

LONG DISTANCE WALKERS ASSOCIATION – Kent Group

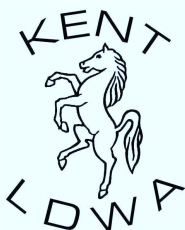
Aim: to further the interests of those who enjoy long distance walking

NEWSLETTER



The three wise monkeys - Photo by Claire Betts

Number 83



December 2010

www.ldwa.org.uk/kent



White Cliffs photos by Bryan Clarke

KENT GROUP SOCIAL WALKS DECEMBER 2010 TO APRIL 2011

Sat Dec 4 Biggin Hill Circular

c22 mls. Meet 8.45am at Knockholt rlwy stn GR TQ485629 Map: Exp 147. 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 12 Christmas Lunch

Anyone who has not yet booked should contact secretary Bill Gillibrand – contact details above.

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.

Wed Dec 29 Post Christmas Sevenoaks Stroll

15 mls. Meet 9am NT c.p. Ightham Mote GR TR585535. Map: Exp 147. Lunch stop: Wetherspoons, Sevenoaks. Ldrs: Ivan Waghorn and Dave Sheldrake

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 600972. 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.

Sun Jan 16 Greensand Way 1

c18ml. Folkestone East Cliff – Hamstreet. Linear walk. Meet 8.30am at Hamstreet rlwy stn GR TR001337 to arrange cars to drive to start of walk. Maps: Exp 125, 137 & 138. Pub stop. Ldr: Graham Smith.

Sun Jan 23 Greensand Way 2

c15ml. Hamstreet – Pluckley. Linear walk. Meet 9am Pluckley village. GR TQ925454 to arrange cars to drive to start of walk. Maps: Exp 125 & 137 Pub stop. Ldr: Graham Smith.

Sat Jan 29 Swalecliffe to Birchington

22ml. Linear. Meet 9.00am at Chestfield and Swalecliffe rlwy stn. GR TR136668. Map: Exp 150. Lunch stop at Sarre. Joint walk with London Group. Ldr: Mike Ratcliff.

Sun Jan 30 AGM

at The Church Barn, Charing (see newsletter item below).

Sun Feb 6 Greensand Way 3

c19ml. Pluckley – West Peckham. Linear walk. Meet 9am West Peckham village GR TQ644525 (park near church) to arrange cars to drive to start of walk. Maps: Exp 137&148. Pub stop. Ldr: Graham Smith.

Sun Feb 20 St. Margaret's Circular

C22ml. Meet 9am at public c.p. in St. Margaret's village GR TR358447. Map: Exp 138. Lunch stop at Ringwould. Ldr: Mike Ratcliff.

Sun Feb 27 Greensand Way 4

c22ml. West Peckham – Limpsfield Chart. Linear walk. Meet 9am Limpsfield Chart in c.p. on edge of common GR TQ426521 to arrange cars to drive to start of walk. Maps: Exp 147 & 148. Pub stop. Ldr: Graham Smith

Sun Feb 27 Sevenoaks Outcrops Walk

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

Sun Mar 6 Sevenoaks Circular Marshals Walk

For details contact Brian Buttifant.

Sun Mar 13 Sutton Valence Circular

21.5ml. Meet 9.00am at the Old Congregational Chapel (now belonging to King's School) on the junction of Broad Street and Lower Road in Sutton Valence village centre GR TQ813492. Street parking available in village close by. Map: Exp 137. Lunch stop at Egerton. Ldr: Mike Ratcliff.

Sun Mar 20 Sevenoaks Circular Main Event

See Events Diary

Sun Mar 27 Greensand Way 5

c20ml. Limpsfield Chart – Brockham. Linear walk. Meet 9am Brockham village GR TQ198496) to arrange cars to drive to start of walk. Park near church. Maps: Exp 146 & 147. Pub stop. Ldr: Graham Smith.

Sun Apr 3 Appledore Circular

c22ml. Meet 9.00am at public c.p. in Church Road on edge of Park Wood GR TQ954318. Map: Exp 125. Lunch stop at Stone-in-Oxney. Ldr: Mike Ratcliff.

Sun Apr 10 A Royal Stroll Revisited

c20ml. Meet 8.30am at Harrietsham rlwy stn GR TQ866528. Map: Exp 148. Pub stop – food available. Ldr: Neal O'Rourke.

Fri Apr 22 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 24 Greensand Way 6

c18ml. Brockham – Shamley Green. Linear walk. Meet 9am Shamley Green GR TQ033434 (near small church on B2128) to arrange cars to drive to start. Maps: Exp 145 & 146. Pub stop. Ldr: Graham Smith.

Sat Apr 30 The Four Pits Walk

C40mls. Meet 8am at Northbourne Village Hall GR TR334523 for a walk which will visit the sites of the former Kent pits of Tilmanstone and Snowdown, Chislet and Betteshanger, and which has now become an Anytime Challenge (see newsletter item below) Map: Exp 150. Unsupported, but with refreshment stops. Ideal preparation for the Hundred! Ldr: Graham Smith.

FRONT COVER

Hear no evil, see no evil, speak no evil – the three wise (or are they?) monkeys, Henry Williams, Mike Pursey and Graham Smith, pictured on Mike Ratcliff's West of Sandwich walk on Sunday August 1. Memories of summer!

Picture by Claire Betts.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Chairman – Brian Buttifant

Secretary – Bill Gillibrand,

Treasurer – Neil Higham,

Members

Joy Davies –

Nick Dockree –

Michael Headley –

Stephanie le Men –

Mike Pursey –

Graham Smith –

Newsletter editor: Graham Smith –

PUB meetings are held on the first Monday of each month (except if that coincides with a bank holiday, when they are postponed to the second Monday) at the Rose & Crown, Wrotham. Meetings commence at 8.30pm. All welcome.

