

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

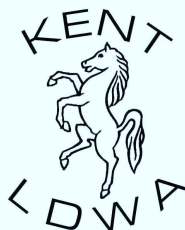
**Aim: to further the interests of those who enjoy long distance walking**

# ***NEWSLETTER***



**Tom Sinclair: 15 May 1936 - 9 June 2010**

**Number 82**



**August 2010**

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



High Weald Walks at Wadhurst Commemoration Hall 11th July 2010 - Photos by Eric Rolfe

## KENT GROUP SOCIAL WALKS AUGUST TO DECEMBER 2010

### 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. Map: Exp 123. 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, or nearby. 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 12 Capt. Kidd's Treasure Trek

c19ml. Meet 10am Sandown Castle, Deal GR TR376543. Map: Exp 150. Pub stop: Chequers, Ash. Ldr: Richard Frost.

### Sun Sep 26 White Cliffs Challenge Main Event

See Events Diary

### Sun Oct 3 North from Hawkhurst

c24 mls. Meet 9am in public c.p. on Dickens Way, just off Rye Road (A268), Hawkhurst. GR TQ 764305. Map: Exp 136. Lunch stop at Kilndown. Ldr: Mike Ratcliff.

### Sun Oct 10 Not New Year's Day!

Rye-Hastings & return. Having shown you how *not* to do it, Mike wishes to complete the comparison. c23ml. Meet 9am Rye rlwy stn c.p. GR TQ919205. Map: Exp 125. Pub stop. Ldr: Mike Pursey.

### Sun Oct 17 Another Minnis Meander

c18ml. Meet 8.30am at Ivy House, Stelling Minnis GR TR147483. Map: Exp 138. Bring packed lunch. Ldr: Liz Keeler.

### Sun Oct 31 Sandwich Stroll

c20ml. Meet 9am Sandown Castle GR TR376543. Map: Exp 150. Pub stop at Sandwich. Ldr: Graham Smith.

### Sun Nov 7 South of Westerham.

c21 mls. Meet 9am public c. p. on Ide Hill Road (B2042), Ide Hill. GR TQ 488517. Lunch stop at Limpsfield Chart. Map: Exp 147. Ldr: Mike Ratcliff.

### Sun Nov 14 Crabble Cruise

c19ml. Meet 9am at Crabble Athletic Ground, Dover GR TR299428. Park on road. Map: Exp 138. Pub stop. Bring torch. Ldr: Joy Davies.

### Sun Nov 21 Lewes Loop

c18ml. Meet 9am at Lewes rlwy stn GR TQ417098. Map: Exp 122. Pub stop. Ldr: Graham Smith.

### Sat Dec 4 Biggin Hill Circular

c22 mls. Meet 8.45am at Knockholt rlwy stn. Map: Exp 147 GR TQ485629. Lunch stop at Downe. Joint walk with London Group. Ldr: Mike Ratcliff.

### Sat Dec 11 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 confirmation of times. Ldr: Graham Smith.

### Sun Dec 19 Thames Path – Abbey Wood to Westminster.

Linear. c20 mls. Meet 9am at Abbey Wood rlwy stn. Finish at Charing Cross rlwy stn. Regular trains back to Abbey Wood. Maps: Exp 162 & 173. A riverside walk through East London to the heart of the capital. Lunch stop at The Cutty Sark, Greenwich. Joint walk with London Group. Ldr: Mike Ratcliff.

### Sun Dec 26 Bewl Water Circular

c23ml. Meet 9am in public c.p., Wadhurst GR TQ640316. Map: Exp 136. Lunch stop at Three Leg Cross. **Bring torch.** Ldr: Mike Ratcliff.

### Sat Jan 1 New Year on the South Downs Again

c20mls. Meet 9am in Eastbourne at western end of promenade (B2103) by South Downs Way marker post, GR TV600972. Park near school on left. Pub stop. Ldr: Graham Smith..

### Fri Jan 7 A Night on the Terrace

c18mls. Meet 9.30pm for 10.30pm start at The Bell PH, Kemsing. GR TQ555587. Map: LR 188. Ldr: Dave Sheldrake.



## COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Chairman – Brian Buttifant,

Secretary – Bill Gillibrand,

Treasurer – Neil Higham

Members:

Nick Dockree –

Michael Headley –

Mike Ratcliff

Mike Pursey

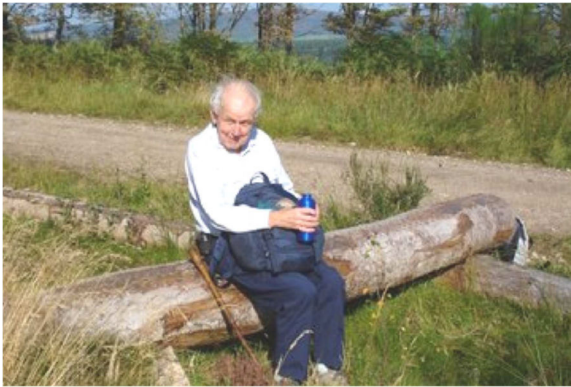
Joy Davies –

Stephanie le Men

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.



## **TOM SINCLAIR: MAY 15 1936 - JUNE 9 2010**

TOM Sinclair, who spent seven years on the LDWA National Committee - being General Secretary from 1999 to 2003 and Chairman from 2003 to 2006 - passed away on June 9 after a short illness. He had not enjoyed good health in recent years and suffered a stroke on Easter Sunday, from which he did not recover.

He was a staunch and highly respected member of the Kent Group and he was one of those utterly selfless people who gave more to the LDWA than he took from it. We should all be very grateful for his like.

Tom was born in 1936 in Belfast, Northern Ireland where, in his youth, he enjoyed outdoor activities – principally hillwalking.

He moved to England in 1955 after having won a place at St. John's College, Cambridge. There he studied Anthropology and Archaeology which, according to his beloved wife Jenny, was roughly translated as drama and playing rugby. He often returned to Northern Ireland to visit his family, but he settled in England.

His passion for rugby continued after he met and married Jenny. Their four children have presented them with five grandchildren and family get-togethers gave Tom much joy.

Tom worked as a personnel manager for all of his working life, being employed by various organisations, the last ten years of which was with the London Borough of Bromley. It was here that he met a fellow colleague and LDWA stalwart, Ron Roweth, who persuaded him to join the association.

In 1985, Tom joined the LDWA and the Kent Group and soon became involved in the group's activities. He enjoyed social walks and the occasional challenge event, was a dedicated supporter and marshal on its events and had spells as the group's secretary and newsletter editor. Thereafter he served on the National Committee. The current editor of Strider, Ken Falconer, in remembering his time working with him, said: "Tom was LDWA secretary when I was chairman and he was a pleasure to work with and easy to get on with. He thought things through carefully and his advice was always sound. In particular we worked together during the foot and mouth episode which was especially difficult for the LDWA."

In 1969, Tom and Jenny moved to Wrotham, just a short stroll from the North Downs Way, where he became heavily involved in village life, arranging fetes, fireworks displays, Wrotham Arts Festival and carol singing around the local pubs. He continued his acting with the Wrotham Players (once cast as a Captain Charles Craddock clad in plus fours in a farcical role which could have been written for him). Tom was chairman of a local almshouses' trust, president of Wrotham Cricket Club and was the village croquet champion in 2009. His hobbies, when he had the time, included gardening, bird-watching and Irish songs. The English language and its abstruse words and phrases delighted Tom and he regularly set crosswords and quizzes for the Kent Group's newsletter and Strider. Latterly, he and Jenny enjoyed their involvement with the University of the Third Age, taking a particular interest in history.

When picnicking near Balmoral in 2008, Tom and Jenny met Her Majesty the Queen and had a mild altercation with,

as Her Majesty put it “these troublesome corgis”. It is not known whether Tom offered her an LDWA membership form, but Her Majesty was interested in the association. As Monarch of the Glens, she graciously offered them advice on the best walks in the locality.

“There is a jay in our fig tree”. This was the title of an e-mail Tom sent to us a while ago. He delighted in the obscure, having a Milligan-type sense of humour, but was equally serious when the situation demanded.

Tom was truly a gentle man and a true gentleman. His wise counsel was sought by many and everyone he met will remember his easy manner, his military bearing and his impish sense of humour. He was a close friend to us and even though the flow of press cuttings, quirky words and phrases, limericks, quiz questions and garden produce may have stopped, our affection for Tom will not.

We send our sincere condolences to Jenny and her family at this sad time.

**Keith Warman and Shirlie Gill**

TOM was a kindly man, a good friend and a dedicated member of the LDWA and Kent Group. He always displayed a calm and balanced view on many different matters. His enthusiasm for walking made him an excellent checkpointer with a cheery word of encouragement to the weary. He walked the Sevenoaks Circular, Rottingdean Windmill and Seven Sisters challenge events, but he was mainly seen on social walks, leading some himself.

Tom was a committee man and spent many years on the group committee, as newsletter editor and secretary. He was involved in the planning of two Hundreds in Kent. He graduated to the National Committee as secretary and then chairman, also 100s coordinator.

His early years were in Northern Ireland. I knew Tom for 25 years, since when he joined Kent Group, and he always spoke fondly of walking in the Mourne Mountains of his homeland.

At his funeral, the vicar spoke of Tom’s many ‘hats.’ This prompted thoughts of Ivan’s social walk of last July, when Tom came out to meet us, smartly dressed as president of Wrotham Cricket Club, en route to a village game, wearing a Sri Lankan cricket hat – he had acquired this when visiting his daughter on the island some years earlier.

Tom will be much missed, not only by his family but by his many friends in the LDWA.

