

LONG DISTANCE WALKERS ASSOCIATION – Kent Group

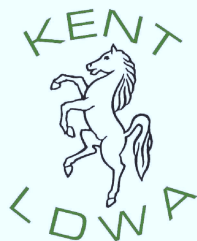
Aim: to further the interests of those who enjoy long distance walking

NEWSLETTER



Saltwood Castle in January taken from the (unofficial) stretch of the Greensand Way by Eric Rolfe

Number 84



April 2011

www.ldwakent.org.uk/



2011 Sevenoaks Circular Photos by Bryan Clarke and Christophe Delogne

KENT GROUP SOCIAL WALKS APR to AUG 2011

Sun Apr 3 Appledore Circular

c22ml. Meet 9am 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. **L:** Graham Smith

Sun Apr 24 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 Chislet, Betteshanger, Tilmanstone and Snowdown. Map: Exp 150. Unsupported, but with refreshment stops. Ldr: Graham Smith

Sun May 1 Hollingbourne Circular

c22ml. Meet 8.50am at Hollingbourne rlwy stn GR TQ834550. Map: Exp 148. Lunch stop at Bredgar. Joint walk with London Group. **L:** Mike Ratcliff

Sun Jun 5 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 of walk. Maps: Exp 145&146. Pub stop. **L:** Graham Smith.

Sat Jun 11 Summer French Challenge

c.23mls from Coquelles, just outside Calais, after taking Le Shuttle at approx.7am. For further details contact leader **by 30th April LATEST.** **L:** Graham Smith.

Sun Jun 12 Swale Circular

c22ml. Meet 8.45am at Teynham rlwy stn GR TQ956631. Map: Exp 149. Lunch stop at Painter's Forstal. Joint walk with London Group. **L:** Mike Ratcliff

Sun Jun 19 Greensand Way 7

c18ml. Shamley Green – Haslemere. Linear walk. Meet Haslemere, in High Street c.p.(entrance next to bank branch).GR TQ905329 to arrange cars to drive to start of walk. Maps: Exp 133&145. Pub stop. **L:** Graham Smith.

Sun Jun 26 A Walk with the Smugglers – Marshals' Walk

For details contact Neil Higham

Sun Jul 3 Midsummer on the Downs

c38ml. Meet 8.40am at Berwick rlwy stn GR TQ525067. Map: Exp 123. Morning tea stop at Birling Gap and late lunch stop at Seaford. Joint walk with London Group. **L:** Mike Ratcliff

Sun Jul 10 A Walk with the Smugglers

See Events Diary

Sat Jul 16 Downsman '97 (late finisher!)

c37ml. Linear walk: Steyning to Eastbourne. Meet c6am at Willingdon School, Eastbourne GR TQ579037. Transport to be arranged to start of walk. Maps: Exp 122&123. Lunch stop at Kingston. Mike wishes to complete his first (unsuccessful) Hundred attempt. **Please contact leader** for meet time and travel details. **L:** Mike Pursey.

Sun Jul 24 Reculver, Canterbury and Whitstable

c30ml. Meet 8.30am at public c.p. at the Reculver Towers GR TR225692. Map: Exp 150. Lunch stop at Canterbury. Afternoon tea at Whitstable. **L:** Mike Ratcliff

Sat Jul 30 West from Sandown Castle

c65ml. Meet 8.30am at Sandown Castle GR TR375542. Maps: Exp 138&150. A very long walk around N.E. Kent via Shepherdswell, Reculver, Thanet and Sandwich, finishing Sunday morning. Numerous stopping points for refreshment and provision. Those interested must be capable of the distance. For further details contact leader: Mike Ratcliff

Sat Aug 6 South Downs Thirty

c.32ml. 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. Lunch stop at Alfriston(c22ml). Food also available at Firle(c17ml) **L:** Mike Pursey.

Sun Aug 14 Cream Tea Walk

c20ml. Meet 8.30am at Grafty Green GR TQ873489 Map: Exp 137. Park on roadside. Pub stop at Hawkenbury, food available. **Ls:** Neal & Jan O'Rourke.

Sun Aug 21 Wingham to Sandwich

c26ml. Meet 9.00am at public c.p. on St. Mary's Meadow just off the High Street(A257) in Wingham GR TR243576. Map: Exp 150. Lunch stop at Sandwich. **L:** Mike Ratcliff

FRONT COVER AND OTHER PICTURES

Saltwood Castle from the (unofficial*) stretch of the Greensand Way on January 16, taken by Eric Rolfe.

*As previously reported in this newsletter, Mike Pursey has worked out that although the Greensand Way officially starts (or ends) at Hamstreet, the Greensand ridge goes on to Folkestone.

Inside front cover pictures taken on the Sevenoaks Circular, on March 20, by Bryan Clarke and Christophe Delogne. Inside back cover pictures taken on the Greensand Way social walks, on January 16, January 23, February 6 and February 27, by Eric Rolfe.

COMMITTEE

Chairman –Brian Buttifant,

Secretary/newsletter editor – Graham Smith

Treasurer – Neil Higham,

Walks secretary - Mike Pursey

Membership secretary - Mike Ratcliff –

Webmaster - Michael Headley,

Members:

Joy Davies –

Nick Dockree –

Bill Gillibrand -

Stephanie le Men –

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.

SUBS OVERDUE

THE most onerous job of any membership secretary is chasing up members for the subs - and a number of people have not yet paid their subs (which are only £5) for this year. So please, hurry up and get your fivers over to our new membership secretary Mike Ratcliff. We need your money, and you need to renew your membership, otherwise you run the risk of it lapsing. Please make cheques payable to LDWA Kent Group, and send them to Mike Ratcliff.