NEWS OF KENT CHALLENGE WALKS

Sevenoaks Circular

Next year's Sevenoaks Circular will be on Sunday March 20. It will be based at Sevenoaks Rugby Club, as it was this year, and there will again be routes of 30, 20 and 15 miles. The route will be the same as it has been for the last three years, although organiser Brian Buttifant says it may be changed for 2012. The marshals' walk will be on March 6, and members wishing to marshal are asked to contact Brian on the above telephone number.

Weald challenge

Our 2011 challenge walk will be the Walk With The Smugglers, based at Goudhurst, on Sunday July 10, with distances of 26 and 15 miles. Organiser Neil Higham has provisionally earmarked June 19 for the marshals' walk. Further details will appear in the April newsletter.

White Cliffs Challenge

Next year's WCC will be on Sunday September 25, and will return to St Margaret's Hall, where we last held the event in 2008. The distances will be 28-30 miles, and a shorter distance of 14-15 miles.

After the success of last year's WCC – the second leg of the Kent Surrey Sussex Triple Challenge – it had been hoped that Fowlmead Country Park would have been a permanent venue for the event. In terms of facilities, parking and access, Fowlmead is ideal, but unfortunately, we had an issue with the catering when the event was held in September. We really need to have sole use of a kitchen when we put on events, which we could not have at this year's WCC, because the Fowlmead kitchen had been franchised out, something we were not told when we made the booking. The franchisees did honour the booking, and everyone agrees they did an excellent job with refreshments at the start and end of the event. But this almost doubled our costs at Fowlmead, so we had little option but to seek a different venue.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

OUR AGM will be at Church Barn at Charing on Sunday January 30. Michael Headley will lead a short walk, starting at 10am, before the meeting. The meeting itself will start at 2pm and will be preceded by a free meal. So please come along to our AGM and have your say on the running of our group.

NEW MEMBERS

AS the year ended, Kent Group of the LDWA had 118 members, our highest number for some years. New members are:-

John Crozier, Rainham; John Goodwin, Dover; David Gwynn, Northfleet; Deepanjan Kanungo, Purley, Surrey; Mark Norman, Mereworth; Blanche O'Connor, Deal; Annie Ross, Maidstone; Derek Rowell, Barming; Sue and Colin Slater, Canterbury; Dr Laurie Jo Knight, Burmarsh Weald, East Sussex.

Please make sure all new members are given a warm welcome on walks.

KSS (KENT SURREY SUSSEX) TRIPLE CHALLENGE

THE Sussex Stride on September 18/19 was the third leg of the KSS. Certificates and badges – both extremely attractive, and designed by Keith Warman – have been produced. They are now being sent out to 35 walkers who have completed the Surrey Tops, our White Cliffs Challenge and the Sussex Stride by Shirley Greenwood, from Sussex Group, who is Recorder for the KSS.

The Sussex Stride was a huge success, attracting 149 entries, with Kent Group manning a checkpoint. All three events have been hugely successful, so the concept of a Triple Challenge of 50-plus mile walks has certainly proved popular. To qualify for the Triple Challenge, the events can be walked in successive years, and can start with any one of the three.

Next year sees the return of the Surrey Tops, based at Witley, held over the weekend of September 16/17. Kent Group will be manning a checkpoint at Elstead, at 16 miles. The marshals' walk will be held on the bank holiday weekend of August 26/27.

Brian Buttifant and Graham Smith have met with members of Surrey and Surrey groups to discuss the organisation of the events. One of the points agreed was to standardise the entry fees. Entering next year's Surrey Tops is going to cost £15 for LDWA members and £18 for non-members, so it is likely that very similar fees will be applied when we put on the White Cliffs Challenge in 2012.

HOUSMAN HUNDRED

THE 2011 Hundred is based at Ludlow in Shropshire, with what looks like a delightful route going through parts of Herefordshire, South Shropshire and the Cluns area. Kent Group will be manning a checkpoint at Newcastle, on the Welsh border, at 41.9 miles. Provisional opening arrangements between 6pm on the Saturday and 6am on the Sunday. People wishing to help are asked to contact Brian Buttifant – details above.

OLYMPIC YEAR HUNDRED

KENT Group treasurer Neil Higham has been attending meetings of the 2012 Hundred steering committee, which may be the most memorable Hundred ever.

Victoria Park, near the Olympic park, has been earmarked the start, and Trevelyan School, in Windsor, will be the western HQ. The steering committee has yet to decide on a name for the event.

The route description for the event has now been completed, and Kent Group will be offering to man a checkpoint at Biggin Hill, which will be at 31 miles. It now looks like the controversial issue of walking (or not) through Windsor Great Park has been resolved. In the event of the park authorities not agreeing to access to the park at night (members of the steering committee are still in negotiation about this) the idea of bussing walkers elsewhere has now been dropped. There will now be a detour around the park.

Further details about progress will appear in future newsletters.

SHIRLIE GILL

SOME Kent Group members may be aware that Shirlie Gill had a fall, chipping a tooth, on Jill Green's birthday walk on the Isle of Wight on October 10. Shirlie has made a full recovery, and sent the following message to secretary Bill Gillibrand after the committee sent her a get well card.

WHAT a lovely surprise to receive the delightful card this morning with kind thoughts and words on behalf of the Kent Group Committee. Thank you all so much. I have been amazed at the compassion of people - some I hardly know - their cards and telephone calls and e-mails have cheered me up quite nicely!

It is just over three weeks now since the accident and I think the shock is practically conquered. The facial trauma has now healed but I fear there may be some permanent damage to some nerves in my top lip - but it is early days I suppose. I plucked up courage and made appointments at the dentist to have the broken tooth crowned. I really really really loathe having to have that done but I have little choice. My knee complains loudly if I kneel on it and I am hoping it was just badly bruised and still needs some healing time. Keith and I went for an eight mile walk - my knee grumbled a bit but I was not limping so, hopefully, all OK. It was my first walk/exercise since the fall so we just took

it steadily. We walked through some Woodland Trust woods (Brede High Woods) near Battle and the colours were magnificent - magical even.