**Brian Buttifant**

Jenny Sinclair, who kindly provided the lovely pictures of Tom which have been used in this newsletter, has sent the following message to Kent Group members:

JENNY and family wish to thank friends in the Kent Group for all the kind messages and tributes received both during and following Tom’s last illness. As you know, Tom took great delight in all his contact with LDWA and his life was the richer for being part of Kent Group: thank you all very much.

## **KEN HEATH**

KENT Group members will be saddened to hear of the death of Ken Heath, a member of our group several years ago. It appears that Ken died alone at his home. These were the only details we had as this newsletter went to press.

## **ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

THE 2011 AGM has been scheduled for Sunday January 30 at Church Barn, Charing. Further details will appear in the next newsletter, but put that date in your diaries now.

## **CHRISTMAS FAMILY LUNCH**

BY popular demand, this year’s Christmas Family Lunch will return to the London Beach Hotel, just outside Tenterden, where it has been held for the last three years. It is an excellent venue, and we have had nothing but praise for the venue, the food and the service. We had hoped to hold the lunch on December 5 but it appears this date is booked. So instead, it will be held on Sunday December 12. A booking form is included with this Newsletter.

## **NEWS OF KENT CHALLENGE WALKS**

### **White Cliffs Challenge**

THIS is Kent Group’s next big event, and will be at Fowlmead Country Park, just outside Deal, on Sunday September 26. There are two routes – 30 miles and 15 miles – with the marshals’ walk on Sunday September 5. We’re going to need plenty of marshals, so people interested are asked to contact Graham Smith on the above telephone number,

### **Sevenoaks Circular**

AS this newsletter went to press, chairman Brian Buttifant was waiting for confirmation of the date of next year’s Sevenoaks Circular. Following the success of this year’s event, it is going to be based at Sevenoaks Rugby Club again. Members will be interested to know that Kent Group has donated £200 to Kent Air Ambulance from the proceeds of this year’s event.

### **Weald Challenge Walk**

NEXT year’s Weald Challenge will be the Walk With The Smugglers, based at Goudhurst. Neil Higham will be

organising it again – more details in the next newsletter.

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

THE Sussex Stride – the third leg of the KSS – makes a very welcome return over the weekend of September 18/19, with the marshals' walk held over the August Bank Holiday weekend of August 28/29.

Kent Group will be manning a checkpoint at East Dean Village Hall (at 28.6 miles, and open between 2.15pm-8pm). We are going to need marshals, particularly as Sussex Group sent five people to marshal on our WCC last year (and we do, after all, have our reputation to maintain!) so members wishing to marshal are asked to contact Graham Smith – details above.

KSS badges have been designed by Keith Warman, and the Triple Challenge moves to Surrey again next year, when the Surrey Tops will be held over the weekend of April 9/10. We will be organising a checkpoint, as we did when the event was last held two years ago.

### **HEART OF SCOTLAND HUNDRED**

KENT Group put in a very creditable performance on the Heart of Scotland Hundred over the weekend of May 29-31. Twenty Kent Group members started the event, with 17 finishing – a success ratio which compares very favourably with the 143 retirements out of 495 walkers who lined up for the start in Dunkeld (and for the record, 23 walkers finished the marshals' walk, with four retiring).

Particular congratulations go to Jill Green and Keith Warman, who both completed their 20<sup>th</sup> Hundreds, and were each presented with commemorative badges and souvenir paperweights. And many congratulations go to Kevin Puttock, who completed his 10<sup>th</sup> Hundred and whose name will now go on the trophy – in the shape of a Triangulation Pillar (Trig. Point) – donated to us by Jane Dicker, for whom the HoS was her 13<sup>th</sup> Hundred.

Kent Group members were among the fastest finishers. Rex Stickland finished in 31 hours 2 minutes, Mike Ratcliff got round in 31 hours 7 minutes, and Wendy Thurrell – taking part in her first Hundred – finished just behind him, in 31 hours 9 minutes.

Much praise and warm congratulations go to all Kent Group members who took part – whether they finished or not – on what was generally considered to be one of the toughest Hundreds in recent years, albeit the most beautiful.

And many thanks go to the people from Kent Group – Pauline Barnett, Anne Beeching, Martyn Berry, Brian Buttifant, Bryan and Pat Clarke, Nick Dockree, Joan East, Shirly Gill, Fiona Nutburn, Jackie Puttock, Mike Pursey and Ron Roweth – who co-manned Checkpoint 11 at Fortingall, with members of South Pennines Group. They did a marvellous job, making everyone who dropped in (quite a few of them literally!) so welcome, and attended to their every needs (well, most of them!).

Kent Group members who completed the Heart of Scotland Hundred, with times, are as follows:-

Rex Stickland – 31 hours 2 minutes.

Mike Ratcliff – 31 hours 7 minutes.

Wendy Thurrell – 31 hours 9 minutes.

Andrew Boulden – 31 hours 15 minutes.

Stephanie Le Men, Christophe Delogne – 35 hours 16 minutes.

Graham Smith – 36 hours 41 minutes.

Jill Green – 39 hours 41 minutes.

Merv Nutburn – 39 hours 41 minutes.

Don Newman – 40 hours 28 minutes.

Kevin Puttock – 44 hours 39 minutes.

Jane Dicker – 45 hours 27 minutes.

Nicola Foad, Gordon Harker – 45 hours 45 minutes.

Keith Warman – 46 hours 6 minutes.

Roger Munn – 46 hours 34 minutes.

Alan Stewart – 46 hours 49 minutes.

Mike Headley – taking part in his first Hundred – got to CP13 at Aberfeldy (86 miles) before having to retire, and Roger Dean and Julie Welch both pulled out at CP7 at Loch Ercrochy (53 miles).

Brian Buttifant has been sent the following note from Paul Hatcher, one of the main organisers of the Heart of Scotland 100 and also, of course, Brian's predecessor as Kent Group chairman:

DEAR Brian,

Thank you and your team for all you did at your checkpoint on the Heart of Scotland Hundred to make the event a resounding success.

“What a great event and so well organised, I award full marks to everyone concerned with making it run so well.”

“I would like to thank the organisers and checkpointers for the wonderful event they provided over the spring bank holiday weekend.”

Just two of the many positive comments on the LDWA Forum.

We the organising committee did what we could to ensure that things were in place to enable you to do the job, but we were constantly having to rearrange things even up to and on the day. We should write a book!

In the end it is you, the groups, that pulled it all together and deserve the praise for the efficient way that you ran the checkpoints. Please pass on our thanks to all your helpers.

A DVD of the event is being produced. It is hoped we will be able to provide one for each entrant and also a copy for each checkpoint group. This will of course depend on financial circumstances once all other accounts are settled. It is also proposed that it will be on the website to view and possibly download.

Please be assured that once all our financial outgoings are settled, any surplus funds will be distributed among the groups that gave us and, more importantly, the walkers a fantastic weekend.

Sincere and heartfelt thanks.

Paul

## **DIARY OF A COMMON MAN – THE HEART OF SCOTLAND HUNDRED: May 29-31 2010**

**by Keith Warman**

THE Hundred moved further north than ever this year, being based in the delightful small Perthshire town of Dunkeld. This was the first time that Scotland had staged the event and local residents in the area were interested in 'how it happens'. The headquarters was based in two halls abutting the cosy and charming town square, where walkers gathered in eager anticipation of what lay ahead.

The route was an anti-clockwise traverse of the Perthshire Highlands via Kirkmichael, Blair Atholl, Dalnacardoch, Loch Errochty, Kinloch Rannoch, Fortingall, Aberfeldy and Craigvinean Forest. Route-finding was relatively straightforward, being a mixture of moorland, forestry tracks and footpaths, quiet lanes, the occasional twist of heather bashing - just to alert the senses - and a total ascent and descent of about 13,300 feet.

After a dry period, rain fell during the few days before the event. The weather forecast was mixed for the Saturday (with rain expected during the night), warm for the Sunday and with two cold nights to look forward to.

The marshals' walk, held at the beginning of May, attracted 27 starters, of whom 23 finished. For the main event there were 495 starters, of whom 352 finished. Twelve people were each awarded a 10 x Hundreds' badge this year and the newly introduced 20 x Hundreds' badge and paperweight were given to six more achievers.

There were 20 entries from Kent Group members – the highest number for some time – and 17 managed to stay the course and finish successfully. Commiserations are due to those who had to retire and congratulations to all who finished, especially Wendy Thurrell on her first completion.

**At the start** . . . Many old (and some not-so-old) friends and acquaintances were met and we assembled on a beautiful grassy area behind the church hall. There, the immaculately attired Vale of Atholl Pipe Band entertained the milling throng and gave us a magnificent send-off. Once again I let the field go ahead of me but, as this year's route was 104.4 miles, it meant that I could not afford to linger too long. After saying farewell to Shirlie, I was off alone at the back of the pack.

**1 mile** . . . Left the road for the first of many forest tracks, nicely directed by Ken Falconer resplendent in his kilt and sporran. We would not see another road for more than 15 miles and the sky was looking increasingly threatening.

**3 miles** . . . Gradually caught up with the back of the field, including some walking chums from past Hundreds: Len Fallick from Newcastle-upon-Tyne and, yes, here he was again, The Bustling Brummie himself - Tony Francis from Worcester.

**5 miles** . . . A wonderful track, easy going and rolling moorland to all sides. Two ptarmigan, still in their winter white plumage, pecked their way through the heather just off the track near Raor Lodge. Grey skies.

**6 miles** . . . Checkpoint 1 in a large marquee perched on the edge of Loch Ordie. Safely ensconced and then the heavens opened. Cagged up into new cagoule – this should test its claimed waterproofness! 11:55 am.

