

LONG DISTANCE WALKERS ASSOCIATION – Kent Group

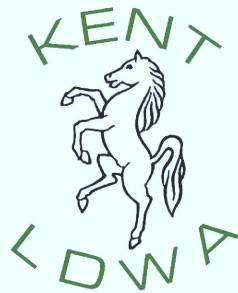
Aim: to further the interests of those who enjoy long distance walking

NEWSLETTER



The White Cliffs Challenge 2011 - Photo by Eric Rolfe

Number 86



December 2011

www.ldwakent.org.uk/



The White Cliffs Challenge 2011 - Photos by Eric Rolfe

KENT GROUP SOCIAL WALKS DEC 2011 to APR 2012

Sun Dec 4 Christmas Lunch

Preceded by a walk of c7ml, starting from London Beach Hotel at Tenterden - our lunch venue - at 10am.

Sat Dec 10 Christmas Cruise around Calais

c14ml. Meet 7.30am by P&O Desk, Dover Eastern Docks for 8.30am sailing. (return 9pm local time - 8pm British time). Ring P&O reservations 08716 646464 for foot passenger day return. Don't forget your passport! Please ring Graham for confirmation of times.
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 LDWA London.
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

Wed Dec 28 Post Xmas Sevenoaks Stroll

15 mls. Meet 9.00am Ightham Mote c.p. nr Ivy Hatch GR TR585536 Map: Exp 147. Lunch stop at Wetherspoons, Sevenoaks.
L: Dave Sheldrake

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.

Fri Jan 6 Coldrum Night Walk

c.17mls. Meet 9.30pm for 10.30pm start at The George PH, Trottscliffe GR TQ641599 Map: Exp 148. L: Dave Sheldrake

Sat Jan 21 The White Cliffs Walk

c 20ml. A linear walk taking in the entire stretch of Dover's White Cliffs. Meet 8.30am at Walmer rlwy stn GR TR364504 Map: Exp 138. Lunch stop in Dover. Finish at Folkestone rlwy stn. L: Graham Smith

Sat Jan 28 Otford to Greenhithe

c21ml. Meet 09.10 at Otford rlwy stn. GR TQ532594. Maps: Exp 147&162. Lunch stop at Darenth. A joint walk with London LDWA. L: Mike Ratcliff

Sun Jan 29 Kent Group AGM

At Lenham Village Hall - preceded by a walk of c.7ml (for more details see item below).

Sat Feb 11 West from Chilham

c21ml. Meet 9.00am at public c.p. in Chilham. GR TR066535 Map: Exp 149. Lunch stop at Badlesmere. L: Mike Ratcliff

Sat Mar 3 The Four Pits Walk

A circular walk taking in the sites of the former Kent pits of Chislet, Betteshanger, Tilmanstone and Snowdown (this is an Anytime Challenge and certificates are available for completions, and badges can be obtained for £2). c40ml. Meet 8.00am by the bridge over the River Stour at Fordwich GR TR179598 Maps: Expl 150 & 138. Various stops en route. Likely to be a late finisher so bring a torch (or more appropriately miner's lamp!). L: Graham Smith

Sat Mar 10 North from Kemsing

c21ml. Meet 9.00am at the public c. p. on the High Street in Kemsing between Church Lane and The Wheatsheaf pub. GR TQ555586 Maps: Exp 147/162. Lunch stop at Eynsford. L: Mike Ratcliff.

Sun Mar 11 Sevenoaks Circular Marshals Walk

For details contact Brian Buttifant.

Sun Mar 25 Sevenoaks Circular Main Event

See Events Diary

Fri Apr 6 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 8 Foreland to Foreland

(South Foreland Lighthouse to North Foreland Lighthouse) c23ml. Meet 8.30am in Kingsgate, at the top of Elmwood Avenue GR TR398701, to arrange cars before driving to start of walk. Maps: Exp 138, 150. Pub stops at Sandwich and Pegwell Bay. L: Graham Smith

Sat Apr 14 Tonbridge to Tunbridge Wells

c22ml. Meet 9.20am at Tonbridge rlwy stn GR TQ587460 Map: Exp 136. Lunch stop at Tatlingbury. Joint walk with LDWA London. L: Mike Ratcliff.

Sun Apr 15 Fullers Follies 2

c20ml. Meet 8.30am Etchingham rlwy stn c.p.(charge c.£1) GR TQ714262 Map: Exp 136. Probable pub stop - food available.
Ls: Neal & Jan O'Rourke.

Sat Apr 21 Cinque Ports Challenge

c100km. Meet 9am at Sandwich rlwy stn GR TR333576. An unsupported walk from Sandwich to Hastings, linking the Cinque Ports and associated towns. Finish at Hastings rlwy stn. Includes night walking - bring warm clothes and torch. Maps: Exp 124, 125 & 138. Several cafes and pubs along the route for refreshments. For more details contact: L: Graham Smith

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 cover and inside front cover taken by Eric Rolfe on this year's White Cliffs Challenge, pictures on the inside back cover by Peter Jull on his walking trip to Holland (see below), back cover pictures by Ingrid Neumann.

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.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

OUR AGM will be at Lenham Village Hall on Sunday January 29 - so please put that date in your diaries. Michael Headley, who led a short walk before this year's AGM, will be doing the same again. The walk will start at 10am, with the meeting itself starting at 2pm, preceded by a free meal. Nomination forms for the committee are contained with this newsletter. So please come along to the AGM and have your say in the running of Kent Group of the LDWA.