It is such a shame it all happened on Jill Green's birthday walk. We were all having such a wonderful time and Jill had put so much effort and organisation into the weekend - I am just so sorry that I caused a great deal of worry for everyone. Still, I suppose we shall all remember her birthday now!

Please pass my thanks to the committee members - I am most grateful.

My best wishes, Shirlie

REG CHAPMAN

ALL Kent Group members will be saddened to hear of the death of Reg Chapman, LDWA Internet Officer and national committee member, who died on November 5. Reg has contributed to the running of the LDWA in many ways for many years, not least in setting up our association's website. He was also a stalwart of Surrey Group, and some members will remember him doing a marvellous job in marshalling the Surrey Tops marshals' walk in 2008. Reg's funeral was on November 17.

Reg will be greatly missed, and our condolences go to Janet and her family at this time.



THE FOUR PITS WALK – AN ANYTIME CHALLENGE

GRAHAM Smith's Four Pits Walk has now become an Anytime Challenge. The walk is 40 miles, and takes in the sites of the four former Kent collieries – Tilmanstone, Snowdown, Chislet and Betteshanger. A route description – kindly checked by Michael Headley and Wendy Thurrell – has been produced, which also features a brief history of the Kent Coalfield. The RD also has details of how walkers can cut short the walk and make it into a Three Pits Walk, taking the sites of Tilmanstone, Snowdown and Betteshanger pits.

Those completing the walk qualify for a certificate. A badge, based on a design by Graham's wife Sarah, is available for £2. The Four Pits Walk has twice gone on our social walks programme, and it is on again on Saturday April 30 (see social walks programme above). Anyone wishing to tackle the route should contact Graham (details above) who will send out the route description.

CAPTAIN KIDD'S TREASURE TREK

by Graham Smith

FOUR members of Kent Group went on the walk led by Richard Frost on Sunday September 12 – and those who didn't make it missed a treat. It was a very nice walk on good paths, led by someone who we don't see too much of, but when we do, he certainly makes himself known!

I have been on some of Richard's walks before, and I am sure Richard won't mind me saying that they can be a little bit idiosyncratic. But there again, who isn't a bit idiosyncratic in the LDWA? Goodness me, you've got to be a bit idiosyncratic (my wife calls it something else!) to **contemplate** walking 100 miles in 48 hours, let alone actually doing it.

Richard is a very strong walker, and very fit. I can remember back in July 2003 (I think it was) Richard turning up on my 18-mile Three Pits Walk. It was a blisteringly hot day, in fact I believe it was the hottest day in England on record. Eight of us started the walk, and Richard was one of three who finished it.

September 12 was a lovely sunny day, and Richard started by handing out maps, where he had marked his route in felt pen. The walk started from Sandown Castle, on the northern extremity of Deal. We started by following the Saxon Shore Way but then, realising the tide was right out, the four of us went onto the beach and walked the next couple of miles along the sand – and very nice it was too, making quite a refreshing change. We took the footpath across Prince's Golf Course to Sandwich, rather than the more frequently used path across the Royal St George's course (where the British Open is going to be played next year). This is a very pleasant path which took us to Sandwich, where we kept to the outskirts of the town before taking a route which brought us close to Richborough Castle. We then took some good, well-waymarked paths on the Stour Valley Walk, turning off the SVW near Cooper Street, to head south-west for Ash, and our lunch stop.

Richard had planned for us to stop at a pub, but as we all had drink with us, none of us were all that keen on visiting any pubs (which I know may be difficult to believe). Instead we had our lunch at a table on Ash recreation ground, watching the village team playing rugby. We set off after our break on more good, well-defined paths heading south. Unfortunately, after about 45 minutes, we were trying to cross a field when the path seemed to peter out. The landowner suddenly appeared, and asked where we were going. We all felt there was going to be some trouble, but it turned out that the landowner had not owned the land for very long, and he was genuinely curious about the network of rights of way across his property, so after some poring over the map and exchanging some pleasantries, we continued on what we thought was the right route. After carefully negotiating some nettles (a bit painful for Mike Ratcliff and

myself, who were wearing shorts), we found a good track, which took us to a minor road, and we followed this to Eastry.

We had a couple of short breaks on the afternoon stretch, when our leader handed out bananas and then pieces of organic cheese (now how often does **that** happen on social walks?) From Eastry our route followed a path which crossed the main A256 road, and then continued to the A258 Deal-Sandwich Road, which we crossed to reach Worth. We then followed paths and a minor road to reach the Ancient Highway, as very old route linking Deal with Sandwich, which we followed back to Sandown Castle.

It was very good day and an excellent walk. And in case anyone, like me, is wondering about the significance of the name 'Captain Kidd's Treasure Trek', Richard explained that he had been asked to give the walk a name with a certain ring to it. Well, 'Captain Kidd' certainly has that. And treasure? Well, Richard points out that there have been some significant historical finds in this area, such as the Bronze Age Ringlemere Gold Cup discovered in Ringlemere Barrow, near Sandwich, in 2001. So now we know.

Many thanks, Richard, for a very good day.

10.10.10 – JILL'S BIRTHDAY WALK by Jill

WHEN I was 10, in 1951, my father said: "This is a once in a lifetime day, you are 10 on the 10th of the 10th. Remember this day – it's special and it will never happen again." Well I do remember it, and indeed he was correct. It can never happen again.

This year I noticed my birthday was 10.10.2010 and it fell on a Sunday, just right for a party. What do I like to do best? Go for a walk of course.