NEWS OF KENT CHALLENGE WALKS

Sevenoaks Circular

AS this newsletter went to press, this year's Sevenoaks Circular had been and gone, and was its usual success, with 246 people taking part. Members may be interested in this note, sent to us by one very happy customer, Helen Abbott – event number 124:

‘Many thanks to all concerned for all the hard work which went into today's walk. I particularly enjoyed the scenic route, the choice of food (never had hot cross buns or bread pudding on a walk before, or finished without eating anything I brought!) and the welcome. Now having an interesting time looking at a detailed map and working out where I went, intentionally and otherwise. I was also struck by the willingness of passers-by to give directions to the walkers (even when not lost) reassurance on a completely unfamiliar route as well as a sense of general goodwill.’

As the event had followed the same route for three years, organiser Brian Buttifant has decided that there will be a new route next year. This will be the 1992 route which – more or less – follows a loop out to Limpsfield Chart, crossing the Surrey border. The route was walked out by Neal and Jan O'Rourke earlier this year, who reported that – much to their pleasant surprise – it had not changed very much. Mike Ratcliff has now been asked to check this route. Further details will be in the next newsletter.

Walk with the Smugglers

OUR Weald challenge walk this year will be on Sunday July 10, based at Goudhurst, with distances of 26 and 15 miles. The marshals' walk will be on Sunday June 26 (see walks programme above). Organiser Neil Higham needs marshals for the event, so please contact him – details above.

White Cliffs Challenge

THIS year's WCC will be on Sunday September 25, when the event will return to St Margaret's Hall, where we last held it in 2008. Distances are 28 and 15 miles. The marshals' walk will be on September 4. We will need marshals for the event, so people wishing to help should contact Graham Smith – details above.

Next year's WCC will again be 50 miles, and will be part of the KSS (Kent Surrey Sussex) Triple Challenge. It is hoped we will be able to stage the event in the Deal area again. More details about this will appear in the next newsletter.

KSS (KENT SURREY SUSSEX) TRIPLE CHALLENGE

AS reported in the last newsletter, the third leg of the KSS Triple Challenge was last September – the very welcome return of the Sussex Stride.

This year sees the return of the Surrey Tops, organised by Surrey Group, and based at Witley, over the weekend of September 17/18. Kent Group will be manning a checkpoint at Elstead, at 16 miles. People wishing to help man it are asked to contact Graham Smith – details above. The marshals' walk will be held over the bank holiday weekend of August 27/28.

KSS badges and certificates, designed by our own Keith Warman, are now ready. For further details, contact the Recorder, Shirley Greenwood, of Sussex Group, on 01903 754097.

HOUSMAN HUNDRED

MUCH to the surprise of many LDWA members (and certainly a few Kent ones), this year's Hundred was fully subscribed within weeks of entries opening. As this newsletter went to press, at least five Kent Group members who were not able to enter the main event – Andrew Boulden, Nicola Foad, Gordon Harker, Michael Headley and Graham Smith – had entered the marshals' walk.

On the event, Kent Group will be organising at checkpoint at Newcastle, on the Welsh border. There will be two shifts - 6pm-midnight and midnight-6am, with seven people per shift. People wishing to help marshal are asked to contact Brian Buttifant – details above

In the meantime, very best wishes go to all Kent Group members taking part in the event and on the marshals' walk.

OLYMPIC YEAR HUNDRED

KENT Group treasurer Neil Higham is on the steering committee of next year's Hundred, which is likely to be an historic one. Victoria Park, near the Olympic stadium at Stratford, has been earmarked for the start of the event, with Trevelyan School, at Windsor, the western HQ. Kent Group will be organising a checkpoint at Biggin Hill, at 31 miles. As we are involved with the event, Kent members may also be asked to help out at other CPs.

The event will be on the first weekend in June – a bank holiday (to celebrate the Queen's diamond jubilee), one week later than usual for Hundreds. The marshals' walk will be on the first bank holiday in May.

Neil has kindly written the following article about the event for this newsletter.

THE 2012 HUNDRED

WELL, here we are in March 2011, and planning for the 2012 Hundred is progressing apace. Our newsletter editor, Graham Smith, asked me to write about 1,000 words, which I thought was a bit of a tall order; I can't possibly write that many, surely? Well, in practice what you see here may be a slimmed down version (in order to help keep the newsletter costs 'slim' - I have a vested interest in that!), as I could easily have managed 10,000 or more words. And there will hopefully be more/updates in our future newsletters. Incidentally, Kent members are always welcome to e-mail me with any questions or comments regarding this event (neil.higham1@tesco.net – please don't forget the digit 1). Enjoy the read.

The 2012 LDWA Hundred: London (Olympic Park*) to Windsor Great Park

** or as close to as possible, all depending on construction and accessibility*

HOPEFULLY, most of you will be aware of at least the outline of the route, a sort of horseshoe shape from the east of London out through green paths to Farnborough (Kent), along the North Downs Way (NDW), into the Surrey Hills (the severity of these, and the incidence of trees, may come as a bit of shock to the northerners!) and across the Surrey heaths to Windsor Great Park; most of the detail is now in place, both route and checkpoints, although there may still be a few changes before the big weekend itself.