**10 miles** . . . Our first taste of heather bashing and a combination of the heavy rain and the pounding from 800-odd soles from 400-odd souls (some odder than others) made the going decidedly 'sporting' as Tim Glenn would say.

**12 miles** . . . Misty views ahead of Glen Ardle and distant mountains adorned with snow patches. A long line of walkers ahead threaded its way slowly off the moor down an excellent track.

**15 miles** . . . Steeply down through birch woodland to join The Cateran Trail (a new long distance path) and, even though it had stopped raining, inky-black clouds ahead hinted of another soaking to come. I was dry inside.

**16 miles** . . . Hove into Checkpoint 2 in Kirkmichael Village Hall just after 3 pm. Shirlie was due to meet me here, but my arrival about one hour ahead of schedule meant that she hadn't arrived yet. Met Mary Hatcher. Lots of frenzied activity to mouths and feet. Had a proper LDWA telling-off when I helped myself to a sandwich from one of several plates on a groaning side table. A marshal barked at me "You can't have them, they're 'reserve' sandwiches." "Oh, sorry" I replied in disbelief, carefully replacing it from whence it came. "Don't put it back - you might as well take it now that you've fingered it" was the unexpected follow-up. "Right-o" I said and retreated into a quiet corner before I could cause further mayhem. I then found the 'proper' sandwiches and chatted with Linda Michell, who had witnessed my epicurean misdemeanour.



**17 miles** . . . Shirlie, who had arrived at 3:30 pm, accompanied me for a while along an easy track until I swept into the wonderfully verdant and mossy Kindrogan Wood. The aroma from the pine trees was intoxicating, and cheaper than alcohol. Soon, I caught up Len Fallick and we crossed an ancient stone bridge over the River Ardle to meet and follow the Pitlochry to Blairgowrie road for a while.

**19 miles** . . . With very little warning, the heavens opened again and a torrential downpour was endured for ten minutes, made worse by the rain bouncing high up off the road onto our bare legs.

**20 miles** . . . Passed a timber horse shed, but no timber horse inside - only Roger Morton who was sheltering from the rain. Joined a lane for four miles of tarmac alongside the churning Allt Fearnach burn to the next checkpoint at Daldhu.

**24 miles** . . . With increasing isolation, we made the tented Checkpoint 3 next to Daldhu (a lonely house adjacent to a patch of woodland) at 6:03 pm. The sun was shining and Essex & Herts Group's hearty welcome added to the experience. The shapes and colours of the surrounding hills were really interesting and I remarked to Len that I didn't see this sort of breathtaking scenery very often in Kent.

**26 miles** . . . Now on a stony track and, with Mike Childs and Deirdre Flegg, reasonable progress was made over somewhat undulating terrain. We reached a burn crossing by a cluster of ruined buildings where several young people were camping, presumably doing their Duke of Edinburgh Award.

**28 miles** . . . A nice grassy path uphill, with dramatic mountains to the left and right, led us to a col. Outlines of layers of jagged peaks in the distance basked in the gentle evening sunlight. This was simply wonderful.

**29 miles** . . . A pathless moorland crossing on a bearing brought us to a footbridge in a deep burn. It consisted of several rather old tree trunks alongside each other. Not wishing to endure unexpected early evening ablutions, I opted to make use of stepping stones just downstream.

**30 miles** . . . Steeply downhill to the lonely farm of Shinagag, where West Yorkshire Group had set up Checkpoint 4 in another large marquee. It was 8:42 pm. Refreshments and banter with John and Lesley Sparshatt were spot on. Upon leaving with Len, I was shivering for ten minutes which, I thought, might be a sign of a cold night ahead. I was not to be proved wrong.

**33 miles** . . . A steady descent on a good farm track with the sun sinking fast ahead of us. Joined a metalled road by Loch Moraig.

**36 miles** . . . In the last vestiges of daylight, we dropped down into Glen Tilt and along a wooded path by the tumbling River Allt to the old A9 road at Blair Atholl. Shirlie was there to guide us to Checkpoint 5 (in the Church Hall) and we passed Tim Glenn on his way out.

**37 miles** . . . Arrived at the checkpoint at 11:06 pm, changed socks and had a good fill of food and drink, both with good variety. The organisation had been splendid so far. Rumours abounded that it was raining again and they were correct. Met Mark and Jo Bertoni from Sussex here, repairing their feet but in good spirits. Len and I left just before midnight with Alan Stewart and his walking companion Elaine Oddie, with Shirlie telling us not to worry, it was due to stop raining at 3:00 am.

**38 miles** . . . The rain was exceptionally heavy - well, torrential really - but I was comforted by the fact that this next section, 6.6 miles to Calvine, was not too tricky to navigate and much of it would be in woodland. The night had turned very cold.

**40 miles** . . . Walked through a quirky stone folly and along lanes to the hamlet of Old Blair. To our left were Blair Castle and Gardens, although the magnificent collection of extremely tall and statuesque trees could not be seen at night. Our heads were firmly down to avoid the driving rain as much as possible.

**42 miles** . . . Reached a seat overlooking The Falls of Bruar and self-clipper number 1. A steep path led us down alongside the noisy Bruar Water then over a stone footbridge. Paths through long wet grass took us out of the woods to traverse a hillside on a clear track. Now out in the open, we gathered up our goose-pimples against the full onslaught of the incessant rain, which had not relented one little bit.

**43 miles** . . . Narrow paths meandered down towards the A9 road and we slithered beneath it through a "large pipe" which tested our imagination beforehand but was merely a somewhat damp concrete culvert. We sloshed into the hamlet of Calvine and soon found the school - Checkpoint 6 - where Staffordshire Group was waiting for us at 2:32 am. Disappointed to learn that no Staffordshire oatcakes were on offer this year. Len and I lurched out into the night at 3:03 am as the rain finally eased. Len threatened to admonish Shirlie the next time we saw her for being three minutes adrift in her prediction!

**46 miles** . . . Torches were turned off as we ambled along the old A9 road, now a cycleway, for the six miles to the next unpronounceable checkpoint at Dalnacardoch. Our minds were wandering more than our bodies as there were not too many mental distractions, although the fact that the temperature was just above freezing kept us awake.

**49 miles** . . . At 4:58 am we stumbled across Checkpoint 7, another marquee, being run by Marches and Mid-Wales Groups at Dalnacardoch. A good atmosphere here, despite more retirees having succumbed to the rigours of the event.

**50 miles** . . . The first anorak moment of the route! We crossed the Highland railway line to Inverness on its long climb to the highest standard-gauge point on the British system, Druimuachdar Pass at 1,484 above sea level. I thought of all the trains which had pounded their way up over the pass and what an ordeal it must have been in the bleak



winters.

**53 miles** . . . After another three miles of road, all uphill, we had reached halfway. The early morning was still and eerily quiet. Passed one of the body wagons on its way to Checkpoint 7, then we struck off on a bearing across the heather, aiming for the remote Loch Errochty dam ahead and below us.

**54 miles** . . . Ambled across the dam to yet another marquee at the far side, being Checkpoint 8. It was 6:47 am. Janet Chapman was conducting a kit check here, which I passed, having found my compass for her from the depths of my sporran. Ken Falconer was taking numbers in his kilt - well, I suppose he could have been arrested without it. Another good selection of refreshments at what was probably the remotest location on the route.

**56 miles** . . . After a rollercoaster track through woodland, we left it via a bizarre stile. Len and I joined Mike Childs and Deirdre Flegg again on an easy track alongside Loch Errochty. We resisted the temptation for a dawn dip in order to sharpen our minds and concentrated on looking out for an "old chuck wagon". It turned out to be a rusting vehicle, probably ex-military, and I fully expected Corporal Jones to pop up through the round hatch in the roof shouting "don't panic!" (as if we would).

**58 miles** . . . At the far end of the loch, we continued on a very wet intermittent path alongside another unpronounceable and unspellable burn. All right, if you must, it was the Allt Ruighe nan Saorach. There, that will teach you to ask.

**59 miles** . . . The corner of an isolated fence beckoned us with a flashing red light to the second self-clipper point. Now, loins needed to be girded for what was to be the hardest climb on the route. We followed the fence uphill to another corner, about one mile away just below the rocky summit of Carn Fiaclach. There was no path, just wet bog and heather and it seemed indeterminate. As we slowly ascended, the corner seemed to be getting further from us.

**60 miles** . . . Finally we reached the corner, had a drink, then turned right alongside the fence. The going was just as tricky but the climbing had been done. A short uphill heather bash and we gained a wall gap which was the col. What a superb view ahead, dominated by the massive bulk of Schiehallion, our next target.

**62 miles** . . . A gradual descent led us to a steep zig-zag path through beautiful birch woodland to Kinloch Rannoch and the breakfast checkpoint, number 9, in the village and school halls. Shirlie was there to greet us. The going had taken its toll on my feet, which were suffering from trenchfoot. Shirlie's magic ibuprofen gel, her thin socks and a change of footwear were to prove invaluable. Saw Gordon Harker, Nicola Foad and Kevin Puttock here and all seemed to be going well. A delicious plate of porridge was devoured, although I exercised great moral restraint by not having the offered whisky on it. We had arrived at 10:34 am and I left at 11:45 am. Len departed just before me, but I was to catch him up on the next climb.

**64 miles** . . . In sunshine, Shirlie accompanied me along the two miles of road to the point where I began the long climb over to Fortingall, 12 miles away.

**66 miles** . . . Having caught up Len, we slogged up a good track with Schiehallion looming over us to our left. We were confronted by a lady entrant limping back to the checkpoint wishing to retire. She said her left sock was soaked in blood from blisters. We told her that the checkpoint would be closed by the time she got there and perhaps she could telephone for a lift from the road below. Another walker, who claimed to be going slowly, invited her to join him and continue, which she did.

