

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

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

# ***NEWSLETTER***



Mike Ratcliff on the summit of Sharp Haw (LDWA AGM walk)

**Number 81**



**April 2010**

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





## KENT GROUP SOCIAL WALKS APRIL to AUGUST 2010

### **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. Lunch stop at Alfriston.

Ldr: Graham Smith

### **Sun Apr 4 Foreland to Foreland**

(North Foreland Lighthouse to South Foreland Lighthouse) c23ml. Meet 8.30am St.Margaret's village c.p. GR TR358455, to arrange cars before driving to North Foreland. Maps: Exp 138 & 150.

Pub stop at Sandwich. Ldr: Graham Smith.

### **Sun Apr 11 Fuller's Follies**

c20ml. Meet 9am Robertsbridge GR TQ735234. Park on left just before rlwy stn. Map: Exp 124. Pub stop.

Ldr: Neal O'Rourke.

### **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.

### **Sat May 1 Cinque Ports Challenge**

c100km. Meet 10.15am Hastings rlwy stn GR TQ815096. An unsupported walk from Hastings to Sandwich, linking the Cinque Ports and associated towns. Finish at Sandwich rlwy stn. Includes night walking – bring warm clothes and torch. Maps: Exps 124, 125 & 138. Several cafes and pubs along the route for refreshments. Contact (Ldr) Graham Smith for more details. **See below.**

### **Sun May 9 Wittersham Wander**

c20ml. Meet 9am Wittersham Church GR TQ897270. Park on road. Map: Exp 125. Pub stop.

Ldr: Joy Davies.

### **Sun Jun 20 Rye Circular**

c24ml. Meet 8.45am at Rye in c.p.(£3) on A259, Winchelsea Road, on western bank of River Brede by bridge GR TQ918202 Map: Exp 125. Lunch stop at Peasmarsh. Ldr: Mike Ratcliff.

### **Sun Jun 27 Heart of the Weald Marshals' Walk**

For details contact Neil Higham.

### **Sat Jul 3 Summer French Challenge**

c.23mls from Coquelles, just outside Calais, after taking Le Shuttle at approx.7am. For further details contact leader **by**

**Monday June 7 LATEST.** Ldr: Graham Smith.

### **Sun Jul 11 Heart of the Weald Main Event**

See Events Diary

### **Sun Jul 18 Fish & Chips – Another Helping**

c20mls. Meet 8am in Jefferstone Lane, St. Mary's Bay GR TR090275. Map: Exp 125. Park on roadside near village hall. Pub stop (fish & chips optional). Ldr: Mike Pursey.

### **Sat Jul 24 Summer on the Downs**

Plumpton Green to Eastbourne (linear). Meet 9.45am at Plumpton Green rlwy stn GR TQ364162. Finish at Eastbourne stn on Sunday morning. A 100km day and night walk on the Sussex Downs. Return to Plumpton by train. Picnic lunch on Saturday. Main stop at Rottingdean (25 miles) for evening meal and provisions. Free 24 hour parking at Plumpton stn. Joint walk with London Group. **Please contact leader if you are interested.** Ldr: Mike Ratcliff.

### **Sun Jul 25 It's a Mint**

c10 + 8mls figure of eight. Walk either or both: 10mls morning and "after eight". Starts: 8.30am and 2.00pm at St. George's Church, Wrotham GR TQ612592. Maps: Exp 147/LR 188. Food available at the Rose and Crown.

Ldr: Ivan Waghorn.

### **Sun Aug 1 West of Sandwich**

c24ml. Meet 8.45am in c.p. on The Street (cnr of Pudding Lane), Ash. GR TR285583 Maps: Exps 138 & 150. Lunch stop at Goodnestone. Ldr: Mike Ratcliff.

### **Sat Aug 7 South Downs Thirty**

c.30mls. Meet 8am at Eastbourne, western end of promenade (B2103) by South Downs Way marker post GR TV600972. Park near school on left. Pub stops (bring packed lunch as food probably not available until c.22mls)

Ldr: Mike Pursey.

### **Sun Aug 15 Cream Tea Walk**

c20ml. Meet at Rolvenden Church GR TQ844312. Park on left near Village Hall. Map: Exp 125. Pub stop.

Ldr: Neal O'Rourke.

### **Sun Aug 22 Lenham to Eastling**

c26ml. Meet 8.45am in public c.p. behind The Dog and Bear pub, Maidstone Road, Lenham GR TQ897522 Map: Exp 149. Lunch stop at Eastling. Ldr: Mike Ratcliff.

### **Sun Sep 5 White Cliffs Challenge Marshals' Walk**

For details contact Mike Pursey.

### **Sun Sep 26 White Cliffs Challenge Main Event**

See Events Diary.

## **COMMITTEE MEMBERS**

Chairman – Brian Buttifant,

Secretary – Bill Gillibrand,

Treasurer – Neil Higham,

Members:

Graham Smith –

Nick Dockree –

Michael Headley –

Mike Ratcliff –

Mike Pursey –

Joy Davies –

Stephanie le Men –

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.

**Pictures on the inside cover and at the end of the Newsletter taken on the Sevenoaks Circular by Bryan Clarke, Nick Dockree and Eric Rolfe.**

## **A THANK YOU FROM ERIC ROLFE**

MORE properly GRACIAS to the White Cliffs walkers for £55 (US\$88) for DVD donations for the little orphanage in Bolivia.

## **NEW MEMBERS**

KENT Group of the LDWA currently has 115 members. New members are:

Judith Cowan, Canterbury; Jim Hawkins, Kennington, Ashford; Richard Hoskin, High Halden; Sharon Poole, Tonbridge. Please make them welcome when you meet them on walks.

## **NOT THE AGM? by Tom Sinclair**

WELL, yes and no. Yes, because what follows arises from what occurred at the AGM. No, because it does not relate to the mundane fodder normally associated with such meetings.

We heard about our checkpoint on the Heart of Scotland Hundred, about the HQ for the Sevenoaks Circular being at the Rugby Club, that the possibility of reviving the Tunbridge Wells Circular was again under consideration and that Kent Group might be invited to run a Hundred, starting and finishing in Canterbury in 2015.

Most importantly we heard from Gail Elrick, 100s convenor on the National Committee. About the plans for the Hundred in 2012, the year when the Olympic Games are to be held in London, the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the LDWA's founding and the Queen's Diamond Jubilee (dv) when an extra Bank Holiday, on Tuesday June 5, has been declared by the government. The linear route will start in Hackney, near, or possibly in, the Olympic Stadium, cross the Thames via the Greenwich pedestrian tunnel, use the Green Chain Walk through parks and open spaces in Kent before moving into Kent and Surrey countryside, going through Windsor Great Park and finishing near Eton Dorney, the venue for the Olympic rowing events. It had been hoped to have the finish at Eton Dorney but the Eton College authorities had, so far, not been co-operative. The route will visit some Olympic Games sites, other places of interest and places, such as Tanners Hatch Youth Hostel and Peaslake Post Office, associated with the founding of the LDWA. The word 'Olympic' could not be used in the name of the event which was yet to be decided.