Much to my wife's chagrin, I felt compelled to get involved with this project as I live only some four miles away, at the 38 mile mark, and have also worked or lived fairly close to the route at quite a few locations between Eltham (18 miles) and West Clandon (77 miles); the chief organiser and current LDWA chairman, Paul Lawrence, lives in both Mottingham (near Eltham) and in Wokingham (reasonably near Windsor), and the remainder of the organising committee are drawn from the BBN, London, Surrey and Thames Valley LDWA groups. Each of these five groups has provided a £300 loan to the 2012 100 as 'working capital' – hopefully we will be fully repaid shortly after entries are accepted, if the 2011 experience is repeated (and the feeling is that it will; indeed, there was talk at the latest (2012 100) committee meeting about how we could in theory, if we are not careful, end up with 500 runners and no walkers – but that won't be allowed to happen, and the entry criteria are being reconsidered).

Just to confirm, the main event is to be held on the (extended) Queen's Diamond Jubilee Bank Holiday weekend, Saturday 2 to Monday June 4 2012, while the marshals' walk will be at the 'normal' time (May 5-7 2012) and will faithfully follow the main event route as far as possible, but with a couple fewer and some far more basic checkpoints. This is being organised by Dave and Lynn Yorston of BBN.

There have no doubt been some negative thoughts about walking the first few miles in London, which is I'm afraid a necessity if the Olympic Park is the venue for the start! I can do no better than to include here the following 'testimonial' from Lynn (Yorston), who very recently wrote the following:-

"I went to Victoria Park (*NB this is by the Olympic Park, TQ366847; nowhere near Victoria Railway Station*) this is so that I could see the site booked for the Eastern Headquarters. We walked the route from there to The Pilot Inn at Greenwich, our CP1 on the Marshals' event. May I congratulate on such an eye-opening route. I had absolutely

no idea London could be so beautiful. I have never been 100 per cent comfortable about walking within London but the area we walked through was outstanding. I loved the Regents Canal and the expanse of the Docklands. It really amused me to think of the reaction of the security staff within that shopping mall (*at Canary Wharf*) when 500 eccentric walkers pass in one door and out the other!"

This accurately reflects my own thoughts – I walked the first 10 miles with Paul Lawrence late last year and I, too, was enthralled; I can assure all that there is plenty to see and keep your eyes and minds occupied. In fact, I was quite taken aback when we reached the Isle of Dogs and I suddenly realised that we hadn't yet crossed the Thames! (*OK, OK, I know I'm a bit thick sometimes, but we had marvelled at the Thames and the accompanying views just before Canary Wharf and had then obviously veered away from the river - or perhaps the river took a different route? - which in the excitement I had completely and genuinely overlooked*).

After crossing under the Thames via the more than adequate Greenwich Foot Tunnel, the route passes the Cutty Sark (still hidden from view) and into Greenwich Park, up the hillock to the Observatory/General Wolfe memorial (the hillock will get the biceps moving slightly, methinks) and a clip point; some of the Olympic equestrian events will be held in the temporary arena here which may even then be under construction. The route then essentially follows the Thames River Path, within spitting distance (literally) of what is now the O2 Arena (but Millennium Dome still to me) and to the Thames Barrier at Woolwich, where we bid a fond farewell to Britain's premier (?) river - "Au Revoir, hope to see you again in 90 miles or so" may be an appropriate phrase here.

The one negative aspect, from my own perspective, is that most of the first 10 miles is going to be fairly hard on the feet, and that entrants should bear this in mind (eg wear two pairs of socks?). Oh, and lest I forget – please don't try and drive to anywhere near the Olympic site. I drove through the Blackwall Tunnel on a 'quiet' Friday early afternoon in February, and have vowed never to repeat this voluntarily!

More on the next 90 miles of the route in the next newsletters.

The Olympic Road Race route was recently published and we 'kiss' this at Box Hill. The cyclists will experience the zigzag road up to the summit a number of times (and I, for one, shall probably take my children there to sample at least some Olympic action) whereas our route stays on the NDW and descends 'vertically' to the Stepping Stones. The checkpoint at Box Hill Village Hall means that the entrants will, briefly, cross the hallowed surface where the cyclists will be perspiring some three months later (it looks as though we also cross the road race route in Westcott).

A plea – if you hear about anything, I repeat, **ANYTHING**, which you even remotely, just possibly think may affect the route and/or the event, please, please, please contact me (neil.higham1@tesco.net); we can then investigate and take any steps necessary. As the current Home Office(?) radio advert says regarding reporting suspicious (terrorist) activities, "*chances are it'll come to nothing*", but if you don't tell us, we won't know, and telling us will assuage any guilty feelings!

Two quick examples:

A) (which I spotted) The Surrey Mirror contained a brief mention in February that the iconic Reigate Footbridge (over the A 217) will be out of action until early next year – a temporary replacement bridge will be erected (it is the NDW, so they really have no option?). It should be all completed by June 2012, but guess who will be keeping a close eye (and foot) on proceedings?

B) (which a few of us spotted) There is to be no Glastonbury Festival in 2012 (not that that would normally bother me, old fuddy duddy that I am!), due to their inability to source affordable Portaloos due to the Olympic Games etc. Does this affect us? Er, yes it does, as two or three of the checkpoints are outdoors and, perhaps more importantly, there may not be too many 'facilities' at the start – which reminds me that the draft route description for the first five or more miles is awash (sorry, bad pun) with references to "places that one may care to visit" and is perhaps more akin to a "Good Loo Guide" than a route description!!

Moving swiftly on, how can **you** help?