I hired our village hall. It's small, one toilet and a tiny kitchen. Then I made a list of walking friends who may just like to sleep on a hall floor, perhaps most of them are getting a bit old for such a Spartan weekend. I sent out invitation letters explaining that I had the hall from 6.30pm on Saturday October 9 through to 10am on Monday October 11. At 8pm on Saturday October 9 we would all have a simple meal together. Provisions for people to make their own packed lunches would be available, we would all have breakfast together at 7am and start the walk at 8am.

The walk was in three stages, each of 10k. At the end of the first 10k I reserved a café, at the end of the second 10k the pub was expecting us, and so back to the hall. 30k is actually eighteen and three quarter miles, I'm pleased the person with a dreaded GPS made it 19 miles – so my bit of string method is not bad.

I posted off invitations to 25 people. To my amazement and delight nearly everyone said yes. Two people from the Netherlands, some from Norfolk and Suffolk, Kent, Somerset, London – and Germany, all bringing bed mats and sleeping bags, 18 men and nine ladies. I note that's 27, but my maths was never very good.

To relieve the problem of the one toilet as much as anything, a good friend gave beds to four in her cottage. She had to sleep downstairs. She did say: "Jill, you can't have the chairman of the LDWA, Paul Lawrence, sleeping on the hall floor." "Of course I can," I replied. "He is used to this kind of thing." Two walkers brought their young sons, Lewis and Rowan, aged seven and nine.

The hall is in Alverstone. Lord Alverstone gave it to the people of the village as a school, meeting place and church. His picture looks down on us all. He said there was to be no alcohol, and there isn't even a pub in Alverstone. I contacted the hall committee and I was granted permission. I thought I should perhaps turn his picture to the wall. I went to our local brewery and looked at barrels of beer. I found they sold it by the case, and they had three different kinds, so I got a case of each. Naturally, when I got them home, I tried all three to make certain they were OK – all very nice, I liked Wight Winter best.

The walk went well. Graham Smith from Kent looked longingly at the hills that we weren't going to go up. I've known Graham go off and do extra hills on challenge walks. I restrained him by promising to put on a good long walk for Kent Group with hills. We do have a fell race that meets the required criteria.

Next year, 2011, I will be 70. I am so pleased some members of Kent Group will be coming down to the Isle of Wight to walk all round it, with surprise extra bits. You will arrive on October 6, walk four days and go home on the 11th, so you need six clear days. Go and book it NOW. I won't make you sleep on the hall floor, and I'm not providing beer for you. What will be so good is that I will have walking friends with me to celebrate my 70th birthday.

Jill Green



10.10.10 – JILL'S BIRTHDAY WALK

by one of her guests

JILL Green didn't only organise a walk to mark her birthday on October 10, she planned an entire weekend. And what a weekend it was, in fact with what she arranged for those of us who went on it, the walk itself seemed somewhat secondary in importance.

Jill, as most of us know, lives on the Isle of Wight, and she invited scores of her walking friends to Alverstone, where she lives. These friends included LDWA members, of course, race walkers – with two from Holland and two from Germany – and ramblers, with whom Jill also walks.

With the arrangements, I must say Jill didn't leave a stone unturned. She booked Alverstone Village Hall from 6.30pm on Saturday October 9, and all day Sunday. She arranged an evening meal on the Saturday and breakfast on the Sunday morning, making available food for us all to prepare packed lunches. She also sent out full details to us all beforehand, with a timetable, eating/sleeping arrangements and travel directions – including names and telephone numbers of two taxi firms or, for those of us (like me) who walked the two miles to Alverstone from Sandown station, a map with a route description.

On the weekend of October 9 and 10, I was actually starting a week-long holiday in the New Forest with my wife, Sarah, and our three dogs. But the New Forest isn't far from Portsmouth, from where you can cross to the Isle of Wight. And anyway, how can you turn Jill down? So Sarah, myself and our dogs spent a couple of hours at our holiday cottage, before my wife drove me to Portsmouth, where I got the hovercraft for Ryde (Jill had, of course, given me times of hovercraft from Portsmouth and back to Portsmouth the following day). Sarah and dogs returned to the New Forest.

Leaving the hovercraft, I walked a few yards to Ryde station and didn't have to wait long for the train to Sandown. By then it was dark, and I was following Jill's directions easily enough when I spotted three figures who were clearly long distance walkers – they were walking briskly, wearing tracksuit bottoms and carrying rucksacks, obviously on their way to Jill's birthday event.

We got to Alverstone Village Hall just in time for the start of a very pleasant meal. More than 25 people were there. Jill had also thoughtfully provided some Isle of Wight beer, which was very pleasant. Everyone had an enjoyable evening, eating, drinking and talking.

At the end of the evening, some of the party left to go to guest houses which had been booked, while the rest of us – about 20 in all, and Jill included – got out our sleeping bags, and crashed out on the village hall floor. Alverstone Village Hall is not very large, so it's fair to say it was quite cosy.

At 6.30am we were woken up by a beaming Jill, who turned on the light and said: "Good morning. I hope you all slept well. It's time for breakfast." Most of us were pretty bleary-eyed, so we did our ablutions, had our breakfasts, and got ready for the walk. Jill had wanted to start at 8am, but what with everyone chatting and various photographs being taken, we didn't actually set off until about 8.15am.

It was the first time I had walked on the Isle of Wight, and I found it very pleasant – good tracks and nice views. Personally, I love hills, and Jill's walk didn't actually go over any. I made this point to Jill, and we suddenly found ourselves planning an Isle of Wight hill walk for Kent LDWA members next year (see above).

But it was very enjoyable. Jill's son Fred – a good walker, and pretty athletic - joined us. We had a very nice coffee stop at Sandown, and a very pleasant pub stop at Godshill, where we also viewed the model village, which Fred makes his living by looking after. We also had a stop to eat our lunch, and a quick stop at 10 minutes past 10 – on the 10th day of the 10th month of 2010.

It was really nice to walk with such a cross-section of walkers – ramblers, LDWA members and race walkers. No one complained that the pace was either too fast or too slow, which means it was about right.