NEW MEMBERS

Bryan Burgin, Kemsing; Richard 'Captain Kidd' Frost, Deal; Paul Sims, Swanley; June Wong, Tonbridge.
Welcome to Kent Group Bryan, 'Captain', Paul and June. Let's please give them a warm welcome on walks.

NEWS OF KENT CHALLENGE WALKS

Sevenoaks Circular

Next year's Sevenoaks Circular will be on Sunday March 25, with the marshals' walk two weeks previously, on March 11. It will be based at Sevenoaks Rugby Club, which - as this newsletter was going to press - was due to unveil some new facilities. Distances will be 30 miles, 20 miles and 15 miles, the latter to encourage new walkers to the LDWA and to the event. The event will be based on the route last used in 1991. As always, this is our first big event of the year, and we will need plenty of marshals. Anyone interested should contact Brian Buttifant - details above.

Andredsweald

As the newsletter was going to press, a date for next year's High Weald walk had still to be confirmed, although organiser Neil Higham has provisionally set it for Sunday July 8. The event will - again provisionally - be based at Forest Row, with two distances - 26 miles and 14 miles. Full details will be in the April Strider and the Kent newsletter.

White Cliffs Challenge

With due respect to Jose Mourinho, next year's WCC will be a special one. It will be our contribution to the LDWA's 40th anniversary celebrations, as well as the latest leg of the KSS (Kent Surrey Sussex) Triple Challenge of 50-mile walks. The event will take place over the weekend of September 22-23, the date set aside by the national committee for LDWA 40th anniversary walks. In addition to the 50-mile walk, there will also be a shorter one of 17-20 miles, to encourage new members. The committee has decided to mark next year's WCC by getting some special commemorative mugs, which would be given out free to every entrant. There may also be a special commemorative raffle at the event.

We have a new venue for the WCC next year - Deal and Betteshanger Rugby Club, which is in Deal and not far from Betteshanger Sports and Social Club, which we used when we started organising the event in 2005. Deal and Betteshanger Rugby Club is an excellent venue, with all the facilities we need - a good-sized room for checking in, kitchen, showers, and the bonus of facilities for camping nearby.

The route will be very similar to the tried and tested route used when we started organising the WCC, following the White Cliffs to Capel, then the North Downs Way to Farthing Common, then the Elham Valley Way, and the NDW again before returning to Deal. Peter Jull, a new member from Deal, has done quite a bit of work on a possible new route, which would still take in our White Cliffs, but would take a different direction to Plucks Gutter. We are going to look at this, with a view to incorporating it in a future year.

The whole thing is pretty exciting, particularly as we have a new venue, and we are obviously going to need plenty of marshals (and we have no date yet for the marshals' walk). More details will appear in the April newsletter.

KSS (KENT SURREY SUSSEX) TRIPLE CHALLENGE

AFTER this year's Surrey Tops in September, and as mentioned above, the triple challenge of 50-mile walks returns to Kent next year with our White Cliffs Challenge.

In Kent we have been very pleased with progress and development of the KSS. The Surrey Tops, the Sussex Stride and the White Cliffs Challenge are all excellent - but very different, and highly challenging - walks. It has been very good to work with our friends and neighbours in Surrey and Sussex on the KSS project, particularly as it has seen the re-appearance of the Sussex Stride, which was discontinued in 2005, and is due to be held again in 2013.

As this newsletter went to press, chairman Brian Buttifant and secretary Graham Smith were due to meet with our colleagues from Surrey and Sussex to discuss how the KSS goes forward. More news will appear in the next newsletter.

CHECKPOINTING IS FUN

by Brian Buttifant

YES it is fun and very rewarding, but the success of our challenge events is built on good checkpoints. This success has been built up over many years and must continue, so we are always looking for checkpointers on our three events during the year.

We have many willing helpers who do an excellent job for the group, but newcomers are always welcome. Don't worry if have not done anything like this before. Plenty of members will be on hand to help, so come and try it.

March 25 - Sevenoaks Circular. Contact: Brian Buttifant (details above).

July 8 - High Weald Challenge (Andredswald). Contact: Neil Higham (details above).

September 22/23 - White Cliff Challenge 50. Contact: Graham Smith (details above).

Next year is the annual LDWA Hundred. The Games Hundred, over the first weekend in June, is passing through our county and our group has been allocated a checkpoint at Biggin Hill. Again help will be needed in large numbers.

Please contact Brian Buttifant. See below.

LDWA GAMES HUNDRED

WITH 400 entries for next year's Hundred in the first week, the event was certain to be full by the time this newsletter is printed. A few of us have applied to enter the marshals' walk, on Saturday-Monday May 5-7, and others have applied to enter the event, on Saturday-Monday June 2-4.

Neil Higham, who is on the organising committee, tells us that the route has now been completed, and we have to accept that we will not be able to go through Windsor Great Park at night. Therefore an alternative route, via Runnymede, has been devised.

Lots of marshals are going to be required, and as one of the organising groups, we will be taking care of the checkpoint at Biggin Hill (31.3 miles). Anyone wishing to marshal is asked to contact Brian Buttifant - details above.

