

LONG DISTANCE WALKERS ASSOCIATION – Kent Group

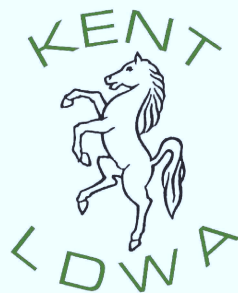
Aim: to further the interests of those who enjoy long distance walking

NEWSLETTER



Walkers approach Coquelles, with Calais in the background, on the Summer French Challenge on June 11. Picture by Eric Rolfe

Number 85



August 2011

www.ldwakent.org.uk/



2011 Walk with the Smugglers pictures by Bryan Clarke

KENT GROUP SOCIAL WALKS AUG to DEC 2011

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.

Sat Sep 3 West from Dover

c24ml. Meet 9.00am at Kearsney rlwy stn GR TR289439 Map: Exp 149. Lunch stop at Elham. Joint walk with London Group. **L:** Mike Ratcliff

Sun Sep 4 White Cliffs Challenge Marshals' Walk

For further details contact Mike Pursey

Sat Sep 10 North West to Leeds

c27ml. Meet 9am at public c.p. on edge of Dering Wood (Greenhill Lane) c1.5ml. WSW of Pluckley GR TQ900447. Map: Exp 137. Lunch stop at Leeds and extra pub stop(in pm) at Egerton Forstal. **L:** Mike Ratcliff

Sun Sep 25 White Cliffs Challenge

See Events Diary in Strider

Sun Oct 2 Les Trois Chateaux, encore une fois

c34ml. Meet 7.30am (prompt) at Sissinghurst Church GR TQ795375 Map: Exp 136. Park in village. Pub stop at The Moor (c18ml), food available. An unsupported walk linking Scotney, Bodiam and Sissinghurst Castles. Only for those able to complete. **Ls:** Neal & Jan O'Rourke.

Sun Oct 9 Open Golf 19

c19ml. Meet 9.30am at Sandown Castle ruins, North Deal GR TR375543. Map: Exp 150. Lunch stop at Ash. **L:** Richard Frost

Sat Oct 15 Abbey Wood to Westminster

Linear. c20 mls. Meet 8.50am at Abbey Wood rlwy stn GR TQ473790. 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 Greenwich. Joint walk with London Group. **L:** Mike Ratcliff.

Sun Oct 30 Another Minnis Meander

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

Sat Nov 5 West from Selling

c21ml. Meet 9am at public c.p. on Selling Road in Selling village GR TR038564 Map: Exp 149. Lunch stop at Stalisfield Green. **L:** Mike Ratcliff

Sun Nov 13 Lewes Loop

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

Sun Nov 20 Summerhouse Saunter

c20 ml. Meet at Lympne Village Hall c.p. GR TR120349 (park at end away from hall). Map: Exp 138. Lunch stop at Stowting. **L:** Graham Smith

Sun Nov 27 End of the World

c17ml. Meet 9.30am at Tides Swimming Pool c.p., Deal GR TR373522 (free parking). Map: Exp 138. Lunch stop at Guston. **L:** Richard Frost

Sun Dec 4 Christmas Lunch (see item below)

Preceded by a walk of c7ml.

Sat Dec 10 Christmas Cruise around Calais

c14ml. Meet at approx. 7.30am by P&O Desk, Dover Eastern Docks for approx. 8.30am sailing (return c9pm – 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. **L:** Graham Smith.

Sat Dec 17 South of Orpington

c20ml. Meet 8.45am at Knockholt rlwy stn. GR TQ484629. Map: Exp 147 Lunch stop at Downe. Joint walk with London Group. **L:** Mike Ratcliff.

Mon Dec 26 South of Ightham

c21ml. Meet 9am in public c.p. at One Tree Hill GR TQ558532 Maps: Exp 147&148. Lunch stop at Dunk's Green. **L:** Mike Ratcliff

Sun Jan 1 New Year in Sussex Again

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

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 –

PICTURES on the inside front cover were taken by Bryan Clarke on A Walk with the Smugglers on July 10, pictures on the inside back cover were taken by Nick Dockree and Shirlie Gill during the Housman Hundred on May 28-30, and the pictures on the back page were taken by Eric Rolfe on the Summer French Challenge on June 11.

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.

CHRISTMAS LUNCH

USUALLY the menu for our Christmas lunch goes out with the August newsletter. Unfortunately we can't do that with this August newsletter, because the menus won't be ready until the end of August. That's the bad news. The good news is that we are returning to the London Beach Hotel at Tenterden, an excellent venue where we have been for the last few years, and the date will be Sunday December 4. As usual, there will be a fairly short walk before the lunch. It will again be a three course lunch, plus coffee, and the price will be £22.50, the same as last year.

There will be a separate mail-out of the menus to all Kent Group members when we have them, which should be late August or early September. Members will be required to make their choices and send them back to secretary Graham Smith, so that we know how many people will be there. We are sorry about this change of arrangements, but there is not much we can do about it. In the meantime, please put **SUNDAY DECEMBER 4** in your diaries. Our Christmas lunch is always a most enjoyable occasion, and the London Beach always does us proud.



Picture of Tara and Wendy by Mark Easton

OUR WENDY BECOMES A CENTURION

WENDY Thurrell, not content with being one of the first walkers home on the Housman Hundred, has now joined the exclusive ranks of the Centurions – people who walk 100 miles in 24 hours.

Wendy, who only did her first LDWA Hundred last year, completed the feat with Tara Williams, with whom she walked the Housman Hundred. The Lingfield 100 took place over the weekend of July 2-3, and was organised by Surrey Walking Club. The venue was Lingfield Park Racecourse, with more than 80 walkers taking part, having to complete 1.2-mile laps of the course until they had clocked up the magic 100 miles.

Wendy and Tara finished the course in an amazing 21 hours 33 minutes 55 seconds, and came joint 14th overall. An entry on the Centurion website reads: 'Two ladies who won everyone's hearts were Tara and Wendy of the Long Distance Walkers Association (LDWA). They talked and laughed (and ate!) their way round 100 miles finishing in 21:33:55. Some said that they should have been disqualified for enjoying themselves too much! Their performance

was a great credit to themselves and to the LDWA coming joint 14th overall.'

Wendy, who trained for the event by pounding along the promenade between Folkestone and Hythe, says that attempting to become a Centurion appealed to her because "there are no hills, there are no navigation difficulties and there are no hidden obstacles when you walk at night."

Wendy and Tara were supported by many LDWA members, including Kent Group's Michael Headley, Jill Green and Jim Catchpole, who all went to Lingfield to cheer her on straight after the group trip to the French Alps.

A card of congratulations has been sent to Wendy from Kent Group. Well done, Wendy – we're all proud of you.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

YES, it may be summer but we've got a very important winter date for your diaries – our AGM, which will be on January 29, at Lenham Village Hall. Michael Headley, who led a short walk before this year's AGM, has offered to do the same again. More details will appear in the next newsletter.

NEW MEMBERS

Jenny Brown, Leybourne; Michael Davison, Bromley; Paul Lockwood, Sevenoaks; Margaret Mullally (joining existing member Tom Mullally under family membership), Shipbourne.