Kent Group has offered to man a checkpoint at **Biggin Hill**, approximately 31 miles, provisionally open from **17:00 on Saturday 2** through to **04:00 on Sunday 3**. This will be at the Spitfire Centre (TQ421590), postcode TN16 3LB, which is a London Borough of Bromley building for youths, and is surprisingly roomy inside. More on this later, but I can confirm that the offer has been accepted, and Brian Buttifant will be drawing up a list of those volunteering to assist here.

However, **in addition**, as the route travels through the western extremities of 'our' county, I hope that some of you (possibly in small groups) will be available to assist 'as required' – it is early days yet, I know, but as I write this, we may need assistance near the Woolwich Barracks (Olympic Shooting range) at CP2, while the inevitable 'scrum' at CP1 (by Island Gardens DLR station on the Isle of Dogs) will probably be an amalgam of available bodies. So please **contact me** if you can help here or you would like to help elsewhere on route (we may need a few road marshals and "Slow - Walkers" signs erecting). NB Don't be shy, you are permitted to assist on both the Kent CP and elsewhere!! And, if you're really feeling keen, there's also the marshals' walk where I am sure you will be welcome to assist!

Again, please **contact me** in the first place.

Neil Higham, LDWA 2012 Hundred Organising Committee, LDWA Kent Group Treasurer

STRIDES WITH SUSSEX

KENT Group social walks often venture over the county border into Sussex – a beautiful county which, of course, has

the South Downs. We are, of course, working with Sussex Group on the KSS (Kent Surrey Sussex) Triple Challenge. To increase the links with Sussex Group, we are putting our walks which are either in Sussex or in the parts of Kent which border it, on the Sussex Group social walks programme. Similarly, some Sussex walks which may go into Kent are going onto our social walks programme. So we look forward to meeting more Sussex Group members on our walks.

And on the subject of Sussex, entry forms for the 2011 South Downs Marathon, on June 26, will be available via the Sussex Group website - <http://www.ldwasussex.org.uk>. The walk is 28 miles, and as per last year the start and finish point will be East Dean Village Hall, on A259, three miles west of Eastbourne.

NEW MEMBERS – AND LOTS OF THEM

KENT Group of the LDWA now has 124 members. A year ago we had 115, the year before that we had 105, and the year before that we just had 93. So membership is showing a steady increase – which proves that, as a group, we must be doing something right!

The committee has now appointed Mike Ratcliff as our membership secretary, and it is to be hoped that in a year's time, we will have even more members.

The following are new members:- Jack Denness, Rochester; Peter Jull, Deal; Mark Diomedes, Great Mongeham, Deal; Rachel Donaldson, Gillingham; Alison Pretious (Mrs), Gravesend; Rob Wheeler, Faversham.

Please give all these new members a warm welcome on our walks.



JILL GOES CLIMBING

JILL Green went on one of Terry Griffiths' walking holidays in November – one of which he wrote about ('The Spanish Garden of Eden?') in the December Strider. She ended up going up a rock face on the Via Ferrata. She is pictured above making the ascent on 1,000 feet of cable – she doesn't look as if she was enjoying the experience but she assured the newsletter editor that she did! Jill highly recommends these holidays. Terry has booked another one for this November, two separate weeks. Just contact Terry Griffiths if you want to join. Telephone 01709 890341 or e-mail him at terrygriffiths@talktalk.net. If you telephone, please do so before 9pm.

KEITH'S SPECIAL AWARD

AT our AGM on January 30, Keith Warman was presented with two special awards by chairman Brian Buttifant – a hand-carved bowl made by our own Trevor Blake, and a commemorative mug to mark the 50th year of the Bluebell Railway in Sussex.

The presentation was to mark Keith's completion of his 20th Hundred – the Heart of Scotland 100 last May – and also to recognise the work he has done for the group over the years. Keith, of course, is one of our stalwarts – not only of Kent Group, but of the LDWA generally. He served on our committee for several years, he is the LDWA's Hundreds statistician and his many talents extend to designing badges and certificates for LDWA events (the most recent being for the Kent Surrey Sussex Triple Challenge) and writing his inimitable annual Diary of a Common Man, recounting the highs and lows his adventures on the Hundred, for the newsletter. Following the presentation, he sent a note to our new secretary Graham Smith, part of which is reproduced here:

Dear Graham,

I would like to take this opportunity to thank most sincerely the Committee of the Kent Group for the presentation made to me at last week's AGM. I had no idea this was coming my way and was frozen in my seat for a second when Brian called me forward to collect the gifts. I felt very humbled at hearing his kind words but I was mightily relieved that he didn't ask me to say a few words as I was speechless.

I was aware that the Bluebell Railway celebrated its 50th anniversary last year (as I am a member) and the delightful mug has already been tested by with a few 'steamy' brews! The wooden bowl was, as Brian told me after the meeting, turned by a Kent Group member. I then knew immediately who that was, as I have seen examples of Trevor Blake's masterful work in the past. It was a lovely idea and I shall treasure both gifts forever. I have written separately to Trevor to offer my thanks for his endeavours.

Little did I know that, when on a scorching hot day at Guildford in May 1982 I took my first steps in this wonderful world of LDWA Hundreds, I would still have the luck, fitness, enthusiasm and stubbornness to be doing them to this day. I have met many interesting people along the way, many of whom have become firm friends. I hope to be able to continue enjoying Hundreds for as many years to come as time, age and over-subscription will allow, because participating in them has been one of the most enjoyable parts of my LDWA membership.