As the newsletter was going to press, no decision had been taken on whether a celebrity should start the event - which is also, of course, marking the LDWA's 40th birthday. There has been some discussion on this subject among members of the organising committee, and also among members of our committee. An approach has been made to Hugh Robertson, who is the Government's Sports Minister and also a Kent MP. Sadly, Mr Robertson has declined due to the volume of invitations he is getting connected with the Olympics. There has been talk of TV personality Timmy Mallett starting the event, an idea which has not gone down well with other members of the organising committee or Kent Group committee ("Timmy who?" appears to have been the main comment from members of both committees) so it is hoped this particular idea will be forgotten. National Hundreds coordinator Gail Elrick has suggested getting someone more connected with the LDWA, like Ann Sayer (whose achievements are legendary in LDWA terms) and maybe getting a steel band to add some atmosphere to the start. This is a suggestion likely to find favour with many LDWA members. We have suggested getting TV personality, walker and - of course - president of The Ramblers, Julia Bradbury to start the event. It is hoped a decision can be made soon.

Anyway, the Games 100 is not far off, and whether people are taking part in the event or the marshals' walk, or just marshalling, it promises to be a fantastic occasion. Many are working very hard to make it the success it deserves to be, not least our own Neil Higham.

2013 HUNDRED

CORNWALL and Devon Group are well advanced with their plans for the Camel-Teign Hundred (Ivor's Dream) for the following year. The event will start at Wadebridge in north Cornwall, and Kent Group has already been approached to organise checkpoint seven at Callington (44 miles). Brian Buttifant is in contact with Hazel Bound from Cornwall and Devon Group, which is already asking about who is going to want to take part in the event's marshals' walk. Graham Smith has already put his name forward. The linear route will take in Bodmin Moor and will include a traverse of Dartmoor, so it promises to be a fabulous walk. Further details will appear in subsequent newsletters.

PROPOSAL FOR A CINQUE PORTS HUNDRED

PLANS are progressing for Kent Group to make a bid to the national committee to host a Cinque Ports Hundred in 2016. John Goodwin - a new member from Dover, who is also a town and district councillor - has done a lot of good

work lobbying various influential people in the area. Partly as a result of this, John, Brian Buttifant, Joy Davies and Graham Smith had a very successful meeting with the bursar of the Royal Duke of York's Military School in Dover in September. The school is happy to let us use its facilities as a base for the event, should it go ahead. The school premises are ideal, with acres of space, including an extensive area where people could camp. It has a huge hall for checking-in, a kitchen, another large room for people to get some sleep afterwards, plenty of parking - in fact, everything we could want.

Mike Pursey and Mike Ratcliff have done much work on the route. The plan is that walkers would be bussed from Dover to Hastings (a Cinque Port) where the walk would start, with Hastings Castle earmarked. The route would go to Winchelsea and Rye (both Cinque Ports Ancient Towns), before going out to Tenterden (a Cinque Port Limb), then heading to Lydd (a Limb), New Romney and Hythe (both Cinque Ports), Folkestone (a Limb), Dover (a Cinque Port), Deal (a Limb) and Sandwich (a Cinque Port) before going back to Dover. We don't yet know where the breakfast stop would be. An approach would be made to the Lord Warden of the Cinque Ports, Admiral the Lord Boyce (who actually took part in John Goodwin's Cinque Ports charity walk when it was held, over three days, a few years ago) to start the event.

John Goodwin has been able to get support for the project from various town and district councils, Kent County Council and the VisitKent organisation. We are shortly due to submit our bid to stage the 2016 Hundred to the LDWA's national committee, and the other group submitting a bid is Dorset. National Hundreds coordinator tells us we should know whether our bid has been successful in May. One of the things we will be doing fairly quickly if we do get the nod is putting on the entire route as a series of linear social walks, possibly later next year, so that members can get a feel for the whole project.

Obviously, if our bid is successful, staging a Hundred is a very exciting and massive project. It will require a lot of work and we will need to enlist the services of a lot of members to make it happen successfully.



FOUR PITS WALK

At least 20 people have completed Graham Smith's Four Pits Walk Anytime Challenge this year. The 40-mile walk links the former pits of Chislet, Betteshanger, Snowdown and Tilmanstone and visits some of the former pit villages and places with great significance to the Kent Coalfield. These include the Waiting Miner statue, situated outside Fowlmead Country Park - built on the site of Betteshanger, the last Kent pit to close (in 1989) and which now has a plaque listing the names of all those miners killed while working in the Kent mines.

Certificates are available for walkers completing the route, as are badges, priced at £2. Anyone who fancies tackling the walk is asked to contact Graham (details above) who can either post or e-mail a route description, which contains all the necessary information.

In the meantime, the Four Pits Walk is on our social walks programme for Saturday March 3 - full details above.

The picture above shows walkers on the Four Pits Walk, by the Payday at Snowdown Colliery statue at Aylesham, on April 24 this year.

WALKERS AND RUNNERS

THIS is partly in response to the excellently written and very well argued articles on this subject by Merv Nutburn and Gavin Davis in the last newsletter. Runners on walking events is a regular topic of conversation on walks. I would say it has not become a problem, although I have spoken to some Kent LDWA members who might disagree with me. So first of all, my own feelings. As a serious walker since 1981, when I joined the Ramblers' Association, and an LDWA member since 1995, my view is that by definition we are primarily an organisation for walkers. In my experience - which is certainly not as long as many other members of our group - most people join the LDWA either having previously been (and remaining) members of ramblers' groups, or who have been walking with other groups, or who have been walking by themselves. That is what happened to people like myself, Mike Pursey and Joy Davies. We love walking and were (and are) members of the White Cliffs Ramblers in the south of the county. We found that the trend for White Cliffs Ramblers' walks was going for less mileage, whereas we wanted more miles and more challenging walks. And so we discovered the Long Distance Walkers Association, and I have to say that one of the few regrets of my life is that I didn't discover it earlier. And what a discovery - an organisation which puts on long walks all over the country every weekend, with most groups putting on midweek walks, giving out route descriptions and providing refreshments on challenge walks. Wow, perfect, beyond my wildest dreams! I could hardly believe it. Rambling is, after all, walking, whereas running is something different. Let me say here and now that one of the things I like about the LDWA is that the organisation is a broad church. On our events we have walkers of all ages and abilities, and as Julie Welch has put it so well in her fabulous book *Out On Your Feet - The Hallucinatory World of 100-Mile Walking*, in which other (sort of) athletic event does the person finishing last get more (much more) applause than the person finishing first? I reckon that just about sums us up.