NEWS OF KENT CHALLENGE WALKS

Weald walk

The Walk with the Smugglers, held on Sunday July 10, was a huge success, with 145 entrants. Full details are with this edition of the newsletter.

Next year will be the return of the Andredsweald, based at Forest Row, with distances of 26 and 14 miles. Details will be in the December newsletter.

White Cliffs Challenge

Now, of course, the focus of attention switches to the WCC, which this year will be based at St Margaret's Hall, an excellent venue we last used in 2008. Distances are 28 and 15 miles, with the marshals' walk on September 4. As usual, we are going to need plenty of marshals, so people wishing to marshal on the event and/or take part in the marshals' walk, should contact Graham Smith (tel and e-mail above).

Next year's WCC will again be 50 miles, and it will be part of the KSS (Kent Surrey Sussex) Triple Challenge. The 2012 White Cliffs Challenge will also be Kent Group's contribution to marking the 40th anniversary of the LDWA, so it should be quite special. We are planning to stage it over the weekend of September 22/23, the two days set aside by the national committee for all LDWA 40th birthday walks, and we are likely to be working with Surrey and Sussex groups. If any Kent Group members have ideas about what we can do to enhance next year's WCC and/or the weekend, please contact a member of your committee (of whom details of all are above).

Sevenoaks Circular

We do not yet have a date for next year's Sevenoaks Circular, as organiser Brian Buttifant needs the fixtures from the rugby club, which will again be the event's venue, and these are not due until September.

Next year's Sevenoaks Circular will be using the 1992 route, which Mike Ratcliff and Roger Dean are checking. More details about the 2012 Sevenoaks Circular will appear in the next newsletter.

KSS (KENT SURREY SUSSEX) TRIPLE CHALLENGE

AFTER our own White Cliffs Challenge (in 2008), the Surrey Tops (2009) and the Sussex Stride (2010), the KSS Triple Challenge of 50-mile walks returns to Surrey this year.

The Surrey Tops, based at Witley, is being held over the weekend of September 17/18, and Kent Group will be manning a checkpoint at Elstead, at 16 miles. The marshals' walk will be held over the bank holiday weekend of August 27/28, and Kent Group members interested in checkpointing on the event and/or taking part in the marshals' walk should contact Graham Smith (details above).

HOUSMAN HUNDRED

KENT Group members put in some highly creditable performances on the Housman Hundred. On what was generally considered to be a very tough route, 15 Kent Group members started and 11 finished. On the event generally, there were 469 starters (out of 523 entrants) and 375 finishers.

In fact Kent Group had one of the fastest walkers to finish, in Wendy Thurell, who recorded a time of 31 hours 17 minutes, and also one of the slowest, in Martin Brice, who finished with a minute to go, in 47 hours 59 minutes.

In addition, four Kent Group members – Andrew Boulden, Nicola Foad, Gordon Harker, Michael Headley and Barrie Morgan – entered the marshals' walk. Unfortunately, only Andrew finished, in a time of 32 hours 44 minutes, with Nicola, Gordon and Michael having to retire; Nicola after 45.6 miles, Michael and Gordon after 84.7 miles.

Kent Group organised a checkpoint at Newcastle, after 43.8 miles.

Details of Kent Group members on the Housman Hundred:-

Rex Stickland – 31.00
 Martin Brice – 47.59.
 Jim Catchpole – 40.10.
 Christophe Delogne, Stephanie le Men 35.15.
 Jill Green - 40.13.
 Don Newman – 40.45.
 Merv Nutburn – 37.01.
 Mike Pursey – 46.33.
 Wendy Thurrell – 31.17.
 Keith Warman – 47.20.
 Roger Dean and Kevin Puttock retired at checkpoint 6, and Jane Dicker and Alan Stewart retired at checkpoint 7.
 Kent Group members on the Housman Hundred marshals' walk:-
 Andrew Boulden – 32.44.
 Barrie Morgan retired after 22.6 miles, Nicola Foad retired after 45.6 miles and Gordon Harker and Michael Headley retired after 84.7 miles.



Brian Buttifant adds: Housman Hundred – Checkpoint 5, Newcastle on Clun, (43.8 miles), open from 18.00 on Saturday May 28 to 06.00 on Sunday 29.

We were short of a few more helpers than we had hoped for, as we had planned to run two shifts. So it meant that some of us would be working straight through till morning. We had a nice roomy hall with a well equipped kitchen, so to have good facilities was very good. We had two Raynet operators, Karen and Paul (from Essex), working alongside our check-in people. Raynet are always helpful and they were no exception. Everyone worked hard and displayed a good welcoming attitude, upholding Kent Group's high standard. Thanks for your support. Helpers were Martyn Berry, Andrew Boulden, Phil Butler, Gill Bunker (BBN), myself, Nick Dockree, Gordon Harker, Francoise Nurse (Marches), Jackie Puttock, Graham Smith, Helen Sutton (Marches) and Ann and Ivan Waghorn.

Next year will hopefully be another good Kent checkpoint on the LDWA Games 100, at Biggin Hill (31.3 miles) on June 2.

LDWA GAMES HUNDRED

NEXT year's Hundred is, of course, the Olympic year one. The Inspire application – which, more or less, means the event gets the official blessing of the Olympic authority – has been approved. This means, apart from anything else, that event will be called the LDWA Games Hundred. It also means there will be some local led walks connected with it and the route will also be an anytime one – which may be very useful if, as expected, the event gets booked up. As this newsletter was being printed, there was still an issue with walkers being able to go through Windsor Great Park at night, but it is still hoped we will be able to come to an arrangement with the park's authorities to let us have access. The event takes place on the late spring bank holiday weekend of Saturday June 2-Monday June 4. As one of the groups involved, Kent Group is organising a checkpoint at Biggin Hill (31.3 miles) which is likely to be open between 3pm-4am.

The marshals' walk will be over the earlier bank holiday weekend of May 5-7. We are obviously going to need lots of marshals and we have just heard that entry on the marshals' walk will be limited to 50. The idea of limiting the number produced some concern at our last committee meeting, as the view was generally held that people marshalling on the Hundred had every right to be allowed to take part in the marshals' walk. It was suggested that the national committee allocate a certain number of places – perhaps eight - on the marshals' walk to all the organising groups (and the others are Beds, Bucks and Northants, London, Surrey and Thames Valley). Our treasurer Neil Higham, who is on the LDWA Games Hundred steering group, has been asked to propose this. Graham Smith has given names of people

wishing to take part in the marshals' walk to Dave Yorston, of BBN, who is coordinating the walk. Anyone wishing to marshal and/or take part in the marshals' walk is asked to contact Graham Smith – details above. Obviously, more details about the LDWA Games Hundred will appear in the next newsletter.

CINQUE PORTS HUNDRED?

