

LONG DISTANCE WALKERS ASSOCIATION – Kent Group

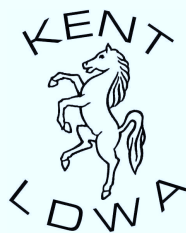
Aim: to further the interests of those who enjoy long distance walking

NEWSLETTER



Overlooking Kingsdown - Photo by Peter Jull

Number 80



December 2009

www.ldwa.org.uk/kent



White Cliffs Challenge photos by Peter Jull



White Cliffs Challenge photos by Eric Rolfe

KENT GROUP SOCIAL WALKS DECEMBER 2009 to APRIL 2010

Sat Dec 12 Christmas Cruise around Calais

c14ml. Meet 7.30am by P&O desk, Dover Eastern Docks for 8.30am sailing (return 9pm local time – 8pm British time). Ring P&O reservations 08716 646464 for foot passenger day return. Don't forget your passport ! **Please ring Graham** for further details

Wed Dec 30 Post Christmas Sevenoaks Stroll

c 14ml. Meet 9am at National Trust car park, Ightham Mote. Lunch at Wetherspoons, Sevenoaks.
Ldr: Brian Buttifant.

Fri Jan 1 New Year in Sussex Again

c23ml. Rye to Hastings & return. Meet 9am Rye rlwy stn c.p GR TQ919205. Map: Exp 125. Bring torch.
Pub stop. Ldr: Mike Pursey.

Fri Jan 8 A Night on the Terrace

c20ml. Meet 9.30pm for 10.30pm start at The Wheatsheaf PH, Kemsing. GR TQ555587. Map: LR 188.
Ldr: Dave Sheldrake.

Sun Jan 24 White Cliffs 22 – Social

c22ml. Meet 9am at Fowlmead Country Park c.p. (£1 fee). GR TR352540. Map: LR 179. Pub stop.
Ldr: Graham Smith.

Sun Jan 31 AGM

Detling Village Hall, preceded by a seven-mile walk. See below.

Sun Feb 7 West of Ashford

c21ml. Meet 8.45am in c.p. on Cades Road at Hothfield Common. GR TQ972458. Map: Exp 137. Lunch stop at Smarden. Ldr: Mike Ratcliff.

Sun Feb 28 Sevenoaks Outcrops Walk

c10ml. Start 10am from One Tree Hill c.p. GR TQ559532 Map: LR 188. Finish about 4.00pm. No pub stop, bring packed lunch. Short in length, plenty of incident. Ldr: Martyn Berry.

Sat Mar 6 A View of the Medway

c20ml. Meet 9am Sole Street rlwy stn GR TQ655675. A walk through Cobham Park and Snodland.
Pub/picnic lunch. Ldr: Jerome Ripp.

Sun Mar 7 Sevenoaks Circular Marshal's Walk

For details contact Brian Buttifant.

Sat Mar 13 Aylesford to Rochester

c24ml. Meet 8.45am in car park behind the Golden Eagle pub in Burham. GR TQ725620. Map: Exp 148.
Lunch stop at Birling. Ldr: Mike Ratcliff.

Sun Mar 21 Sevenoaks Circular Main Event

See Events Diary.

Fri Apr 2 A South Downs Way Loop

(Good Friday) c26ml. or c20ml. Meet 9am at Eastbourne, western end of promenade (B 2103) at South Downs Way marker post GR TV600972. Map: Exp 123. Park near school on left.
Ldr: Graham Smith

Sun Apr 4 Foreland to Foreland

(North Foreland Lighthouse to South Foreland Lighthouse) c23ml. Meet St. Margaret's village c.p. GR TR358455, to arrange cars before driving to North Foreland. Pub stop at Sandwich.
Ldr: Graham Smith.

Sun Apr 18 Around Elham

c26ml. Meet 8.30am Farthing Common on the B2068 (Stone Street) GR TR137404 Map: Exp 138. Lunch stop at Elham. Ldr: Mike Ratcliff.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Chairman – Brian Buttifant,

Secretary – Bill Gillibrand,

Treasurer – Neil Higham,

Members:

Bryan Clarke –

Joy Davies –

Nick Dockree –

Gordon Harker –

Mike Pursey –

Graham Smith –

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.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING (see separate insert with this newsletter)

THE 2010 AGM will be held at Detling Village Hall on Sunday January 31. Mike Ratcliff will be leading a seven-mile walk, starting at 10am, before the meeting. Duncan and Ann Brice will be providing lunch – which is free. The meeting itself will start at 2pm and should end no later than 4.30pm. Gail Elrick, national Hundreds organiser, has been invited to speak to our AGM about the Olympic year Hundred in 2012 (see below).

NEWS OF KENT CHALLENGE WALKS

Sevenoaks Circular

THE 2010 Sevenoaks Circular will be held on Sunday March 21, with the marshals' walk on March 7 – see above.

Brian Buttifant has been unable to book the Vine Cricket Pavilion so the event will be held at a new venue – Sevenoaks Rugby Club. There will again be three distances, of 30, 20 and 15 miles, with the routes the same as this year.

Heart of the Weald Challenge

NEXT year's Weald challenge walk will be on Sunday July 11, and will again be organised by Neil Higham, who did such an excellent job this year in taking over from Neal and Jan O'Rourke. The event will be based at the Commemoration Hall, Wadhurst, and there will be two distances – 26 miles and 14 miles. The routes are going to be virtually the same as when we last staged this event a few years ago, but probably with some minor modifications. The marshals' walk will be held on Sunday June 27.

White Cliffs Challenge

THE 2010 White Cliffs Challenge will again be held at Fowlmead Country Park, on Sunday September 26. There will be two routes – 30 miles and 15 miles (both approx. as this newsletter went to press), with the marshals' walk on Sunday September 5. We are not due to hold a 50-mile (or 50-plus mile!) WCC again until 2012.

This year's WCC was easily our most successful since we started organising the event in 2005, producing 165 entrants. Everyone seemed to be impressed by Fowlmead, an excellent outdoor activity centre built on the site of the former Betteshanger Colliery. Organisers were impressed as well – which is why we are going back, and we plan to establish Fowlmead as the base for the WCC, whether it's 50 or 30 miles.

There was lots of good feedback after this year's WCC, and the following note – typical of many comments we have received from entrants - was e-mailed to Gordon Harker by Maria Davis:

This was my second Kent LDWA event - having stumbled across the LDWA this year - and definitely the most enjoyable 16hrs+ I have passed in some time. The route was spectacular; a true assault on the senses taking in magnificent views, local history and pockets of hidden beauty which as a Kent resident I was unaware of; but it was the generosity and the hard work of all those involved that made this event so special. I would be grateful if you could pass on my thanks to all involved - their enthusiasm and cheerfulness at each and every checkpoint eased aching muscles and raised a smile despite the hour. Marshals are too often the unsung heroes and in fatigue we sometimes forget our manners but they are always very appreciated.

I understand I have to wait three years to tackle the course again - it will be worth the wait!

Thank you again. Maria Davis (No 34)

* A DVD of this year's White Cliffs Challenge, with more than 300 pictures of the event, has been made by Eric Rolfe. If you would like a copy, please send a 9x6 SAE to Eric at 63 Sketty Road, Enfield, Middx, EN1 3SF, with a cheque for £2.50, made payable to E Rolfe. All proceeds from the DVD go to a little orphanage in Bolivia called AVL, housing six boys and eight girls. Eric tells us that this orphanage needs all the funds it can get, otherwise some of these children will be out on the street.

KSS (Kent Surrey Sussex Triple Challenge)

NEXT year will see the final leg of the KSS, with the very welcome return of the Sussex Stride. This will be held over the weekend of September 18/19, with the marshals' walk held over the August Bank Holiday weekend (Saturday and

Sunday August 28/29). This will be the first time the Sussex Stride has been organised since it was discontinued in 2005, apart from the unsupported event put on in March this year. Kent Group will be manning a checkpoint – more details about this in the next newsletter.

Keith Warman is in the process of designing a KSS badge, and a KSS certificate. Committee members have been able to see early designs of the badge and certificate, and they both look very impressive.