I'm not a runner and never have been, apart from the long distance runs at school (which I always enjoyed). I think it is

good that we have runners on LDWA events. It adds to the mix, and helps make us the broad church mentioned above. One of the most reliable checkpoints in Kent Group is Merv Nutburn, who is primarily a runner. In fact Merv is so keen and so reliable that he has already put forward the services of himself and his wife Fiona to marshal on next year's White Cliffs Challenge - although the event is on Fiona's birthday. Now that's commitment to the LDWA and to Kent Group, and without wishing to embarrass Merv and Fiona more than I have already, it's typical of them. So I am certainly not anti-runner. I have heard lots of criticism of runners on LDWA walks. I have heard plenty of people claiming runners rarely offer to checkpoint (and I have mentioned one person above who is a big exception), that runners often leave a trail of litter behind them (evidence of which I have never seen), and that runners are in such a rush that they often don't read the route description properly (and I have seen plenty of evidence of this - although let's all hold our hands up here and admit that just about all of us very often don't read route descriptions properly, particularly when we get chatting on events, as we all tend to do). Runners add to the mix, and it's good to have their company - albeit for short periods of time as they are passing me! - on events.

And on a purely practical level, Kent LDWA events need the entrance money from runners. Runners boost our numbers and our coffers. The White Cliffs Challenge, with which I have been involved in organising since we started the event in 2005, would have operated at a loss in some years if we didn't have runners. This is one of the reasons I deliberately try to target running groups in South Kent when the WCC is promoted. So there is certainly no problem with runners on Kent LDWA challenge walks, and I don't think there ever will be.

But there has been a problem on some events organised by Surrey Group. I didn't take part in this year's Winter Tanners, but I am told there was a very high proportion of runners on it. Matters seemed to come to a head on this year's Punchbowl Marathon - always an excellent event, over a very good route - which was full up weeks in advance, with more than 50 per cent of the entrants being runners. Now for a walking organisation, that cannot be right, and it isn't right. OK, there were probably a few walkers, like me, who missed out because they didn't get their applications in in time. That's a lesson, but it still doesn't make it acceptable. If a lot of walkers - LDWA members with lots of experience - can't enter a challenge walk because more than 50 per cent of places have been taken up by runners, then it is clearly wrong. If something like that happened on, for example, our Sevenoaks Circular, then Kent Group members can be assured that your committee would try to do something about it.

To be fair, members of Surrey Group are aware that there was a big discrepancy on this year's Punchbowl Marathon, and have taken some action, by saying that only LDWA members can apply to enter next year's event before the end of December, after which it will be thrown open to all comers. Now, as our chairman Brian Buttifant has pointed out to me, that may not solve the problem, because all runners have to do is join the LDWA. But it is an acknowledgement there has been a problem, and an attempt to do something about it. It also lowers the chance of walkers too slow to apply for the event being able to blame runners for taking their places.

Now it is a fact that the cost of entering LDWA events is much cheaper than the cost of entering running events. But if the cost of entering running events is pitched four, five, six or more times higher than our events, that is an issue for the runners entering them. And if they are getting far less substantial fare at checkpoints than we offer on LDWA events, then - again - that is an issue for them. We try to pitch the cost of entering walking events low enough to encourage as many people as possible, and if that means that we are encouraging more runners, then that is just a consequence. It only becomes an issue when you have situations like that on the Punchbowl mentioned above.

I can't see there ever being a move to make us the Long Distance Walkers and Runners Association. If there ever was, it would be fiercely resisted. I would imagine a fair few of us in Kent would leave if that ever happened. I probably would. But, in all reality, I think there's more chance of me completing next year's Hundred in a quicker time than Mike Ratcliff than there is of the LDWA becoming the LDWRA!

And at the other end of the argument, there is certainly no move to ban walkers from LDWA events. This would be impractical, totally unfair to lots of our members, and the sort of dictatorial, dogmatic approach we try to avoid. So to sum up, my view is that the LDWA is an organisation for walkers, with runners taking part in our events, as opposed to an organisation for walkers and runners. As I say, there is no problem at all with runners and walkers taking part in the same events in Kent. But it has been a concern in some other areas. If members feel this is an issue which should be addressed at national LDWA level, then please raise it with one of your committee members, and we will ensure your voice is heard.

In the meantime, the newsletter editor welcomes the views of anyone wishing to have their say in this debate.
Graham Smith

GOING DUTCH

by Peter Jull

HOLLAND isn't really all flat. I know, having made two recent trips there. But the customs man that pulled me over when driving back through Dover clearly thought it was from the disbelieving look he gave me when I told him I had been hill walking there. Perhaps he was persuaded when I said I been to the highest point in Holland and it was downhill from Belgium.