PLANS are being made for Kent Group to submit a bid to the national committee for us to organise a Cinque Ports Hundred in 2016. This would replace the plans for a Kent Coastal Hundred, which we had been considering before. John Goodwin, a new member from Dover, who has twice organised three-day Cinque Ports charity walks, has been instrumental in this project. John is a councillor, and he has already got the support of several of his fellow councillors for the project. The event would be based in Dover, and an approach has been made to the Duke of York's Royal Military school, on the outskirts of the town and just off the A2, to base the event there. The school has plenty of space, including a huge area which could be used for parking. The initial response from the school has been positive, and chairman Brian Buttifant and secretary Graham Smith are planning to visit the school soon to have a good look at what can be offered.

Mike Pursey has offered to work out a rough route. Broadly, the route would go inland to Sandwich (which, with Dover, is a Cinque Port), then along the coast past Deal and back to Dover, then to Folkestone and Hythe and New Romney (the latter two are Cinque Ports), then Lydd, then a diversion to Tenterden, then turning back towards the coast to Rye and Winchelsea (both Ancient Towns of the Cinque Ports Confederation) and finishing at Hastings (a Cinque Port). We would be required to bus people back to Dover, and as Hastings is in East Sussex, we would seek the assistance of Sussex Group in organising the event – if it goes ahead.

The two bids for the 2016 Hundred are likely to be ours and one from Dorset Group, and we would probably not know if we have been successful until early next year. But if a Cinque Ports Hundred does go ahead, it is obviously a major undertaking, and we would need as much help from as many people as possible, with the first major job working out in detail and checking the route. A sub-committee would have to be set up, and if anyone is interested in getting involved with the event at this early stage, they should contact Graham Smith.

And on the subject of Cinque Ports walks, Graham is putting on his 100k Cinque Ports Challenge on Saturday April 21 next year. The route will go from Sandwich to Hastings, starting at approx. 10am and finishing some time the next morning. Full details will be in the next newsletter.

WALKERS AND RUNNERS

THE issue regarding 'runners' has been re-raised because a group, conforming to LDWA rules and entry criteria, entered an event as early as they could which meant that the event was very quickly full. My first thought is 'Would the same concerns be raised if the 'group' were not runners but, say, 'ramblers' ? I think not.

With regard to the 100, why is there a limit of 500 ? This may be appropriate for some 100s but others could easily have coped with more participants. As there is obviously a growing demand for the LDWA flagship event maybe this aspect could be investigated further.

I recently participated in The Bath Beat and Pewsey Downsaround and in both events was treated to a vitriolic account of what the LDWA should do to 'runners' in the future. The rhetoric came from elderly walkers on both events who must have forgot, or were completely unaware, that the LDWA was formed by two excellent runners.

If you Google Alan Blatchford you will be able to confirm that, in 1965, he ran the Ridgeway 40 mile event in 6 hours and 22 minutes. If you compare this with the faster times on the recent Sevenoaks Circular, you will see that his time was indeed an excellent one. Chris Steer, his co-founder of the LDWA, wrote about Alan, informing the reader that Alan went against the establishment as marathons were for men only because women were deemed not to be strong enough for longer events, when he organised the Masters and Maidens marathon, which included women. Alan, like Chris, was an excellent runner, who encompassed the 'sport for all' ideology as he organised events not just for the faster runners but even for walkers, hence the beginnings of the LDWA.

I also firmly believe that a lot of runners of today will be the walkers of tomorrow. A few years ago, while working in Newbury, I did a midweek social walk with Thames Valley. There were four gentlemen in their 70s sauntering along. During the day I discovered that they had all ran a marathon in under 2 hours 30 minutes while in their 20s.

Considering that they must have run them in plimsolls, not energy return shoes, these are superb times. But they are now walkers!

While doing the two events previously mentioned, it was also strongly intimated to me that runners never help at events and that the majority of walkers do. Obviously, being a now slow runner, I can give plenty of evidence of both Fiona and myself running checkpoints, most notably the last checkpoint on the Chiltern 100 where we worked for 26 hours. If it's true that runners don't marshal at events, I presume that my offer of helping at the Surrey Tops and, yet again, running the last checkpoint on the 2012 White Cliffs will be refused!

Ridiculous, eh? Of course, it is! And so is the vehemence being enflamed against runners. How many of the 'walkers' have never run any part of any event, and how many 'runners' walk on part of the events? It makes sense to use differing muscles while doing the long events. In fact, I have seen some of the faster 'walkers' from Kent running.

They may have been trying to get away from me, but they were still running, albeit for a short distance!

I was concerned about a quote from a well respected member of the LDWA executive which was in the Kent Newsletter concerning runners. That quote does not encourage others to join the organisation. It suggests a dictatorial approach to any form of 'change' and creates negativity. In the 1800s all events, both running and walking, were encompassed under the umbrella of pedestrianism. Maybe the LDWA should become the LDPA instead !! You would then be able to choose which mode of action was appropriate at the time.

It wasn't that long ago that several events folded due to lack of entries, such as the Three Forests Way. It was only when a 26-mile option was added to many events, did the LDWA attract more runners for minimal increase in cost but significant increase in income. Thus the increase in runners ensured that certain events continued and others were added, e.g. 5-4-3-2-1 and the Fairland Valleys running/walking events.

So please don't start a 'running' witch-hunt. Fiona and I have made very many good friends and have thoroughly enjoyed ourselves while being members of the LDWA, a truly wonderful organisation.

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to express my concerns.

Merv Nutburn (LDWA number 14252)

I READ the article on runners in the recent Newsletter with interest and felt compelled to give a view.

Why run in an LDWA challenge event? Well in truth, although I might enter as a runner, there is a great deal of walking done. My first observation, in response to the article, would be that a study of finish times will show that there is no clear differential between walkers/runners - in fact, many "walkers" beat people who entered as "runners". The "runners" that enter challenge events are looking for something different. They probably represent about one per cent of the road running community and are mostly ultra runners, or runners that want the challenge of running long distance, or runners that prefer to be off road and enjoying the countryside; all with the mental challenge of a bit of navigation. I know of many runners that have looked at LDWA events and simply refused to enter - the events are much tougher than regular running events and require skills that most runners don't want to exercise (in particular the navigation).

The biggest challenge for putting runners/walkers alongside each other, I would suggest, is a logistical one. The checkpoints are open for longer and this is a potentially a real chore for the many wonderful volunteers who sit out in all weathers along the routes. Mixing runners and walkers on the route should be no problem - I have found that both support each other en route, with neither group being exclusive to the other. And if a runner was to come up behind a walker on a narrow section of path, I daresay that the majority would hang back rather than barging through. Nobody has a right of way as such, and common practice is for the faster person to find the space to pass and therefore not interfere with or impede the other.

From my own experience LDWA is inclusive and I haven't come across anyone (on or off the course) who has said a word against runners. We runners will eventually slow down and become walkers and therefore maintain our membership (hopefully actively) of the association. Indeed many of us, if entirely honest with ourselves, would observe that for all of our Lycra and expensive gadgets we are runners who walk a lot and just love a day out in great company, along fabulous routes with the benefits of tea and cakes en route for a very reasonable entry fee. Road running event fees are going up as they have to cover road closure costs, ridiculous "goodie bags" containing items that will go straight in the bin, funding emergency services, insurances race clocks, electronic tagging and other costs that are now seen as essential to a contemporary road race.