The only downside to the walk, indeed of the whole weekend, was our own Shirlie Gill tripping and falling face-first quite early on and chipping a tooth. A 999 call was made and a paramedic quickly appeared, and Shirlie was given some emergency dental treatment. Shirlie and her partner, Keith Warman, obviously had to leave the walk. It was traumatic for poor Shirlie, and Kent Group members will be pleased to know she has made a good recovery.

We finally got back to Alverstone – after one of Jill's 'twiddles' which initially took us away from the village on a pretty wet track – at 5.30pm. Most of us made our own ways back to the mainland, Jill arranging transport to Sandown station for myself and three others. A few others stayed on an extra night.

I got the train for Ryde and the got the hovercraft back to Portsmouth, where I met Sarah and our dogs, to continue our holiday (and a very pleasant – and under-rated walking area – the New Forest is, I must say).

Jill's birthday event – you can't really call it a birthday walk, because it was much more than that – was a great experience, and I am so glad I went. Great company, excellent refreshments and a very nice walk.

Thank you, Jill, for a lovely weekend. I'm looking forward to going back to walk those hills.

Graham Smith

HAMSTREET TO RYE

by Mike Ratcliff

NOW the grip of winter is well upon us, the earlier summer days of 2010 now seem slightly distant. However, a good walk was enjoyed by a group of us just before the Scottish Hundred which now brings back fond memories. An extremely warm day actually saw some of us beginning the walk with jackets on as the cool low cloud that characterised this balmy spring day slowly dissipated to reveal a hazy but warming sky over Hamstreet.



Sixteen of us began the walk from this quite remote station in south Kent heading southwest following the Saxon Shore Way towards East Sussex and the coast. Starting the walk on relatively high ground we soon began the very gradual descent down towards Romney Marsh via the tiny village of Warehorne and eventually through Appledore, passing the fantastic old church of St Mary's up on the hill just south of Kenardington, looking out southwards for infinity towards the Channel. It's truly amazing to think that this spot, so far inland today was the very shoreline itself when the church was built!

With our route running roughly parallel with the Royal Military Canal until Appledore we then swung due west, leaving the Saxon Shore Way and traversing the modest but beautiful hill of Chapel Bank and then on to the National Trust site of Smallhythe Place. With the sun now hanging almost at its highest point and the temperature in the mid twenties we proceeded due south via the High Weald Landscape Trail towards our lunch stop at Wittersham on the Isle of Oxney. This so

called 'Isle' is an appropriate name as although fairly low lying in comparison with much of the region, it towers above the surrounding country of the supremely flat Romney Marsh like a miniature range of mountains.

Wittersham, however, proved an excellent choice of stop, especially on a muggy day such as this that couldn't help but make us feel hot and weary no matter how much you drank. As is so often the case with pubs, unless you are reasonably familiar with the place, they're always rather hit and miss but in this case The Swan in this village was a massive hit. An excellent pub that bent over backwards to make us feel welcome and gave us excellent food, drink and service!

After leaving the pub we almost immediately passed by the splendid Norman church of St John the Baptist with the sun glowing behind its silhouette giving it a strangely ethereal presence. Now heading southeast we descended quite dramatically down to the real marshlands near Iden to pick up the Sussex Border Path running alongside the River Rother. Swinging south the river joins the Royal Military Canal that we left much earlier in the walk far to the north. Now reaching the final stages of the walk we left the towpath and headed onto the most open and exposed section on our walk which took us across the almost featureless plain of East Guldeford Level. Featureless except for several rather striking features – that of the enormous wind turbines that together form the wind farm that has become such a distinctive coastal landmark - visible right across the region since being erected just a few years ago. With the sand dunes on Camber now well in sight we then headed due south towards the beach where the sea suddenly appears in dramatic style, the waves only becoming directly visible as we reached the crest of the dunes and began to descend to these famous sands. After some well deserved ice creams and lots to drink at the kiosks on the seafront, we promptly began our final push back to Rye.

Crossing the golf course and rejoining the River Rother, this time walking upstream we approached the ancient Cinque Port with the sun now more mellow, sitting quite low in the western sky creating an attractive silhouette of the citadel as evening drew in. Picking the pace up over the last mile or so we managed to reach the station just in time to catch the 18.56 train back to Hamstreet and London which was packed. The train carried sixteen hot, tired but happy walkers I hope!

AL FRESCO TAGINES **by Claire Betts**

THE success of my foray into the Faroes the year before persuaded me to book another singleton jaunt, but where on earth to go? I turned to the Atlas: the Atlas Mountains to be precise.

At Marrakesh airport, my group revealed themselves to be a likeable lot - eccentric couples, an Irish feminist, a French maiden and a squat Northerner with a fabulous repertoire of gags – a welcome addition to long nights in the frozen gite it turned out. The first morning of our trip and we were immediately thrust into the colour and chaos of the old medina of Marrakesh and the hectic myriad of back streets that formed the souks. Shoe-makers and wood carvers mingled with animal skin auctioneers and meat merchants, while scooters nipped through tiny gaps in the mayhem.

In the evening we took in the street theatre and snake charmers in the main square and wove through hundreds of stalls offering cous cous and tagines, washed down with ornate glasses of the requisite mint tea.

It was a relief to hit the road and escape to the tranquility of the Atlas. Hitting the road being the optimum term, as we bumped and swerved our way along three hours of pot holes out to the mountains, having to swap vehicles at one stage and be transported across a muddy torrent courtesy of an entrepreneurial tractor.

Our first experience of mountain life was an hour long walk in incredible gale force winds, to which one of the gang's



glasses fell victim and caused us all to wonder what the hell we had done. The following morning, however, blessed us with clear skies and warm sunshine and our first views of the vast mountain ranges of pink, orange, terracotta and brown.