THE WHITE CLIFFS CHALLENGE: Sat-Sun Sep 12-13, 54 or 22ml in 22 or 8hr - by Julie Welch

THIS is, like the Dorset Giant, a big, serious event, fantastically well organised and catered. People travelled from north, west and south to enjoy a day and a night of near-perfect weather on the cusp of autumn and it was great to catch up with friends not seen since the Wessex Hundred. Based on Kent's Fowlmead Country Park, a marvellous and diverting route took us past Deal Castle, Walmer Castle, Hawkshill Common and Kingsdown seafront before carrying on with hazardous, heart-pulverising up-and-down zig-zags along the eponymous White Cliffs to Capel Le Ferne. Heading inland to the Elham Valley and Bishopsbourne, it culminated in a bucolic return eastwards using the North Downs Way back to Fowlmead for a well-earned slap-up breakfast. Highlights? Well, everything, really: the breath-grabbing ascent of Round Down in the September sun; macaroni cheese and custard creams at Etchinghill; the East Kent panorama from the top of Tolsford Hill. Even lumbering to and fro in light rain, lost, across what seemed like the longest ploughed field in Europe, on a wrongly-taken compass bearing in the small hours, was all part of the fun. I've never seen such an unpolluted night sky, full of stars. And whether it was the Marmite-fans' special at Elham, the briny hot dogs in soft white rolls at Bishopsbourne or those green grapes and salty crisps in what must be a contender for one of the world's smallest checkpoints at Maydensole Farm, the food along the way was brilliant, as were ALL the marshals, especially those such as Merv, Fiona and Neil, prepared to wait it out past midnight in a minuscule brick barn for us sweaty customers. It's the first time I've done the White Cliffs and I can hardly wait for the next. Cheers, Kent LDWA.

HEART OF SCOTLAND 100

AS previously reported in the newsletter, Kent Group will co-man a checkpoint at next year's Hundred, being held over the Bank Holiday weekend of May 29-31 and based at Dunkeld, Perthshire. Our CP will be at Fortingall, at 72.5 miles, and will be with South Pennine Group (Cumbria Group, with whom we had originally planned to co-man a checkpoint, is now needed elsewhere). The checkpoint will be open from 3.45am to 8pm on the Sunday, and Kent has been allocated first shift. Former Kent Group chairman Paul Hatcher is Deputy Organiser for the event. Members wishing to volunteer for checkpoint duties are asked to contact Brian Buttifant on the above telephone number.

Several Kent Group members have already entered the event, and it looks like there will be a very good turnout from our part of the country. The event's entry form is now available, either by downloading from the website – www.heartofscotland100.org.uk – or sending an SAE to Helen Southall at 27 Cityway Apartments, City Road, Chester CH1 3AB. If necessary, a draw will take place. All entrants must have a 50-mile qualifier.

As this newsletter went to press, entries for the Heart of Scotland 100 looked set to pass 400.

HOUSMAN 100

THE 2011 Hundred will be based at Ludlow, Shropshire, and the route will go through Herefordshire, South Shropshire and the Cluns area. Chairman Brian Buttifant has approached Chris Dawes of Marches Group with an offer to help on a checkpoint. More details in future newsletters.

2012 HUNDRED

THE Hundred in 2012 – Olympic year – is obviously going to be something special. On September 23 two committee members - Bill Gillibrand and Graham Smith - went to an information meeting, chaired by national LDWA chairman Paul Lawrence. The meeting was attended by representatives of the groups into whose areas the proposed route of the 2012 Hundred will fall – London, Essex & Herts, Thames Valley, Beds, Bucks and Northants, Surrey and, of course, ourselves.

Our committee has agreed to enthusiastically support the 2012 Hundred, and we have already offered to organise a checkpoint. This is likely to be along part of the route through Kent, possibly at Biggin Hill. Gail Elrick, national LDWA 100s coordinator, has been invited to speak about the 2012 Hundred at our AGM – see above.

Quite an impressive amount of work has already been done on the 2012 Hundred. The event will, as usual, be held over the second May Bank Holiday, well before the start of the Olympic Games in July. The idea is that the base would actually be at Windsor, which is the end of the route. Walkers would then be bussed to Stratford in the East End of London, where the Olympic stadium is being constructed, for the start. The route out of London will follow parts of the London Loop, crossing the River Thames at the Greenwich foot tunnel. Getting out of London, the route will touch north-west Kent (hence Kent Group being asked to get involved) and then head west into Surrey and over many of the North Downs and Greensand Ridge hills with which many of us are very familiar on challenge walks like the Surrey Tops and the Founders Challenge. The route will then eventually arc round to Windsor, and the plan is to finish through Windsor Great Park. There is a potential problem here, because the Great Park must be shut at night, and it is estimated this will affect 20 per cent of people attempting the Hundred. So at the moment there are two options. Walkers arriving

at the Great Park during the hours of darkness or as it is about to get dark can either wait until it get light so they can then continue the walk, or they can be transported away from the Great Park to finish the walk. It is anticipated that there will be objections to both these options – but no final decision has yet been taken, so there is time for further options to be suggested and agreed, although it is currently felt that a diversion, to avoid both options mentioned above, would entail too much extra mileage.

Getting the name right is itself not straightforward. It may not be possible to use certain words and phrases, such as “2012 Olympics” as it is intended to stop the Olympics being linked with unauthorised events, and for this reason the LDWA may not be free to call the 2012 event whatever we like and we may have to gain the prior approval of the Olympic authorities.

Because there is likely to be a high level of interest in the Olympic Hundred, it is likely that the normal entry limit of 500 will be increased, possibly doubled, and the LDWA may seek entrants from abroad. Apart from the usual badges and certificates, medals will be awarded to entrants. And there will, as always be a marshals’ walk – which is likely to be quite an event itself.

It is hoped that any potential problems can be ironed out relatively painlessly. The Olympic year Hundred promises to be a great event which will be extremely memorable for entrants and organisers, and which will boost the profile of the LDWA. Certainly our committee feels we should get involved and members will be encouraged to take part or marshal. No doubt Kent Group members will wish to ask Gail questions when she addresses our AGM.

SUGGESTION FOR A KENT COASTAL HUNDRED

MIKE Pursey, Mike Ratcliff and Graham Smith are currently working on an idea for a Kent Coastal Hundred. If this happens – and it is very early days for this project – it would be the first Kent Group Hundred since the Millennium Hundred in 2000. The rough plan is that the event would be based at Simon Langton School in Canterbury – where the Millennium Hundred was based – with the route following the Elham Valley Way to Lyminge and then the North Downs Way (this, of course, is a large part of the 50-mile route of our White Cliffs Challenge but going in the opposite direction) to the coast. Here the route would follow the cliffs to Dover and then beyond to Kingsdown (again, reversing the WCC) before diverting inland from the coast at Deal to head in a semi-circle to Sandwich. Here it would take the cycle path past the former power station at Richborough to Pegwell Bay Nature Reserve. From there it would go to Pegwell Bay and then follow the Thanet coast, including North Foreland (which, according to the Ordnance Survey, is the most south-easterly point of mainland Great Britain). It would then keep on the coast, possibly to Reculver, from where it would head inland back to Canterbury. It is felt that this route, although quite flat, is full of interest. Obviously a Hundred would be a massive undertaking for Kent Group, and a lot of people would need to be involved. Should this idea come to fruition, it looks like the earliest date available for a Kent Coastal Hundred would be 2015. The idea is going to be discussed by the committee, with a view to approaching the LDWA national committee. Further details in the next newsletter.

FURTHER NOTES FROM A COMMON MAN – THE WESSEX HUNDRED: May 23-25 2009

by Keith Warman

AT the start ... the Hundred moved to the south this year and, once again, here I was amidst the feverish activity at Eggars School in Alton. The rolling downland of Hampshire and Sussex beckoned. A film cameraman was meandering among the throng and the Town Crier was strolling around shouting his head off. This year, the quirky pastime of the Hundred entailed a clockwise circuit of the sylvan beauty of Hampshire and West Sussex, via Selborne, Petersfield, the South Downs Way, Bignor, Slindon, East Dean, Rowland’s Castle, Queen Elizabeth Country Park, East Meon, New Alresford and back to Alton. The total ascent (and descent) was claimed to be about 11,300 feet. The weather had been dry beforehand with very little rainfall. This meant that the paths and tracks would be hot and dusty with an increased chance of really ‘feeling’ the flints under your feet. The forecast was warm for the Saturday and very hot for the Sunday with warm nights; ideal conditions if you like the heat which, as those who know me, I do not.