So to the key point of the complainants, that events are filling up "several weeks in advance". My observation would show that all events involving exercise are filling up faster than ever before. This is nothing to do with runners entering, it is more to do with a trend towards fitness, health and lifestyle. I enter many running, cycling, and triathlon events and, year on year, they are filling up more quickly than ever. Ironman triathlon distance races can fill up within an hour of opening - that is 2500 people each paying £400 to enter and doing so within an hour of opening, and, incredibly, a full year before the race takes place. Consider the London Marathon - 35,000 runners and it's five times over-subscribed! While these events may not be directly comparable to the challenge events the LDWA run, they go to show that the enormity of an event and significant cost of entry do not deter more and more people from entering them nowadays, and doing so months in advance. LDWA events do offer incredible value. Even as a non-member it is possible to enter for a few pounds and enjoy an incredibly well organised event, with well stocked checkpoints and a hot meal and cuppa at the end. How the economics of these events work I don't know and I am sure, based on my comments above about other types of event, that even if entry fees were to go up slightly people would still be prepared to pay.

Some ideas for further debate perhaps: maybe there should be a quota of walkers (say 2/3rds) and runners (1/3 of entrants) to maintain a balance between the two ends of the field. However, if the complaint is solely based on events selling out then I would simply suggest that members need to plan ahead a bit better and enter earlier. Alternatively; perhaps operate two entry phases to allow LDWA members to enter early and then open entry to non-members and members alike at a later date; however, it should be recognised that many runners are also members of the LDWA. Finally a thought, (and Surrey do this), run 15, 20 and 30 mile routes simultaneously and only open the 20 and 30 mile

routes to runners, or stagger start times with a view to everyone finishing more or less at the same time and therefore reducing the length of time checkpoints are open.

From an organisational perspective, if the events can be operated at 100 per cent capacity that is going to keep the entry fee down as the event will be economically viable and therefore a success. A further thought on the comments relating to the Surrey LDWA events - Surrey advertise their challenge events on runners' websites (www.runnersworld.co.uk in particular) and actively embrace/encourage the running community which perhaps explains why there are so many runners at such events. You only have to read reviews written by runners to realise the value of the challenge series events to the long distance running community.

My view is that the inclusive nature of LDWA challenge events adds to the richness of the experience. Long may LDWA continue to recognise the value of the "challenge" series.

Gavin Davis (LDWA number 28696)

SATURDAY WALKS

LAST year, there seemed to be a move away from the dominance of Sundays in our walks programme. I enjoyed the Sole and Aylesford Saturday walks in March, a London Group walk from Bexley on a December Saturday and the joint Swalecliffe walk on the last Saturday in January. I was looking forward to the Four Pits Walk on the day after the Royal Wedding. Although it is 35 years since I walked as far as 40 miles, I felt ready for the challenge.

How disappointing, then, to find this walk brought forward to the previous Sunday, two days after the day acknowledged in the programme as Good Friday but without mention of its own special status. Are there so few observant Christians in the group that an event like this should be on Easter Sunday, the most important day in the church's year?

The other Saturday walk I enjoyed last year was the South Downs Thirty and I hope to be there again in August.

Please don't move this to a Sunday. There is plenty of opportunity in the programme for walking on a Sunday. Can we please balance this with some more Saturday walks?

Andrew Melling

Graham Smith replies: I am sorry if Andrew, or anyone else, was disappointed that the date of the Four Pits Walk was changed from the Saturday originally scheduled. I asked walks secretary Mike Pursey to change the date so that I could enter the Housman Hundred marshals' walk (which, ironically, I wasn't able to enter anyway, due to a hernia which required an operation in June). I felt it would be unfair if I asked anyone else to lead the Four Pits Walk for me. But next year, I promise, the Four Pits Walk will be on a Saturday. The date will be in the December Strider and Kent Group newsletter.

THE CLEVELAND WAY (AND OTHER ADVENTURES) by Jill Green

ON Saturday April 2, at a pub in Farndale, I was presented with a large Irregulars badge. It seems I have now passed some kind of initiation, I'm not sure quite now.

I've only done a few of their events, including the Brockholes, the Regular Irregular, and just one Hangover Hike from the Leggars Inn. I have been away (proudly wearing my Irregular top) to Vichte 415km Dhron (eight day international walk) and the Euroaudax in Kooigem. That's only three events, three away trips, plus the AGM walk. This Farndale Frolic was my only social walk.

The first was to do all the 150k in Kortrijk. We (that is Jim and me) proudly walked in as part of the 'famous five' – Karen, Jackie, Mick, plus Jim and me. We walked behind the Irregular flag. The others did the 100k and were well pleased. We travelled back in Ivan's very comfortable car, and we picked up Jim's little car late afternoon, and made the big drive north to Helmsley YHA. We were both tired from the 94-mile walk, and the long drive.

The next day we started the Cleveland Way, over four days, with Kent Group – Helmsley-Osmotherley (23 miles), Osmotherley-Saltburn (35 miles), Saltburn-Boggle Hole by Robin Hood's Bay (27 miles), Boggle Hole-Filey (24 miles), 109 total!

It's a beautiful walk, as you all know, but it's not flat! And we had to carry all our gear. As it was still only March, we had to be prepared for cold and rain. We had no rain but we had gales that sapped our strength and nearly blew us over. The 150k was not the best preparation.

But it all went very well. Richard Allison, who lives in Kent but is a member of London Group, had to stop after the 35 miles with blisters. They can happen to anyone. We all met up at Scarborough station to say goodbye and go our separate ways. We got the bus from Filey to Scarborough, then back to Helmsley – we were on the top deck with the map out. It was a beautiful bus ride. Daffodils everywhere.

THEN we got up early to join the Frolic in Farndale, and we are so pleased we did. Mick has given us the route so we can return again some day. In the meantime, I have been advised to book up elocution lessons so I can talk properly, just like the rest of them!

We thank Graham for all his planning for the Cleveland Way. We would not have done this without him. Also a very big thank you to Keith Warman and Shirlie Gill. It was great to arrive at their home at 7.45am before travelling to Kooigem and see LDWA on their big black bin, and a CP sign in the front window. We had lovely toast and

marmalade before Keith drove us to meet the Irregulars in Maidstone. On the return, Shirlie met us at Leeds Castle and we had tea and cake before our drive north.

We are lucky to have such wonderful friends. That's what the LDWA is all about – a great walking family.