Accompanied by our mountain born Berber guide, we spent the next four days walking and exploring the High Atlas. Barren hillsides, snow capped peaks, and breathtaking turquoise lakes were our therapeutic backdrop for day-long ventures in the bright Moroccan sun.

Each lunchtime our guest house cook and his mule trotted out to join us, spreading out coloured cushions and blankets and cooking up an al fresco feast. Sipping mint tea and gazing into the endless Atlas, while the mule munched our leftovers, was a serene highlight in each day's walking.

We walked out to a Berber village and took tea with a family of seven. The floors may have been dust, and the washing done in the nearby river, but the mint tea was served from a silver pot, and their hospitality was first class. We sat round in our North Face and Berghaus get-up listening to translated tales of village life, learning that no-one knew their birthday or their actual age. Odd but rather enviable I thought!

Farewell to the mule and the freezing gite, and we spent our last afternoon and evening back in buzzing Marrakesh. Four of us 'girls' opted for a traditional hamman to scrub off the mountain dirt and revitalize our aching limbs. A curious gaggle we must have looked to the Moroccan ladies who scrub and steam regularly, bold and bare. Naively unaware we'd be naked, we huddled and giggled; four women who met just six days ago, now party to each others nether regions and faced with Moroccan masseuses brandishing a stiff brush.

So, red raw and glowing, we whiled away our last evening, strolling again through the souks, and falling upon our first tippie in a week. One glass, after four days of Atlas air and an hour-long scrub, and we hit the Moroccan sack for the last time before flying home.

CRABBLE CRUISE ON NOVEMBER 14

by Graham Smith

AS Jill Green said in an article in the last newsletter, every walk is an experience. And the 18-mile Crabble Cruise led by Joy Davies in November was certainly that.

It was always going to be a good walk, because the route twice took in the Alkham Valley, one of the most picturesque parts of East Kent which, sadly, has rarely been visited on LDWA social walks. What made it such an experience was the weather, and some of the conditions underfoot.

Eight of us assembled at Crabble Athletic Ground in River, on the outskirts of Dover, with Mike Pursey and Mike Ratcliff commendably (for November) wearing shorts. There had been quite a bit of rain over the previous few days, and the forecast for that day was more of the wet stuff. Joy told the group that it was going to be very wet underfoot, and that she had been thinking of cancelling the walk. A couple of us told her that we wouldn't have heard of it, although our resolve was going to be well tested over the next few hours.

We set off by going round the Crabble ground of Dover Athletic (who, just eight days earlier, had beaten Gillingham 2-0 in the FA Cup First Round – sorry Gills fans, I couldn't resist getting that one in). We then took paths and a lane going past the ruined St Radigund's Abbey. The weather was then quite drizzly, and the dark clouds above looked a bit menacing. But, as I always say, if you're bothered about getting wet then there's no point going walking.

The first of the day's challenges came when we crossed a field towards Tumble Tye Farm (in view of the state our clothes were in the process of getting, Tumble Dry Farm would have been more appropriate). As we approached the field corner, the sticky mud we had been walking on became horrible, gooeey slurry, and our feet just sank into it. Four of us – leader Joy, who was wearing her trademark Wellington boots, Claire Betts, Mike Pursey and myself – pressed on to the stile ahead, taking one laborious step after the other as the sludge went halfway up our calves. At one stage it almost reached my knees, and I think I said "Oh dear me" (that may not have been exactly what I said) once or twice. Claire, who was just behind me (sorry about my language, Claire) was laughing (yes laughing) like a maniac, and Mike P was gritting his teeth and getting on with it, as he usually does. The other four walkers had, very sensibly, decided to give the slurry a wide berth, diverting on slightly firmer ground to the edge of the field to manoeuvre themselves under a fence to reach the road.

This ordeal over, and with Claire, Mike P and myself spending the next half an hour trying to shake the slurry from our shoes, we pressed on, taking nice paths to cross the Alkham Valley, and then paths and minor roads to Hawkinge. Then more paths and lanes to Paddlesworth and our lunch stop. The drizzle had by now become fairly hard rain, and the Cat and Custard Pot gave us a very nice respite for a most enjoyable hour.

The return stretch should have been very pleasant, but shortly after leaving the pub, the fairly hard rain became very hard rain. It just bucketed down, completely soaking us all and starting to make my fingers numb. It was my heaviest soaking this year, making me even wetter than I got on the Heart of Scotland Hundred. But we all cheerfully plodded on, going through Reinden Wood en route to the Alkham Valley, and then taking more paths to descend to the village of Alkham. The path which descends into Alkham from the west is one of my favourite paths in east Kent, as it is a very firm, clear track which in decent weather offers fine views. Sadly, the atrocious weather hardly offered us **any** views, but it was still a very enjoyable part of the route. We crossed the Alkham Valley Road and took a path which climbed out of the valley. Just before we reached the wood on top of the valley hillside, the rain actually stopped, and the clouds began to lift. With less than three miles to go, it was certainly a bit late for a change of weather, but it was still extremely welcome. We followed lanes back to Crabble, arriving just after four o'clock while it was still light.

It was such a shame that a good walk like that had to be accompanied by some of the worst weather we've had on a Kent LDWA walk this year. But hopefully Joy will put it on again next summer. My clothes should have dried out by then.

KENT COASTAL HUNDRED SOCIAL WALK

MIKE Ratcliff is planning a social walk (that's right, a social walk) of 100 miles next year. The idea is for this to be a forerunner of the Kent Coastal Hundred, which we have applied to the national committee to host in 2016.

Mike and one or two others are now working out the details. A date has not yet been finalised, but it is likely to be in the summer, and may start on a Friday. It will be a circular walk, starting from St Margaret's. Provisionally, the route will follow the coast to Deal, then go inland to Fowlmead Country Park and Sandwich, then go out to Pegwell Bay and follow the coast to Reculver, before going inland to Grove Ferry to take the Stour Valley Walk to Canterbury, where it will pick up the Elham Valley Way to Folkestone, and then follow the coast to Dover and St Margaret's.