The marshals’ walk attracted 32 entries, 30 starters and 27 finishers. For the main event there were to be 519 entries, 488 starters and 372 finishers, all remarkably similar numbers to the 2008 Hundred in Yorkshire. Thirteen people were each awarded a 10 x Hundreds badge this year.

There were about 17 entries from Kent Group members this year – the highest number for some time – and I wondered whether, over the next few years, this might increase to 20 plus, which was the case when I first caught the Hundred bug in 1982.

At the start, I was pleased to meet my old chum Anthony Lewington with his family. I knew that this would be our only chance of conversation as he flies around like Pegasus without wings these days (he was to finish in 27 hours and 11 minutes).

Suitably prepared, I sauntered out to the nearby school playing field and the Town Crier was still exercising his vocal chords. Following a few words from the Organiser (Les Hewitt) and the Mayor and a few somewhat louder ones from the Town Crier, we were off! I knew that the exit from the field onto a public footpath was via a single rusty gate, so I laid on the grass to relax for my customary ten minutes’ delay. Then, after saying farewell to Shirlie, I was off alone at the back of the pack.

1 mile . . . Just after Holybourne, I was stopped by a car containing a bemused couple who had parked while the 400-odd had passed them by. The lady wound down her window and asked “Is this some sort of Ramblers’ walk?” I replied “It’s a little bit more than that.” She probed further and when I told her exactly what was going on, the male driver promptly stalled the car in shock. Men drivers, eh?

2 miles . . . Gradually caught up with the back of the field. The day was warming up.

4 miles . . . Joined and walked, on and off, with Len Fallick from Newcastle-upon-Tyne and Katie Hunt from Cambridgeshire - both good company. We were now following the Hangers Way.

6 miles . . . The steep and mighty beech hangers were at their most magnificent. Butterflies and birdsong all around. I was enjoying this, even the unusually muddy stretch of byway towards Selborne.

8 miles . . . Checkpoint 1, run by Beds, Bucks & Northants Group, at Selborne (of Gilbert White’s Natural History thereof) Recreation Ground. The route did not show much of this delightful village as it merely crossed the main road and was soon lost among hidden footpaths through green fields and alongside fat hedgerows.

10 miles . . . The steady climb up to the summit of Nore Hanger Nature Reserve was followed by a steep, ankle-straining descent through woodland.

12 miles . . . For one mile we ambled along the winding path in trees at the foot of Hawkley Hanger, where I caught up and walked with the Bustling Brummie (Tony Francis) and Angela and Tony Walton from Mid-Wales. Good banter ensued, with a dash of the usual sauce from Mr. Francis. He stretched the truth somewhat when he told the Waltons that on the 1999 Durham Dales Hundred, the route went through many muddy and boggy sections “yet Keith’s pumps were pristine. I couldn’t understand it. I reckoned, before the start, he had dropped off fresh pairs of pumps every five miles around the route.” The truth was, as is usual with many of Tony’s yarns, somewhat different. After one particularly muddy section, he was plastered thigh-high and then espied me, all squeakily clean (he didn’t believe me when I explained that I had merely climbed up a bank to avoid the quagmire).

13 miles . . . We could see the grassy slope of Shoulder of Mutton Hill ahead; this was to be one of the steepest climbs of the whole route.

14 miles . . . Having minced our way up to the summit, we found ourselves in the woods of Ashford Hanger. A quick right then left and we came out of the trees to be greeted by a stupendous view of fields, woods and distant downland. Over to our right, the mast atop Butser Hill was visible. This was about 6 miles as the crow flies, but about 55 miles as the Warman wanders. This area surely merits its recent elevation to National Park status. The path downhill on shiny grass needed great care and was to be the steepest descent on the route. Halfway down, we passed a very large stone memorial to the poet, Edward Thomas.

15 miles . . . Checkpoint 2 at the foot of the descent was in the village hall at where else but.... steep! Many people were resting here, including several tending to sore feet. The large choice of refreshments on offer from Surrey Group was very welcome. Here, I met George Foot, who was walking with his son Barny. George had not entered a Hundred since 2005, so I was very pleased to see him again. “I don’t expect I’ll finish” he explained (he was wrong - he did).

17 miles . . . Passed under the main railway line on the outskirts of Petersfield. As any railway anorak worth his cheese and pickle sandwich will bore you with, this line is known as the ‘Portsmouth Direct’ and was opened exactly 150 years ago. I wanted to linger as, a few hours later, a magnificently preserved steam engine called *Clan Line* was due through here but, hey, I had a Hundred to do so my book of engine numbers, pencil and Thermos flask were put safely back in my rucksack for another day...

19 miles . . . The centre of Petersfield was busy, but I was soon trying to avoid the candyfloss and thumping noise of a funfair on The Heath. A nice path wound around the perimeter of the large Heath Pond and I was on the lookout for Shirlie - there she was, sitting on a bench watching the Hundred traipse through. After leaving her, I crossed six small fields and just to the right was the B&B farmhouse where we were staying.

20 miles . . . A bizarre moment. Caught up with Len Fallick again and we were instantly confronted by a short, round, tweeded lady (probably the local Margaret Rutherford), complete with a pair of terriers, and waving a large, knobbly stick in our general direction. “I say” she yapped at us in an accent which was as wonderfully clipped as the topiary behind her “those ahead of you told me you are walking 300 miles – is that right?” “Not quite” replied Len “just 100 miles.” “Absolute barking madness” she shrieked and promptly disappeared into the rampant undergrowth.

22 miles . . . Checkpoint 3 on Harting Down – what a viewpoint! Many people here, sprawled across the grassy downland in the sunshine. Goodness, the Hundred had turned into an afternoon picnic! Stopped to partake of afternoon tea daintily served by West Yorkshire Group, including John and Lesley Sparshatt.

24 miles . . . Len had pushed on, so I was alone again on the rollercoaster section of the South Downs Way over Beacon, Pen and Treyford Hills. The early evening was a bit cooler now and I found this stretch very comfortable. A few others ahead of me now but, thankfully, few cyclists about on the easy bridleway over Linch Ball and Cocking Down.

28 miles . . . Left the South Downs Way by a gigantic spherical boulder (oddly, it didn’t seem like chalk, more like limestone) to descend across fields to Cocking.

29 miles . . . Passed the tea rooms and church to follow a narrow lane between high hedges. Had a strange conversation with a couple of runners, who I assumed had missed the left turn to cross fields to Heyshott by mistake. It hadn’t occurred to me that they might have missed it deliberately when, trying to be helpful like every Boy Scout, I called them back and pointed to the stile they had just ‘ignored’. “You don’t have to do that,” one of them shouted

back at me. “You can just stay on the road and go round this way.” Oh no I can’t! I was saddened to have witnessed, not for the first time on a Hundred, entrants wilfully cutting corners in order to try and gain some sort of advantage. My sadness was tinged with disbelief that we have people like this on the LDWA Hundred, where playing with a straight bat and a British sense of fair play is the expected norm. The fact that it is not a race makes it so appealing and the wonderful event it is. As far as I am concerned, they might have done the distance but they most certainly did not do the event.

30 miles . . . Checkpoint 4 at Heyshott and a smiling Shirlie to greet me just outside of the village. On approaching the hall, I was stopped at a kit check being run efficiently by Martin Lawson. I was invited to pick a table tennis ball from a bag, each ball having an item of kit written on it. With luck, I picked a ‘free ball’ so I was sent on my merry way. The tiny hall suffused a warm welcome from Essex & Herts Group. Caught up Len Fallick again and we decided to walk through the night together.

31 miles . . . In the last vestiges of daylight, strode through Manor Farm past a cage full of yapping dogs. Using the barking as a distance gauge, we ascertained that we had people about 10 minutes both ahead of and behind us. We soon passed through the sleepy village of Graffham.

33 miles . . . With the blackened silhouette of the scarp of the South Downs a constant companion to our right, we made good progress through the immaculately manicured grounds of Lavington House, now part of Seaford College.

34 miles . . . Gasp! Civilisation in the form of the busy A.285 and dazzling headlights. Safely across the road, field paths made for straightforward navigation to the quaint Barlavington church.