In the course of a wide-ranging discussion a number of points arose, including:-

- a) the need for plenty of marshals, e.g. walkers' spouses, in the first seven miles of the route, particularly at the Greenwich pedestrian tunnel and the need for a contingency plan in the event of the tunnel being closed or a rail strike on the day;
- b) the fact that Windsor Great Park has to be closed during the hours of darkness, thus necessitating a deviation during the last five or so miles of the route and the possible use of a holding station, probably at Sunningdale, and/or buses;
- c) Kent Group's help and support, by identifying checkpoints and maintaining their section of the route was essential for the success of the event;
- d) some members of Beds, Bucks and Northants, Surrey and Thames Valley Groups had already volunteered to perform some of the roles identified for the steering committee and Essex & Herts Group would help on the day as usual, however, more volunteers were still needed to carry out some of those roles;
- e) some of those present were concerned that, unlike most previous Hundreds, the route used city streets and not so much open countryside but many others felt that it was a courageous and imaginative concept and should be supported;
- f) because of the unusual nature of the event it was thought that more entries, possibly from abroad, might be attracted and, although the usual conditions of entry, including a 50 mile qualifier (with discretion), would apply, some

consideration was being given to allowing more than 500 starters on this occasion alone but the obvious implications in terms of the need for more marshals and checkpoint staff were recognised and it was suggested that the views of all members could be sought through the columns of Strider.

g) the use of a linear route would create the need for transport to be provided from the finish to the start;

h) some, if not all, of the above points were relevant also to the marshals' walk.

If you were not able to attend the AGM or even if you have thought of something relevant since, please convey your ideas to Graham Smith, details above.

NB This is one individual's view of the subject.

## **NEWS OF KENT CHALLENGE WALKS**

### **Heart of the Weald Challenge**

THIS year's High Weald challenge walk will be on Sunday July 11, and will again be organised by Neil Higham. It will be based at the Commemoration Hall, Wadhurst, with two distances – 26 and 15 miles. It will be over the same route as the last time the HOTW was put on three years ago. The marshals' walk will be held on Sunday June 27.

People willing to marshal on the event are asked to contact Neil – details above.

### **White Cliffs Challenge**

AS reported in the last newsletter, this year's WCC will return to Fowlmead Country Park, just outside Deal, where it was held last year, on Sunday September 26. There will be two routes – 30 miles and 15 miles – with the marshals' walk on Sunday September 5.

## **KSS (KENT SURREY SUSSEX TRIPLE CHALLENGE)**

THIS year sees the third leg of the KSS, with the Sussex Stride returning over the weekend of September 18/19, and the marshals' walk held over the August Bank Holiday weekend of August 28/29. This will be the first time the Sussex Stride has been put on since it was, sadly, discontinued in 2005, apart from an unsupported event put on last year. Kent Group will be manning a checkpoint at East Dean Village Hall (28.6 miles, and open between 2.15pm-8pm) – members wishing to help man it are asked to contact Graham Smith (details above).

We have just heard that next year's Surrey Tops will be held over the weekend of April 9/10. We will again be asked to organise a checkpoint – more details in further newsletters.

Very attractive KSS badges and certificates have been designed by Keith Warman.

## **HEART OF SCOTLAND 100**

AS this newsletter went to press, some 12 Kent Group members had entered this year's 100 – which, considering how far the event actually is from our county, is an excellent total (this is, of course, some way short of the Kent Group record of 32, set for the Downsman 100 in 1997 – which, after all, took place in our adjoining county of Sussex).

Good luck to all Kent Group members taking part – it promises to be one of the LDWA's most memorable Hundreds ever, if not THE most memorable.

The Heart of Scotland 100 will be based at Dunkeld in Perthshire, and Kent Group will be co-manning with South Pennine Group at the checkpoint at Fortingall, at 72.5 miles. It will be open from 3.45am to 8pm on the Sunday, and Kent has been allocated first shift. Members wishing to help man the CP are asked to contact Brian Buttifant – details above.

## **HOUSMAN 100**

THE 2011 100 will be based at Ludlow, Shropshire, and the route will go through parts of Herefordshire, South Shropshire and the Cluns area. Chairman Brian Buttifant has been in contact with Chris Dawes of Marches Group, and we have been asked to provide a checkpoint at Newcastle – no, not THAT Newcastle, nor the one near Stoke. This will be the one on the Welsh border, at 41.9 miles. Provisional arrangements are that it will be open between 6pm on the Saturday and 6am on the Sunday.

## **OLYMPIC YEAR 100**

AS members will recall, National Committee Hundreds Coordinator Gail Elrick spoke at our AGM about the plans for an Olympic year Hundred in 2012. She was joined by her husband John, who is also one of the organisers for the Olympic year Hundred.

Gail spoke very enthusiastically and impressively about the event. It is planned that the route will start from near the Olympic stadium in Stratford, then go out of London via the Greenwich Tunnel and use parts of routes like the Green Chain Walk and the London Loop, before heading through part of north-west Kent and then taking a route through Surrey before finishing at Windsor. Gail explained that the event is going to be very 'different' and certainly 'special.' The first 25 miles are likely to be urban or suburban walking, and the whole route is likely to be uncomplicated, and definitely not boring.

Kent Group committee has agreed to support the project, and Gail has been informed that Neil Higham, Mike Ratcliff

and Graham Smith are happy to serve on a steering committee if required. We will, of course, be required to organise a checkpoint, and this may be at Eltham Palace, in the early part of the route.

It is fair to say that some Kent Group members have had some misgivings about some aspects of the event, which were aired at the monthly pub meet held after the AGM, and it was decided that chairman Brian Buttifant would write to Gail airing our concerns. Brian's letter says the idea – and it is no more than that - of upping the number of entries to more than 500 is wrong\*, as this is the standard maximum number of entrants on LDWA Hundreds, and that more would place an unduly heavy burden on staff at checkpoints. Brian's letter also points out that in the event of the Olympic stadium and/or the Greenwich foot tunnel being closed for security reasons, the walk should perhaps be started in Greenwich Park. Brian's letter also voices concern over the plans to finish the walk at Windsor Great Park – where, because walkers will not be allowed through at night, the current suggestion is to bus people to a nearby point where they would be able to continue the walk. Brian's letter says that consideration should be given to changing the route so as to avoid the Great Park, possibly using the Thames Path, and thus removing the problem.

The Olympic year Hundred is likely to be a fantastic event – possibly the most memorable Hundred ever, and should raise the profile of the LDWA in a way never seen before. It is excellent that Kent Group is going to get involved, and it is by raising concerns now – as our chairman has done with his letter – that any potential difficulties can be addressed.

If other Kent Group members have views about the Olympic year Hundred plans, they should send them to the newsletter editor (contact details above) for inclusion in the next newsletter. They can also be passed onto Gail.

\* AT the national AGM it was decided to keep the number of entrants to 500.

### **IDEA FOR A KENT COASTAL HUNDRED**

IN the last newsletter it was reported that some Kent Group members were pursuing an idea for a Kent Coastal Hundred. The idea is that the event would be based at Simon Langton School in Canterbury – where the Millennium Hundred, the last Hundred organised by the group – was based. The route has largely been sorted. It would follow the Elham Valley Way to Lyminge, where it would pick up our White Cliffs Challenge route to the coast, which it would follow to Deal, from where it would go inland in a loop to Sandwich. It would then follow the cycle path through the Pfizer complex to Pegwell Bay Nature Reserve, and then take the coast around Thanet to Reculver, from where it would head south and pick up the Stour Valley Walk back to Canterbury. This would be the first Hundred the group has organised since 2000, and would obviously be a massive undertaking, and for which we would require lots of help. The idea has been put to national chairman Paul Lawrence, and national Hundreds coordinator Gail Erick. Nothing has yet been agreed, but we have been asked to continue making our plans for a Kent Coastal Hundred, possibly with a view to the event happening in 2015. Members will be kept informed of progress through the newsletter.