This will not be a challenge walk, and for that reason numbers are going to be limited. More details will appear in the next newsletter, but anyone interested in going on it, or providing back-up, is asked to contact Mike – details above.

CHALLENGE WALKING IN BELGIUM

AN article in the last newsletter has led to some interest from Kent Group members in getting a party together to tackle one of the 100 kilometre challenge walks in Belgium. Unfortunately the Euroregio in Welkenraedt, held in March last year and which Graham Smith and Jill Green entered, will not be held in 2011. Graham is in the process of getting details of other 100k challenge walks in Belgium next year, with a view to organising a weekend – which would involve taking the Eurostar train to Brussels on a Friday afternoon and staying in a hotel after the walk, returning to Kent on the Sunday. Further details will appear in the next newsletter.

BILL STIRLING

by Eric Rolfe

JULIE Welch's Strider obituary of Henry Bridge reminded me of a long ago Winter Tanners, when Bill Stirling took part. Remember that a Winter Tanners is very lightly supported. A check-in at a Leatherhead car park. A single checkpoint. And by the time I usually got back no check-in at the car park.

Well this was a very cold day with six inches or more of snow on the ground.

It was late afternoon, I had crossed the A25 somewhere near Abinger Hammer heading up the North Downs towards Ranmore Common. Along here I joined up with Sue Clements. I was concerned that the going was very heavy and it could be 8pm or later before we could finish the route.

Sue's concern was that she had driven down, and had given a lift to Bill Stirling. It would have been no big surprise for him to finish well ahead of us, or have retired early. Either way the thought of him waiting hours in an open car park in the bitter cold wasn't particularly happy.

We decided to reach the Ranmore Road, and divert to Dorking railway station. We even managed to hitch-hike this bit. Our Dorking train took us the one stop to Leatherhead. It was cold and dark when we got off. Apprehensive about what had happened to Bill.

Rumble, rumble, rumble. A train arrived from London. Off stepped a sprightly Bill! Having retired much earlier, he had spent the afternoon commuting to London and back on the warm trains, checking to see when Sue had returned. Of course he had been using his free rail travel pass!

Maybe Surrey Group even now could make some note of a late claim for "Greatest Distance covered in the course of a 30 mile event".

WALKING ON THE ISLE OF WIGHT

NEXT year Jill Green is arranging a walk around the Isle of Wight for members of Kent Group and The Irregulars, based in Yorkshire. The coastal path around the island is 72 miles, and Jill has planned the walk to take four days. And if 72 miles in four days sounds a little bit tame for some members, then she has promised some "twiddles" to make it a bit longer.

It is planned that the walk itself will be on October 7, 8, 9 and 10, with travel to the Isle of Wight on October 6.

Accommodation will be in guest houses. More details about this expedition will be in future newsletters.

Jill and her son, Fred – who also lives on the island – are also planning a special Isle of Wight hill walk for Kent Group members on the weekend of June 18/19. The walk will be about 28 miles, and will take in four or five of the most prominent hills on the island. The idea is that we will travel to the island on the Friday evening and do the walk on the Saturday, having a pub meal in the evening, then return to Kent on the Sunday. Accommodation will either be in Alverstoke village hall – which Jill arranged for those taking part in her birthday walk in October (see article above) – or bed and breakfast in the area. Anyone interested in this weekend is asked to contact Graham Smith (details above).

MARKING THE SPOT

KENT Group members will be interested to know that there is now a trail marker on Dover seafront, the official end (or start) of the North Downs Way. Funded by Kent County Council's Countryside Access Service, Natural England, Eastern and Coastal Primary Care Trust and Sea Change, the marker is a cast iron plaque with various features

representing the trail. There is also an eight metre black granite start/finish line.

Most members will know that the North Downs Way is a 156-mile National Trail starting (or finishing) at Farnham in Surrey. It loops at Boughton Lees, near Wye. The northern loop visits Canterbury to reach Dover, while the southern loop picks up the cliffs at Capel-le-Ferne and follows these to Dover. This entire loop is 57 miles which some of us have completed as a challenge.

A few years ago the whole North Downs Way went onto our social walks programme as a series of Sunday walks, and it is possible that this could be done again if this is what members would like.

CLEVELAND WAY

GRAHAM Smith is organising a trip to walk the Cleveland Way, a 108-mile National Trail in the North York Moors National Park, at the end of March. The walk would be completed in four days, with accommodation in youth hostels or guest houses. The idea is to travel up to Yorkshire on Monday March 28 and walk the Cleveland Way over the following four days - which would mean one day of walking more than 30 miles – travelling back to Kent on the Friday evening after finishing the walk. Anyone interested is asked to contact Graham – details above.

CROSSWORD set by Shirley Higgins

ACROSS

1. Wine for joint (4).
3. By rash upheaval in Russia (6).
8. Hop, William (7).
9. French city, we're told for relative (6).
10. Silence for joke (3).
11. Shorten Kingsferry? (7).
12. Those could become a tradition (5).
13. Fossil resin found in Lamberhurst (5).
14. Piers is shaky at the top of church (5).
19. Insect in charge of trick (5).
21. Resisted against (7).
22. Odd spirit (3).
23. Boredom makes nine riot round bend (5).
24. Family and friends are in nest (7).
25. A waif is lost (6).
26. Walk slowly like a policeman (4).

* * *

DOWN

1. Tipsy the morning after, Neil! (6).
2. Burial chamber on the Wealdway has frozen strange rocks (7, 6).
3. Climbed a Munro or scrambled bad egg (6).
4. Found in strangest mountain chain (5).
5. Pastor is in good health in East Kent (13).
6. Comes before Wallop in Hampshire Central (6).
7. Tributary of the Medway sounds like ridicule (5).
15. Tree is in demand without turn (6).
16. He lived at Little Chart Forstal (5).
17. Marsh might be new (6).
18. Graham did this, dieted perhaps (6).
20. One who proclaims town (5).