The first trip wasn't really to Holland but I went there several times because my starting point was where the borders of Germany, Belgium and Holland meet and is marked by a post round which you can walk passing through Holland in two steps and returning in three more. One path led right along the Belgo-German border so that steps were

alternately in Belgium Germany Belgium Germany. A minor novelty today but bird hides, which I originally mistook for watchtowers from an earlier less friendly era, did bring to mind what it would be like in such times to have a border that is just a line in the woods rather than the one at least 21 miles wide we are used to.

I am not convinced by the obsession many seem to have with the attractions of our northern hills when in less than the time it takes to drive to Scotland, or even the North of England from our little corner you can be in the Alps or many other equally attractive places to the south. My first venture was to the Ardennes as the nearest highest point but as a plateau the low points are more actually interesting than the high points with walking in and around the river valleys. For me watching cricket takes precedence over walking and the timing of that trip was dictated by the lack of cricket in England while the second was prompted a cricket match actually in Rotterdam hence the choice of Veluwe National Park being the nearest promising walking country.

Veluwe has hills more than 100m high left by glaciers of the last ice age that dumped their load any old where so none of the neatly aligned valleys and ridges we are used to in the Downs. The soil is sand, not sandy, pure sand extending over many hectares in places, Sahara like. Most of the area though is forested or more open heathland. Paths were mostly hard packed but in places as soft as Broadstairs beach and as exerting to walk on.

The Ardennes are geologically rocky so paths gravely and routes promoted by the local tourist office well signed on the omnipresent trees, the area being heavily forested. They wouldn't qualify as a long distance walk but can be combined to make a good day's walking. Nearly all walking I found was on clear paths, forest tracks and roads and in Holland cycle tracks paved smooth in various materials. No wading through saggy soggy rape crops, no struggling to discern exactly which direction the route of a path takes across a newly ploughed field, no footpaths churned to squelch by bikers and horse riders or overflowing cesspits as in Goudhurst..

Walking in woods seems to be unpopular with some walkers but not me. In our part of the world they rarely last for long and provide some respite from the sun, wind or rain depending on the weather. Yes the trees can spoil a panoramic view but a woodland path has a picturesqueness of equal merit. German straight lines that stretch between the trees for miles have a fascination of their own. The only problem I have with woods is navigation; you can't see the trees for - well, the trees. When the paths are laid out in a grid pattern with some masquerading as so significant to justify their own line on the map but which the cartographer has ignored and others he has favoured but are now so camouflaged they can't be seen, add to the challenge of monitoring progress across the map.

I have a rule of thumb that is, literally, that on a 1:25000 map the distance of the end joint of my thumb takes about 10 minutes to walk. That helps. But it is only an estimate and on firm level ground, when I am fresh, it takes less and uphill and, at the end of the day, longer. On one occasion, having overshot a turn and the next seeming to match the map and my thumb, but leading off at a slightly different angle, no concern arose until after the next turn which was a path that petered out after half a mile, with nothing to see but trees. Perhaps I am one of only a few walkers who can exaggerate that they have been so lost that they were in a completely different country to the one they thought they were in. It's just safer to do it on the Belgo-German border than the Iran-Iraq one.

On both trips I looked for organised walks that coincided with my visit but on both occasions the bigger events were nearer home than hotel and an evening walk near the second hotel was cancelled because the waymarks had been stolen but would undoubtedly have been anyway because of the atrocious weather. They were very hard to find and if the LDWA website could provide links to similar organisations abroad I for one would welcome it. Having to rely on foreign maps does make one appreciate the quality of our Ordnance Survey ones being cheaper, bigger and far more resilient.

I have a predilection for finding a holiday location where no Englishman has been before, or at least the days I am there, and succeeded with Kelmis in Belgium and Dieren in Holland, near Aachen and Arnhem respectively. I only scratched the surface of the Ardennes and Veluwe but of what I saw La Roche en Ardenne and Hoederloo in Veluwe offered the most interesting walking start points. Does anyone have their own tips for a short break across the Channel i.e. too far for a day trip but not so far to rule out a walk on the days of travel and return?

For pictures of Peter's walking trip to Holland, see the inside back cover.

SURREY TOPS MARSHALS' WALK by Graham Smith

SOME people aren't too keen on marshals' walks - they say they don't have the atmosphere of actual events, it's too easy to find yourself walking alone and hence increase the risk of navigational problems, and that there are fewer checkpoints. Others love them - they say that because there are far fewer people, the atmosphere can more intimate, and that fewer checkpoints and the risk of a route description which may still need some work on it, can actually make the walk more of a challenge.

I certainly subscribe to the latter view. I have always enjoyed challenge walks, walking with lots of people from other groups and catching up on the news from other areas, but marshals'





walks I have been on have a distinct atmosphere of their own. The Surrey Tops marshals' walk - held on Saturday and Sunday August 27/28, was one of the most satisfying and enjoyable walks I have done this year. Two of us from Kent Group - Merv Nutburn and myself - lined up near the church at Witley with seven people from Surrey group - Tony Cartwright, Mary D (I don't know what the D stands for but I'm told that's how Mary prefers to be known), Janet Chapman, Elton Ellis, Elaine Edwards, Les Hereward and Peter Rice - and Nick Ford from the Irregulars (Nick lives in York, and because of the shift he works, he could not enter the event, so he was allowed to enter the marshals' walk).