*Kent Group's New Year's Day walk. Picture by Gary Thompson*

### **MIKE PURSEY**

MANY Kent Group members will be aware that during the New Year's Day walk, from Rye to Hastings which he was leading, Mike Pursey slipped on the ice while walking along Barley Lane, just outside Hastings, and broke his femur. Mike was taken to the Conquest Hospital in Hastings, where he had an operation and had to stay there for 10 days. Mike has been recovering well, and plans to go to Scotland in May for his annual hill-walking trip with Graham Smith. Although he will not be taking part in the Heart of Scotland 100, Mike does plan to join other Kent Group members in marshalling during the event. Mike was making good progress as the newsletter went to press, and has sent the following message:

I would like to thank everyone who sent me "get well" messages after my accident on New Year's Day. And, naturally, my gratitude to my fellow walkers who were supportive at the time of my mishap and, also, to those who have given me much help since. It's these things that help push you along the road to recovery. Thank you all. Mike.

## **SOME NOTES FROM THIS YEAR'S LDWA AGM**

**by Mike Ratcliff**



*Delegates at the national AGM ascend Sharp Haw. Picture by Mike Ratcliff*

HAVING dallied too long with the idea of taking part in 2008's Yoredale Hundred, it was a pleasure to finally see the wonderful setting of that great event that I missed out on in Skipton, North Yorkshire. The national AGM takes place in mid March each year and is, of course, usually located within easy reach of good walking country for the main walk of the weekend on the Saturday.

This year the three-day event started on Friday March 12, and from lunchtime on the first day, LDWA enthusiasts from all over the U.K. began to congregate at the Rendezvous Hotel just south of the town centre in Skipton. My own journey north was one of great personal interest, choosing to drive the distance there and back, allowing me a chance to see the changing topography from southern Britain up the spine of the country, eventually to arrive just east of the Pennines near Leeds and then over those great hills into North Yorkshire and the gateway to the Dales.

Friday afternoon was relaxed at the hotel with many old friends meeting up and much chat and gossip being indulged in regarding interesting group walks and recent challenge events. By the evening the mood was extremely merry and a lovely buffet was laid on for our group which was by now a couple of hundred strong. A truly amazing meal, probably the best of the weekend, concluding with what was honestly the most gorgeous desert I've ever tasted – an obscenely sweet toffee and chocolate gateau!

Everyone had a choice of activity on the Saturday with four walks on offer of varying lengths, the longest being a 20-mile hike up into the Dales which I took part in. A fifth choice was also available for those of a more leisurely nature which took the form of a guided cultural and architectural walk around Leeds. The walk I joined in was plain and simply fantastic! Led by Andrew Ward and Ralph Warman, 40 or so of us walkers began the route from the hotel itself, taking the canal towpath into Skipton and around the defences of the town's castle. We then gradually made our climb up into the hills and were throughout the morning treated to a gloriously clear and sunny day with a surprisingly distinct warmth emanating from an almost cloudless horizon. It was only when we reached the highest ground of the walk on our approach to the peak of Sharp Haw that we were temporarily surrounded by some low cloud which sadly hampered our view of the beautifully undulating hills and valleys of the Yorkshire Dales. With the sun now back with us and a balmy spring day now well in the making, we ventured on through a fairly exposed and bleak landscape of limestone rock, scraggy vegetation and the intricate network of dry stone walls that gives much of the Pennine area its richly distinctive character. Taking a circuitous route down and over a few lower hills and meandering through some charming valleys north of Skipton, we gradually made our way back to the Leeds and Liverpool canal with Gargrave and Wharfedale beneath us and eventually back into town. On our way the visibility increased to a fantastic degree with stunning views across three counties – West Yorkshire to the south, to the north looking deeper up into the Yorkshire Dales and finally a striking view of Pendle Hill to the west which rises up out of East Lancashire.

With a well earned rest available at the hotel and time to kill before the main meal of the weekend, most of us enjoyed drinks and an animated chat which epitomised the warm and friendly feeling that the weekend left with me. Gradually, as the other groups returned from their individual experiences from that day we finally congregated for the Gala Dinner – a four course banquet that everyone really seemed to enjoy and by this time we were really letting go. So after far too



much eating and drinking and some barn dancing, co-ordinated by Ken Falconer to wrap up the final fun of the day, I turned in for the night feeling serenely happy, outrageously full but with a peace of mind to match!

As you may have expected, the main objective of this gathering each year is, after all, the main AGM meeting itself. But by the Saturday night after the fun of the previous two days, this was starting to feel like an afterthought. Not for long, thankfully, as after several helpings of Full English in the hotel's breakfast suite on Sunday morning we eventually began formal business at 10am. We proceeded with the usual formalities of appointing new members to the Executive Committee and receiving reports regarding the organisation's accounts which are currently in a state of excellent health. We also heard reports from our chairman Paul Lawrence.

Membership is at its highest ever level and is growing fast – at the moment substantially up on 2009, especially with a notable influx of women, making the gender ratio of new members roughly a 50/50 split, whereas in the past it has been predominantly men. Membership stood at around 6,400 as the renewals season began. There has been much positive publicity recently with articles in *Trail Magazine*, Julie Welch's book *Out On Your Feet* and the *UK Trail Walkers Handbook* that came out in the autumn. The handbook in particular is proving a brilliant success with impressive sales so far and is now generating a profit income after covering its substantial design and manufacturing costs. There had been a long gap since the last similar edition in 2002, and during that time there were major advances in book production technology and changes in the book trade itself, along with the contributions in design and marketing from our new publisher Cicerone that were reflected in the quality and price of the new product. The new guide has been well received by both members and the public, with about 2000 copies sold in the first couple of months, putting the book in the top rank in its relevant classes on Amazon-UK on several occasions.

On the long distance path side we were reminded that we continue to be the leading provider of information about the UK trails network as a whole, now supplementing the comprehensive online service with the new handbook. Further developments have been made online to the huge project of our new website which should be live from the last week in March, providing some mapping to make the trail network easier to visualise and enabling the viewer to research such information as accommodation along the way. How much further we can take this will depend mainly on the current government initiatives to make more mapping data free to all comers. Within the organisation as a whole there seems to be a very strong support to this exciting prospect as the truly immense potential for free OS style mapping data hardly needs stating for any keen walker. However, concerns were voiced over the continued excellence in quality of UK mapping and the potential compromise to this that opening up the market could possibly bring. A formal response to the latest government proposals is currently being worked on by the LDWA. The committee is also keen to implement an environmental policy for the organisation but has so far lacked sufficient resources.