COMEDY CORNER by Bill Gillibrand

For Those Who Enjoy Language (or severe distortions thereof):

Those who jump off a bridge in Paris are Seine.

A backward poet writes inverse.

A man's home is his castle, in a manor of speaking.

Dijon vu – the same mustard as before.

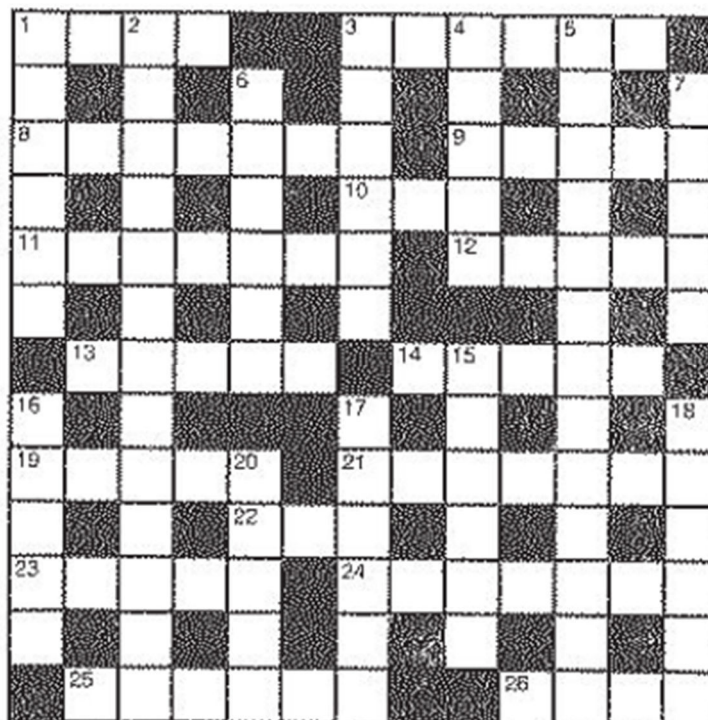
Shotgun wedding: a case of wife or death.

A man needs a mistress just to break the monogamy.

A hangover is the wrath of grapes.

Dancing cheek-to-cheek is really a form of floor play.

Does the name Pavlov ring a bell?



Reading while sunbathing makes you well red.
 When two egotists meet, it's an I for an I.
 A bicycle can't stand on its own because it is two tired.
 What's the definition of a will? (It's a dead giveaway).
 Time flies like an arrow. Fruit flies like a banana.
 In democracy your vote counts. In feudalism your count votes.
 A chicken crossing the road is poultry in motion.
 If you don't pay your exorcist, you get repossessed.
 With her marriage, she got a new name and a dress.
 When a clock is hungry, it goes back four seconds.
 The man who fell into an upholstery machine is fully recovered.
 You feel stuck with your debt if you can't budge it.
 Local Area Network in Australia: the LAN down under.
 He often broke into song because he couldn't find the key.
 Every calendar's days are numbered.
 A lot of money is tainted – it taint yours and it taint mine.
 A boiled egg in the morning is hard to beat.
 He had a photographic memory that was never developed.
 A plateau is a high form of flattery.
 A midget fortune-teller who escapes from prison is a small medium at large.
 Those who get too big for their britches will be exposed in the end.
 Once you've seen one shopping centre, you've seen a mall.
 Bakers trade bread recipes on a knead-to-know basis.
 Santa's helpers are subordinate clauses.
 Acupuncture is a jab well done.

THE LAST WORD

from the editor

WELL, we are nearing the end of another very good year for Kent Group of the LDWA. Once again, we have organised three successful challenge walks; our social walks programme is the busiest many of us can remember; 20 members started and 17 finished the Heart of Scotland Hundred; we've got more members than we have had for some years; thanks to Mike Headley we've got one of the best LDWA websites in the country; and there was much praise for the checkpoint we organised at the Sussex Stride – the third leg of the Kent Surrey Sussex Triple Challenge, with which we are involved - in September; I could go on.

It is very rewarding that, among LDWA members up and down the country, Kent has a reputation for putting on good walks and organising first class checkpoints on challenge events.

Next year we have our three challenge walks again, a busier social walks programme than we had this year (which hardly seems possible), another Hundred which many of us will either be taking part in or marshalling at, and we are planning a 100-mile social walk. Then in 2012 we will be involved with the Olympic year Hundred, which may well be the most important event ever organised by the LDWA.

It is an absolute pleasure to belong to Kent Group of the LDWA, and – as I have written before – editing this newsletter is a labour of love for me. I would like to thank everyone who has contributed articles to the newsletter this year, and make my usual plea to keep them coming – no matter now short or long (within reason!) It's your newsletter, and there wouldn't be one without your input. Thanks are also due to Bryan Clarke for printing it and to Shirley Higgins – who, I am so glad to say, has renewed her LDWA subscription and is compiling crosswords again for the newsletter – for getting it delivered.

In closing, it would be wrong of me not to mention two pieces of sad news. In June, of course, we lost Tom Sinclair, a Kent Group and national LDWA stalwart, a great friend and such a lovely man. And neighbouring Surrey Group has just lost Reg Chapman, another national LDWA stalwart and another lovely man. It's going to take a little while getting used to the fact that we won't be seeing either of their cheery faces at checkpoints again.

So at this particular time, with Christmas almost upon us and with us all looking forward to what promises to be another memorable year for Kent Group of the LDWA, let's all spare a thought for the families of Tom and Reg.

Graham Smith



White Cliffs photos by Bryan Clarke and Eric Rolfe



White Cliffs photos by Eric Rolfe