A FEW MORE MUNROS

by Mike Ratcliff

CLIMBING a mountain or even a hill certainly isn't everyone's idea of fun but after several trips to Scotland over the last few years the pleasure of seeking the more mountainous regions of Britain is beginning to develop into a passion for me after encountering my first few Munros north of the border. After a fabulous trip of two weeks in Sutherland in May of this year with Mike Pursey and Graham Smith from Kent Group, I thought that my time in the Scottish hills was probably up for this year. Though when an old school friend told me that he and his family were renting a lodge by Loch Muick on the Balmoral Estate at the edge of the Cairngorms and that I would be more than welcome to join them for the week to do some hillwalking, of course it all seemed too good to be true; especially with the taste of Sutherland and the north-western hills still fresh in mind. So I set off from Medway very early on a quiet Monday morning before the rest of the world seemed to have come to life, and managed to pleasantly surprise myself by reaching Braemar on the A93 in the southern Cairngorms in a slither under 11 hours, with 12 being my original target. All despite the usual battle of passing through Birmingham and the perennial roadworks east of Glasgow. I find that no enthusiasm needs to be sought within myself at times like this as the awesome and richly varied nature of the northern landscape becomes utterly inspiring as I pass by the Lake District on the M6, then the Southern Uplands just over the border and finally when entering The Highlands the topography becomes exceptionally rugged and at times quite precipitous on the higher slopes. This was certainly very true of The Cairngorms and this being my first visit to this region of Scotland I was impressed with how green and inviting the hills looked with a kaleidoscopic mixture of grasses, heathers, dramatic rock faces, boulder fields and scree slopes. What a super place this turned out to have an adventure simply indulging in the hills! The Cairngorms really didn't fail to live up to all the fantastic praise I had heard regarding them from fellow walkers.

Out of three full days of walking I couldn't really have asked for more. Our first day saw our group, which included several very novice walkers, tackle the beautiful Lochnagar and its four surrounding peaks, all of which were included by Hugh Munro in his now famous list of Scottish hills above 3000 feet in the late 19th century. There are 283 Munros in all, though the list has throughout its history been the subject of speculation and repeated revision as measurements are re-taken and technology has improved. Lochnagar, however, has never been in doubt as it stands a majestic 1155 metres above sea level and is often described as one of the 'grand' hills of Scotland, with its superb sheer north facing cliffs around the lochan of the same name and dramatic rugged pinnacles that dominate the surrounding area for miles. Doing a horseshoe shaped walk of around 18 miles, we gradually made our way back down to Loch Muick from the rest, but not before taking in four more Munros including Carn a' Choire Bhoidheach and Carn an Sagairt Mor. Best of all was the fact that despite ascending from the lochside in a very misty world with a heavy grey and overcast sky, the cloud soon dispersed to reveal patches of clear blue sky with a warm sun shining through which spread as the day progressed and by the afternoon we were very warm indeed and taking advantage of the excellent visibility with what must be some of the most lovely views in Britain. One possibly unique feature of this walk was that for more than seven miles of walking we never once dropped below 3,000 feet. I can hardly think of anywhere else in the British Isles where this may be possible, even in other parts of the Scottish Highlands.

Our second day took us even higher into the mountains, in fact to the second highest place in Britain after Ben Nevis, which is Ben Macdui. We again set off nice and early on a fabulously crisp sunny morning to drive out to a spot just west of Braemar. Starting the walk by following the River Dee upstream for some miles gave us a nice warm-up for the tough climbs to come. Crossing the River at Derry Lodge we made our way up to the base of Carn a' Mhaim. After tackling this first climb we were treated to what we all agreed was the most powerful view of the week. This was looking north along our summit's gradually descending ridge which stretches off into the distance towards the mighty

Ben Macdui towering above, with Cairn Toul and the Devil's Point clearly visible just next to us in the west, and Braeriach looming menacingly in the background to the north. After traversing this beautiful ridge towards the base of Ben Macdui, we began our final ascent for the summit, unbelievably starting our ascent from well over 800 metres above sea level, just confirming to us how big and bulbous this hill really is. After spending a little while relaxing at the summit, with its elaborate cairn, trig point and numerous visitors, we began our way back towards the direction of Braemar via our third Munro of the day, which was Derry Cairngorm with its beautiful, gently ascending ridge. Then finally to our last minor summit of Carn Crom before a sharp descent back down to The Dee with its banks heavily wooded with superb examples of Scots Pine and other fine conifers.

By now, feeling rather chuffed with myself after having 'bagged' eight more Munros in just two days, I was stumped with what to attempt on what will probably be my last full day of walking in Scotland this year. After not so much discussion with my friends, we soon decided to give ourselves an 'easy' day by taking on just the one hill. However, it was certainly no ordinary hill! Despite not being so massively high at just 939 metres, Mount Keen casts a solitary and somehow lonely shadow out to the east of the main plateau of the Cairngorms National Park. Its grandeur, however, is undeniable and is notable as being the most easterly Munro of all the 283 grand peaks. It's also a rather remote hill and when tackling it from either the north side or the south near the small town of Ballater as we did, there's quite a long walk into its base through some fairly rough country. It was dry, however, and we made good progress along vehicle tracks ascending from the A93 and then eventually a reasonable path that lead us over a series of foothills to the proper base of the hill with its broad, rocky slopes inviting us up. A very loose, rocky dirt track lead us up the north west face to reach a spectacular summit, which allowed us some super views looking east out to the North Sea which was clearly visible, and north west to Lochnagar and the formidable range of hills rising up around Ben Macdui. This moment was made particularly special by the amazing lighting effects of the early evening summer sky with vivid streaks of pink and peach ripping through the clouds that drifted around the heavens above us. Driving back home after such a fruitful walking trip has yet again increased my hunger for more and posed the increasingly pressing question . . . where next to continue the Munro bagging mission?



ANOTHER BRIEF EXODUS

by Claire Betts

MY relationship with the group travel industry continues to be a 'see what's on offer at the last minute.com', allowing an indecisive procrastinator very little choice and not much time to make up her mind.

So, end of March 2011 and I am left with Wadi Rum or Tuscany, teetering initially Wadi-wise, but fearing Jordan falling foul of the recent Tunisia, Egypt, Libya effect, so settle for 'Walking in Tuscany' and the promised enchanted forests and home-cooked Italian fare.

On arrival at Pisa airport, I confess to the Exodus group that I have been sitting behind most of them on the plane, but chose to remain incognito in order to snooze and snoop in secrecy. Not an orthodox approach to making friends, hinting at anti-social espionage, but they seem an amiable group, and I am proved right in my pessimistic guess that the only male is also the oldest person on the trip. No matter, he is funny and jolly, and proves to be a steady pace-setter, with a penchant for vino rosso and limoncello night-caps equal to my own.

The others are either sisters, Irish, or like characters from a Victoria Wood sketch, and I'm confident early on that I won't keep in touch with any of them, but they make for a friendly week's walking, and, given my new insistence on a single room supplement, I'll be none the wiser as to whether any of them snore or not.

Our base is beautiful - an hour and 45 minutes from Pisa in the Garfagnana area of Northern Tuscany, and according to the Exodus literature, 'quite hilly'. The latter turns out to be something of an understatement, revealed during the tour guide's preamble, which includes the words 'mountains', 'steep ascents' and 'snowshoes'. We are the first week of the season for this trip, and apparently snow is a certainty. I panic, I inquire in a high pitched squeak as to whether I am mistakenly on the Grade C version of the tour, and my group leaves me to look like the token wimp, admitting only

later that none of them expected this either.

Our first day sees us in heavy rain touring the low level slopes of the valley. I am drenched to my knickers, yet delighted to find out both that I am quicker on the uphill than everyone apart from the Irish girl, and also that our guide won Exodus Best last year and is absolutely superb. She knows Tuscany inside out, she treats us to coffee, and she's got gentle plans for psychologically prepping us for snowshoes.