The Surrey Tops is, of course, part of the Triple Challenge of 50-mile walks, the others being our own White Cliffs Challenge

and the Sussex Stride. They are all very fine walks - very different, of course, but all showing the best aspects of their particular counties. Of the three, my personal favourite is the Sussex Stride, and that's because I'm addicted to the South Downs. But I know a few Kent Group members who feel the Surrey Tops is the best of the three.

Anyway, I had better not digress about the Sussex Stride (a subject which, when I start, it's hard to get me off - all I will add is that for the past three years I have done the event solo, starting at between 3am-4am each time, so that shows just what I feel about it).

When we lined up for the ST, it was certainly hot, but fortunately not too hot. We had a slight breeze, which made conditions pretty comfortable. The first few miles follow fine paths and tracks to Gibbet Hill, one of the best viewpoints on the walk. After the trig point (which I touched, as I touch just about every trig point I walk past - one of my little idiosyncrasies), we then followed along the rim of the Devil's Punchbowl on a route very familiar to Kent Group members who have done the excellent Punchbowl Marathon. And it was here I had a little problem. I was wearing shorts, and the backs of my legs began to feel wet. I was a bit puzzled, so I stopped, opened my rucksack and found one of the three cans of Red Bull I had packed (for energy and stomach settling in case of nausea) was leaking from a dent. I got the can out, proceeded to drink it, and put tissues into the bottom of the rucksack to mop up the mess. That meant I had fallen a bit behind the others, and when I walked on, no one was in sight. So I worked out where I was and soon found Tony waiting for me.

The next highlight is Kettlebury Hill, another fine viewpoint, followed by a long, straightforward stretch over fairly high ground all the way to Elstead Common, and the first checkpoint. Shortly after that the route joins the North Downs Way, which it follows for 13 miles, and very pleasant it is too - good paths and tracks and well signposted, as you would expect on a National Trail. On part of this stretch is CP2 and the highlight of the walk - in fact, for me, the best Surrey hill of the lot - St Martha's Hill. St Martha's, with its church on the summit, is a wonderful viewpoint. I can never understand why the Founders' Challenge doesn't actually go over the summit of St Martha's. In fact my only criticism of the Founders' Challenge is that the route misses the summit and skirts it instead. I like the hill so much that for the last few years, when taking part in the event, I have thrown in my own diversion and taken in the top (this diversion is about half a mile but it's certainly worth it).

By now Tony, Janet, Nick, Mary and myself were walking together, Merv was running so he was way ahead, and the others were behind. After a nice stop at the St Martha's car park, we kept on the NDW. The stretch immediately after Newlands Corner was, if I'm honest, a little tedious - mainly being long stretches through woodland. But it was straightforward, so we could make good, quick progress. About four miles after Newlands Corner, we left the NDW, and headed for Abinger Common, and the Greensand ridge beyond. We reached Holmbury Hill (34 miles) just as it was about to get dark, and had a stop there. It was a clear night and the views from the summit were pretty good - we could see the lights of Surrey for miles around. After Holmbury we had Pitch Hill, and shortly after that we had a descent to Jelley's Hollow. It was dark, and we were going down a gully, with lots of roots and rocks beneath our feet, so we had to be careful, but it was nothing like as bad as Janet had said it would be.

The next objective was the last checkpoint - Smithbrook Kilns car park, at 42.5 miles. Here Jackie Barker and Ted Swift met us with a delightful mini spread, which fortified us suitably for the last few miles. The next ascent was Nore Hanger, followed by Hascombe Hill, and then the last climb - Hydon's Ball. The last few miles involved a fair number of woodland tracks, which in the dark I did find a little boring. But by then, nearing the end of a 50-mile walk, I wasn't that worried about the terrain or the scenery, and it was pretty easy going.

We five got back to Witley at 2.30am, and Mary kindly made us some hot drinks. It has been a great walk, and my sincere thanks go to Tony Cartwright and his team in Surrey Group for planning the route. We later learned that everyone had finished the walk, and particular congratulations go to Elaine Edwards, who is 82.

A STROLL INTO TOWN

by Mike Ratcliff

OCTOBER 15 saw Kent Group team up with London Group for a walk that began near the Kent borders and ended in the very centre of the capital. Twenty of us started our walk from Abbey Wood Station just after nine o'clock and soon

joined up with the Green Chain Walk travelling north to the Thames through Thamesmead Estate. Meeting the river opposite Barking Reach there was a new sense of open space that allowed the warming morning sun brighten the scene. Looking west we could already see upstream into the city and much of the urban terrain that would characterise our route over the following hours. The Isle of Dogs was particularly distinctive with the towers of Canary Wharf and 'The Gherkin' rising high above the river with 'The Shard' taking shape nearby.

Walking along the south bank of the Thames we passed the impressive guns at Woolwich Arsenal then soon through Charlton to reach the Thames Barrier where we took a lovely morning breather at the waterside. We continued and shortly began our traverse of the Greenwich Peninsular which was unfortunately a



contrived shortcut as the usual riverside route round to Greenwich itself via the O2 Arena was off limits that day due to the seemingly endless building work taking place in this region of London in preparation for next year's Olympic Games. Reaching central Greenwich was lovely though with the recently returned Cutty Sark greeting us soon after passing the fantastic architecture of the Old Royal Naval College.