36 miles . . . Caught up Martin Brice, who was having trouble with sore feet, and accompanied him and his two lady companions to Checkpoint 5 at Sutton Village Hall. Nicely looked after by Bristol & West Group and we left at about 11.30 pm.

38 miles . . . A steady plod for Len and me, through the village of Bignor and up the north face of the South Downs to reach and cross the South Downs Way on Bignor Hill. The night was warm with a gentle breeze – just right. We then had an easy descent on well-worn tracks for about two miles to Slindon, where Kent Group beckoned.

41 miles . . . Through the village to Checkpoint 6 in the Coronation Hall. Julie Welch had told me previously that she would be on duty here and asked me roughly what time I expected to arrive. “Approximately 1:27 am” I had said tongue-in-cheek and, as we slid through the silent streets, my off-the-cuff timing was not far out. As we arrived at the hall’s entrance, it was exactly 1:33 am and there stood Paul Hatcher looking at his wristwatch with a huge grin from ear to ear. “You’re late!” he bellowed. We were well tended to by our group, resplendent in the new red T-shirts.

42 miles . . . Off into the night once more, past an ancient railway carriage acting as a garden shed and thinking about this next stage of six lonely miles, much of it through woodland.

44 miles . . . Deep in the very bowels of Earham Woods, with owls hooting all around us, we crossed the Roman road of Stane Street. That night, legions of hundredeers were stumbling along, taking care to follow the many changes of direction.

45 miles . . . Daylight peeped from the east and torches were turned off. It had been a perfect nightwalk through the inky-blackness of the many wooded sections.

47 miles . . . A bit of impromptu waymarking led us down into the beautiful village of East Dean to Checkpoint 7 in the village hall, run by Staffordshire Group. Oatcakes were on offer, but I was desperate for sleep. I asked Len to continue on and then managed forty-one winks. Suitably refreshed, I left at about 5.30am with myself for company.

48 miles . . . A gentle rise towards Goodwood Racecourse and I caught up Alan Stewart and Ian McLeod. An enormous sign on the wall of the grandstand shouted “NO UNRULY BEHAVIOUR” so I made sure that my hair was nicely combed, my shirt tucked in and my laces ironed and evenly tied.

49 miles . . . I cantered along the road (the finishing post was not yet in sight) but wasn’t on it furlong before starting the short, sharp climb up to The Trundle, a prominent hill (which has an Iron Age fort on it) affording 360° views. The misty scenes were extremely atmospheric. It was 6.15am. Rising above the cotton wool landscape the spire of Chichester Cathedral and then St. Boniface Down on the Isle of Wight were prominent.

50 miles . . . On the descent, I overtook a group of three, but was on the lookout for a place for a brief stop behind a tree. We reached an isolated clump of bushes and I shot off to the left seeking a little privacy. There I was, safely mid-stream and feeling mightily relieved, when suddenly the threesome were crashing into each other as they halted abruptly at my left shoulder. They had followed me, and thus had disturbed my pees! Oh dear, never just follow the one in front...

51 miles . . . I dropped down into the Lavant valley on lush, springy turf, crossing the river of that name and a disused railway line. Another anorak moment – this was the line from Chichester to Midhurst which I had crossed the previous evening.

52 miles . . . The heat of the morning was beginning to tell as I plodded along a hard, flinty track towards the wood-cloaked Kingley Vale and Bow Hill.

53 miles . . . A very warm ascent of Bow Hill, a shimmy left then right and I was glad to be slowly dropping through beautiful woodland with the sun piercing through branches and boughs. The shade was most welcome. Oh to be in England and, thinking of my hot feet, aaah to be on the Hundred.

55 miles . . . Checkpoint 8 at Stoughton Down Forestry Commission car park run by a very efficient Dorset Group. The heat and distance were starting to take their toll now and repairs to feet were in evidence. It was 8.30am. Amazed

to meet Shirlie, on a surprise visit. She assumed she had missed me, but I was a bit slower than scheduled due to my short snooze in Sussex.

57 miles . . . Plodded through the delightful villages of Stoughton, then Walderton, but the field paths were rock hard and the sun unrelenting. Swirling dust and sharp flints - this was becoming quite a challenge.

58 miles . . . Caught up and overtook a lone lady who had been looking over her shoulder for some time to check if I had been following. I think the heat was affecting her as she was somewhat scathing about the route description which I thought was clear in this section.

60 miles . . . Past the National Trust's Stansted House and through the parkland, overtaking a few more and, towards the end of a one-mile long open space, met a smiling Shirlie who had come to guide me into Rowland's Castle and the breakfast checkpoint, number 9.

61 miles . . . East Lancashire Group were in charge at the Parish Hall here and all seemed rather calm when I strolled in just before 11am. Len, like many others, was tending to his feet and I had to pierce a troublesome blister of my own. Breakfast and a refreshing wash, followed by a change of clothing meant that I was soon ready for the next hot stage. Len and I set off together.

62 miles . . . The leafy suburbs of Rowland's Castle were left behind and, as we climbed slowly across arable fields, I was glad to be wearing my Australian Cobber to help keep my neck cool. Noticed Chris Dawes just ahead of us.

63 miles . . . Through the delightful village of Finchdean, complete with the house called Carpenters, whose green nameboard was in the style of an old station platform sign.

65 miles . . . On the energy-sapping climb up Chalton Down, passed Chris Dawes who was entertaining a local stroller. This was the hottest section of the route and we were both feeling its effects. Through Chalton churchyard and the village, then back onto field tracks with no shade from the sun. It was about 1.30pm.

67 miles . . . At last, we made it into the wooded estate of the Queen Elizabeth Country Park and a mile of pleasant forest rides. With the drone of the nearby A3 becoming increasingly apparent, we stumbled down past the visitor centre and into the welcoming arms of Marches and Mid-Wales Groups at checkpoint 10 in The Hut.

68 miles . . . Ahead of us lay the steady climb up Butser Hill, whose radio masts I had spied across the airwaves from Shoulder of Mutton Hill the previous day. Through the A3 underpass and onto superb springy turf for the steady ascent to the summit. Many people whereabouts enjoying the lush downland scenery.

69 miles . . . From the summit, we could see the green spire of East Meon church, our next village target and a narrow bridleway led us downhill all the way.

72 miles . . . My parents had threatened to visit East Meon to see the Hundred and, hopefully, Shirlie and me – they were successful on all three counts, but the heat meant that I was a couple of hours later than estimated. My father and Bill Grace from Surrey had walked back along the route to greet Len and me. Together we ambled through the attractive village, alongside the infant River Meon and into the village hall, checkpoint 11, run by Cleveland Group. We were both very tired and Len propped himself up against his rucksack on a perimeter wall and slept instantly. I rested and spoke gibberish to my parents. The unrelenting heat had addled my brain. Met one of my companions from last year's Hundred, Wayne Bartlett, who unfortunately had just retired. We bade farewell to Shirlie and my parents and set off around 5.30pm, grateful that the sting of the heat had abated.

74 miles . . . Joined the South Downs Way for the steady ascent up to Old Winchester Hill, from where wide views were possible over the simmering evening light. We meandered around the summit and paused for drinks by the entrance to the hill fort.

77 miles . . . We caught up and walked with Roger Morton and Neil Mansfield on the long descent into the Meon valley. Tricky narrow paths in places, but no problems with the navigation.

78 miles . . . Crossed the busy A34 on the outskirts of Exton and we were stopped by a group of people who wanted to know what we were doing. They could not believe us or really understand why we were doing it and one of the men said "So, if you are walking to Alton, will you be sleeping in a barn somewhere tonight?" "Err, no" explained Roger, politely, "we carry on walking through the night". "But won't it be dark?" the man asked. "Yes" replied Roger, slightly less diplomatically, "that's what happens at night-time."

79 miles . . . The route crossed several grassy fields, all uphill, full of sheep and cattle, and negotiation of many awkward stiles was necessary. In failing light, Len and I had gone ahead and we arrived at a road where marshals had kindly left water containers.

80 miles . . . On the top of Beacon Hill, we crossed a large wheat field and there, on the far side, the lonely outline of Shirlie was seen and she guided us into checkpoint 12 in the Beeches car park, run by Bobbie and Chris from Norfolk & Suffolk Group. This was my target before torching up for the second night and we had made it. With torches at the ready, as we thought we'd need them before reaching the next checkpoint, we set off at 8.45pm.