As far as future hundreds are concerned, the Heart of Scotland Hundred route has been altered slightly but all for the good and there is talk about the exciting prospect of forming a new second local group north of the border as a result of the event. The walking culture seems to be changing there and proving much more conducive for the LDWA. The 2012 Hundred seems to be causing a lot of controversy and excitement in equal measure with concerns over accommodation and transport at the time being the major issue. The fact that a resurgence of linear hundreds seems to be taking place was another hot topic of discussion as both the 2012 and 2013 events will now certainly be linear. The main talking point that came later in the open discussion time was surprisingly, to me, based on the entry system of future hundreds. Strong opposition now seems to be growing to the current ballot system and now favouring a much simpler first come, first served system. Although the current system has been in place now for many years, it was felt by members that the culture and climate had now changed hugely due to new technologies and online entry and the ease that people can now apply for events. A new simpler system it was felt would be fairer to all.

After an awful lot of coffee and biscuits I said my farewells to many familiar friends I had spent time with over the previous three days, but what was really nice was that I also said goodbye to many characters who were totally new to me, even though I may have heard their names mentioned in conversation before but never having met in person. With the knowledge that I would probably see most of them all again on a group walk or challenge event soon, I left Yorkshire with a great satisfaction and sense of achievement from my time there and am now certainly looking forward to next year – hopefully in the Cotswolds!

## **STRIDERS AND KENT GROUP NEWSLETTERS**

STRIDER No.33 August 1982 had a picture of Roger Cole and Di Bullard. They were the only members to have completed all ten of the LDWA Hundreds since the annual competition's inception.

In that same year at the AGM, Mac McArther retired as chairman and Geoff Saunders took over for the next three years. Talking, dancing, dinner and a guest speaker made for an enjoyable evening. On the Sunday there was a variety of walks. For some a visit to the Cat and Fiddle and then the final departure from the Palace Hotel.

In 1980 the Kent Group (with the agreement from the AGM) had discussed the possibility of holding the 1982 event as 140 miles from Winchester and a 100 miles from Guildford, all to finish at Canterbury. A great deal of planning and work was done during the next two years and we were able to start on May 29 1982. We had help from the Surrey and the Wessex groups, quite apart from the number from Kent. I won't name all the Kent group apart from Peter Rickards. He was a tower of strength and always seemed to carry out any major jobs and on the day acted as chief marshall.



On the day before the start, Celia and I went down to Winchester and stayed overnight. I didn't sleep very well, but was OK by morning. Seventy-four started from the park in Winchester at 10am. Celia used the car and I met her on a few places on the route. In a short time we were all shepherded across the busy main road outside Winchester by the police, and were then on very quiet paths and roads once the traffic had been left behind. After a few miles we had to jump over a stream. One of my feet landed on a hard bank, the other in mud. It did seem to strain the leg a little and this gradually worsened towards the end.

We reached Guildford and broke up by the time we reached Redhill in the dusk. At checkpoint three I found somewhere to get some sleep for one or two hours. One group woke me, I went to sleep again for a short while and then got under way again. Over two bridges and on the path above the M25. Eventually on the route I met Celia in the car outside Kemsing Station as I walked by. Some food and water and soon away again on the other side of the railway following the footpath. Through Kemsing and uphill, then continued on a path which eventually drops down, over a road then a field, to turn left on a footpath. At Wrotham I turned left over the M20 and then along a quiet road, where that road turned right, after  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a mile I turned left up a track to join the road at the top. Keeping ahead on that road after about 50 yards I turned right at a building (which is probably still a public house). Down that road and after about 100 yards up the bank, through a gate and there were four other walkers getting ready to walk after a short rest.

I kept with them and we managed - the five of us, plus one more - to keep together. We still had 40 miles to cover and helped each other. We had to follow the paths north-east over the River Medway, where we had something to eat. Peter Rickards was organising this. There were nearly 350 who enjoyed the food, which helped us on the way to the finish at Canterbury. Those who helped must have been completely beaten by the end.

The route from there was towards Charing and then onto the North Downs Way, turning left at Boughton Aluph, aiming for Canterbury. Once there we went a few hundred yards on a path alongside the river, and then turned into the leisure centre to finish.

I stumbled down the stairs, had a short sleep, but had to be carried up the stairs and put in the car. Celia drove and I'm sure that she was glad to get home and not have to do it again, although she never says so.

More to come.

## **FAMILY LUNCH AND WALK**

**by Graham Smith**

TO say the seven-mile walk which preceded our family lunch on December 6 was wet, is a bit like saying football is a game played with a round ball, or that Christmas is a religious festival. But more about the walk in a bit.

Our Family Lunch was held, for the third year running, at London Beach Hotel, just outside Tenterden. Once again we could hardly have picked a better venue – lovely surroundings and an excellent, very filling meal, served by extremely helpful staff. It looks like we will be going back this year, news which I am sure will please every Kent LDWA member who attended the December one.

As I drove to Tenterden from Deal, the weather was absolutely atrocious. There was hard, driving rain and a wind which was blowing so hard I had to grip my steering wheel really hard to keep control of the car as I drove along the A20 between Dover and Folkestone. I had been planning to take Joy Davies but she telephoned me at 7.45 on the Sunday morning to say she didn't fancy the weather. Actually neither did I, but I knew there were nice hot showers at the hotel, so if I got as wet as I thought I would, I knew I could change into dry clothes.

Six of us assembled in the hotel car park for the walk – leader Neal O'Rourke, Nicola Foad, three of our group's Mikes (Headley, Pursey and Ratcliff) and myself. Fortunately, just as we were about to set off, the rain stopped, the heavy clouds passed and the sun came out, to our very pleasant surprise.

And I have to say right now that it was a very nice walk, albeit one with a bit of incident (I think that's one way to put it). The route followed pleasant paths over fields, tracks and some lanes, and I had been expecting it to be wet underfoot, but to be honest I had not been expecting it to be quite the quagmire it was. The first inkling we had that the conditions might test us was when Nicola slipped over on saturated grass during the first mile. She fell on what is probably the fleshiest part of her slim frame (is that put delicately enough, Nicola?). I certainly wasn't laughing, because I was pretty certain I would do likewise before we got back to the hotel (as it happened, I remained upright but I did encounter a problem of my own, of which more later).

There had been so much rain over the previous month that the fields were just awash. In fact some of them were more like ponds than fields. The higher ground was, of course, generally OK, but lower down, particularly near some of the gates, the mud had become like a massive chocolate gâteau, and went halfway up our calves. But it was getting sunnier, and warmer, by the minute, so we were a contented little bunch of Kent walkers as we paddled along.

Then, shortly after before High Halden, came the next incident. We were required to cross a stream, and the only way we could do so was by using a one foot wide plank placed across it. Mike Pursey started to go over first, and no sooner had he said "This is a bit slippery" – when splash! he slipped on the plank and went into the stream up to his thighs. He clambered up on the other side and began shaking the water off his trousers. I was next, inching my way along the plank to the other side, followed by the other four, who inched their way across as slowly as I did.

The next incident came when my foot accidentally touched an electrified fence. The bit I touched actually had a protective rubber casing on it but it still gave me a shock, which I was wasn't very happy about. The shock made me

exclaim “Bless my soul!” (well, that’s not exactly what I said – this is a family newsletter after all, and we are talking about our Family Lunch).

Then came the next incident. We should have walked along a lane, but the lane was a good six inches deep in water. So we instead walked – or rather splashed – along the grass verge, next to which was a ditch, which was about two feet deep in water. And it was the unfortunate Mike Pursey who somehow missed his footing and went feet-first into that ditch.