After an hour and more of good food, drink and a well earned rest we continued our journey deeper into London, firstly by crossing the river to the north bank. Sadly the Greenwich foot tunnel was also subject to a great deal of renovation work though it still provided convenient and swift access under the river to the start of our walk along the north bank through Docklands. It was a fabulously crisp, sunny day by now and much of the metal and glass that dominated the skyline around us was gleaming in the low autumn sun. The last few miles of our walk saw us make our way round the Isle of Dogs and Wapping, walking past The Prospect of Whitby, reputedly the oldest pub in London. Passing through a narrow alleyway that led us back down to the river, we turned sharply to be greeted suddenly by the awesome sight of Tower Bridge with HMS Belfast in the background. Continuing along the north bank into the old city of London, we found ourselves walking through the throngs of tourists that you will always find around The Tower of London and St Pauls area. Crossing the river once again using the Millennium Footbridge over to the Tate Modern, the crowds became all the more heavy along the South Bank.

We then passed the National Theatre and the Royal Festival Hall, finally to approach the London Eye opposite Westminster where we crossed the river for the final time to reach Embankment Station and Charing Cross just a stone's throw away and the finish of a lovely day's walk with coffee in Trafalgar Square.

OPEN GOLF 19

by Graham Smith

WALKS led by Richard Frost are usually quite unlike other social walks in Kent Group and this one - although on a very similar route to Captain Kidd's Treasure Trek, which he led a year ago - was very enjoyable, and had the leader's very distinctive mark.

The personal style of Richard's walks does not go down well with all walking groups. It is sad to report that the White Cliffs Ramblers have asked Richard not to lead any more walks for them, because of some alleged nonsense about him turning up for a walk he was due to lead and then disappearing. Although I'm a founder member of the White Cliffs Ramblers, I must say that in the LDWA we are made of sturdier stuff, and if ever we turned up for a walk and the leader disappeared shortly afterwards, what would we do? Get our maps out and go for the walk, of course! No leader? No problem - just get out the map, have a quick look and off we go.

And if Richard may not be flavour of the month with the White Cliffs Ramblers, his LDWA walks are getting more popular. Four of us turned up for last year's Treasure Trek, whereas there were 10 of us meeting at Deal's Sandown Castle on October 9 for Open Golf 19. And we had a very good day.

First the name. Open Golf was a reference to the Open Golf championship held at the Royal St George's course at Sandwich in July, over which hallowed ground we walked. But the significance of 19? Easy - the distance was 19 miles. That's right, Richard ... isn't it?

In early morning drizzle, we followed the Saxon Shore Way until the turn-off, across the Royal St George's course, for Sandwich. Then, with the rain stopping and the skies clearing, we went through the ancient Cinque Port town, past Richborough Roman Fort on the Stour Valley Walk, before turning left. By now the sun was out and it was getting pretty warm. I was beginning to wish I had done what Mike Pursey and Mike Ratcliff had done and put shorts on. At around this time, Richard decided to hand out the photocopies of route maps he had prepared, with the route marked in blue felt tip pen. Why didn't he do this at the start? Well, which other leaders hand out route maps on their walks anyway? And the gesture was much appreciated.

We followed some good paths to Ash, where those of us who had sandwiches consumed them on the village recreation ground. The others - and most of those who had sandwiches - went into the excellent Chequers Inn. Richard had not set a time limit for the lunch stop, and when those of us who had visited the pub emerged, there was no leader. We

waited for a couple of minutes, and were just about to go to the recreation ground to find him (and, Richard, I didn't think you had disappeared - honestly) when he turned up.

There were then some more fairly good paths which took us close to Ringleton Manor, but the path seemed to end on the left side of a ditch, and Richard confessed he didn't know where the path was. But there was no problem. We just pressed on in the general direction of where Richard said we should be going, and a reasonable path materialised. Shortly before we got to Eastry, Richard said he would be democratic and take a vote on returning to Deal via Worth or Fowlmead. There was one vote for Worth and two for Fowlmead, including one from Peter Jull, who plumped for that option because it was closer to his home in Deal.

So Fowlmead it was, but after we had had an interesting stop in Eastry churchyard. There we met a very nice lady from New York called Laura. We told her we were walking 19 miles and although she probably felt we were all a bit bonkers, Michael Headley and Mike Ratcliff nevertheless tried to sign her up for the LDWA, giving her our website address. Now a New York branch of the LDWA - that would be something. The idea of a New York State Hundred certainly has potential.

After this Peter Jull, who knows the area, more or less took over as leader, as Richard fell further behind (deliberately, I'm sure). We followed paths to Finglesham and Betteshanger, and then took a road to the A258 and the entrance to Fowlmead Country Park, built on the site of Betteshanger, the last of the four Kent coal mines to close, in 1989. We had a good look at the Waiting Miner statue, which had been moved to the outside of Fowlmead last year having previously been sited near the former National Coal Board and National Union of Mineworker offices on Dover seafront, and which now has a plaque on it, listing the names of everyone killed in accidents in the Kent Coalfield.

After this I, more or less, took over as leader, as I know the route through the country park, which had been used as the venue for our White Cliffs Challenge in 2009 and 2010. After Fowlmead, Peter went straight home, as he lives near the country park, and most of the others followed me back to Deal. The only people who didn't were Richard and Juliet Casciano, a friend of Richard, a very strong walker and a real character who made us all laugh for just about the entire walk. Where Richard and Juliet got to I just don't know, but Sandown Castle is close to where Richard lives, so they couldn't have been far behind.

Many thanks for a very good day, Captain. The ramblers may not be too keen on your walks but we certainly are.