**68 miles** . . . Passed Tempair Bothy at around 1,970 feet above sea level and followed narrow paths to drop slightly to a crossing of two burns. These were in the middle of a high-level plateau with brooding giants on all sides. A marshal had been camping here and had kindly gathered stones to help us across the water. Wonderful. Caught up several others here.

**69 miles** . . . After another horrible uphill heather bash, we reached an estate track which marked the end of the most difficult section underfoot on the route. The track climbed out of the plateau to the highest point on the route at 2,070 feet, affording spectacular distant views. Such a lonely spot. I was surprised when the lady with the bloody sock caught me up and strolled past, appearing to be much better. I hope she finished.

**70 miles** . . . Reached Checkpoint 10 at Pheiginn Bothy with Len at 3:26 pm. Sat outside in the sunshine. I looked in the visitors' book (which I had signed two weeks earlier during Shirlie's and my recce) to read several references to the Hundred including a hopeful one which read "Note to marshals - don't forget the steak and chips."

**73 miles** . . . All downhill, still on the track which had become more stony. Passed Steve Clarke (the photographer) on duty with his bicycle. At the road at Keltneyburn, we sat in the bus shelter for a drink in the hot sunshine.

**75 miles** . . . A long road section to Fortingall was eased by the company of John Walker for a while. A smiling Shirlie welcomed me into this beautiful village. Its churchyard is the home of the famous ancient yew tree, reputed to be 5,000 years old and Europe's oldest living thing. The heat was becoming uncomfortable.

**76 miles** . . . Checkpoint 11 was in a wonderful hall at the far end of the village and we arrived at 6:12 pm to be greeted by South Pennine and Kent Groups. I needed a sleep here so I told Len to leave when he was ready and I might catch him up later. After 40 winks and being fully fortified in Fortingall, I set off to seek a suspension bridge over the River Lyon. Said farewell to Shirlie, who I hoped to see in Aberfeldy.

**78 miles** . . . A bit of minor road, then it was up again, around a farm and into the Tay Forest. Route-finding was easy on forest tracks and I was really enjoying this.

**80 miles** . . . Another marquee, Checkpoint 12 in Tay Forest, was attained at 8:56 pm. The evening heat had dissipated and, after a few drinks, I thanked The Irregulars marshals and ambled along a lane to join a riverside path at the confluence of the Rivers Lyon and Tay. This path was sheer joy. The two swollen rivers became one powerful mass. Passed a fishermen's lodge, which had photographs inside of catches of 26lb and 28lb salmon!

**86 miles** . . . After several miles I left the river bank to ascend to a road, which crossed the river on General Wade's Bridge into Aberfeldy. There was Shirlie, waiting for me on the far side of this amazing structure. It was built so well in 1733 that it does not have a weight restriction to this day. We strolled into Checkpoint 13 in the Scout Hut at 11:08 pm and I was promptly given a welcome kiss by Hazel Bound - I must visit this checkpoint again! Len was waiting for me and, after a further change of socks, we set off just shy of midnight along the deserted streets with the finish in our thoughts.

**88 miles** . . . In good spirits, we staggered past Dewar's distillery and climbed gently up a sandy track into Craigvinean Forest. We had forest tracks to follow for several miles but, even after this distance, our conversations were varied and interesting enough for us not to lose our concentration.

**91 miles** . . . Accidentally trod on a wild haggis. It didn't stand a chance as it ran out straight under my feet. Hallucinations had started late this year . . .

**93 miles** . . . Thames Valley Group was in charge of Checkpoint 14, another marquee by Loch Kennard. We sauntered in at 2:34 am. News arrived of a collapsed walker, so a marshal and a Raynet person went to assist (all was well - he had been sick and decided to have a nap on the wayside). It was another cold, quaking night and we did not tarry for too long.

**95 miles** . . . More unremitting tracks but hey, daybreak was approaching. The sky seemed to be clear and maybe promised a fine day ahead.

**97 miles** . . . Still in the forest, reached Checkpoint 15 at Pitleoch at 4:52 am. The marquee was augmented by a bright brazier, but the marshals were complaining that there was not enough wood around to burn. I think they meant dry wood, but it was a good yarn.

**99 miles** . . . Met Les Merchant, from Cornwall & Devon Group, walking the wrong way towards us. He seemed a little surprised at this, claiming he had entered the wood for a call of nature and had forgotten which direction he should be going when he returned to the track. He told us about the plans for his group's Hundred in 2013, which seemed well advanced.

**100 miles** . . . Finally left the forest and a majestic panorama was spread out in front of us - sparkling colours, bright bare rock and long low shadows in the early sunshine. A steady descent on a dusty drive led us to a lane at Ballinuick. We now walked into the strong sunlight, knowing that we had conquered the distance but not yet the event.

**102 miles** . . . Met Shirlie just before the final checkpoint, number 16, a camper van by a bend in the road near Rumbling Bridge. It was 6:52 am. Changed into shorts here for the first time since Blair Atholl and felt much better. Len and I left together for this final leg through the grounds of the National Trust for Scotland's beautiful Hermitage Estate.

**103 miles** . . . With the River Braan crashing through rocks to our right, easy paths led past The Hermit's Cave and St. Ossian's Hall. The tallest tree in the country (a douglas fir at 215 feet) was spied on the riverbank. The dead-straight trunks of every tree seemed to defy gravity and we marvelled at how they stayed perfectly upright. Under the railway, along a diverted path (due to erosion on the original one), through the pretty hamlet of Inver and under the A9 road for the last time.

**104 miles** . . . Shirlie greeted us just before we crossed the River Tay via an ancient bridge and, with local shopkeepers standing by their doorways applauding us, we were back in the square in Dunkeld to finish in the Black Watch Drill Hall at 8:06 am. I congratulated Len for completing his 30th Hundred, and he reciprocated for my 20th. Before I had a chance to sit down, I was presented with a 20 Hundreds' badge and paperweight by Ken Falconer. He had introduced me as the LDWA keeper of Hundreds' statistics "and if his records are to be believed, he has now completed 20 Hundreds". A very humbling moment. We relaxed and witnessed everyone else behind us finishing and, once again, it was a great atmosphere.

My thanks go to the organising committee for the years of hard work, together with all marshals who gave up their time for us. It was a splendid Hundred and a wonderful experience. Long may the LDWA Hundreds prosper for the obvious joy they bring to so many people.

## **HOUSMAN HUNDRED**

NEXT year's Hundred will be based at Ludlow in Shropshire, with the route going through parts of Herefordshire, South Shropshire and the Cluns area. Kent Group has been asked to provide a checkpoint at Newcastle, on the Welsh border, at 41.9 miles. Provisionally it will be open between 6pm on the Saturday and 6am on the Sunday.

## **OLYMPIC YEAR HUNDRED**

TWO Kent Group members - Neil Higham and Graham Smith - are on the steering committee for the 2012 Hundred. As members may recall, and as reported in previous Kent Group newsletters, it is going to be a very special event.

Victoria Park, near the Olympic park, has been earmarked for the start, although the western HQ – and, for all intents and purposes the base – is going to be at Windsor, where the walk will finish. As one of the organising groups, we will be required to organise a checkpoint (and we may be required to help at others – watch this space!) which may be at Biggin Hill or Farnborough.

Work is very much in progress for the route description. The RD has been completed for the first 37 miles and the last 26 miles, although there are one or two issues for the latter stages of the walk, the main one being Windsor Park. Many Kent Group members will be aware of the potential problems at Windsor Park, which is likely to be closed at night. Because of this, the idea of a shuttle bus, transporting walkers to somewhere nearby where they can continue the walk, has been mooted. This is likely to meet with some opposition, and the option of having staggered starts for walkers – to minimise the numbers who would not be able to go through the park – has been discussed. A sub group has been formed to look into this thorny issue, and the views of other groups are going to be canvassed. The preferred option remains to try and persuade the park authorities to allow access at night, so we live in hope.

### **PLANS FOR A KENT COASTAL HUNDRED**

THERE has been a setback in the plans for there to be a Kent Coastal Hundred. As reported in previous newsletters, the idea is that the event would be based at Canterbury, with the route going out to Folkestone, from where it would – more or less – follow our county's coast all the way to Reculver, before going back to Canterbury.

Next year, of course, is the Housman Hundred in Shropshire, followed by the Olympic year Hundred in 2012, with which Kent Group will be involved. In 2013 the Hundred will be hosted by Cornwall and Devon Group, with South Wales organising it in 2014. We had been led to believe that 2015 may have been the year allocated for a Kent Coastal Hundred, but we learned – to our disappointment – a few weeks ago that the LDWA national committee had asked East Lancashire Group to host the Hundred in that year.

There is no problem with the national committee over this issue, but the news about East Lancs came out of the blue, and we do feel we should have been notified earlier. Chairman Brian Buttifant has contacted 100s coordinator Gail Elrick expressing our views.

So it looks like 2016 will be the earliest available slot for a Kent Hundred. We will keep members posted about this via the newsletter.

### **MEMBERS**

KENT Group of the LDWA currently has 105 members. New members are as follows:-

Claire Betts, Tunbridge Wells; John Grace, Folkestone; Deborah Jarrett, Stowting; David Jones, Lympne; Bridgette Read, Eastry; Brian Payne, Northfleet.

Please make sure Claire, John, Deborah, David, Bridgette and Brian are welcome when you see them on social walks or challenge events.



### **A SOUTH DOWNS LOOP: APRIL 2**

**by Graham Smith**

FOURTEEN Kent LDWA members started the annual Good Friday walk – and 10 finished. And what a day it was – a day in which, as one of the walkers said, we seemed to get all four seasons of weather within a few hours.