82 miles . . . An easy section, leaving the South Downs Way and along lanes for two miles towards Kilmeston. Here, when recceing in April, Shirlie and I had the unexpected pleasure of seeing a red kite circling around and following us down into the village. Len and I arrived at the quaint village hall in Kilmeston, run by Cornwall & Devon Group. Good banter, food and drink and it was difficult to leave but we were in the last 20 miles. 10.30pm.

83 miles . . . A tricky start through woodland, then across sheep pastures on the Hinton Ampner estate. A distant light flickered on the bearing we required and we soon passed a marshal who had kindly set this up to assist us. It was an enormous field and we thanked him for his help.

85 miles . . . Easy route-finding on clear flint-ridden tracks, we caught up Roger and Neil again and passed a sewerage works and a golf course. Another clear, warm night for this adventure. Speaking with Roger, I was aware that his usual walking partner, Val Bridges, was not with him. I was also aware that Val has become super-fit in the last few years by doing triathlons, complete with punishing training schedules. I asked Roger if Val was on this event. "No" he replied firmly. "Val has entered for the Ironman Triathlon, which takes place very soon, and the Hundred got in the way of her training schedule." Gulp!

87 miles . . . Under streetlights again and into New Alresford. An easily missed path took us alongside the station of the Mid-Hants (or Watercress) Line and all was eerily quiet. There was to be no brief encounter with The Bournemouth Belle that night.

88 miles . . . Clear chalk streams and watercress beds on both sides led us to checkpoint 14 in the Christy Hall in Old Alresford. Thames Valley Group was in charge and Len and I both fell asleep on the table. As we left, at around 1.30 am, it was suddenly cold and goose pimples formed on my kneecaps. Shirlie bade us farewell as we shivered and shuffled onwards and Altonwards.

89 miles . . . We joined the byway of The Oxdrove Way and this was rather monotonous. We were very tired and just followed our bobbing torch beams for what seemed like an eternity. My hallucinations had started late this year, but were no less vivid.

91 miles . . . Complete stillness around and no other torches in sight as we staggered along more rutted tracks. Less than ten miles to go and the silence was deafening.

93 miles . . . Along the road and into the isolated hamlet of Upper Wield. Shirlie was sitting by the village green and led us into the cosy village hall and checkpoint 15. Straight away, I felt faint and sick and laid down on the floor, using my rucksack as a pillow. Some time later, I awoke and managed to eat toasted teacakes and drink tea, caringly provided by the London Group. Len, after a short nap, had left during my slumbers, so I set off alone and was soon crossing clear field paths. It was 4am and daylight was approaching – I was looking forward to my second dawn of the Hundred.

94 miles . . . A long road section of about two miles was really tough and I began singing to try and keep awake. The dawn was a glorious experience and thinking of the simple beauties in this world and how lucky I was kept me from falling into the gaping roadside ditches.

95 miles . . . Past the sleeping village of Bentworth and the descent down the most stony track on the whole route was somewhat painful. Across the A399, followed immediately by the concealed trackbed of a former railway line. Anoraks pay attention! This one was the branch line from Basingstoke to Alton which was so underused that it closed completely in 1935. However, it does have one claim to fame - it was deemed perfect for the setting of Will Hay's hilarious black and white comedy film 'Oh Mr. Porter!' The track had to be re-laid just for the film and the disused station at Cliddesden nearby became the fictional station of Buggleskelly in Ireland. Here endeth the anoraks' lecture for another year.

97 miles . . . I could spy Len about 500 yards ahead of me as field-edge paths led us through Shalden churchyard and along lanes to the village hall and checkpoint 16. Ian Smith and friends were in charge here, and we chatted to Janet Chapman. Shirlie then walked with us for half a mile to see Len and me off on our last leg(s)!

99 miles . . . Straightforward navigation again with minor undulations. Our last beech woodland and soon we were dropping down into Alton. Caught up with Roger Munn, who was in excellent spirits despite a troublesome leg.

100 miles . . . Shirlie was at the main road to greet us and took our photographs by the school entrance. It was 7.45am and I insisted that Len, as the senior man, should enter the hall first and we checked in to generous applause. I was immediately accosted by the cameraman and spoke a few words. Len stood graciously to one side but, on sitting down, I realised that the camera should have been on Len, who had just completed his 29th Hundred from 29 started. Only four people have done more than my modest companion – quite an accomplishment.

We relaxed and witnessed everyone else behind us finishing, including a beaming Alan Stewart on his first Hundred. What a wonderfully warm atmosphere there was and what a great advertisement for the LDWA. Once again, my heartfelt thanks go to all those on the organising committee for the years of hard work, together with all marshals and friends who gave up their time over the weekend – I hope they gained as much enjoyment from it as I did. Blisters? Two small ones, so I was very lucky.

Next year, the Hundred moves north several hundred miles to take place wholly in Scotland for the first time. The venue is Dunkeld (north of Perth) and I am reliably informed that a Highland Games takes place over the same weekend in that area. I must try and register at the correct event, or else I might have to carry a caber around in my sporran...

STRIDERS AND GROUP NEWSLETTERS

by Ernie Bishop

AT 9am October 11 1981, 19 athletes set off from Coptall Stadium, Barnet, for a 24 hour track running race. Some well known runners were entered, including Mark Pickard who was well known in the LDWA.

The Frenchman, Jean Boussiquet, who held the world record of 169 miles and 705 yards for the 24 hour event, was unable to participate. Several athletes took the lead at various times until Mark Pickard went to the front around 22 hours and finally recorded a total distance of 163 miles and 1249 yards. At that time a British record for that distance, but I don't know whether there has been a further increase of the record. If anyone has heard of Mark in recent years, I

would be grateful if they would let me know.

In 1981, although I took part in several events, of various distances, the one that I always remember was the Cumbrian Hundred. Those who completed the "100" could, if they wished, immediately continue on with a further 25 miles. There was poor weather and a rail dispute before the event started. Running down from the castle ruin at Kendal, eventually all were able to get through the gate and were thinned out. After seven miles I was running with Tony Wimbush and Guy Collinson, although we broke up after a few more miles. I was with two others for about 20 miles, and then in the rain, having been with Martyn Greaves, I fell behind. After struggling uphill to checkpoint 11, I enjoyed some food. Martyn went off and I went off on my own about 10 minutes later, making for checkpoint 12. As I was leaving Martyn arrived back there, having made a mistake on the route. We continued from there and had two more checkpoints before reaching the finish.

We decided before finishing the Hundred that we'd have some food and drink and then carry on with the extra 25 miles (to complete a distance of 200km by a different route), Keith Arnold was the first man to complete and Martyn and I were joint second. Three others later were P.Simpson, Andrew Thacker and Di Bullard (who was the only woman to do the extra 25 miles on her own).

More to follow.

NEW MEMBERS

THE following people have joined Kent Group of the LDWA over the last couple of months. We extend a warm welcome to them. Edward Barnes, Hythe; Caroline Richards, Cranbrook; Gavin and Maria Davis, Old Wives Lees, Canterbury; Traviss Willcox, Shepherdswell.

Kent Group now has 112 members.

COMPUTER WHIZZES

BRYAN and Pat Clarke will be stepping down from computer duties at Kent Group events after next year's Sevenoaks Circular. This is such an important part of running events. Bryan and Pat, as members will know, have done a superb job logging entries and producing reports for events since – it is believed - the first Wealden Waters in 1981, if not before. Kent Group owes them both a huge debt of gratitude. Mike Headley and Stephanie Le Men, who both have some knowledge of computers, have agreed to pool ideas to see how they can take this job on.

FOUNDERS CHALLENGE

KENT Group members put in a tremendous performance, individually and collectively, on the Founders Challenge, held on October 18.

Eleven members completed the 26-mile route, and one – Liz Keeler – completed the 16-mile route. Of the 11 doing the longer route, there were some very impressive times.

Kent Group 26-mile walkers' results: Mike Ratcliff (6 hours 7 mins); Wendy Thurrell (6 hours 8 mins); Stephanie Le Men/Christophe Delogne (6 hours 17 mins); Mike Pursey (6 hours 35 mins); Mike Headley (6 hours 43 mins); Neal O'Rourke (7 hours 1 min); Keith Warman/Shirlie Gill (7 hours 47 mins); Gordon Harker (8 hours 19 mins); Roger Munn (8 hours 20 mins). Well done to you all!

