock windmill which is one of Paul McCartney's recording studios.

Then across to historic Winchelsea., where a storm in 1287 had destroyed the old town. The present town was planned by Edward I, and I believe partly financed as well. Soon along below Cadborough Cliff we saw fine views seaward to Henry the VIII's Camber Castle completed by 1540 and also a SSSI (Site of Special Scientific Interest) nearby where it is said you can find 14 different types of Gentians. Have fun!

We finally arrive at Rye, another historic town of course, having covered 31 miles since Pevensey.

## **THE VANGUARD WAY: January 18, February 22, March 29, April 12**

**by Graham Smith**

FOR the last five years, Kent Group has been completing various long-distance paths in the South East during the early part of the year as part of our programme of social walks. We have done the North Downs Way (2004), the Wealdway (2005), the Greensand Way (2006), the High Weald Landscape Trail (2007) and

the Saxon Shore Way last year.

They are, of necessity, linear walks, so we always meet at the end of the day's walk, arrange cars – depending on how many people are there – then drive to the start of the walk, and do the walk. The principal criteria is that all the walks must be reasonably accessible from East Kent to get there and back in a day.

A year ago, when Mike Pursey was beginning to compile our social walks programme for the earlier part of this year, it occurred to me that the only LDP we hadn't tackled seemed to be the Vanguard Way. So I decided to put it on the programme – and what an excellent walk it is. The whole route is 66 miles, and goes from Croydon in Outer London to Newhaven on the South Coast, passing through parts of Surrey, Kent and Sussex. In doing so it visits two of the South East's real gems – Ashdown Forest and the South Downs.

It was developed to mark the 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Vanguards Rambling Club, which got its name after an occasion when members returned from a walk travelling in the guard's van of a crowded train. In fact the colourful Vanguard Way badge shows a guard's van.

In the August 2008 Strider I read that the club had published a new edition of its Vanguard Way guide, only available online at [www.vanguardway](http://www.vanguardway), which I downloaded. The guide is as detailed as an LDWA route description, and there are waymarks throughout, although these would be more visible if they could include the VW guard's van logo.

Our first section (Croydon-Moorhouse Bank, near Westerham on the A25) was 14 miles. The route starts at East Croydon Station, and it is quite an interesting sensation passing out of the London suburbs into the Surrey countryside. The tracks were good, with some fairly long, uncomplicated stretches where we could get motoring. The highlight was an uphill section near the Nore Hill Chalk Pinnacle, where views back across London were quite stunning.

The next section (Moorhouse Bank-Forest Row) was a very pleasant 16 miles, and reminded me quite a lot of a typical Sevenoaks Circular route – good, easy paths, and nice but not spectacular countryside. On this stretch there was no pub on or near the route, so we had our lunch stop enjoying good views on an uphill stretch near Dry Hill Fort.

We were joined on these first two sections by national LDWA chairman Paul Lawrence, who had walked the Vanguard Way before and was a great help in terms of route-finding and giving us background about the walk.

On our third section (Forest Row-Chiddingly – 20 miles) we crossed the Ashdown Forest, which was excellent – as it always is - with some good long stretches where we could move pretty quickly. This is where the South Downs start to come into view, getting closer and closer the further we walked and looking delightful, of course. On this section we found a good pub for our lunch stop at Blackboys.

Our last section (Chiddingly-Newhaven – 17 miles), which we did on Easter Sunday, was the best of our four days on the VW, in my view. After a dreadfully boggy 2.5km stretch, we emerged almost within touching distance of the South Downs, and the paths and tracks improved immensely. We went through Alfriston, had our lunch stop at Litlington, then followed the South Downs Way over the hills to Westdean. We then took a path on the west side of the Cuckmere Valley, with superb views back to the Seven Sisters. This brought us to Cuckmere Haven, after which we enjoyed a green carpet of a path which climbed easily to Seaford Head. Then it was down to Seaford and a march along the seafront to Newhaven.

The numbers on the walks varied between eight and 15, four of us completing all four sections (and qualifying for certificates). All four days were thoroughly enjoyable, and much credit is due to Vanguards Rambling Club for devising a route which gives such a wide variety of terrain in its 66 miles.

My problem now is that we seem to have run out of LDPs in the South East to do in sections on day walks, but I am working on a project to do the South Downs Way in four days (see below).

## **CROSS CHANNEL CHALLENGE**

FIFTEEN Kent Group members made our annual summer visit to France on July 4. We followed the same arrangements as we made last year, meeting at 6.30am at Newington, near the Channel Tunnel before taking Le Shuttle to Coquelles. We took three cars (all full with five people) and parked them in the car park at the Auchan hypermarket before doing our 22.7 mile walk following the same route we took last year – out to the villages of Peuplingues and Escalles, then the excellent viewpoint of Mont de Couple, then down to our lunch stop of Wissant, along the beach before a climb to another excellent viewpoint at Cap Blanc-Nez, and back to Coquelles, following a fair few miles of Grande Randonnée (GR) 128.



It was a pretty hot day – once again – a very enjoyable one. A few of us found splish-splashing along in the water on the beach after Wissant sheer bliss. As usual, we had a couple of some nice stops at bars we found en route.

One Kent Group member who made the trip was Jill Green. Members will be very pleased to hear that Jill has recovered from her operation and is back to walking her usual huge distances. She is looking forward to next year's 100.

Eric Rolfe took some superb pictures, several of which appear on the inside back and back pages of this newsletter.

Next year's Cross Channel Challenge will again be on the first Saturday in July, which is the third – so put that date in your diaries.