It must be 16 years now that we have been going to Eastbourne on Good Friday for this walk, which started purely as a 20 miler all those years ago. For the last few years, it has been 26 or 20 miles, myself leading the longer walk and Joy Davies leading the shorter. It's a great walk, and it's an important part of the Kent LDWA calendar.

The weather was pretty good when we started out – at 9am, as usual, from the South Downs Way sign at the end of Eastbourne seafront. It was a little blowy, but the sun was out. The forecast was that some horrible weather coming from the south-east was going to hit us by late morning – what we didn't know was just how long it was going to last. We took our usual tried and trusted route to Beachy Head, and then the Seven Sisters, walking on what felt like a green carpet. I never tire of the views at the end of the Seven Sisters, across the Cuckmere Valley, with the South Downs as a backdrop. That view never ceases to reinforce my opinion that the South Downs are the most beautiful area we've got



in the South East. We had our elevenses stop, as we usually do, shortly before we follow the riverside path. Then after a couple of miles of riverside path, our parties split – Joy and Nicola Foad taking the 20-mile route, and the others taking the 26-mile one. And then there were 12 . . .

From the riverside we climbed onto the Downs, following the Sussex Stride route many Kent Group members know well. Good paths then took us to the long track which would connect us with the South Downs Way. About halfway along that long track the weather changed, and the rain started – light at first but then pretty heavy, accompanied by winds which were getting stronger by the minute. It was pretty bad by the time we reached the SDW. We turned left to head the Firle Beacon, the furthest point on the walk. It was at that point that Merv Nutburn informed me that an Achilles problem, from which he had been suffering for months, was going to force him to cut the walk short. And then there were 11 . . .

The wind and driving rain were behind us, so going to Firle Beacon wasn't too bad. We usually have lunch there, but that wouldn't have been a good idea on that day. The weather was then at its worst, and some of the group were having trouble standing upright, let alone walking. Despite this, most people seemed glad to reach Firle Beacon, and they made sure they stood on the highest point. It must be said that one or two people weren't quite so happy. Coming back from Firle Beacon, we were walking into the wind and driving rain and, I have to say, I was actually enjoying it. I made this point to Jill Green, who said she was enjoying it as well, and Mike Ratcliff agreed with us – which just goes to prove what I've believed for a long time, that I'm not the only member of Kent LDWA who's barmy!

Shortly after we had reached the Bo Peep car park on the track to Alfriston, the wind eased, the rain gradually stopped and – much to our amazement – the sun began to appear. We were beginning to get dry by the time we reached Alfriston, where we spent a good hour in the Star Inn, which had a very handy and welcome open fire. Unfortunately Shaun Wallace, a new member from Medway, was suffering from a recurrence of a leg problem, so he had to pull out. But his partner Tina decided to carry on. And then there were 10 . . .

It was then our usual route, taking the river and fields before the long climb up Wilmington Hill. By now we had clear blue skies and some glorious sunshine. We then had more good tracks before descending to Jevington, where we had our second pub stop at the Eight Bells. After that we followed the Wealdway route to Willingdon Hill. I had told Tina that this wasn't a long hill but after climbing it, she said she reckoned she could sue me under the Trades Descriptions Act! We then turned right to pick up the SDW which we followed back to Eastbourne, making good, fast (3.5 miles per hour) progress. We arrived at 6.30pm.

It had been an excellent day, and much credit is due to Tina for exceeding her previous personal best distance of 22 miles. Despite the wet weather – which, to be fair, we only endured for three hours at the most – everyone seemed to enjoy it, and we had had some laughs.



#### **A SOUTH DOWNS LOOP – Good Friday (April 2)**

**by Jill Green**

FOR approximately the last 16 years, Kent Group have been enjoying a 26-mile Good Friday walk. The start is always at Eastbourne at 9am, so it's become a tradition.

The route goes up over the Seven Sisters, then a coffee stop by the River Cuckmere, with a packed lunch on the top of Firle Beacon enjoying the fine views of the South Downs. Then a pub stop at Alfriston, even a tea stop – at Jevington – thus finishing at about 6pm.

This year was no exception, but the weather forecast had warned us of bad weather to come. We enjoyed the first three hours of dry blustery weather and we hoped the forecasters were wrong. Then the rain came – the kind that's good at testing waterproofs, the kind of rain that sends you off to the shop to get a new set because the ones you've got hardly ever work in such conditions. I couldn't walk straight or see anything – so we certainly didn't stop at Firle Beacon for lunch!

We all hurried down to Alfriston and dived into the first pub. Here we recovered and warmed up with pots of tea, pints of beer, coffee and even Irish coffee. Everything is expensive in Alfriston but it was worth it to us at this time.

Amazingly, in the afternoon the sun came out – wonderful warm sunshine drying us out far more effectively than the pub fire.

Late afternoon the same party that had resembled drowned rats when scuttling into the pub at Alfriston, could be seen sitting outside in the sunshine at another hostelry in Jevington. Then, divested of our waterproofs, we all walked back to Eastbourne, finishing just after 6pm.

Thanks to Graham Smith for leading us. Every walk I go on is a little adventure and this was certainly no exception. And it must be said that it has been a long, hard battle, but it is so good that our South Downs are at last afforded some protection as a National Park.

### **SHOTLEY 50**

MEMBERS will be interested to know that neighbouring Essex and Herts Group are putting on their Shotley 50 again next year. This event was very popular when it was last staged, in 2008, and the date set aside is September 10/11.

Jean Bowers, Essex and Herts secretary, tells us that it is planned that this will be part of a Triple Challenge, with the Herts Stroller and Norfolk and Suffolk Poppyline 50, giving people the opportunity to get a Triple Challenge in two years.

Our own KSS (Kent Surrey Sussex) Triple Challenge starts again next year, with the Surrey Tops taking place over the weekend of April 9/10, so there will be no clash. Our White Cliffs Challenge will be a repeat of this year's 30-mile and 15-mile event, which will be held in September (date to be confirmed but we will obviously avoid the Shotley 50).

### **LEANING OVER SIDEWAYS SYNDROME**

THERE has been much written about in Strider (and certainly spoken of by LDWA members all over the country) about so-called Leading Over Sideways Syndrome.

Members may be interested in the following e-mail sent by Con Powr, who lives in Hastings. Con was experiencing some difficulties on the Cinque Ports Challenge at the beginning of May. Unfortunately, he retired from the walk when he reached Folkestone but afterwards he sent this note to walk leader Graham Smith:-

AFTER we parted company near the top of that steep hill at Folkestone, I sat down and rested for 20 minutes. Then I went back down to the town to take stock of things. I now have a theory about what causes the 'leaning over sideways syndrome'. I have had this three times over the past eight or nine years and each time it has been accompanied by a pain in the small of the back. So I wonder if it is caused by a rucksack that is just at the level such that it continually rubs against the small of the back.

Anyway, when I returned to Folkestone town centre I carried my rucksack over just one shoulder and the condition improved immediately and never came back. Maybe I should write to Strider to this effect seeing that no-one has yet come up with a reason for the complaint.

Not wanting to roam the streets of Folkestone for many hours I decided to walk on to Dover. So I went up the steep hill (for the second time!) still with the rucksack over just one shoulder. I found the cycle track including the point where it leaves the road and goes out into the wilds. I reached Dover with no problems at all except that I walked at my own pace. I was a bit annoyed with myself at this point as I feel that I could have finished the whole walk if the pace had been somewhat slower. I called it a day at Dover as the rain was setting in and by this time of course I was some hours behind schedule. But I could have carried on!

Thanks for the walk. I have no regrets about doing it and if it is repeated again I would certainly consider it.

Con's points about the pace have been noted (see the piece about the pace on social walks elsewhere in this newsletter). If other members agree with Con's theory – or perhaps have their own theory – please send views to the newsletter editor.

### **CAR SHARING**

IN this day and age, it makes a lot of sense if Kent Group of the LDWA tries to decrease the size of its carbon footprint by encouraging people to car share when travelling to social walks and challenge events. A number of people in the group car share anyway, but if you are going to a social walk or challenge event, it might be an idea to contact other members of the group who live in your part of the county to see if you can share the transport. Apart from anything else, sharing the transport also means sharing the transport cost.

### **PACE ON SOCIAL WALKS**

THERE have been some – to be fair, not many – incidents over the last few months when we have had some polite complaints about the pace on some of our social walks.

Matters came to something of a head on Graham Smith's 100k Cinque Ports Challenge in May, when four people dropped out just after the halfway mark because of the continually fast pace – described as "unrelenting" by one of the retirees. As walk leader, Graham accepts responsibility for the pace, and he agrees he should perhaps have taken a firmer line with some of the walkers on that walk who were charging on ahead and often leaving the rest of the group more than 100 yards behind.

But it is worth reiterating here that social walks are not challenge walks. On challenge walks people can walk at whatever pace they like, and finish as quickly as they like. But social walks, by their very nature, are different. On

social walks it is important that the group stays together, more or less, particularly if it is a long walk which is going to involve some night walking, as was the case on the Cinque Ports Challenge.

So on social walks, please try not to walk too far ahead of the leader, who will have the entire group to think about. Leaving other members of a walking group 100 yards behind – sometimes more, and occasionally much more – is not just bad walking etiquette, it is bad manners and pretty selfish. It can also discourage people who may be new to long distance walking, which is the last thing we want.

Don't forget, one of the LDWA's principal aims – repeated on the front page of each edition of this newsletter – is to 'encourage the interests of those who enjoy long distance walking.' We don't want to be known as a group whose social walks are too fast for people to enjoy - do we?