SOUTH DOWNS WAY

GRAHAM Smith is organising a trip to walk the South Downs Way – 100 miles from Winchester to Eastbourne – on Monday-Thursday March 1-4. The plan is to get to Winchester by train, arriving on the 12.05 from Waterloo (that means changing at Waterloo). We will walk to East Meon (approx. 17 miles) on the first day, staying in hostel accommodation; on the second day we will walk to Amberley (approx. 31 miles), staying in a hotel or guest house; on the third day we will walk to Lewes (approx. 28 miles), staying in a guest house; and on the fourth and final day we will walk to Eastbourne (approx. 24 miles), getting trains back to Kent. Anyone interested in this walk is asked to contact Graham by the end of December so that arrangements for accommodation can be made. The South Downs Way is a great walk, with good tracks and lots of fine, airy views, and it should give us four days to remember. But please be warned – we will be going in very early March, when the weather may still be pretty cold (and it could be a bit wet), and there are a couple of long days, which will almost certainly mean we will be walking part of the time during the night. Also, people interested in going are advised to restrict whatever they are taking to an absolute minimum, as they will have to carry it. And because of the near certainty of some night walking, please carry a torch, as well as warm clothing. For anyone interested, Graham's contact details are above. The national railway inquiries number is 0871 2004950 for connections to Winchester from your own areas.

VANGUARD WAY

SEVERAL Kent Group members enjoyed walking the Vanguard Way, completed in four sections earlier in the year (and recounted in the last newsletter). The following has been sent to secretary Bill Gillibrand by Colin Saunders, chairman of the Vanguard Way Working Party.

We would like to draw the attention of your group to the new edition of the official guide to the 66-mile Vanguard Way, available as a free download from our website www.vanguardway.org.uk. The route description is divided into

ten sections, but of course you can combine them or divide them as required. You may know about the route already, but we hope you won't mind us reminding you that it passes through some of the best countryside in southern England (North Downs, Weald, Ashdown Forest and South Downs), and finishes with some superb views that bring a "Wow!" to the lips of all who see them: the Cuckmere Meanders, the Seven Sisters and Seaford Head.

The route is well served by public transport, and would make an excellent subject for a series of walks over several weekends, or a long weekend staying overnight along the route. The Vanguard Way Companion (also free from our website) gives details of transport, accommodation and refreshments.

Those who complete the route are entitled to a free certificate, and badges can be bought for £2.50 each. Details can be found on the website.

If it's not already in your programme, please ask your leaders to consider including it. If you have any questions about the route or the website please contact me and I will do my best to help.

The Latest News page on the website tells you what changes have taken place that we know about. Please note that previous editions of the printed guidebook to the Vanguard Way are now out of date and should not be used to follow the route, and you should beware of using guidebooks to the route by other publishers as these are also likely to be out of date and/or inaccurate in places.

Thank you for your attention.

Colin Saunders, 35 Gerrards Close, London, N14 4RH (tel 020 8886 8285).

CINQUE PORTS CHALLENGE

THE 100k (approx.) Cinque Ports Challenge, linking the Cinque Ports of Hastings, Romney, Hythe, Dover and Sandwich and associated towns of Winchelsea, Lydd, Hythe, Folkestone and Deal, will be held over the Bank Holiday weekend of May 1-2. The plan is to travel by train to Hastings and meet at the station there at 10.15am (a train from Ashford arrives at Hastings at 10.11am). The walk will be self-supporting, although there will be no shortage of places where we can get refreshments en route, and it is planned to have a decent stop for a hot meal (probably fish and chips – or something like it) at Hythe, which is about halfway. The walk will involve walking through the night, so anyone going should take warm clothing and, of course, a torch. We should reach Sandwich some time after 6am on the Sunday. There is a railway station at Sandwich, where trains can be taken for Dover and beyond. The first train leaves Sandwich on Sunday mornings at approx. 6.30am. Organiser is Graham Smith, whose details are above.

FOOTPATHS

AS members know, Shirley Higgins had to resign as our footpath officer due to an old ankle injury which has had to curtail her walking. Members are reminded that any footpath problems should be reported to the county rights of way office at Brabourne on 01303 814534. Say which area the problem is in and you will be put through to the relevant rights of way officer.

OUT ON YOUR FEET (The Hallucinatory World of Hundred Mile Walking) by Julie Welch a review by Tom Sinclair

I WAS well into one book, Dark Fire, part two of a thrilling trilogy by Colin Sansom, set in the latter years of Henry VIII's reign, and was just getting into A Tragedy of Errors, The Government and Misgovernment of Northern Ireland, by Kenneth Bloomfield, former Head of NI Civil Service, when Out on Your Feet came through the post. Attempts to ration myself to a chapter or two a day soon proved unavailing as the "buzz" of the Hundred (as Sir John Johnson called it) and the general LDWA folklore which permeated each page made me read on and I finished it at a sitting (well lying at the end, I was in bed).

Many of the people mentioned were well known to me but Julie made them all, known and not known, come alive as she drew out their idiosyncrasies with perception. Several Kent Group members are mentioned, including Nick Dockree, Graham Smith and myself, Shirle Gill, Avril Stapleton, who accompanied Julie on the recce, and, most frequently, Keith Warman.

The unusual technique of arranging the chapters so that descriptions of events walked in preparation for the Hundred, relevant extracts from Strider (which Julie edited for five years), meetings with people involved in Hundreds as walkers and marshals and the graphic description of her own progress on the Yoredale Hundred, are interspersed with one another is very effective in holding the reader's interest. The spirit and ethos of the LDWA is well encapsulated in the book's last sentence where an Essex & Herts stalwart is heading off into the dark to see where a notoriously late finisher has got to. Kent Group members attending the monthly pub meet may be allowed a quick glance at my copy but it is NOT available on loan.

Out on Your Feet: The Hallucinatory World of Hundred-Mile Walking, by Julie Welch, is published by Aurum (tel 01903 828503) at £16.99. It would make an ideal Christmas present.

HENRY BRIDGE

THE following sad news has been sent by Keith Warman.

I HAVE just received the message advising of the passing of Henry Bridge at the age of 99 (he would have been 100 next August).

I am sure there are many Kent Group members, particularly those of long standing, who will remember Henry with affection as a quiet, intelligent and interesting man, who joined the LDWA aged 68 and who had so many age-defying walking achievements. I found this news to be quite poignant as I have written an article for the December Strider about people aged 70 or more who have completed a Hundred. Henry's name is prominent in several places throughout the article as his record in this regard is second to none. He was the first person ever to finish a Hundred when aged 70 or more. He holds the record as being the oldest person to finish a Hundred (the 1992 Invicta Hundred when he was 82) and was also awarded a ten Hundreds badge. The next eldest person to complete a Hundred was 76. Henry's tally of nine completions when aged 70 or more is easily the most recorded, the second highest being five. He didn't hang up his boots after our Invicta Hundred either, but started the next three Hundreds (alas he retired on them all) so he was the oldest starter in a Hundred when aged 85 in 1995.

There will be more about Henry in the Strider article, including details of a Hundred record he set in 1980 and which remains unbroken to this day! A remarkable gentleman.

I understand that an obituary will appear in April's Strider as this news was received too late for the December edition.

Brian Buttifant adds: I first met Henry on the second night of the 1979 Hundred on Dartmoor. It was our first Hundred and the weather was pretty appalling. We had to cross the stepping stones over the River Plym. I was with three others, who decided we couldn't find this crossing. We checked the map and we could rejoin the route by walking down the north bank to a road bridge. Henry was also sheltering about 100 yards further along, behind a wall, so we all followed the course we had planned to get back on route. The rain on that second night, as earlier in that Hundred, was very heavy. Getting to the last checkpoint, my route description was papier mache and Henry said: "I know where I am" so we were quite happy to follow him. When getting to a road, we were actually going in the direction of the airport and the moors, opposite to where we wanted to be, so the compass came out and I just walked south to the finish. Henry finished shortly after. Among Henry's other achievements, he regularly did the Cleveland Classic, an overnight event of 50-60 miles, and he often got the Old Man Of The Moor Trophy for being the oldest person to finish. I believe he completed about 10 of these. Henry was a founder member of the Anglian Group, which was a forerunner of Norfolk and Suffolk Group. Norfolk and Suffolk has gone from strength to strength, due in no small part to Henry's efforts. Henry was an inspiration to all of us walkers throughout his walking career.