I wish the Committee well and hope the Group has a successful 2011, continuing the LDWA's aim of "furthering the interests of those who enjoy long distance walking".

With best wishes,

Keith.

SUMMER FRENCH CHALLENGE

THIS year's summer walk in France (see social walks programme above) will be a month earlier than usual – on Saturday June 11. The route will be the same as for the last two years – 23 miles, going from Coquelles and taking in the excellent viewpoints of Mont de Couple and Cap Blanc-Nez – and there should be time for a quick meal and some shopping at the Auchan hypermarket. We will again be taking Le Shuttle, leaving at approx. 7am. Because of Le Shuttle booking and car arrangements, organisers Joy Davies and Graham Smith need to know the numbers of people going by April 30 at the latest.

FORESTS SAVED

LDWA members all over the country – indeed, walkers all over the country – will be mightily relieved that the Government withdrew its controversial plans to sell forests. Obviously the big worry for walkers was that, if they fell into the hands of private owners, there was a real risk that restrictions would be put on access to forests, which would have affected our right to walk in them. The decision to abandon the privatisation plans was made after a campaign by The Ramblers. And while the LDWA is not a campaigning organisation, the campaign did receive the backing of many hundreds of LDWA members. The issue was also raised at our AGM in January by Neil Higham.

Kent Group members may find the article below, by the environmental group Deal With It, of interest. It appeared in the February 24 edition of the East Kent Mercury.

GOOD news this week about our forests. A burst of people power – the campaigning website '38 degrees' attracted 532,000 signatures - has caused the Government to think again and cancelled plans that would have enabled them to sell off the entire Forestry Commission estate.

For those of us who only use forests for leisure pursuits, it was unthinkable that this part of our country could have been removed. For those who work with the forests, no doubt they would have feared losing their jobs in this depressing economic climate.

There obviously has to be commercial forestry in our country to raise money to help pay for the upkeep of the less profitable but culturally important woodland that we like to visit. In fact, we need to plant more trees and provide many more forests near to towns and cities for people to enjoy.

Forests are 'carbon sinks'. Trees are the best thing we have to soak up the carbon emissions we create from our every day lives and which are causing the climate to warm. If an extra four per cent of our land was planted with trees over the next 40 years, it could lock up 10 per cent of the nation's predicted carbon emissions by 2050. It is not only the Amazon rain forest that we need to protect; we must care about our own forests.

A very interesting option for the future of our forests that has come to light is for the Government to continue to run the commercial forests and to offer the rest to communities for free, to enhance protection for the forests and access for the public. The National Trust looks to be the body that might be the one to achieve this. Giving communities a vested interest in their trees results in responsibility and conservation.

Victoria Nicholls, Deal With It (www.transitiondeal.blogspot.com)

FAMILY LUNCH – TRIED AND TESTED

BY popular demand, this year's family lunch will again be at the London Beach Hotel at Tenterden. It will be the fourth (or is it the fifth?) year we will have been there. The food and service are both excellent, and the venue is one of the most picturesque in that part of Kent. The date is Sunday December 4, so put that in your diaries now. Neal O'Rourke has again agreed to lead a walk.

There will be more details in the August newsletter.



WE'VE GOT A BANNER

THE group now has a large banner, to be used on our events and when we are organising checkpoints on other groups' events. The banner – in red, with white lettering, with our insignia of a Kent horse - was arranged through Joy Davies, and was displayed for the first time on when we did a checkpoint on the Sussex Stride last September. It was also on display at the family lunch in December, the AGM in January, and of course the Sevenoaks Circular in March.

NOT A 100-MILE SOCIAL WALK – BUT A 100k ONE INSTEAD

A FEW difficulties have conspired over Mike Ratcliff's planned 100-mile social walk, which have made him shelve the project for the time being. However, instead, Mike has organised a 100-kilometre social walk, West from Sandown Castle, on Saturday July 30. The route, starting from Sandown Castle at Deal, takes in north-east Kent, visiting Shepherdswell, Reculver, Thanet and Sandwich. Details in the walks programme above.

SHORTER WALKS - a few words from Mike Pursey

HAVING read through the minutes of the AGM, which I was unable to attend, I have noted that the need was expressed for shorter walks at a more moderate pace. I am aware that our average walk-length has increased somewhat over the past couple of years and that, for some of them, a faster pace is needed to complete them in daylight hours. I'm

sure that such shorter walks would be a useful addition to our programme and not just for the “older” members. If anyone, then, has a walk in mind that would fit this billing (say between 15 and 20 miles), please contact me and we can agree a date. Although we have a full programme with almost all weekends accounted for until the end of this year, there is no reason why we can’t double up, say, where we have a particularly long walk already. Some other local groups do this. I look forward to some replies.

WALKERS AND RUNNERS

DURING, before and after our AGM, there has been some considerable debate about runners on LDWA events. In recent months, this does appear to have been an issue, in fact some people have made the point that it has become something of a problem.