After that the rest of the walk was still very wet, but there were no further mishaps. I must say we were all a bit concerned when at one stage leader Neal picked up a thick, seven-foot long branch – “Is that for our next mission?” asked Mike Headley. Actually it was – Neal laid it across a stream to help us get across, clinging to strands of a wire fence as we did so.

We got back to the hotel in glorious summer sunshine, and I must give Neal a lot of credit for planning a very nice route.

The lunch, as I say above, was excellent. Apart from the meal itself and the delightful surroundings, it was – as always – nice to meet and talk with other Kent Group members, some of whom are not able to walk as well as they used to. It looks like we will be going back to the London Beach Hotel this year, so as Tenterden is on Neal’s patch I hope he will be leading another pre-lunch walk, but I also hope it will be a bit dryer underfoot.

## **FAMILY LUNCH AND WALK**

**by Neal O’Rourke**

HAVING been entertaining the previous evening I over slept and arrived late at this year’s venue to lead the walk.

On a very damp and miserable morning, having donned boots and waterproofs I joined the group of walkers similarly attired who had been patiently waiting for my arrival. We set off crossing the road and soon realised that the drizzle had stopped and the sun had come out. Soon our tops came off and we were making our way to High Halden, which was passed through and left behind. We encountered a small wood. Mike Pursey had taken the lead and proceeded to cross a stile onto a sleeper bridge. What he did not know, and us likewise, was that it was not secure and was floating, therefore he was forced to step into the stream. The rest of us, with some assistance, crossed safely with dry feet.

As I had pre-walked this route recently, I guessed that the way ahead was also be impassable. So we changed direction, which would mean more road walking than was planned. We reached a lane and turned right and we were soon passing a garden when the owner told us that our way ahead was also flooded, which it was and found to be deep in places.

Mike, being in front again, at this point chose to use the grass verge as it was slightly higher in the water, until it gave way and he slid into the stream. We probably thought that he was going to give us some swimming lessons.

However he made his way back to the bank safely.

We then proceeded to finish the walk without any more mishaps.

Mike was to say later that he was quite dry despite his encounters.

## **THE SOUTH DOWNS WAY IN THREE AND A HALF DAYS**

**by Graham Smith**



*On the summit of Butser Hill – the highest point on the South Downs. Picture by Richard Allison*

FOUR Kent Group members – Mike Headley, Roger Munn, Mike Ratcliff and myself – plus Richard Allison from London Group, completed the 100 mile (approx.) South Downs Way national trail on March 1-4. For the previous week – the last week of February – the weather had been atrociously wet and miserable, and I don’t mind admitting I was getting a bit twitchy about our prospects. But I had a telephone call from a quite excited Roger on the day before

our departure, to say the weather forecast for our week was sunny, so we were likely to be OK. I had advised everyone to be as minimalist as possible with their packing, as we had a couple of long days planned, and we would have to carry everything we needed. As it turned out, we had three and a half very enjoyable – but quite challenging – days.

**Day 1: Winchester-East Meon (approx. 20 miles).**

The two Mikes, Roger and myself met Richard at Winchester, as he had decided to make his own way there. We met at the cathedral – which does not appear to be the official start of the walk, but it's certainly an ideal place from which to start a delightful trek like the South Downs Way. We set off at 12.30pm, and it didn't take us long to get out of the city and onto the rolling downs. We had good walking and plenty of sunshine all afternoon. The route gave us extensive views – which were most impressive to the south, where we could see the Isle of Wight. For me Old Winchester Hill was the highlight of that first day. It's a fairly stiff climb, but you are rewarded with great views, and you also have a most enjoyable ridge. By then it was early evening, and we diverted from the SDW to the village of East Meon, where we had a nice meal in a pub before getting out torches and gloves (as it was then pretty cold) to walk the last three miles to the Sustainability Centre – run by the EarthWorks Foundation, which promotes organic living and which includes a hostel - where we were staying, and which is right on the route.

**Day 2: East Meon-Amberley (31 miles).**

This was a long day, but a most enjoyable one. The sun was out again, and it didn't take us long to reach Butser Hill, at 888 feet the highest point on the South Downs. Of course we had marvellous panoramic views, with the Isle of Wight still very clear. We then dropped down to cross the A3 and go through Queen Elizabeth Country Park, near Buriton, where the SDW used to end (or begin) until it was extended to Winchester at the end of the 1980s. We then took more good tracks, often enclosed by woods, to Harting Down, another fine viewpoint. We then had our steepest climb of the trip – Beacon Hill – and then lots more good tracks. Although these were often enclosed by trees, there were loads of excellent viewpoints – including Cocking Down, Heyshott Down and Westburton Hill. The last few miles brought extensive views across what is known as the Amberley gap. The heavy rain of the previous couple of weeks had made the water meadows flood quite heavily, and made for quite an impressive sight. Mike R, Richard and myself followed the SDW across one of these flooded water meadows, and had to clamber along a fence in an effort (unsuccessful in my case) to avoid getting wet feet. Mike H and Roger were more sensible, taking a short diversion to the village of Houghton. The two Mikes, Richard and myself arrived at the Sportsman Inn at Amberley, where we were staying, just before it got dark, Roger arriving shortly afterwards.

**Day 3: Amberley-Kingston (31 miles).**

Another long day, made longer than it should have been because, foolishly, I had underestimated the mileage. I told the others it would be 28 miles (long enough in any case) but a closer inspection of the route would have revealed it to be a good three miles more than that – which, in very early March, when it gets dark at 6.30pm, was pretty important. Anyway, it still proved to be a great day, and there weren't any complaints (I didn't hear any anyway!)

We set off from the excellent Sportsman Inn – where we had all enjoyed excellent breakfasts - just before 9am. A short climb brought us onto the Downs again, with fine views which we were to enjoy all day (or until it got dark). In a few miles the fine track brought us to Chanctonbury Ring, famous for its clump of beech trees and offering more marvellous views – which for me were the highlight of the day. We had good paths and great views all day - with Devil's Dyke another superb viewpoint – and were making good progress. When Mike R, Richard and myself reached Ditchling Beacon, I checked the guide book, and it dawned on me that I had underestimated the day's distance by a good three miles. Mike H and Roger were both behind, and I figured that as it would be dark before too long and as none of us had stayed in Kingston before, it would be best if Mike R, Richard and myself cracked on to the village and found the guest houses where we were staying, keeping in touch with the other two by mobile phone. Crack on we did, and by the time we reached the A27 it was just about dark. We still had a good couple of miles to go, which we negotiated by torchlight before descending off the Downs into Kingston. Fortunately the guest houses were close to the route. We three arrived at about 7.30, Mike H getting there an hour later, and Roger arriving just before 10pm, having walked a good three and a half hours alone in the dark and on an unfamiliar route – a fine achievement. Despite the rigours of the day, in terms of scenery it was probably the best day of the walk.