Tom Sinclair adds: I can remember going out from a checkpoint on the Wealden Waters, on a lovely moonlit night believe it or not, to find Henry who was not as concerned as Ron Roweth who was with me at New Barns Farm. I also remember helping Henry over a stile near Chartwell when Ron and I were one of the three teams (if I remember rightly the other two teams were Ian Needham and Judy Rickwood and Neal O'Rourke and Keith Warman) shepherding people through the woods between Limpsfield Chart and Ide Hill on the Invicta Hundred.

ROSEMARY CARTER

KENT Group members will be very sad to hear that former member Rosemary Carter has died. Many members will remember Rosemary for her cheerfulness – and, of course, the food she helped provide – at various Kent Group events, particularly on the Sevenoaks Circular. Our thoughts go out to her husband Kelvin – like Rosemary, a very good walker and former LDWA member - and her family.

The following obituary appeared in the East Kent Mercury on August 13.

A FORMER teacher who enjoyed walking, running and art has died.

Rosemary Carter, who was 72 and lived at River, died on Saturday, August 8. She was particularly concerned with children who had special needs.

Born in Kowloon, Hong Kong, she spent her childhood overseas and in the UK as her father served in the Merchant Navy. Evacuated to Melbourne, Australia, during the Second World War, from 1946 to 1947 she lived in Northumberland with her mother before rejoining her father in Bombay, India, where he worked as a marine engineer. The family was reunited in 1949 in Northumberland, moving to Woodford Green in Essex in 1950. Educated in Newcastle and Woodford, she went to Easthampstead Park College - part of Reading University - in Berkshire for professional studies in primary education. She began her teaching career in Aldersbrook, Leytonstone in 1957 being responsible for the reception class.

Married to Kelvin Carter in July 1960 at St Mary's Church in Woodford, they moved to Dover where Mrs Carter taught in Walmer before starting a family. Mr Carter was head of art at the Dover Boys' Grammar School.

While living at Capel, she founded a playgroup in the village which still exists. She returned to teaching, part-time, in 1970 in various Dover schools, being particularly concerned with special needs provision.

From 1975 to 1988 she taught literacy skills to the inmates at the Borstal on Dover's Western Heights. She then continued as a school-based individual tutor of children with special needs, particularly dyslexia.

For many years Mrs Carter sang with Folkestone Choral Society and at the Stour Music Festival. Her other leisure interests included reading literature, particularly Charles Dickens and Jane Austen, listening to music, art, running, swimming in Dover Harbour, and countryside flora and fauna.

She had enjoyed cycling around Holland, and since 1995 walking with the White Cliffs Ramblers and Long Distance Walkers Association. More recently she had been an active member of the Deal Life Drawing Group.

Described as a lovely lady with a winning smile, even in adversity, she and her husband had four sons, Simon, Ian, Andrew and Jeremy. The funeral was held on Monday, August 17 at 1.45pm at St Peter's Church, River.

NEW WEBSITE FOR WALKERS

KENT Group members may be interested in Walking in England www.walkinginengland.co.uk, which has thousands of walks to download and print FREE. It is the work of John Harris, a keen walker, who contacted secretary Bill Gillibrand. John says: "I am a keen walker and found that, although there is a load of information about walking in the internet, it was often hidden away and difficult to find. So www.walkinginengland.co.uk came into being. www.walkinginengland.co.uk gives you, county by county, all the information you need for the best walking in the country. Details of thousands of walks to download and print free; all the walking groups in the country, maps and walk books; plus loads more information. So check out the website and find some new walks!"

FOUR PITS WALK

PLANS are progressing for Graham Smith's 38-mile Four Pits Walk, linking the former Kent coal mines of Tilmanstone, Snowdown, Betteshanger and Chislet, to become an Anytime Challenge. Graham has now written a route description for the walk, and he is planning for a certificate and badge to become available in the new year. If any Kent Group members wish to tackle the route, they are asked to contact Graham (details above) and the route description can be posted or e-mailed. More details about this project will appear in the next newsletter.

A WILD YEAR OF WALKING

by Mike Ratcliff

WITH the trees now shedding their leaves and the grip of winter taking hold, the dawn of 2009 now seems to be a memory filed away in the cerebral filing cabinet under 'ancient history'. However, when looking at the walking calendar 12 months ago I can still distinctly remember a wry sense of excitement about the prospect of a great walking year ahead.

For me personally I knew it would certainly be a year full of new and unique experiences within the LDWA. A year of firsts for sure: my first challenge walk, my first Hundred and my first experience of leading a walk. Only having discovered the organisation in late 2007 I still felt somewhat of a newcomer when walking with some of the well-seasoned troopers of Kent and London groups, hearing countless old yarns spun about eccentric characters and crazy events that even the most imaginative fiction writer would find hard to better. But this only seemed to exacerbate the lure of the prospective programme of epic social walks and tough challenge events to come.

I decided just before the new year that I really must try and do my bit for the group by finally getting round to proposing a walk to lead – something I had been telling myself I should try and do for many months. I knew this would surely involve a great deal of work both in planning and extra walking miles during the week. Mistaken about the workload I certainly wasn't, but ignorant of the joy and sheer great fun to be had in studying the maps and devising a range of possible routes I definitely was. Why didn't I have a go at this before? Naturally I decided to start walking out these ideas in my own backyard – the North Downs either side of the Medway Valley and the Isle of Grain, eventually settling on a rather wild, remote but beautiful route round Cooling and the Hoo Peninsula as my 'grand masterpiece'. However, feeling pleased with myself that I was now capable of creating my own walk I realised that there was no reason for it to stop there. Why not create others in the same way but further afield? Maybe even in other counties? Why not? And so I set to it. And so 2009 has turned into the most mile-hungry walking year of my life, exploring new terrain in Kent, Surrey, Sussex and even a few times down to Hampshire. Leading my first ever club walk for our group over the Isle of Grain on a gloriously hot sunny day in May was a wonderfully satisfying culmination of the work – especially just before the thrill of my first Hundred at the end of that month. This then snowballed with the addition of nine more dates for the LDWA calendar – a growing addiction maybe, but certainly something that would have seemed laughable to me just 12 months ago.

In addition to the fun of my own projects I've also had the privilege of enjoying a variety of great social walks all over Kent and beyond since January, starting with the very first day of the year on the beloved South Downs. Completing the Vanguard Way early in the year, our annual South Downs Thirty and two lovely trips to France leave me with especially fond memories of a year that has made me start to feel like a more solid feature in the LDWA landscape. Thinking what I've achieved myself and what I've been blessed in sharing with others demonstrates to me no more perfect example, vindicating the old saying that we do indeed reap what we sow.

DOVER—CANTERBURY: November 1

by Graham Smith

THIS was a walk for diehards – or, probably more accurately, the loony element of the LDWA's Kent Group. All week the weather forecasters had been predicting that the weather was going to be dreadful, with torrential rain and very strong winds. On the Friday and Saturday before the walk all the forecasts – whether on TV, radio, newspapers or websites – were giving severe weather warnings. I was expecting only two, possibly even one, walker to join me on the walk, and I was very pleasantly surprised when Liz Keeler telephoned me on the Saturday evening to say that she and Wendy Thurrell wanted to go. I said "That's fine, but do you know just how bad the weather is going to be?" Liz said she realised it was going to be bad, and then rang me again 15 minutes later after checking just how bad it was going to be, to say she and Wendy had decided not to come. "No problem," I said. "And I'm certainly not offended." Joy Davies – probably the toughest member of Kent Group but also one of the most realistic – had already decided not to come (which says it all, really).