While our boots dry out back at the ranch, we meet 'Mamma', head of the household at the farmhouse, and our cook for the week along with her two daughters, and on some days her three-year-old granddaughter Emily. Mamma is 24 carat Italiana – squat, plump and hugely animated. She coos over the male, tells us Berlusconi is a 'very bad boy' and insists on second helpings for all of us, every night. Some evenings she appeared again later, brandishing the Grappa and telling us it would make us all 'strong'. A certain strength was needed to get the rocket fuel down your throat in the first place, but we indulged her with an enthusiastic 'Salute!' and grappled with the Grappa on her behalf.

They make the vino rosso at the farmhouse, it's fruity and plentiful, and, served alongside home made pasta, parmesan and tiramisu, it's textbook Italian every tea-time.

We get a drizzle of rain on day two, but not before we've ascended to 1,700 feet and a village called Campocantino and beyond and had a picnic at a hermitage with Mamma's exquisite sun dried tomatoes. The scenery is lovely; rows and rows of beech trees, clear lakes, pretty villages and early crocuses and other flowers I should probably know the names of. We can see the snow, but Exodus' Best still has us in prep mode . . .

Tuesday evening we are introduced to our snowshoes. All remark on how heavy they are, and the concern of carrying them temporarily supersedes the one of wearing them. By Wednesday morning we are all trialing them in the garden, plodding around the grass like turf-trotting astronauts. They seem utterly ridiculous, although in a flat garden, perhaps this is not surprising.

The rest of our walks are increasingly stunning; the raison d'être of the blessed snowshoes. We gain heights like I've never been at before, and consequently the views are breathtaking. In stark contrast to my initial panic, I warm to my snowshoes. They require concentration and steadiness and provide a hypnotic and welcome distraction for the mind. I can grip and ascend arctic slopes, and the combination of the clear blue skies and the crisp and glistening bright white snow, our rhythmic crunching steps uphill, and the summits of panoramic mountain ranges – 360 degrees on some days – was more wonderful walking than I had expected.

Our last day we are taken to the Crinali ridge and we spend almost the whole day in snowshoes. We ascend to the ridge and are met with endless views of parallel mountain ranges. Our guide gives us the option of carrying on to the second highest peak – Monte Vecchio – or stopping to eat lunch. Looking at the peak I am weak with fear, and the guide won't answer my question as to whether anyone has ever fallen, but a thirst for a higher panorama and a sense of achievement and a reluctance to spend the next hour listening to how much Debbie from Sheffield is 'dying for a cuppa', and I am off, with only two of the others and a delighted guide, who heaps us with praise when we reach the peak, and dine on faro salad with a huge slice of smug satisfaction on the side.

A day off of walking spent in the lovely city of Lucca, eating creamy gelato and exploring the myriad of back streets, was an enjoyable sideline, but unexpectedly, the days in my snowshoes, picnicking at the pinnacle of Tuscany's terrain, was the highlight. Quite hilly indeed . . .



THE GREAT GLEN WAY

by John Goodwin

HAVING walked Hadrian's Wall last year and walking across England - Bowness on Solway to Wallsend - I planned to walk across Scotland this year and decided to do the Great Glen Way, one of the newest long distance trails, which technically takes you across Scotland's shortest coast to coast walk in five days' walking. The 71-mile walk from Fort William to Inverness, of course, is the Caledonian Canal, made up of three Lochs and a man-made section and includes Loch Ness.

Being a councillor in the ward of Tower Hamlets in Dover and an election to fight on May 5, I had plenty of opportunity to get some practice walking in, but this walk was an eye opener, seeing the sites of Scotland in one of the prettiest glens Scotland has to offer.

I flew up from Manston to Edinburgh and then caught the train from Edinburgh to Fort William, changing at Glasgow. Even on the train as you pass the areas north of Glasgow on your four-hour train ride, you see deer on the moors at Rannoch as you slowly climb up to the mountains, and arriving at Fort William at 10pm it hits you that this far north it stays lighter longer.

The first concern was arriving at 10pm. Having booked a bed and breakfast nearby it was straight to bed. After a casual breakfast, with Ben Nevis in the background, it was time to pick up some supplies as the route is pretty remote in places and few shops until Fort Augustus. So setting off at 10am it was a visit to a local supermarket before finding the start of the walk.

Just outside the supermarket was the sign and day one was to be a 10 mile casual warm-up on the trip to Gairloch at the start of Loch Lochy. Wandering through Fort William, you soon arrive at Neptune's Staircase - a dramatic flight of eight locks raising boats 20 meters. The path is simple and easy walking on a gritted path and impossible to get lost, especially using the Harvey's map I had bought. So a few hours later I arrived at the tiny village of Gairloch, just three miles from the Commando Memorial where the Commandoes trained in the Second World War. Staying in a bed and breakfast can be a hit and miss event but on my first day I stumbled on a pure gem. The village of only a few houses has no facilities except, in my opinion, the best bed and breakfast anywhere. Now on Hadrian's wall I stayed in two brilliant B and Bs but this one got 12 out of 10. Dalcomera is an eight year old house with views of Ben Nevis and is a beautiful and exceptionally clean place. But the best is yet to come - the bedrooms are bright and the bed . . . well I wanted to take it with me. And there was more. The host, Heather, was absolutely brilliant, such an advert for the Scottish Tourist Board, especially as the lady who runs it is from Bristol but had lived in the village 22 years. She was a fountain of knowledge and a brilliant cook as well. Nothing was too much trouble for her. It was so good it was difficult to start walking on day two as I wanted to stay longer.

Day two was another 13-mile walk to South Laggan, along the entire length of Loch Lochy - a walk along the towpath and a pretty easy walk, with the forests on the other side, and a few locks on the way. There is no real road on the side of the loch you walk but you can see the road on the other side, and you meet the road in South Laggan. Here there is varied accommodation, from youth hostels to campsites to bed and breakfast. Thanks to Heather a diversion was added, walking past the Clan Cameron Museum across the wooden road bridge near Achnacarry to a spectacular waterfall.

Day three was the start of the real walking, from South Laggan to Invermoriston, an 18-miler. You leave the towpath and head up the hills into the forests. At times you join the old defunct railway that used to run along the glen and get views of Loch Oich, the smallest of the three lochs, five miles long. Up to Fort Augustus the walking is easy. Arriving in the small town after 11 miles you hit the tourist area of Loch Ness. Boat tours and tourist shops but a pleasant enough town. Time to stock up and on I plod, but now it gets hard. From Fort Augustus you climb steeply out and the walking gets hard until you rise above Loch Ness, with spectacular views of the mountains in the distance. On I plod to Invermoriston, a small town, and although I could see the bed and breakfast far below in the valley, the path was closed and a two-mile diversion was in operation owing to a tree fall blocking the path - not just one tree but half a forest, adding four miles onto the walk. I struggled into my bed and breakfast at 18.20.