**Day 4: Kingsdown-Eastbourne (20 miles).**

The good side of under estimating the previous day's mileage (if there **was** a good side) meant I had over estimated the last day's mileage. I checked the guide book and found it was going to be considerably less than the 26 I had originally thought – which would prove to be very helpful on the last day, when we all had trains to catch to get back home. We set off just before 9am again, soon getting back onto the Downs. The sun was shining again, but there was a fairly stiff breeze which we were walking into. We followed the ridge before dropping down to cross the River Ouse and then climbed up to Itford Hill. The whole five-mile stretch from there to Alfriston, going past Firle Beacon, is a delight – great views on either side and a green carpet of a track to walk on. We reached Alfriston for lunch, where the two Mikes, Richard and myself decided to opt for the footpath to the Seven Sisters and Eastbourne, three miles longer than the bridle path, which Roger – who was behind us – took. The four of us had decided we wanted the variety of the coastal route. It meant we, sadly, had to leave the South Downs, but we followed a nice route along the bank of the River Cuckmere, then the village of Litlington and the hamlet of Westdean, where there is a green telephone box, to the



Seven Sisters Country Park. The Seven Sisters, followed by Belle Tout and Beachy Head, were as spectacular as always, and we all finished in plenty of daylight (which was a welcome change after the previous two days). There's a one and a half mile walk from the end of the SDW to Eastburne Railway Station, and as we all finished at different times and as the wind was pretty cold, we weren't able to join up for a celebratory drink at the end.

But we had enjoyed three and a half days of walking excellent tracks among the best scenery in the South East, and we had been amazingly lucky with the weather. So if any other Kent Group members fancy tackling the South Downs Way, I can't recommend it enough – in fact I would be more than happy to lend anyone interested in the route my guide book (whose maps are so detailed you don't really need to invest in other maps).

### **THE SOUTH DOWNS WAY: MARITA'S ALTERNATIVE VERSION by Marita Saunders**

I ALWAYS wanted to walk the South Downs Way in one go. Now I have, thanks to Graham and the Kent Group. The original idea was to go with the group. Once I knew that our fastest, fittest walkers would feature in the group composition I knew I had better not attempt the full package. But I looked at the positives. Having enjoyed several of Mike Pursey's circular SDW walks in recent years, I was familiar with some of the territory. And accommodation would not be hard to find in early March. Enough reasons to just do it.

Resourced with the Cicerone guide and a Harvey's National Trail map – plus wind-up torches and minimal kit including basic waterproof gear - I just did it.

Plodding a bit here, doing a couple of unintended circular bits there, tackling various varieties of mud in most places, slower pace than I had expected – so I took five days, not four. No problem.

It was good to meet the group when they swiftly overtook me on day one, and I look forward to hearing all about their experience. Meanwhile, each of my solo, but sociable (lots of walkers around – memorably LDWA 100s veteran Dennis from IoW – who camped out at night!) days ended with a very comfortable night. I highly recommend the accommodation I found in Exton, South Harting, Washington and (just a couple of miles off route) Lewes.

Thank you Graham for the idea, and thank you Mike for some early practice – I'd like to do it again.

### **NEW LOCAL GROUPS SECRETARY**

JOHN Phillips was elected the LDWA's new Local Group secretary at the AGM, held at Skipton (see the piece by Mike Ratcliff above) and has sent the following message to secretary Bill Gillibrand:

Hi everyone,

Following Nicky's glowing reference I thought it best if I introduced myself. At the AGM I was elected to the position of Local Groups Secretary which will also incorporate the previously independent role of Group Walks Co-ordinator.

I do not claim to be an expert in any particular field but am willing to give any help and support where it is needed.

I am a current group secretary with the newly formed South Pennine Group so I feel I have an appreciation of the difficulties faced by group secretaries/walk secretaries.

It is my intention to try and walk with as many groups as I can during the next 12 months as it would help me enormously to understand the different issues facing groups.

Just for the information of any who did not make the AGM, the committee was elected as described in your pre AGM papers (12 nominations/12 positions).

Now I do need a favour - prior to being nominated for the post I booked a week's holiday after the Hundred and do not return home until the end of the first week of June. The deadline for the walks programme is May 28, which is the day I go away. Not wishing to sacrifice the 100 or the holiday, I would be extremely grateful if the group walks coordinators in your local groups could work to a tighter deadline for the next Strider. Could I suggest May 18 as this is also my first attempt at this role and want to get it right. If this presents a particular problem to any group please could you let me know.

Thanks in anticipation of your help and I look forward to meeting you all in the not too distant future.

In conclusion I would like to thank both Nicky and Nicole for the work they undertook on behalf of the LDWA and hope they are now able to enjoy a bit more time walking.

### **WALKING IN MID WALES by Jill Green**

LAST September I walked part of the Offas Dyke Path and went on to take part in the Welsh 4 Days from Llanwrtyd Wells. I had enjoyed this event in 2008 and I really like this pretty, unspoilt area of Mid Wales. I noticed on the list of future events there was a Real Ale Ramble on November 21-22, with three distances on offer – 10, 15 or 25 miles. On the Viking Way I discovered I liked trying different local beers and I decided to book up.

I found an independent hostel attached to the Stonecroft pub, costing £6 per night – basic and warm, with a kitchen. Then I booked my advanced railway ticket, very reasonable indeed at £11.20 each way.

On Friday November 20 I was at my bus stop at 7am to get down to the village for the train to meet the ferry for

Portsmouth. I got the Cardiff train to Newport, the Manchester train to Craven Arms, then I got the Heart of Wales line to Llanwrtyd – a real adventure. I could not fail to notice lots of fields under water. I thought there wouldn't be any more rain, but I was wrong.

On Saturday November 21 we walked in heavy rain **all day**. As I was on the 25-mile route, I was given four tokens – half a pint of beer at each of the checkpoints and one at the end. I had taken my pint mug and I did very well, sampling four different local beers. Sunday brought yet more rain. The streams were torrents, the bogs were deep and during the night we had thunder and lightning. When my companion Jane and I learned there were no checkpoints on the A route loop, we decided to miss that out and cut it short. This was especially wise considering the checkpoint van had got marooned between two impassable streams that had turned into rivers. The driver was rescued and the van abandoned – that was the reason it wasn't there for the 25-mile walkers.

Jane and I still walked quite a long way in constant driving rain and wind. Just think how thrilled we were to find a refreshment van not shown on the map we had been given. It had been repositioned so all routes would visit it. We were very happy to be able to exchange our beer tokens for hot chocolate, pints of tea, veggie burgers and bacon butties. I kept one beer token for the finish of the walk. Jane used all hers as she was going to drive home.

Such a shame about that terrible weather, nevertheless I did enjoy it and I will always remember it. I met a couple who had done the Real Ale Ramble 10 times. They told me it had never been so mad. I will certainly be doing it again. It is an IVV event so I collected my distance and event stamps.

I would like to recommend the independent hostel I stayed at, Stonecroft Hostel. It has all the facilities walkers require, including a washing machine and tumble dryer, as well as a self-catering kitchen. It sleeps 36. I had a five-bedded room to myself. It is possible to book a single room. The walks start at the Neuadd Arms Hotel. The landlord Lindsey and his wife Catherine organise it all, and they run a very good hotel with an excellent dining room. It has 21 bedrooms. If you wish to stay there book early, as they are very popular. Telephone numbers – Neuadd Arms 01591 610236, Stonecroft Hostel 01591 610327.

I had some really pleasant walks. I was told Llanwrtyd Wells has won the Calor Gas Best Village award for 2009. This is surprising as villagers pride themselves on living in the smallest town in Britain.