When I got up on the Sunday morning the weather really wasn't too bad – it was dry and a bit overcast, but actually

quite mild. I thought that perhaps the forecasters had got it wrong, and the Dover-Canterbury corridor was miraculously going to escape the severe weather which was going to hit just about everywhere else in the United Kingdom. I might just as well have wished that my Lottery number was going to come up! At Dover Priory Station I was met by Mike Pursey and Mike Ratcliff and, just as we were about to leave, Nicola Foad joined us. We set off optimistically, with the conditions still dry, and were beginning the long uphill pull from Charlton Green at Dover to the A2 when the rain started, so on came our waterproofs. But it wasn't heavy rain – yet. However, by the time we reached Pineham it was pouring, and becoming torrential, and the wind was getting up, and up, and up. As we splashed through Waldershare the gusts had just about reached the 60mph which had been forecast, and as we negotiated that long open stretch of the park before the road (familiar to White Cliffs Challengers, of course) it was hard enough trying to remain upright, let alone walk.

We had decided to have a stop in Shepherdswell, and when we got there the only place with any kind of shelter we could find was the lychgate at the village church, St Andrew's Sibertswold. As we huddled there, our cold fingers fumbling to get out our drinks flasks, good fortune smiled on us. The church service had just finished, and a very friendly member of the congregation asked if we would like to go into the church for some hot coffee. Would we? Does Christmas fall on December 25? Is the LDWA an organisation for people who like long distance walking? We zoomed inside and enjoyed just about the most delicious cup of coffee (actually ordinary decaf) which has ever passed my lips, and certainly the tastiest biscuits (actually they were ordinary custard creams) I have ever eaten. We met the vicar and several other members of the congregation, and they were lovely people, so friendly and welcoming. When we said we were walking 18 miles to Canterbury in that atrocious weather they clearly thought we were barmy – and to be absolutely honest, I had actually started to doubt my own sanity shortly before we had reached Shepherdswell (my wife has been doubting it for 30 years anyway).

Sadly, we couldn't stay too long, and after about 15 minutes (which felt like at least double that) we set off into the rain and wind, warmed by that coffee and by the sheer kindness of those people. Heads down in determined LDWA style, we trudged and splashed on. Luckily for us, the wind was mainly behind us, otherwise our progress would have been even more laborious. We passed Woolage Village and Womenswold, before starting that two-mile stretch of the North Downs Way which parallels the A2. As we were nearing the end of the stretch, it appeared that the wind and rain were actually easing – but we didn't really believe it, either because we didn't think it was possible or because we were so sodden we didn't care, or perhaps both.

But by the time we were approaching Patricxbourne, on an enclosed path which is right next to the A2, the rain had stopped and the wind was easing. We started to smile, probably for the first time that day. Then as we walked through Patricxbourne, the sun (sun? we had forgotten such a thing existed) came out, and made us semi-dry as we marched into Canterbury, arriving at 3pm. Nicola made arrangements to go straight home to Sturry, while the two Mikes and myself headed straight for Weatherspoons at Burgate, where we had a much-needed hot meal and a couple of drinks, including a malt whisky each, in fact Mike R had two.

And I defy any Kent Group member reading this to say we didn't deserve them.

* ONE of the members of the Shepherdswell church congregation who were so friendly and welcoming was the mother of someone I used to work with, who e-mailed the following to one of my work colleagues the next day: *Heard about the tramp who staggered into Shepherdswell church on Sunday? Heck of a sight apparently. Sopping wet, covered in mud, shaking with the cold, a wild, famished look about him? Once they'd wrung him out, patted him dry and thawed him out, he bore a striking resemblance to Graham Smith. Me Old Mum enjoyed chatting to you Graham, and was most impressed that you were out rambling in that lot.*

CROSS CHANNEL CHALLENGE

NEXT year's summer walk in France will be on Saturday July 3. We will follow the same arrangements as we have for the last two years – taking Le Shuttle to Coquelles and leaving cars at the Auchan hypermarket. We will follow the same route as for the last two years, taking in the excellent viewpoints of Mont de Couple and Cap Blanc-Nez, and we should have time for a bit of shopping at Auchan and a meal before returning. More details in the next newsletter - but put July 3 in your diaries.

ANYONE FOR CROQUET?

by Tom Sinclair

SURPRISING as it may seem, two Kent Group members, Ian Needham and myself and our partners, Mrs. Clare Connarty and Mrs Vee Martin, respectively met in the final of the annual Wrotham Croquet Tournament on Sunday September 20. After a to-and-fro battle, full of drama and lasting more than four hours including a tea break, Vee and I emerged as victors by 26 points to 21. We were then presented with a welcome glass of wine, the trophy and a bottle of champagne. I shall now have to get the trophy engraved with two names which last appeared on it in 1985.

COMEDY CORNER

by Bill Gillibrand

ARE you sitting comfortably?

Once upon a time, in a land far away, a beautiful, independent, self-assured princess happened upon a frog as she sat contemplating ecological issues on the shores of an unpolluted pond in a verdant meadow near her castle.

The frog hopped into the princess's lap and said: "Elegant lady, I was once a handsome prince until an evil witch cast a

spell upon me. One kiss from you, however, and I will turn back into the dapper, young prince that I am, and then, my sweet, we can marry and set up house in yonder castle with my mother, where you can prepare my meals, clean my clothes, bear my children, and forever feel grateful for doing so.”

That night, on a meal of lightly sautéed frogs’ legs seasoned in a white wine and onion cream sauce, she chuckled to herself and thought: “I don’t think so!”

AND FINALLY ... FROM THE EDITOR

WELL, what a fine year we’ve had in Kent Group of the LDWA. In fact it’s probably one of the busiest – and most satisfying – years we’ve had since I joined our group in the mid-1990s. Very importantly, we’ve had three excellent events – the Sevenoaks Circular, the Andredsweald and the White Cliffs Challenge – which all produced great numbers of entrants.

The WCC, held at the new venue of Fowlmead Country Park in September, recorded a record number of entrants, which gave particular satisfaction to our little sub-committee – Joy Davies, Gordon Harker, Mike Pursey and myself – who have organised the event since we started it in 2005. We are, of course, backed up by scores of Kent Group members who offer their services as marshals, and do a marvellous job, many of them working through the night.

Neil Higham took over the running of our summer Weald challenge from Neal and Jan O’Rourke, and is due a lot of credit for handling this year’s Andredsweald so tremendously well – with the result that we had 139 entrants.

And, of course, there’s the Sevenoaks Circular, organised by our chairman Brian Buttifant for so many years in his usual unflappable, cheerful and highly efficient way, and which again produced some 300 entrants.

Kent Group has a very full programme of social walks, with Mike Ratcliff (who seems to spend all his non-working hours walking!) in particular organising so many extremely well thought out routes. Mike devises so many walks that sometimes walks secretary Mike Pursey has a job keeping up with them!

In May we had one of our best years ever on the LDWA flagship event – the annual Hundred. Sixteen Kent Group members took part in the Wessex Hundred – one of the highest numbers of entries from Kent ever – with all but two finishing.

And we’re not resting on our laurels. At the moment it looks like there will be at least 10 Kent Group members travelling north of the border to enter the Heart of Scotland 100 next May, with several more members manning a checkpoint.

Plus we’ve got the Sevenoaks Circular in May, the Heart of the Weald Challenge in July, and the White Cliffs Challenge (30 mile and 15 mile routes only next year) in September. Then there’s the return of the Sussex Stride, the third part of the Kent Surrey Sussex Triple Challenge - also in September, at which some members will be manning a checkpoint. We have also been asked to get involved with the Olympic year Hundred, and some of us are planning another Kent Hundred, this one around largely around part of our county’s coast (see above).

So we’ve got a very active group, organising walks which give much pleasure not only to ourselves but to people who come down to Kent from all over the country.

It is a real privilege for me to be a committee member, and in particular to edit our newsletter. As I have said before, it’s a labour of love. But please keep your articles coming. Honestly, I can’t get enough of them. Write about walks you’ve done, or perhaps walks you might like to do. Sound off about footpaths, challenge walks, other groups in the LDWA, Hundreds, walking etiquette – if you feel strongly about something, the chances are that other Kent Group members will share your views. You might have a joke or a funny story to share, as our secretary Bill Gillibrand does with his Comedy Corner which appears with each edition of the newsletter. It doesn’t matter how long or short your articles are, or even how offbeat - I can guarantee they will be used.

On behalf of the committee, sincere thanks to all Kent Group members for your fantastic help and friendship during the year. Have a very happy Christmas and enjoy lots of great walking in 2010.

Graham Smith



White Cliffs Challenge photos by Eric Rolfe



White Cliffs Challenge photos by Eric Rolfe



Social Walks photos by Mike Ratcliff