## RAMBLERS, LONG DISTANCE WALKERS, JOGGERS AND RACE WALKERS

by Jill Green

I KNOW I walk a lot, but I do listen as well. I really overheard all of what is below, I haven't made it up. One day I recited it to a walking party I was leading for step by step holidays on the Isle of Wight. One of the party said if I brought photos of me doing these things, he would do cartoons for me. So here they are.



People keen on natural history tend to disapprove of ramblers.  
Why? Because they have been seen to walk on the flowers.



Ramblers tend to disapprove of long distance walkers.  
Why? Because they don't look at the views.



Long distance walkers tend to disapprove of race walkers.  
Why? Because it is all on roads.



Race walkers tend to disapprove of joggers.  
Why? Because all that pounding on the hard ground is bad for the joints.



Joggers tend to disapprove of marathon runners.  
Why? Because it's too serious to get away from it all.



I don't know what marathon runners disapprove of because I've never had enough breath to ask them!

I have taken part in all these things, and don't disapprove of any of them.



## CHALLENGE WALKING IN BELGIUM

by Graham Smith

THIS year I have entered two 100k challenge walks in Belgium – the Euroregio, based at Welkenraedt, in March, and Les Marcheurs de la Police de Binche in June.

I entered both events at the suggestion of the ebullient Jill Green, who has completed scores (or is it hundreds?) of challenge walks on the other side of the Channel.

Both events were organised by the IVV, the international walking federation, and they are certainly very different to LDWA challenge walks. Entering them was a great experience, even if I wasn't able to complete the first one.

Whereas most LDWA challenge walks start at 10am – which certainly applies to all 100k events I have entered in this country – both these walks started at 9pm. This means, of course, that you are walking straight into the night. Quite honestly, I think it's a good thing to get the night section out of the way first. Apart from anything else, it means you have completed half the walk by the time daylight comes. It is also a requirement that you wear a vissy-vest – a colourful jacket which can be seen at night. Fortunately one of these – an orange one – was supplied to everyone who took part in the Euroregio. I also wore it on Les Marcheurs de la Police de Binche.

Another principal difference is checkpoints, known as controle in Belgium. There are more of them on Belgian challenge walks. For example, there were 14 controles on Les Marcheurs de la Police de Binche – compared with 17 on the Heart of Scotland Hundred.

There is a smaller variety of fare on offer at the controles, although what is available is perfectly adequate – it might be a cheese or ham roll, waffles (typically Belgian, of course) or some other sweetmeat from Belgium. I had to retire before the breakfast stop on the Euroregio, but on Les Marcheurs de la Police de Binche, breakfast was an omelette, with bread and butter. And although there is not so much variety of food, there are more types of drink on offer – it might be orange juice, cola, chocolate milk (very popular in Belgium), coffee or water, of course. There is also likely to be beer available. This was on offer at a few controles on the Euroregio, but only available at the last controle on the Binche event, although beer could be bought at several controles for one euro a glass.

Another main difference is that you don't have route descriptions. Instead, you follow yellow or orange arrows, put out at regular intervals along the route. Just think of how much work this must involve for a 100k walk. It certainly makes route finding a lot easier, I must say.

I was struck by just how similar Belgian challenge walkers are to us. Like LDWA folk they are, simply, people who love walking. And – just like us – lots of them are quite barmy! I've always felt that you've got to have a few screws loose to walk through the night on a 100k walk and enjoy it, and I know my wife Sarah feels that way.

Also, I have to say that meeting some of Jill Green's European friends is such an experience. I was open-mouthed in admiration as I listened to some of them talking – in such a matter-of-fact way – about their achievements. Like Herbert, who has been the German race walking champion. Herbert has completed LDWA 100s in under 20 hours and he has walked 5k in 30 minutes – yes, 30 minutes. And like Marc, from Belgium, who has completed well over 200 100k walks and who once did 200k in 24 hours – which makes him a double kilometre Centurion. I also met a walker from Denmark who has completed well over 300 100k walks.

And so to the walks. On the Euroregio and Les Marcheurs de la Police de Binche, us walkers were told to assemble outside the HQs for the start. There were a good 200 walkers on each event, and it was quite an experience to be surrounded by townsfolk on both walks who cheered us on as we set off.

For an event in March which starts at 9pm, we were obviously walking straight into the darkness on the Euroregio. Unfortunately, I had a chest infection and I wasn't feeling too good. My breathing was becoming a bit laboured, and it gradually dawned on me that I was going to struggle to complete the event before 4pm – 19 hours – if I was going to get the Eurostar train from Brussels I was booked on to get me back to Kent. But it was a nice night, the walking was either on good tracks or minor roads, I was speaking to other walkers in schoolboy French (or trying to!) and we were visiting some pleasant Belgian villages. I was quite enjoying it, but after a good 30k, I knew I was in trouble. At the controle before the one at 40 kilometres, I decided to make for one more controle then see how I felt. It was a struggle to make that controle, where I retired. I knew there was no way I would complete the walk before 4pm.

I don't like retiring on walks, but I always reckon you should learn from any negative experiences in life. If I had had the foresight – or the common sense – to have arranged to stay overnight in Welkenraedt or Brussels, I reckon I may well have been able to complete the Euroregio in the 24 hours walkers are given for the event. I had still enjoyed it, and I was very pleased to see Jill Green finish it smiling, as she does with every walk. But I was determined to enter and complete another 100k walk in Belgium – and so I entered Les Marcheurs de la Police de Binche, in June.

This event was just two weeks after the Heart of Scotland 100, and I figured that it certainly couldn't be any harder than that. I also figured that I was still reasonably fit after the 100. This time, I booked a room at the Hotel Ibis in Belgium, so there would be no question of going straight back to Kent after the event.

I met Jill and her friend, Serena – who was using the event as training for an attempt to be a Centurion, completing 100 miles in 24 hours – on the train to Brussels. We took another train to Binche, arriving in plenty of time to get something to eat and then prepare ourselves before the walk.

And what a good walk it was. After the 9pm start had been witnessed by crowds of people, we moved off, and it wasn't long before we were out of Binche. As it was June, we had daylight for well over an hour. The walking

couldn't have been much easier. It was all on minor roads, the direction arrows were placed at regular intervals, and it was a very nice night. So we were moving pretty quickly. I would say that at least the first 30 miles of the walk were on tarmac, and although that makes for easy walking in terms of navigation, it can also be pretty hard on the feet, as anyone who completed the Wessex 100 will agree.

I reached the breakfast stop – at 44km – just when dawn was beginning to break, and when I left that controle, it was light, and I was able to put away my torch. Shortly after breakfast the route went on a signposted 'sentier communale' (public footpath) for the first time, and what a relief it was for the feet to walk on springy grass instead of a hard road surface.

The route then followed a fair number of tracks, as opposed to roads, and it was really very pleasant going. But unfortunately the weather then began to cloud over, and then it started to rain. Initially the rain was quite hard, and I was following a track in quite an exposed area, so I got pretty wet. By the time I left the next controle – a school in a very nice spot by a river – the rain was easing. It took a long time for the rain to stop, but stop it eventually did. At least we were no longer tarmac bashing all the time. We were following a mixture of riverside paths and woodland tracks.

At controle 11 (74km), I realised there were well under 20 miles to go, and I was starting to focus on finishing. Those last few miles involved a lot more tarmac bashing, including one straight road section of 2.5 km, which was as boring as it was hard on feet. I didn't stay too long at the remaining controles, although I certainly enjoyed the lovely Belgian fruit beer at the last one.

I got back into Binche shortly after 4pm, meaning I had completed the walk in just over 19 hours – a bit quicker than I thought I would do it. I met Jill and Serena – who had both finished long before me – and was delighted to see a very nice Belgian, with whom I had been walking, finishing, thus completing his first 100k walk. I collected my certificate and T-shirt and Jill, Serena and myself had a couple of beers before getting the train back to Brussels where we collapsed into the Hotel Ibis. The only downside of the whole weekend going into the hotel bar and watching England's poor performance against the USA in the opening game of the World Cup (little was I to know at the time that England's performances were actually going to get worse!)

Belgian challenge walks are certainly different, as Jill had told me they would be. I am planning to enter next year's Euroregio in March, and if any Kent Group members would like to join me, please give me a ring. I'm sure you will enjoy them as much as I have.



### **SUMMER ON THE DOWNS: Plumpton Green to Eastbourne, July 24-25**

**by Mike Ratcliff**

OK, so weekend social walks are generally supposed to be easy going, fun affairs with not too much stress or strain along the way. Absolutely, but why not just occasionally do something a little more ambitious? That was basically what I started to think roughly nine months ago when the thought arose to try and devise a longer summer walk for the group on the South Downs. Something a little more testing. Well, maybe not quite a hundred kilometres testing but certainly more than the usual 20-25 miles that we all enjoy most weekends. Looking at the old OS explorer maps of the eastern end of the South Downs, I found it terribly hard to decide which areas to include and not too include, knowing what lovely walking many of the paths and tracks in that region provided. Trying to come up with a route that included all my favourite bits was just impossible without the mileage getting ridiculous. Ridiculous? Well how can we ever define ridiculous? I wasn't sure so the more thought I gave it, the more happy I was to just let it be and accept that if I wanted to add a longer walk to the programme in my favourite walking area, I might as well make it really long and 100 kilometres is such a nice round number. So I decided that this would be my goal and in the end I settled on a route of exactly 100 kilometres (62 miles), starting from Plumpton Green and ending at Eastbourne with a main stop at Rottingdean at 25 miles.