#### **FOUR PITS WALK – ANYTIME CHALLENGE**

ON May 2 ten LDWA members completed the 38-mile Four Pits Challenge, visiting the sites of the former Kent pits of Chislet, Betteshanger, Tilmanstone and Snowdown. The walk was led by Graham Smith, and it was the second time Kent Group members had completed the walk. Graham plans to make the walk an Anytime Challenge, with a certificate and badge, and he is currently working on a route description. More details about this project in the next newsletter.

#### **SOUTH DOWNS WAY**

THE South Downs Way is, in many people's opinion (certainly that of the newsletter editor!) the best National Trail in the South East.

It is 100 miles long and stretches from Winchester to Eastbourne. Of course, Kent Group members who took part in the Wessex 100 will be familiar with parts of it.

Graham Smith plans to organise a trip to walk the SWD in four days next spring, probably in early March, using guest house, hotel or hostel accommodation. The plan is that we would take a train to Winchester and walk from there to East Meon on the first day (approx. 17 miles); walk to Amberley, where there is a hotel on the route (approx. 31 miles) on the second day; walk to Lewes, just off route but plenty of accommodation (approx. 28 miles) on the third day; then finish the route by walking approx. 24 miles to Eastbourne, and trains back to Kent.

Anyone interested is asked to contact Graham on the above telephone number.

#### **WALKERS ARE WELCOME IN DEAL**

KENT Group members may be interested to know that Deal has become the first town in the South of England to attain Walkers Are Welcome status.

Getting the status meant that Deal had to satisfy certain criteria – including having waymarked paths, getting rights of way maintained, and encouraging local people to use public transport.

Two Kent Group members, Graham Smith and Alan Sutton, who both live in Deal, set up a steering group to press for Deal getting the status. The first step was getting 500 names on a petition, the next was securing backing from Deal Town Council.

Getting the status was approved by the national WAW network, and launched in May by Dover and Deal MP Gwyn Prosser at Fowlmead Country Park, venue for our White Cliffs Challenge, of course.

The status has resulted in some grant aid being given by Deal Town Council and Kent County Council. So far this money has been spent on some stickers which guest houses, hotels, restaurants and pub in Deal can display, and a leaflet outlining the various walking opportunities in Deal, which should be available for when we have our WCC next month. There are now 29 towns in Britain with Walkers Are Welcome status.

#### **SPONSORED WALK AROUND BEWL WATER**

WE have received the following letter from Fiona Morris, of Nikwax Ltd. Any Kent Group members interested in taking part in the event are asked to contact her directly on 01892 786450 (e-mail [fiona.morris@nikwax.co.uk](mailto:fiona.morris@nikwax.co.uk)):

I work on behalf of Nikwax Limited & Paramo Directional Clothing Systems, both brands which you may be aware of. We are a company who specialise in water-based waterproofing and outdoor clothing. We are currently in the midst of arranging a sponsored walk to take place around Bewl Water, East Sussex.

The walk is being arranged to support the World Land Trust and their conservation work in Ecuador with a goal to reach £5,000 in sponsorships. However it is equally important to us to raise awareness to the public of the natural beauty of our own local environment by sharing this event with other outdoor enthusiasts. The full circular route is approximately 12.5 miles, hopefully with a buffet laid on after the walk. We also plan to complete a smaller route for families and dog walkers to join should they wish.

The reason for my e-mail is to see whether any of your members would be interested in attending our event on September 26 2009. I would be happy for you to contact me further with questions should you feel the event would be of interest to you.

Fiona Morris, Nikwax.

### **ANY OLD STRIDERS**

JILL Green has very kindly donated her collection of Striders and other LDWA newsletters to Kent Group. These publications date back to 1975, to before the newsletter became Strider. Any members who would like to take possession of any, some or all of these magazines – which are in excellent condition – are asked to contact Graham Smith on the above telephone number.

### **COMEDY CORNER**

**by Bill Gillibrand**

MEMBERS – particularly those of use who enjoy the beautiful game – may be interested in the following bits of football wisdom.

“I’d like to play for an Italian club, like Barcelona” – Mark Draper.

“You’ve got to believe that you’re going to win, and I believe we’ll win the World Cup until the final whistle blows and we’re knocked out” – Peter Shilton.

“I faxed a transfer request to the club at the beginning of the week, but let me state that I don’t want to leave Leicester” – Stan Collymore.

“I was watching the Blackburn game on TV on Sunday when it flashed on the screen that George (Ndah) had scored in the first minute at Birmingham. My first reaction was to ring him up. Then I remembered he was out there playing” – Ade Akinbiyi.

“Without being too harsh on David Beckham, he cost us the match” – Ian Wright.

“I’m as happy as I can be – but I have been happier” – Ugo Ehiogu.

“Leeds is a great club and it’s been my home for years, even though I live in Middlesbrough” – Jonathan Woodgate.

“I can see the carrot at the end of the tunnel” – Stuart Pearce.

“I took a whack on my left ankle, but something told me it was my right” – Lee Hendrie.

“I couldn’t settle in Italy – it was like living in a foreign country” – Ian Rush.

“Germany are a very difficult team to play . . . they had 11 internationals out there today” – Steve Lomas.

“I always used to put my right boot on first, and then obviously my right sock” – Barry Venison.

“I definitely want Brooklyn to be christened, but I don’t know into what religion yet” – David Beckham.

“The Brazilians were South American, and the Ukrainians will be more European” – Phil Neville.

“All that remains is for a few dots and commas to be crossed” – Mitchell Thomas.

“One accusation you can’t throw at me is that I’ve always done my best” – Alan Shearer.

“I’d rather play in front of a full house than an empty crowd” – Johnny Giles.

“Sometimes in football you have to score goals” – Thierry Henry.



Photos in France by Eric Rolfe





Photos in France by Eric Rolfe