There is no doubt that more runners are taking part in LDWA events, and there is plenty of evidence. LDWA events are much cheaper to enter than most running events. One long-standing Kent Group member who took part in the Winter Tanners in January said he had never seen so many runners on the event, and there seems little doubt that runners formed a substantial proportion of the entrants on Surrey Group’s Punchbowl Marathon (more than 50 per cent, according to reports) which was full up several weeks in advance. As one Kent Group member said before our AGM, “We are an organisation for walkers but walkers can’t get on some of our walks.” On the other hand, LDWA members will probably be encouraged by the words of Strider editor Ken Falconer who, when the idea of the association being for walkers **and** runners was put to him in Julie Welch’s book *Out On Your Feet*, said “Over my dead body.” Clearly, if lots of walkers are not able to take part in challenge walks because of the sheer numbers of runners on them, it is unacceptable. We are, after all, an association of walkers whose main aim – repeated on the cover of each of this group’s newsletters – is to ‘further the interests of those who enjoy long distance walking.’ But the thing is, what can the organisation do about it? Certainly, our three Kent Group events have plenty of runners, and their entry fees form an important part of our income. In fact, it is fair to say that one of our events, the White Cliffs Challenge, would be operating perilously close to a loss without runners’ entry fees.

What are the views of other Kent Group members? If you feel strongly, please share your views by sending something to the newsletter editor.

THANK YOU BILL – VERY MUCH

THERE are a couple of changes to the members of our committee, which were agreed at the AGM. Bill Gillibrand has stood down as secretary, to be replaced by Graham Smith, and Mike Ratcliff has become membership secretary – a role previously carried out by Bill as one of his secretarial roles.

Massive thanks are due to Bill, who was our secretary for seven years, performing such an onerous task (made much more onerous in recent years because of the internet) very efficiently. His will be a very hard act to follow.

Very best wishes to Graham and Mike in their new roles. A full list members of the new committee, with contact details, is above.

CAR SHARING

TO say the cost of fuel has soared in recent months is something of an understatement, which makes it even more important for members to consider car sharing for social walks and challenge events. Kent is one of the largest counties in England, and we have members from all points north, south, east and west. So have a look at the membership list which went out with the December newsletter, and if you are planning to go on a social walk or a challenge event, try to contact members who may be living near you. Car sharing helps the environment – and it certainly helps our pockets.

COLLINS’ ‘RAMBLERS BEST WALKS BRITAIN’

THIS is a hardback ‘coffee table’ book with beautiful photos. One of the walks included is our very own Graham Smith’s Dover to Folkestone walk. A beautiful section of this walk would have been closed to walkers if it hadn’t been for the campaigning of a few people. In 2002, KCC wanted to close a section along the cliffs, as it was deemed too dangerous. Two people from Capel, one of whom was Ramblers’ Association member Mike Godfrey, cleared the path, and there was a county court case about it. Graham Smith, who is also a member of the White Cliffs Ramblers, gave evidence at a county court case, along with his fellow White Cliffs Rambler and campaigner Gordon Sencicle. They argued in favour of the path remaining open. Graham described the path as ‘a gem’, and the judge agreed with him! A handrail was put up, and the path has remained open since then – a victory for walkers!

You can buy the book for £25 in bookshops, or if you have internet access, from Amazon for £14-25 – go to www.amazon.co.uk/Collins-Ramblers-Best-Walks-Britain.

Chris Perks

EQUIPMENT – CAN YOU HELP?

THIS is a request to all members to please notify event organisers (Sevenoaks Circular – Brian Buttifant, Neil Higham – Walk with the Smugglers, Graham Smith – White Cliffs Challenge) about what group equipment and/or food may be in their possession – it may be tins of baked beans, a kettle, bottles of squash, anything. This is so we can keep a proper register, which will be invaluable to event organisers. Many thanks for your help.



Above – Gordon Harker, Claire Betts and Mike Ratcliff at Cheddar Gorge on one of the national AGM walks, and Mike and Claire on the hotel balcony.

THE LDWA ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING by Mike Ratcliff

THE 2011 LDWA AGM was another weekend of excellent fun and a chance for members from various groups across the country to meet together to walk, talk and generally enjoy themselves. The meeting on the Sunday morning itself was noticeably longer than that of the previous year and some very productive and interesting discussion took place. The sad death of Reg Chapman was noted at the start of proceedings and a reflection and summary was made of the super work that he contributed in establishing the current website. This site that he worked so hard on is now proving both technically successful and extremely popular.

Simon Leck has been elected as the new Internet Officer for the LDWA to take Reg's place. This major upgrade to the LDWA website was completed in the spring of 2010 and provides a visually more attractive experience with many new features and resources. For instance, we now have online mapping to visualise trails. The number of people using the website has continued to increase in 2011. It is currently again up 50 per cent year on year, with some 2000 visits a day including around 1300 unique visitors, viewing some 7000 pages daily on average and regularly exceeding the daily maxima in 2010. Any online searches that people now make regarding general walking topics, trails or event information will regularly return the LDWA website as high or top ranking. The site now includes more than 10,000 pages of walking related information. It is clear that many people are now discovering the LDWA in this way. In 2011 the focus is now moving to extending more of those recently developed features to other parts of the site and also to the regional groups' websites. The template site that many local groups use is planned to be upgraded to bring it in line with the main national site. A 100s template option is also being planned on the same lines.

Financially, progress has continued in building up the LDWA's reserves and established a healthy cushion against unforeseen events. For the financial year that ended in September there was a substantial surplus of some £14,500 with net worth rising to £124,600. This is the highest nominal level since 2000. This was, of course, without any increase in the subscription. The LDWA was able to continue to invest during this same period, especially in upgrading our online technology that now underlies much of what the organisation offers nationally. Annual turnover was up by £20,000 (23 per cent), driven by an increase in membership numbers and by sales of the *UK Trailwalker's Handbooks*. Overall there was net income from the sales of the handbooks.