### **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 and 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. 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 takeaway meal (probably fish and chips) at Folkestone, which is more than halfway. This will involve walking through the night, so anyone going should take warm clothing, a torch and sufficient refreshments to last for 100k. We should reach Sandwich some time after 6am on the Sunday. From Sandwich trains can be taken to Dover and beyond. The Cinque Ports Challenge is a very interesting walk and will be good training for anyone tackling the Heart of Scotland 100 – but it is also a very long one which should not be underestimated.

People interested in it should contact organiser Graham Smith, whose details are above.

### **CROSS CHANNEL CHALLENGE**

THIS year's summer French walk will be on Saturday July 3, and will follow the same tried and trusted arrangements we have taken for the last two years – taking Le Shuttle to Coquelles and leaving cars at the Auchan hypermarket. We are likely to follow the route as before, although we might make a small diversion from the village of Escalles to take in another hill before going to the excellent viewpoints of Mont de Couple and Cap Blanc-Nez. As before, we should have time for some shopping at Auchan and a meal before returning. In order to make the necessary arrangements for cars, anyone interested in going is asked to let organiser Graham Smith know by Monday June 7.

### **EXPLORE KENT WALKING FESTIVAL**

THE Explore Kent Walking Festival, being coordinated by the county council, is being held between April 24-July 31. The idea is to bring together and highlight new and existing guided walks taking place across the county, promoting our county's wide range of countryside, coastal and urban walks. It will have a high profile launch at Northgate, near Canterbury, on April 24.

Neil Higham is contacting the festival organisers with a view to linking our walks in with the festival. Further details from the event's excellent website:-

### **VANGUARDING IN A DAY**

SOME Kent Group members may recall doing the 66-mile Vanguard Way in one go several years ago, as a one-off challenge (indeed, the editor of this newsletter would love to receive some recollections about it for a future edition).

The VW goes from Croydon to Eastbourne, and was on our social walks programme last year as a series of linear walks.

We have been contacted by Angharad Thomas Steff, who lives in Croydon, whose father completed the VW in one go in 1993. Angharad, who is planning to walk the whole route in one this summer, says: "My dad did this 17 years ago but a repeat is beyond him now. Obviously I can get some preparation tips from him but do you know of any fellow nutters who have done/planned to do the same thing you can put me in touch with?"

Any nutters who may be able to help can contact Angharad by e-mail.

### **WALKING IN THE SPANISH PYRENEES by Ann Beeching**

TWO years ago Ron and I did a hotel trek in the Spanish Pyrenees, starting in Bielsa. We enjoyed the area and wanted to return to a similar but different location in the Spanish Pyrenees.

Most of the holidays I found on the web were guided. We like to walk independently and don't drive outside the UK. The bus services in this part of Spain are not good so we needed help. I found Hike Pyrenees' which sounded ideal. It is a young couple, Anna and Phil, who run this small company from Biescas, a base in the Pyrenees. They do guided walks, adventure activities, horseriding, and they also provided transport and help to independent walkers. It sounded ideal, and it was. They gave us advice, route cards and maps and took us each day to the start of our walks and collected us at the end. We flew from Liverpool to Barcelona, then caught a train to Zaragoza and then Sabinanigo where Anna picked us up and took us to Panticosa. A small village in the Valle de Tena, one valley west of the Ordesa valley. They had chosen this valley because it has more options for walks than Torla, the gateway to Ordesa (though in 2010 we are going to Torla).

The first day we walked up a quiet valley, Rincon del Verde, to the Col de Sabacos, then the Ibon de Sabacos. We caught the cable car down to Panticosa. It was busier on the Sabacos side but not excessively so.

#### **Rincon del Verde**

In the evening we were taken with their three other clients to the ancient capital of Aragon, Jaca, and had a meal there. The next day we went up the valley towards France and walked to the Ibones de Anayet. We had good views of the Pic du Midi d'Ossau. We had travelled to the walk with Phil's three clients although we walked separately. They were taken on a scramble up the Pico de Anayet which has exposed sections using cables. Ron walked up the easier Vertice; I stayed by the Ibon and enjoyed the sunshine.

#### **Pico de Anayet**

We then had two easier walks. One through the small villages towards Biescas where Anna and Phil live, and a second down from Panticosa to an Ermita and along to Biescas. The next day we had a long and, for Ron, a very strenuous walk to the Ibones de Arriel which involved a scramble walk up a scree slope. I walked on the easy trail to the Embalse de Respomuso and waited for him there. This was a busy area with lots of walkers, and climbers making for the refugio with the objective of climbing the peaks in the area.

Next day we had a rest and after a short walk in the morning spent the afternoon watching Le Tour de France.

We then went to the Ordesa Gorge. A super day. Ron walked the Faja de Pelay and I walked up the valley to meet him. Ron said it was one of the best walks he had done which is quite a statement considering how much mountain walking he has done. He said it wasn't exposed at all and I could have managed it easily.

#### **Ordesa Gorge**

Our last day we did a circle of the Punta del Pacino on a good, well waymarked path. Again a very quiet day in which we saw very few people.

We travelled home on Friday arriving in Liverpool at two in the morning. It had been a very good holiday, the weather was perfect, we had a good hotel and good support from Phil and Anna. I did fairly easy walks, Ron did harder options, but there were lots of harder walks and climbs in the area. I can recommend the area and the company.

*\* Ann belongs to Morecambe Bay and Bowland Group and she and Ron Roweth, who moved north 14 years ago, are Kent members. Many Kent Group members will remember that Ron was chairman and before that treasurer for many years. In fact he doesn't belong to any other group. Until recently Ann and Ron used to come down to Kent for our Sevenoaks Circular.*

*They will be working with Kent Group on this year's Hundred, which they have done nearly every year since they stopped walking 100s. They send their regards to all Kent Group members and look forward to seeing a few of us at Fortingall checkpoint.*

### **TRAIL WALKERS GUIDE**

KENT Group members might have seen the UK Trailwalkers' Handbook advertised in Strider.

It is the LDWA's directory of long distance paths, featuring 730 long distance routes across Britain, is brilliantly illustrated with colour pictures and regional maps, and has a wealth of articles, regional overviews and individual path information. Published by Cicerone Press, it is in A5 format, with 384 pages. Recommended retail price is £18.95 – but the price to LDWA members is £12.95. Full details are in Strider, or buy online through the LDWA website [www.ldwa.org.uk](http://www.ldwa.org.uk)



## **COMPUTERS**

AS mentioned in the last newsletter, Bryan and Pat Clarke stepped down from computer duties after the Sevenoaks Circular, having performed this vitally important role for the group since our first Wealden Waters in 1981, logging entries and times.

They will be a very hard act to follow but Mike Headley and Stephanie Le Men, who both have expert knowledge of computers, are working on ways of taking on the job. Mike was working with Bryan and Pat during this year's Sevenoaks Circular, and Stephanie has been working on a computer system we may look at using at this year's Heart of the Weald Challenge on July 11.