With there not being any spaces left in the programme around the summer solstice when I would ideally have liked to walk with the most daylight, I got the best slot I could which was Saturday July 24. In hindsight this was a great choice as the weather we had over this weekend was superb, especially on the Saturday when 11 of us set out from Plumpton Station at 09.45. I had planned the route to have a 'dropout' option for people who wanted to come along, but only for the day with our usual distance of twenty miles or so. So a happy 11 was a good start, though how many would really

want to join me for the long haul all the way to Eastbourne I didn't really dare anticipate too much until we actually left Rottingdean and were walking into the night. But Saturday morning was fine and bright and we soon covered the couple of miles or so south from the station to reach the base of Blackcap and the prominent South Downs ridge forming a dramatic horizon that dominated our view south and the whole area north of Brighton. After a vigorous climb up onto the South Downs Way, we travelled west to Ditchling Beacon where shortly after we left the main hilltop track to walk south into the heart of the downs near Lower Standean and Stanmer Down. After continuing south for some time we skirted the northern end of the site of Sussex University at Moons Corner to swing north up to Waterpit Hill and Balmer Down where we enjoyed a fabulous but windy picnic lunch on top of the highest point in the area with fantastic views of the sea to the south and the unmistakable graceful sweep of Firle Beacon in the east. The gleaming white cliffs at Seaford Head and the Cuckmere Valley were just visible in the far distance. For those of us who would be walking all the way to Eastbourne we could now see most of our hard work to come in stark technicolour in front of us.

After lunch we soon rejoined the South Downs Way to walk south and cross the A27 near Lewes. Shortly after crossing the railway line running parallel with the road, we endured the long but gradual climb back up into the hills near Kingston and continued to Swanborough Hill where the sun was now very strong but visibility superbly clear which made for such an enjoyable afternoon with more views of the sea and the myriad of colours that leap out at you from the hills on summer days like this. Continuing on down to High Hill we were now approaching the northern limits of Rottingdean and a well earned rest. The White Horse in the centre of town, just near the seafront, served as a superb venue for those whose day's walking was complete and wanted some refreshment before the journey home as well as the six of us who planned to tackle the remaining 37 miles through the hills and along the coast to Eastbourne. After an hour or so in the pub we said our goodbyes and our group of 11 became just six. But half a dozen is a nice number and still makes for a good group on any occasion. So we carried on along the seafront at Telescombe in fast changing but still positive conditions with the light still strong but definitely now feeling like afternoon. We eventually left the front to climb up to Telescomb Tye, Fore Hill and Mill Hill before descending to the valley at Southease which forms the last major gap in the South Downs ridge before swinging down to Eastbourne.

The next nodal point on our journey would be at Southease itself where we crossed two major roads, the River Ouse and a railway line all in the space of a few hundred metres. With the light now fading, the radio masts at Beddingham Hill were beckoning us eastwards and up the long winding climb of Itford Hill. Now back on high ground we were also back in what I tend to think of as the Downs proper with Firle Beacon sweeping down to the north and the lights of Newhaven beaming bright to the south. That Saturday night we were especially lucky as a gorgeous, almost full moon soon rose and kept us company with an effervescent presence. After turning due south off the South Downs Way we descended over Blackcap Hill down to Stump Bottom where we turned back up to Gardener's Hill and back north towards Bostal Hill and the Bopeep car park. After this long climb back up through the dark, crisp night to reach the ridge we soon found ourselves at the trig point at Firle Beacon, coincidentally at almost exactly midnight. The circuitous route that we were taking allowed us only a very short time back on the top with us soon descending down to the old coach road that runs parallel with the downs for several miles to Alfriston. This ancient byway is under tree cover for much of its length and at that time of night with the moonlight beaming through the leaves from the cool clear sky, the atmosphere was quite unique for us six walkers. I guess it was around this time, with well over half the distance completed and the aches and pains of a very long distance walk starting to creep in, that we now thought more about the coming morning and the final push over the hills to Eastbourne. I knew that we would soon be back down at the coast at Seaford but even that still felt like quite a long way off with another hard climb rapidly approaching and a weariness now setting in that maybe all overnight walkers will experience at some stage.

Finally reaching the outskirts of Alfriston after our mammoth push down that never ending flinty track, we made the gruelling climb back up to the South Downs Way near Black Patch though after probably less than a mile of walking west we turned off the line of summits to take the Green Way, another old bridleway that took us on an undulating route south through woodland and farms towards the coast. With the intense neon lights of Newhaven Harbour seeming almost tangible in the early hours of that Sunday morning we walked towards them with the smell of 'civilisation' drawing us in. We soon found ourselves passing the old church at Bishopstone and then soon down on the seafront at Seaford itself. I now realised for sure that we were making excellent time on this trip as I had always anticipated that we would have seen the dawn by the time we rejoined the coast at Seaford. Continuing darkness, however, was all we had with only the sound of the sea and the very faint outline of the horizon made visible by the moon. The growing lights of the town also added to the strange atmosphere of this very sleepy place as we walked eastwards towards the towering mass of Seaford Head that dominated the murky skyline. Now needing a serious rest, we crashed out on the tourist benches by the beach at the eastern end of the seafront by the famous Martello Tower that sits solid and strong, guarding the town at the base of the cliffs. Dawn! After we had all rested our stiff and aching bodies by the sea, with some of us even grabbing a few moments sleep, we pushed our way up the rising chalky outcrop that culminates in the summit of Seaford Head, over to the other side with the beautiful panorama of the Cuckmere Valley opening up before us. The shocking white ripples of the Seven Sisters trailing away to the far horizon under the fresh new light of dawn. The walk following the South Downs Way up to the Golden Galleon at Exeat was rather tedious though it was lovely



to turn round after crossing the River Cuckmere and to aim for the first of those great coastal peaks in front of us. The river was very low, the earth very dry and the morning air was still quite cool and fresh though the climb up to the finger post at Cliff End soon got the blood really pumping hard again. And so we traversed the hills one after another with the sea to our right and a bright pink strip of morning light piercing through the petrol grey coloured cloud across our view to the east. Reaching our final rest stop at Birling Gap we made a special effort I think to take stock of the situation and savour the moment with the knowledge that our long hard journey was nearly at its climax. We lay there on the stony grass bank by the car park with the morning air now warming up and the day now fast establishing itself. With the last efforts at foot surgery and other remedial action complete, we rose from our resting, sprawled postures for our final push up to the Belle Tout Lighthouse and on towards Beachy Head. Very, very weary now with the finish now almost in our grasp the great sprawl of Eastbourne soon came into view as we crept round the side of the hill above Whitebread Hole with the sea more grey now and a thick, dark low cloud rolling in from the south. All that now remained was the formality of walking from the base of the hill and the terminal point of the South Downs to Eastbourne Station. It was a joy to have finished but certainly a greater joy to have persevered to walk through the night and gain such a unique experience in such a wonderful place.

### **WALKING IN THE FRENCH ALPS**

SEVERAL Kent Group members enjoyed an excellent week of walking (and socialising!) in the French Alps, based at Champagny en Vanoise, in June.

This holiday has become something of an annual event, and Gordon Harker has just had the dates confirmed for next year, which will be from Saturday June 25 to Saturday – for the cost of just £170 (plus travel). People going will be very well looked after by John and Margaret, who provide, breakfast, lunch and a wonderful three course evening meal, plus wine and beer.

For those who haven't been, we stay at a ski lodge, with a pool, hot tub and sauna, and table tennis – all for us to use after a day walking.

The plan is to take the Eurostar train as a group, although some members may wish to make their own travel plans.

A deposit of £60 per person will be required. Members interested in going on next year's French holiday are asked to contact Gordon Harker for more details – tel 01843 299455 or e-mail at [gordonharker@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:gordonharker@yahoo.co.uk)

### **THE FEET by Tom Wayman**

At night the feet become lonely.

All day they have considerable importance,  
are carefully dressed in shoes

and ready at any moment to stand,  
move around, take the weight off the body.

Even when the body is sitting, sometimes  
the feet depress certain pedals  
to control an automobile travelling at tremendous speeds  
for hundreds of miles.

But at night  
even their socks are taken away.

The feet are made to lie down naked  
in a part of the bed no one visits.

All night they lie there, with nothing to do.

Hidden away in the darkness  
under sheets and blankets,

No wonder the two abandoned feet  
begin a clumsy relationship.

One foot suddenly crosses the ankle of the other,  
like a blind horse putting his head  
over the neck of another blind horse.

The feet like this, touching all night –  
still, self-conscious, not saying a word.

This poem was sent in by Jill Green, who would like to add:

Yet in darkness,  
under the sheets and blankets,  
they heal the injuries we inflict upon them.  
Thank you feet, for taking me so many miles  
To see such wonderful people and things.



### SUMMER FRENCH CHALLENGE

THIS year's Summer French Challenge was on Saturday July 3. Fifteen LDWA members took Le Shuttle at Cheriton at a price per person of £6 – yes, £6 for a day in France, thanks to discounts obtained by Joy Davies.

The 15 filled three cars, and the trip followed the same format – and almost the same route – as for the previous two years. We parked the cars at the Auchan hypermarket at Coquelles and then set off. The route followed roads and then a Grande Randonnee (GR) to Peuplingues and a coffee stop. Then it was a minor road to the village of Escalles to pick up the GR again, leaving it follow excellent tracks, offering extensive views, to Mont de Sombre. This was a diversion from the previous two years, and proved a very popular one. We then dropped down to the village of Hervelinghen and the easy ascent of Mont de Couple, offering even better views and where there is a toposcope informing people how far it is to places like Paris, Stockholm and Moscow.

We then descended from Mont de Couple to follow another GR to Wissant, on the coast, where we had our lunch stop. After that it was a walk along the beach (some of us happily splish-splashing along in bare feet) for a couple of miles, before we took a clifftop path which we followed to Cap Blanc-Nez, a very steep climb but another very good viewpoint.