Invermoriston is a nice small town with its old Telford Bridge, which collapsed a number of years ago, over the river. The bed and breakfast I stayed in was the last house in the town on the Road to Skye - Brackadale, a pleasant place to stay, with good food and a good welcome and another little shop for restocking. The day was a long tough walk but I was about to find out it was not the toughest day - that was to come.

Day four was a 15-mile walk but it starts off walking up a steep hill above Loch Ness. I haven't mentioned the weather yet so I will now. It will rain, and when it rains get your sunglasses out because the sun is on its way. As soon as the sun comes out get your raincoat out because the rain is on its way. I have never walked as much with it raining and sunny at the same time. As you struggle up the hill and realise that it is a mountain you are climbing, there is a view of Loch Ness that is breathtaking. The loch is 40 miles long and further on was a stone cave which appeared just as it started raining again.

On I went to the Loch Ness Centre of Drumnadrochit and I said this is the toughest part of the walk, with steep climbs and falls. It didn't help that one sign was covered in nettles. I walked downhill for 30 minutes, only to realise I had to retrace my steps up a hill that had me gasping to get back to the path. Soon after the town of Lewiston came into view. A short walk from Drumnadrochit, or as it is known Drum, I stayed in a lovely if a little expensive bed and breakfast called Glen Kirk, with the added bonus that at the local pub you get a free soft drink, wine or whisky. So after a soft drink (yeah!) with my meal, I headed back for a well earned rest. Drum is full of Loch Ness shops and tourist attractions.

Day five - the last day, 18 miles to Inverness, and the biggest problem was the train. I had to be on to Edinburgh at 16.53. So an early start and another mountain (all right, large hill) to climb. The first five miles are tough but straightforward. From there into the busy town of Inverness in time for the train.

I used the baggage service supplied by the Great Glen Way people to have my large bag moved each day, and had an excellent service by George (although I never met him). My bag was always there.

Train to Edinburgh and hotel. Then a 30-minute bus ride to the airport after a guided tour of Edinburgh and flight home. Edinburgh to home in three hours can't be bad. Next day flights were cancelled owing to big winds, and the next day was the day all flights in Scotland were cancelled owing to an Icelandic volcano dust cloud.

A brilliant trip and I would recommend it to anyone – well, most of it.

PARISH WALK by Bill Gillibrand

DUE to old age and arthritis I have had to give up serious walking. That leaves me with time on my hands and I have taken to exploring places not previously visited. As a result I decided to go to the Isle of Man on June 13 for a few days. Accordingly I got a guide from the tourist office and saw that on June 25 there would be a 'Parish Walk'. That would be after my visit but seemed the sort of thing I could have coped with. How wrong can one be?

The guide went on to state, 'An endurance walk comprising an 85 mile walk through all 17 parishes in the Isle of Man to be completed in 24hrs.' 85 miles in 24 hours! That had to be a mistake, so I took a look at the website – parishwalk.com. It was no mistake and the site gave the results of the 2010 event. Since then the 2011 event has taken place and I can now tell you that 159 completed the challenge with the first home being a Jack Waddington in a blistering (pun intended) time of 15hours 01min 48sec. Obviously their time-keeping is a bit more precise than ours but that works out at an average speed in excess of 5.6mph and the island is by no means flat. Another entrant, David Collister, made his 28th successive completion.

I have to wonder if that is why the symbol of the Isle of Man has three legs.

AROUND THE ISLE OF WIGHT

JILL Green celebrates her 70th birthday on October 10 this year. To mark the occasion she is planning a circular walk round the Isle of Wight. The walk takes place over the four days from Friday October 7 to Monday October 10 and LDWA members from Kent and The Irregulars and Kent will be especially welcome. The event is being organised on Jill's behalf by Mick Abbott of The Irregulars.

There is a catamaran service from Portsmouth Harbour to Ryde Pier Head (IoW) and a train service to Sandown. B&B accommodation is at St Michaels Hotel, 33 Leed Street, Sandown, Isle of Wight, PO36 8JE.

The suggested arrival day is Thursday October 6, with departures on Tuesday October 11, but participants may wish to join or leave on other days if they find it more convenient.

The walking schedule is:

Friday: Sandown – Gurnard, 22 miles. Lunch: pub at Fishbourne Inn.

Saturday: Gurnard – Totland, 18 miles. Lunch: Pub in Yarmouth.

Sunday: Totland – Chale Green, 19 miles. Lunch: Pub at Hulverstone.

Monday: Chale Green – Sandown, 14 miles. Lunch: Pub at Sandown.

HADRIAN'S WALL PATH – Saturday March 24 - Wednesday March 28 2012

MIKE Ratcliff is organising an expedition for Kent Group members to walk the Hadrian's Wall Path National Trail in March next year. All group members are very welcome to come along although the availability of accommodation will ultimately dictate the size of our group, so do get booked up fast if you're keen. Everyone going will be responsible for booking their own travel and accommodation. The total distance of the trail is 84 miles with a total additional mileage of between 4 and 6 miles for the extra walking required to reach our accommodation each night. This will depend on where our B&Bs are in Carlisle. So all in all we'll be walking between 88 and 90 miles. The plan is to complete the trail over four days and then return home on the fifth day. All the information below should be taken as a guide only and people should feel welcome to make their own individual plans regarding travel and accommodation if they wish. There is some alternative accommodation in the middle sections of the trail and of course there will be accommodation of all types at Newcastle near the start and plenty of B&Bs in Carlisle near the finish. The basic plan is as follows:

Saturday March 24.

Travel from Kent to Wallsend then walk from Wallsend to Heddon-on-the-Wall:

Morning: travel to Wallsend (Start of Hadrian's Wall Path). Meet at Wallsend Station about 13.00. A precise time will be announced 12 weeks before the walk when the train schedules are published. There are regular trains from London King's Cross to Newcastle. The earlier you book your train tickets, the better value it tends to be. You can book up to a maximum of 12 weeks in advance. When reaching Newcastle, there is a regular service to Wallsend on the Tyne and Wear Metro. However, Wallsend is just a couple of miles or so from Newcastle Station so it is easily walkable too.

Afternoon: Next, we shall have our first 15 miles walking to reach our first night's accommodation at Heddon-on-the-Wall: Houghton North Farm, Heddon-on-the-Wall, Northumberland, NE15 0EZ

Sunday March 25.

Heddon-on-the-Wall to Steel Rigg: 28.5 miles walking in total. 27.25 miles from Heddon-on-the-Wall to Steel Rigg with just over one mile in addition to reach our second night's accommodation just slightly off the route at Once Brewed: YHA Once Brewed, Military Road, Bardon Mill, Northumberland, NE47 7AN.

Monday March 26.

Steel Rigg to Carlisle: 28.5 miles walking in total. Half a mile from the hostel at Once Brewed back to the trail. Then 27.25 miles from Steel Rigg to Carlisle city centre where our accommodation will be hopefully not too far. There is no hostel accommodation in Carlisle at this time of year so it will probably be a bed and breakfast for most of us. Check with Google or the local tourist information centre for information regarding accommodation in Carlisle but the best websites I've found so far for good deals are: www.bookdirectrooms.com or www.laterooms.com

Tuesday March 27.