In 2010, our membership numbers continued to grow strongly, peaking at more than 7000 on New Years Eve which is up about 10 per cent year on year by the end of 2010, with more than 1300 new members and a continuing healthy retention rate providing the increase. This 7000 level has only been reached once before during a period in the late 1990s. Recruitment rates continued to remain strong in early 2011 with 127 new members since the January 1, though renewals have been slow due to several postal delays. There were still 1317 members who hadn't renewed which is a much higher number than previous years due to the amazing recruitment figures for 2010 when we gained 1302 new members. Progress is now being made in encouraging members to use the direct debit system to pay their subscriptions which seems a much simpler and more efficient method and greatly reduces the workload of the Membership Secretary. Work is in hand on providing a paperless sign up system that should encourage more members to use it. Our events, and especially Hundreds, seem to be increasingly popular each year right now with many events seeing record entry numbers in 2010. Growing membership may be a key factor here as with The Hundred. For this year, The Housman Hundred was well oversubscribed and certainly promises to be another superb event, this time up in the Shropshire Hills. The planning is now at an advanced stage for the 2012 event that links the three themes of The Olympic Games, The Royal Jubilee and of course the LDWA's 40th anniversary, using a linear route from East London, skirting Kent down into the Surrey Hills, continuing westwards and up towards West London, finishing at Windsor. Planning for other future Hundreds is also advancing well with another linear event planned for 2013, organised by the Devon and Cornwall Group and The Valleys 100 in South Wales in 2014. Following the success of last year's Hundred in Perthshire, there are now high hopes of creating an additional local group around the Perth and Kinross area and already some group walks have been planned for March and April 2011.

Regarding long distance paths, the LDWA continues to be the leading provider of information about the UK trails network as a whole. The *UK Trailwalker's Handbook* continued to sell very well, leading the rankings in its classes on

Amazon early in 2010 and receiving many positive reviews in the media. In its first year sales were about 4000, compared to around 2300 for the previous similar edition in 2002. As a spin-off from our information and resources concerning long distance paths, several significant features in major walking magazines such as Trail have been based on specific information that we provided in return for promotion of the LDWA, with more possibilities on the horizon such as a Natural England regional trails guide. The LDP's team are continuing to gather information on the many new trails, with some 50 already since the handbook was first published!

On a more general note, despite not having the resources to respond to many Government consultations and not being a campaigning organisation, the LDWA does engage in some significant consultations when it can. We responded to the 2009 proposals to make much of the Ordnance Survey's mapping free online to all users. However, when this was put into action, some of the OS's mapping data was indeed made free though without certain aspects that would clearly have been the most appealing to walkers on large-scale maps such as footpaths. The data that is now free to use, however, is currently being utilized widely throughout the LDWA website. In 2011, the proposals in the Public Bodies Bill to privatise forestry land caused great concern among many users of the countryside, particularly in relation to access (see newsletter article above).

Finally, it's been noted that in our constitution, one of our objectives is 'to assist in the preservation and enhancement of the beauty of the countryside and preservation of public access to open country'. In our current culture it now appears that as an organisation, it would now be a positive step to establish an official policy. With no particular committee member allocated to an Environment brief in 2010, and following a request at the 2010 AGM for some help in preparing a simple overall statement of LDWA environmental policy, one of our members, Carol Coyne, volunteered for the task. Following a review of the first draft by the national committee, this draft Environmental Policy Statement (EPS) was then considered at the Local Groups Meeting last year. The plan is that after any final revisions that are made, this statement will eventually be published on the website and in Strider.

GREENSAND WAY 3: PLUCKLEY-WEST PECKHAM – FEBRUARY 6

TWELVE people turned up by the church at West Peckham for the third leg of the Greensand Way – and what an adventure it turned out to be.

I've got to hold my hand up here and take full responsibility (or most of it) for the events of that day. It was the first LDWA social walk for John Goodwin, one of our new members. John thought that most of us were barmy before he went on the walk – and afterwards, he knew we were!

The principal problem (and I still don't know exactly how it happened) was that the advertised mileage of 19 miles was actually, according to the GPS of Eric Rolfe (of which more later) more than 22 miles – and the mileage on the next stretch of the GW (West Peckham-Limpsfield Chart) was actually 19 miles, whereas it went into the programme as 22 miles. So there was a fundamental cock-up.

Anyway, it all started well. We met at West Peckham and sorted out the cars, the 12 of us piling into three motors for the drive to Pluckley, and we started walking at 9.40am. The weather was a bit overcast and it was pretty windy – but it was dry. So although we all felt the wind on the exposed stretch to Egerton, we were getting reasonable views, and it wasn't muddy. From Egerton there were more reasonable paths and tracks to Ulcombe and our lunch stop at Sutton Valence. We found a nice pub in the village, and I said we should be no more than 45 minutes. Unfortunately, four of us wanted proper meals, it was a restaurant/pub (a very good one) and those of us who were eating still hadn't had our food after 45 minutes. It eventually came, it was consumed quickly, and we set off for the afternoon stretch (and, we were to find out, the evening stretch as well) just after 2pm.

It has to be said that the Greensand Way from Sutton Valence to Yalding is some of the best walking our county can offer – good, firm paths, easy navigation and good views south the whole way. Our problem was that we still had quite a way to go, because the mileage was going to be 22 and not the 19 advertised. By the time we got to Yalding, it was almost 5pm, and – while not dark – we were losing light, and rapidly. A few of us (not me, I'm afraid) had had the foresight to bring torches, and by the time we reached Nettleshead Green – about one third of a mile after Yalding – they were all on. So we looked like a group of walkers on the night section of a challenge walk. A few people rang their partners to tell them that they would be home a little later than planned.