A quick stop to get our breath back and then we took the GR back to Coquelles, where we had another stop in a bar before returning to the Auchan hypermarket. We had time for a quick meal and some of us did a bit of shopping at Auchan before getting Le Shuttle back home. It was a very good day, by common consent one of the most enjoyable we have had since we started our French challenge walks in the mid-1990s.

Next year's Summer French Challenge will be on Saturday July 9 (it is always on the first or second Saturday in July). It will involve the same transport arrangements as it has for the last three years, and will follow the same route. We had to turn someone away this year because she contacted us too late, so if you want to go, let Graham Smith or Joy Davies know as soon as possible.

And for those interested in the shorter version of our French challenge, our 14-mile Christmas Cruise Around Calais will be on Saturday December 11. Details are in the Social Walks Programme above.

### A FOOT IN THE FAROES

by Claire Betts

TWO years before I immersed myself foot-first into weekend walks with the LDWA, I cut my teeth and boots on my first walking venture with Explore, and spent a week wandering around the Faroe Islands. This is an account of my inaugural venture, and the background to why I am now a firm believer in the Single Supplement . . .

A dearth of singleton companions, the long overdue need to get away and it was time to face the inevitable. An Organised Group Tour. With a healthy bout of cynicism and fear on the backburner, I dialled an Explore rep to see what was on offer. My query being at the 11<sup>th</sup> hour, Explore were down to their last two trips: 'Cruising the Dalmatian Coast' for an additional late booking fee and bonus accommodation hassles, or a no extra charge 'please god come along and help make up the numbers' place on their pleasantly named 'On Foot in the Faroes' trip.

These so called 'Faroes' were so far off my GPS, I had not a geographical clue where they were, nor did the friends who heard 'Faroes' as 'Pharaohs' and imagined me basking by the Nile. A quick exploratory Google, and I realised

that, for just under a grand, I'd be sent to 18 windswept islands, marooned in the Atlantic, equidistant from the three chilly land masses of Scotland, Denmark and Iceland. The guidebook celebrated them as 'bleak, barren but beguiling' and so, having, always considered myself in a similar vein, I felt an immediate affinity, a mild curiosity and an urgent desperation to get away. I booked.



I now had just three days to trawl through outdoors shops, select an appropriately functional, light yet experienced trekker style wardrobe, as well as embark on a crash course in mountain climbing to tone up my Berghaus for the Nordic terrain. I panic bought, I begged and borrowed and the extent of my pre-trip training programme equated to nothing more than running between outlets of Millets, Blacks and Lillywhites, up to my elasticised gaiters in Goretex, improbably small travel towels and clip-on aluminium water bottles.

All too soon I was standing at Stansted, trying to guess which of the holidaying masses might be my fellow trekkees. I couldn't deny there was also an undercurrent of hope that one of the booked might be a single male, with a clear penchant for walking, and an ulterior motive - potentially fulfilled by the appearance of me. Two hours later, at the tiny, bleak and security-shy Sorvagur Airport and it seemed Mr Right hadn't made it, although, curiously, a young man called Keith HAD apparently cancelled at the last minute.

Minus Keith, my Faroe Friends were Scottish, married or mildly peculiar, though fortunately also friendly, human and similarly apprehensive as to what the potentially hard cored walking week in a chilled land of the barren, may entail. We needn't have worried. The Gods shone on us, as did the sun, and the Faroes were a barely Explored treat.

Having been warned by an ornithologist mate that the puffin season was nearing the end and I'd be lucky to see any, reality was an avian treat in the form of vast colonies of the little characters. Like painted dodos, comical and plentiful, they perched on precipitous clifftops or at the entrance to their hillside holes, balancing beakfuls of sand eels: they appeared mercifully unaware of the nets of the Puffin Catcher. Like a macabre character from a fairy tale, this gainful employment sees the Faroese scale any sea stack or teetering peak to capture these speciality menu toppers. None of our group could stomach dining on the fruits of our photo shoots, instead we captured them on camera along with the huddled guillemots and swooping arctic terns, which featured just as highly in the skies, though less so on the menu. Given the 'Foot' emphasis in the tour title, we of course expected lots of walks, though amusingly, all still seemed to anxiously question the subject. Our tour leader, experienced and toned yet fairly anti-social with little time for small talk, blinked, gaped and stumbled in Manuel-style confusion as we, equally represented as the unfit, the fearful, the Vertigo sufferer and the OCD style preparation freak, bombarded him with questions as to the nature of each days trek: 'Is it steep/rocky/slippery/high/long/necessary?' etc. Yet, albeit with moments of trepidation, exhaustion, panic or cramp, we thrived on our efforts and were duly rewarded with scenery beyond any of our expectations.

The intensely blue expanse of the Atlantic, the spectacularly vertical miles of the bird cliffs, the rugged valleys and the bare, barren hillsides: the landscape is like Middle Earth, and is a feast for the eyes and a tonic for the soul. The sporadic flocks of weathered and densely woolly sheep, from which the Faroes gained its name, cling hypnotised to the hilltops. And, aside from the birds, the only other activity are the infrequent, dotted clusters of village life, surviving on the fruits of the ocean and yet often at its mercy. There is so much, and yet refreshingly so little, to take in.

The only downside to an otherwise glorious trip was the unexpected nocturnal debacle. My request for a single room supplement had been declined due to the last minute nature of my booking and I therefore found myself facing seven nights of close quarters with the 'mildly peculiar' member of our group, who, during our first night of shared space, revealed herself to come fully equipped with a deep, continuous and resonant snore. She also possessed the enviable ability to sleep through her poor room-mate's frustrated pleas, sighs and last resort pinches, and thereafter each night and each new location involved a tired, 'edge of a breakdown' style search for somewhere else to rest. And so it came to pass that, in spite of having shelled out a good few Faroese krone for three starred accommodation, my un-starred bed space included a corridor, a TV room, an unplugged massage chair and, as an end of the week finale, a cleaners' cupboard, complete with en-suite bucket and mop.

No matter. This was a week of such meditative qualities that even sleep deprivation could not diminish my mood. So far removed from the chaos and clutter of everyday life, and dramatic, majestic, rugged and wild – the place is a



veritable mind massage, a cathartic zone of tranquillity and the perfect destination for redressing the balance. From one tiny toy town of turf-roofed settlements to the next, there is nothing.

The Faroe Islands are the antithesis to mayhem, and life there is testament to the adage that time and tide wait for no man. The islands are remote and weathered, and in many ways so are its people. While the description may repel the average holidaymaker, those in need of a far-flung getaway should consider putting feet, eyes and tired mind in the Faroes. And as for Keith - you missed a treat (and you'd probably have enjoyed the holiday too).

### **WALKING IN SIDCUP – BUT IT WILL BE 75 MILES**

MEMBERS may be interested to know that the Rotary Club of Sidcup, as part of its 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations, is organising a 75-mile walk through the northern part of our county. This will commence in Footscray Meadows, Sidcup, on Sunday September 19, and will take place over several days. Members who may be interested are asked to contact David Barker, vice-president of the Rotary Club of Sidcup, by emailing [rotarysidcup@googlemail.com](mailto:rotarysidcup@googlemail.com)

### **SCOTTISH BORDERS WALKING FESTIVAL: SEPTEMBER 4-12**

KENT Group members may be interested to know that the sixth Scottish Borders Walking Festival will take place in Peebles, in the heart of the Tweed Valley, next month.

The Scottish Highlands, as every member who either took part in or marshalled at the Heart of Scotland 100 will know, are unsurpassed for scenery in the UK.

But the Scottish Borders – often overlooked by people heading for the Highlands – are not far behind. The area boasts some of the most breathtaking landscapes in Scotland, the Tweed Valley is less than an hour's drive south of Edinburgh and only a couple of hours north of Newcastle, but a million miles away from the hustle and bustle of the city.

The Scottish Borders Walking Festival - the longest established walking festival in Scotland - is a nine-day festival of walks and a full programme of social events, to suit all ages and abilities.

There will be friendly and knowledgeable walk leaders to guide you through the unspoilt scenery of the Tweed Valley, exploring the delightful towns of Peebles, Innerleithen, West Linton, Walkerburn and Selkirk.

With its purple hills and lush valleys, the Tweed Valley is a fantastic walking destination - a real hidden gem.

In an attempt to put the area on the national walking map, festival organisers are hoping to attract at least one walker from every county in the UK to take part in this year's event.

For full details of walks and events, please visit [www.borderswalking.com](http://www.borderswalking.com) or call 01835 863170 to order a programme.

### **COMEDY CORNER**

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

A little concerned at the ambiguity of that comment, the patient asked: "Do you think I'll live to be 90?"

"Well," said the doctor, "do you smoke tobacco or drink alcohol?"

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

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

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

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

"Nope," said the patient.

"Do you gamble, drive fast cars or have regular sex?" asked the GP.

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

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

**by Bill Gillibrand**

### **INNER PEACE – THIS REALLY WORKS**

I AM passing this on to you because it definitely worked for me today, and we all could probably use more calm in our lives.

Some doctor on television this morning said that the way to achieve inner peace is to finish all the things you have started.

So I looked around my house to see things I'd started and hadn't finished and, before leaving the house this morning, I finished off a bottle of Merlot, a bottle of Chardonnay, a bottle of Baileys, a bottle of wum, a package of Prunglies, the remainder of bot Prozic and Valum scriptins, the rest of the Chesescake and a box of choclets.

Yu haf no idr how bludy guod I feel rite now.

**by Neal O'Rourke**



Heart of Scotland 100 - the Start at Dunkeld





Heart of Scotland 100 - Dunkeld and Forthingall Checkpoint