Carlisle to Bowness-on-Solway: 15 miles walking in total from central Carlisle to Bowness-on-Solway. Added to this will be the little extra from our B&Bs to our meeting point back on the route in Carlisle town centre but hopefully this will be minimal. When reaching Bowness-on-Solway there is a regular bus service from there that will take us back to Carlisle. Our final night's accommodation can be back at Carlisle at our B&Bs so book here for these two nights (March 26 and 27).

Wednesday March 28.

Return to Kent: there are frequent trains back to London Euston and Kent from Carlisle. Once again, the earlier you book, the better value it tends to be.

BETTY COOPER

MEMBERS will be saddened to learn about the death of Betty Cooper, a stalwart of Cornwall & Devon Group. Betty died on April 9, having been ill for some time. Many Kent Group members will remember Betty for her sterling work at checkpoints. Older members may remember her husband Peter, who was a prominent early member of the LDWA. Betty's funeral was at Chagford Parish Church on April 15.

TREKKING IN INDIA

IN December Pam Jones, who lives in north-west Kent and is a keen walker, is trying to get together a couple of small groups for an affordable trekking and yoga holiday in Kerala, India. Pam says: "Trekking in that part of India is actually more like technical walking, it's just that they call it trekking. I'm planning a pretty low-key and fun thing really manageable for everyone and for everyone to enjoy."

If anyone is interested in going, please contact Pam.

HORSHAM 100

KENT Group has been contacted by Sophie Sutton, who is helping to organise a 100k charity walk over the South Downs called the Horsham 100, taking place over the weekend of September 17/18. This is the same date as the Surrey Tops, where a few of us will be marshalling. But some Kent Group members not involved in the Surrey Tops may be interested, as the Horsham 100 sounds like a great walk in an excellent area. A website for more information is below. Alternatively, anyone interested is asked to telephone Paul Arkle on 01403 783400.

Sophie writes: I was just contacting you to see if your walking group would be interested in getting involved in our charity walk in September.

I am involved in a project called Horsham 100, you may have heard about us in the West Sussex County Times? Our aim is to raise £100,000 each year for a chosen charity, this year being The Dame Vera Lynn Trust for Children with Cerebral Palsy.

We need your help!

My mission is to get as many people involved as possible to help us reach our target and I was hoping a group of walkers like yourselves would be interested.

The walk is a challenging 100k trek from Arundel to Beachy Head, along the South Downs Way, in a total of 36 hours. It will be tough, but it will be a great challenge for the Long Distance Walkers to get involved in.

We know this is going to be a brilliant event and we would really appreciate it if you could spread the word and see if anyone will donate their time and efforts for such a worthwhile and rewarding cause!

The place to go is www.horsham100.co.uk for all the information you need and how to register. Experienced officials, water and light refreshments and medical back-up will be provided.

HERTS STROLLER

KENT Group members may be interested to know that Essex and Herts Group is putting on the Herts Stroller (50-plus miles) on the weekend of August 11-12 next year. This is part of the Eastern Triple Challenge.

Essex and Herts are also putting on the Stansted Stagger again next year – on Bank Holiday Monday, January 2. The

group has decided to go ahead and run this by committee after Pat and Brenda Ryan retired after 10 years.

COMEDY CORNER by Bill Gillibrand

OSCAR was an unlucky chap. Having just spent megabucks on a skydiving class, he jumped out of the aeroplane and pulled the rip-cord. The parachute emerged, tangled, and he cut if free. He then pulled the cord on the reserve chute, and it was also tangled.

As he looked at the fast approaching ground below him, he was amazed to see a woman coming, rising towards him at an amazing speed.

“Hey, do you know anything about parachutes?” he shouted to her as they passed by.

She replied: “No! Do you know anything about a gas barbecue?”

CRYPTIC CROSSWORD Compiled by Shirley Higgins

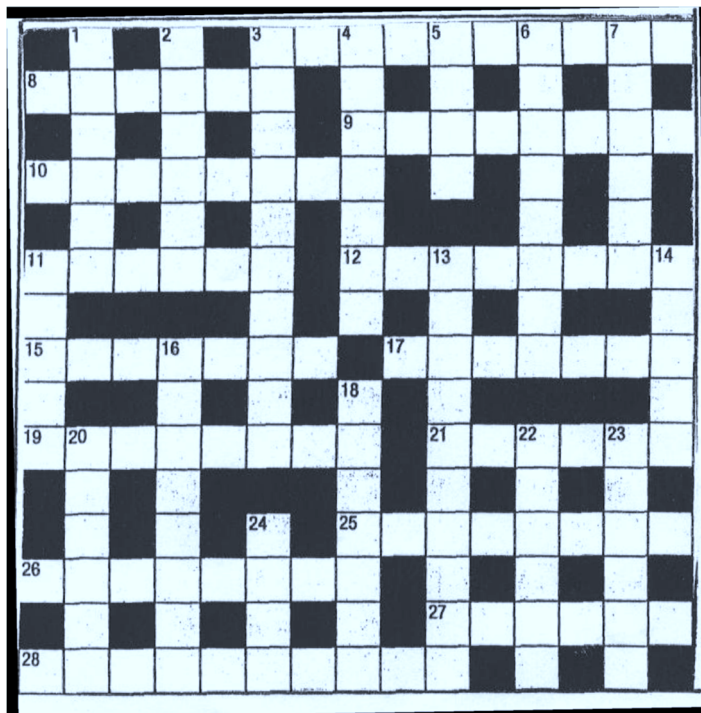
Winner of the April crossword was Keith Warman.

ACROSS

- 3 One who walks and is Peter perhaps (10).
- 8 Sort out a berth if you are out of this (6).
- 9 Odour from sweaty socks? (3, 5).
- 10 Len trips awkwardly, breakaway (8).
- 11 Walking through water, joker conceals a noise (6).
- 12 Trapped, ran back in tangled dense surroundings (8).
- 15 Gunners depot (7).
- 17 Was critical re Desné going astray (7).
- 19 Bring about fifty to the Queen for one who makes arrows (8).
- 21 Reveal former stance (6).
- 25 Unusually love city for speed (8).
- 26 Saint to a part of the West Indies (8).
- 27 Irritate one with a point (6).
- 28 Rank for Sir Robin? (10).

DOWN

- 1 Brandy made from mixed rag and pap (6).
- 2 Container in one roll (6).
- 3 Shot image (10).
- 4 Collect information, out of order, be fired (7).
- 5 Secondary team (4).
- 6 Batters exit in East Kent (8).
- 7 Burning destroyed leaf, about time! (6).
- 11 Landing stage for canary (5).
- 13 Divide ground on the North East coast (10).
- 14 Avoid sidestep (5).
- 16 Submitting unusual green tin (8).
- 18 Boasting support at a function about victory (7).
- 20 The French continue to find a lake (6).
- 22 Steal if you are out of this! (6).
- 23 Make your home in North Yorkshire (6).
- 24 Meal of worms? (4).





Housman Hundred pictures by Shirlie Gill and Nick Dockree



Summer French Challenge on June 11. Pictures by Eric Rolfe