It wasn't long before it was pitch black, and not too difficult to miss Greensand Way signs – which we did. We only had about two miles to go to get back to West Peckham, but we had our first difficulty when we missed a GW sign near Moat Wood. I had a gut feeling that we should retrace our steps a little way, which we did, and found the GW sign which we had missed.

Then came a big problem at Roydon Hall. We suddenly realised we had missed a GW sign – and it was pitch black. We had a good look round and spent some while investigating directions north, south and west – before Eric Rolfe consulted his GPS, Dave Jones consulted his OS Explorer map, and they recommended we head east which – they reckoned would lead us to a path which would then head north-west for a church Dave could see on his map and which I could see on my Greensand Way guide (which is 14 years old, and which I used when I first walked the GW in 2003). Anyway, the combined navigation of Eric and Dave was inspired, and we found the church (although we took a slightly wrong line to it when we crossed a field, and we all ended up climbing over a rather high gate – but by that time, none of us particularly cared, not even those people with little legs, who had a bit of difficulty getting their legs over, if you know what I mean).

After that it was, more or less, straightforward. Dave had his map, we had about eight torches between us, so we pressed on, following reasonable paths which crossed the A228 and the A26 before we finally reached West Peckam at 6.45pm – a good one and a half hours later than I had thought we would when we started the walk. I dropped John back in Dover at 8.15pm.

I can only say very sincere thank-yous to Eric and Dave – you were both stars. If Dave hadn't had his Explorer and if Eric hadn't had his GPS, we may still have been trying to find that church near Roydon Hall at midnight. And thanks to everyone who came on the walk – nobody complained, everyone just got on with it and pressed on when it was pretty clear we were lost – sorry, I mean we were having some navigational issues.

It was still a good walk and anyway, what's wrong with a little adventure in life sometimes?

Graham Smith

CRYPTIC CROSSWORD set by Shirley Higgins

SEND solutions to Shirley at 189 Old Road, Watlingbury, Maidstone, Kent, ME18 5PR, by June 1. There is a small prize for the first correct solution drawn on that date.

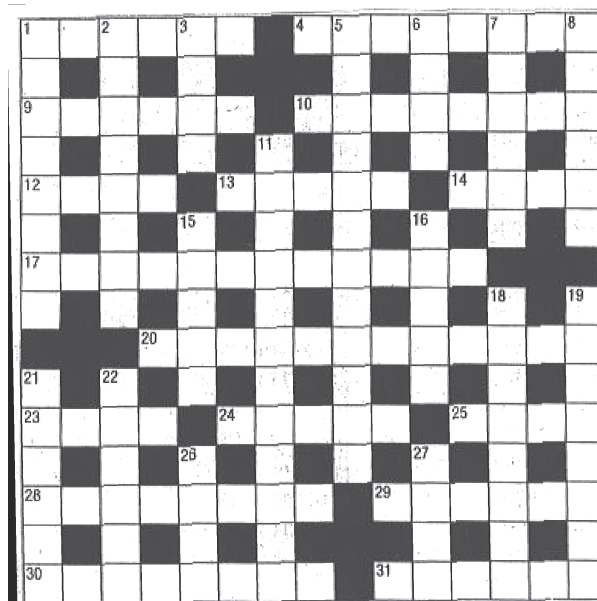
December crossword winner was Shirly Gill.

ACROSS

1. Against the sound of poetry? (6).
4. Cut off, also tied perhaps (8).
9. We hear you have disturbed sleep near Oare (6).
10. Hanger on, flatworm for instance (8).
12. Enormous outcry about start of game (4).
13. Ejects water from narrow projections (5).
14. Nourished about 50 and ran away (4).
17. Small capital south of Heathfield (6, 6).
20. Environmentally friendly township near Wrotham (7, 5).
23. Leave out nothing at the start of my interesting talk (4).
24. Sharp cut in A+E (5).
25. Seen by the eye at the top of a hill (4).
28. Plant for your own cure? (8).
29. Dawdle or lie and rot maybe (6).
30. Standard and unknown area of France (8).
31. Climbs and enters university (4, 2).

DOWN

1. Bridge for a car (8).
2. Banish and reel awkwardly over entrance (8).
3. Not new and oddly unsteady (4).
5. Barrier for the launch of an event? (8, 4).
6. Soil seen in the gloaming (4).
7. Challenge such as Poppyline, Daffodil Dawdle and Flower of Suffolk (6).
8. Feels nervous about adders (6).
11. Granny Smith's fruit field (5, 7).
15. Knock down toilet in outskirts of Falmer (5).
16. Stuff yourself with Cheddar? (5).
18. Refuse waste (8).
19. Winter weather or spring flower (8).
21. Relax and see Kent village at start of November (6).
22. Standard column (6).
26. Possibly hear flightless bird (4).
27. Nothing on record for emblem (4).



COMEDY CORNER by Bill Gillibrand

AN old retired sailor was sitting on a park bench when a young lad walked up to him and sat down. He had spiked hair in all different colours: green, red, blue, orange and purple. The old man just stared. Every time the young man looked, the old man was staring. The young man finally said: "What's the matter, old man? Never done anything wild in your life?" Without batting an eye, the old man replied: "Got drunk once in Japan and had sex with a parrot. I was just wondering if you were my son."



Pictures taken on the Greensand Way social walks, on January 16, January 23, February 6 and February 27, by Eric Rolfe