## **MARSHALS – WE NEED YOUR HELP**

KENT Group challenge walks have, generally, been a success in recent years, judging by the numbers of entrants we have had and the feedback afterwards. They would not be the success they have been if it was not for the marshals who have helped out, often starting their duties early in the morning and sometimes – like on our 50-mile White Cliffs Challenge – working right through the night. But, on one or two events recently challenge walks organisers have struggled to get sufficient numbers of marshals. Most Kent Group members who are telephoned and asked to marshal, invariably do so, but it would be a great help if more people came forward without being asked. We need more help from our members for spreading the load. Please consider using the Marshals' Walk for taking part in the event and then helping on the day. With the number of members we have we should be self-sufficient and not as happened on the last Sevenoaks Circular using three people from other groups! So anyone willing to marshal on this year's Heart of the Weald Challenge and White Cliffs Challenge is asked to contact Neil Higham and Graham Smith respectively – their telephone numbers and e-mail addresses are above. Thank you.

## **FOUR PITS WALK**

IT is planned for Graham Smith's 38-mile Four Pits Walk, linking four former Kent coal mines of Tilmanstone, Snowdown, Betteshanger and Chislet, can become an Anytime Challenge later this year. A route description has been written, and a badge and certificate will be produced. Any Kent Group members wishing to tackle the walk – which is circular, and can be started from, more or less, anywhere along the route – should contact Graham, who can post or email a route description.

## **BORROW A BOOK – HELP KENT AIR AMBULANCE**

TOM Sinclair has the following books available to LDWA members on loan for up to three months – providing he is given a minimum donation of 50p for Kent Air Ambulance.

The list of books is as follows:-

AA Walkers' Britain plus pocket guide, Wildest Britain, The Killing of the Countryside.  
Walking the Summits of Somerset and Avon, A Walk for Jim (LEJOG),  
The Elham Valley Way, The Wealdway, The Stour Valley Walk, (KCC booklets)  
The North Downs Way (an inspirational journey), A selection of walks in Kemsing,  
Waterside Walks in Sussex, Walks in the Kent Hills, South With Scott,  
An Unsung Hero – Tom Crean, Antarctic Survivor, Best Foot Forward,  
The North Downs Way, Pub Walks in Warwickshire, Pub Walks in Suffolk,  
The Path to Rome by Hilaire Belloc, Nanga Parbat by Karl M Herligkoffer, The Road to Rakaposhi by George Band,  
The Ascent of Everest by John Hunt, South Col by Wilfrid Noyes,  
Seven Years in Tibet by Heinrich Harrer, Mountain Craft by Winthrop Young,  
From Side to Side and By Way of Beachy Head both by Joyce Tombs.

## **FOR OLDER WALKERS, FASTER IS BETTER**

THOSE who stroll are more likely to die from cardiovascular disease, a French study has found.

Highlighting the importance of staying fit in old age, the study has found that seniors who walk slowly are three times more likely to die from cardiovascular disease than are fast walkers.

The researchers measured the walking speed of the participants – 3,208 men and women, aged 65-85 – and collected medical and demographic information on them at the start of the study. Follow-up exams were performed at regular intervals over the next five years.

After adjusting for a number of baseline characteristics, the researchers found that seniors with the slowest walking speed were 44 per cent more likely to die than the faster walkers. The slowest walkers also had a three-fold higher risk of cardiovascular death.

The increased risk of cardiovascular death was found in both women and men, in younger as well as older seniors and in those with low or physical activity levels.

There was no link between walking speed and risk of death from cancer.

“These findings show that assessment of motor performances in older people using simple measures such as walking

speed can be performed easily and that the role of fitness in preserving life and function in older age is important,” the researchers wrote.

## **GOODBYE TO THE DARENTH STROLLERS**

**by Bryan Clarke**

THE Darenth Strollers commenced in 1976 as a monthly walk designed to make the local footpaths known to more people. Celebrating their 25th anniversary in July 2001, they were founded by Trevor Blake – a member of LDWA Kent Group - and David Altheer who both took part in the 300th stroll in July 2001.

A few months after the Strollers started, Bryan Clarke joined. Bryan became more closely involved with organising after David Altheer moved away from the area.

For many years the Darenth Strollers enjoyed attendances of up to 40 people and in the beginning many families with children came too. During later years attendance fell away, perhaps because of the variety of other things people were able to do on a Sunday afternoon. Unfortunately, too, fewer people are prepared to leave their cars behind and look for the pleasures of being away from the main road.

At first the Strollers walked mainly in the parish of Darenth and often struggled to find stiles in good condition and marked paths that were without obstructions. These problems diminished over the years and walking became less of an adventure but we like to think many walkers benefited by seeing where they could walk safely and legally on some interesting and scenic routes. In later years the walks took place across a wider region but were mostly in or near the Darent Valley.

Memories persist of walks where snow fell heavily as we walked through the fields to our Christmas lunch venue or the occasion when a thunderstorm started when we were halfway round, and owing to the lack of wind, continued for an hour or more, leaving us soaked to the skin or when the wind howled so relentlessly that some turned back. And, oh yes, the sun shone occasionally too! Many new friendships were made over the years and will hopefully continue.

It was, therefore, with regret that early in 2009 it was agreed that the organisers could no longer keep the monthly strolls going. As is often the case, no-one wanted to volunteer to lead the walks or to organise the programme so Trevor and Bryan decided that the last Stroll was to be the 401st in December. The Strollers had been in existence for 33 years and five months.

## **CAUGHT ON CAMERA**

A FILM crew of students from the University of Kent followed our White Cliffs 22 social walk on January 24. The group of students, led by Anna Firmberger, were making a film about long distance walks. After filming walkers leaving Fowlmead Country Park, where the walk started, they met us at various points en route, and interviewed walk leader Graham Smith.

## **ISLE OF WIGHT CIRCULAR**

JILL Green, who of course lives on the island, has offered to organise an Isle of Wight circular walk for Kent Group members, which is likely to take place during a weekend in the summer. Walking all the way around the Isle of Wight is 70 miles so this is likely to be a two-day walk – although it is quite possible to do it in one go. Any Kent Group members interested in this walk are asked to contact Graham Smith (details above) who will liaise with Jill.

## **COMEDY CORNER**

**by Ivan Waghorn**

JACK and his friend Bob went on a winter night walk. After a few hours, they got caught in a terrible blizzard and ran to a farm owned by a very rich widow.

They went to the door and asked the attractive lady who answered if they could spend the night there.

“Oh, it’s such terrible weather out there and I have this huge house all to myself, but I’m recently widowed,” she said, “and I’m afraid of what the neighbours will say if I let two attractive young men stay in my house.”

“Don’t worry,” Jack said, “we’ll be happy if you just let us sleep in your barn, and if the weather clears up we’ll be gone at first light.”

The lady agreed and the two men found their way to the barn and settled in for the night. Come morning, the weather had cleared and they continued on their walk.

Nine months later Jack got a letter from a solicitor. It took him a few minutes to figure it out but he finally determined that it was from the solicitor of the attractive widow in whose barn he and Bob had stayed.

So he drove over to see his friend Bob and asked him: “Did you get up in the middle of the night and go to the house and pay her a visit?”

“Yes,” Bob said, a little embarrassed about being found out. “I have to admit that I did.”

“And did you spend the night with her?”

“Yes.”

“And did you happen to use my name instead of your own?”

Bob’s face turned red and he said: “Yes, sorry mate, I’m afraid I did, why do you ask?”

“She just died and left me everything!”