DIARY OF A COMMON MAN - THE HOUSMAN HUNDRED: May 28-30 by Keith Warman

THE promise of this year's Hundred being held in one of my favourite parts of the country was enticing. The Housman Hundred was based at Moor Park School, a rather up-bracket affair just south of Ludlow. The usual anticipation was experienced before the start, where many of the 'usual suspects' had gathered for this annual ritual. The LDWA's Hundred has a temptation - for participants, marshals and supporters - which I cannot explain but I expect some learned psychologist would have a theory or seven.

The route was a clockwise traverse through the lush, fertile and wooded country of north Herefordshire, followed by 15 miles of the Offa's Dyke Path in the Radnorshire borderlands. We then slipped unobtrusively back into England for the final 65 miles in remote Shropshire, which included a further impressive stretch of the Offa's Dyke Path, followed by the dramatic scenery of the Stiperstones ridge and The Long Mynd to test our mettle. The organisers had declared the total ascent and descent to be around 16,200 feet - which was much more than last year in Scotland - and this caused much repartee before, during and after the event, on the relentless 'undulating' nature of the route.

The weather forecast was almost perfect for the Saturday - sunny periods with a light breeze. The night was expected to be windy and cold and a band of rain was due to pass through during Sunday. Those towards the rear of the field had the promise of heavier rain on Monday morning to look forward to.

Taking the marshals' and main events together, there were 19 starters from Kent Group members and 12 finishers (1 marshals' and 11 main) managed to stay the course and finish successfully. Commiserations are due to those who had to retire and congratulations to all who finished, especially Martin Brice on his first completion.

At the start . . . We had to drift across from the school to the edge of the forest on Overton Common, which was about half a mile away (and uphill - there's a surprise). Ten o'clock soon arrived and we were off. By habit, I let the field go ahead of me up the narrow forest path and, ten minutes later, I bade farewell to Shirlie and set off alone at the back of the pack.

2 miles . . . A gentle ascent up dry paths and tracks of the Mortimer Trail (which we were to follow for about 25 miles) to High Vinnalls, with its fire lookout tower and splendid views. Caught up the back-markers here.

5 miles . . . In the remote high country of the wooded Orleton Common, chanced upon good chums: Len Fallick, Mark and Jo Bertoni, Matthew Clarke, Mike Pinner and yes, the Hundred wouldn't be the same without the Bustling Brummie himself, Tony Francis. It's worth doing the Hundred for times like this as the banter was first-rate, heightened by the fact that it was Matthew's birthday. The verdant fields and hedgerows below us were like a patchwork quilt - this was tranquil England at its best.

7 miles . . . Across the beautiful open grassland of Bircher Common, tended by wild horses. Those I saw didn't seem too angry. Through copses to reach Croft Ambrey hill fort, giving stunning views of our route ahead over the next line of wooded hills.

9 miles . . . Arrived at checkpoint 1 at 1:00 pm, in an open-sided barn high above Aymestrey. Beds, Bucks &

Northants Group was in charge here and a sign proclaimed “The best checkpoint so far”! I was surprised to see many people tending their feet at this early stage. I left with Len Fallick for 12 more miles of ups and downs (1,900 feet) to Titley.

13 miles . . . More woodland paths and glades in the Lugg valley led us to a drinks point at Covenhope. The sun was warm and the extra fluid was welcome. We then strolled along the ridge crest of Shobdon Hill and on to the first self-clip point by a hill fort on the summit of Wapley Hill.

20 miles . . . The first anorak moment on the route as we passed between the stone ramparts of the railway bridge which once carried the Presteigne branch line from Titley Junction. It closed in 1951, which was before Dr. Beeching wielded his axe. We then enjoyed thick grassy fields for a further mile to reach the delightful village of Titley and checkpoint 2 (run by Wiltshire and Bristol & West Groups) in the Village Hall. It was 5:30 pm. Len pushed on as I needed to tarry awhile.

25 miles . . . Alone through sheep pastures on the gradual ascent of Rushock Hill, where I joined the Offa’s Dyke Path. This would be followed (leaving it to visit checkpoints only) for the next 25 miles. I soon found Len on the wonderful path descending Herrock Hill and, with green hills encircling us, we entered Wales at Lower Harpton.

28 miles . . . Met a smiling Shirlie just before checkpoint 3 (Vermuyden Group) at Evenjobb Village Hall. After a short rest, we prepared for the night section as it would be dark before we reached checkpoint 4 in the fleshpots of Knighton. Left at 8:30 pm.

30 miles . . . With sheep, the remains of Offa’s Dyke and more sheep for company, Len and I plodded onwards and upwards, passing a roving marshal splendidly ensconced in a deeply- upholstered armchair in a horsebox, to drop and cross the Lugg valley again.

32 miles . . . The wind was starting to pick up as we topped Hawthorn Hill in the sepulchral gloaming, but the sky was clear and stars beckoned us on. With torches behind and in front, our little procession weaved its way across darkened pastures. I was looking forward to seeing Essex & Herts Group friends, who were running the next checkpoint.

36 miles . . . Following a knee-jarring descent through trees, we landed in Knighton to be greeted with, goodness me, street lights! We were made very welcome at the Community Centre and, suitably refreshed, set off together around 12:30 am. The town was silent save for a raucous party in a public house.

37 miles . . . Past the Offa’s Dyke Centre, down to the River Teme and a sign welcoming us to England. We then crossed the single track of the beautiful Central Wales railway line, which runs from Craven Arms to Llanelli.

38 miles . . . Loins needed to be girded as we now had the enormous bulk of Panponton Hill ahead of us. This rollercoaster section of the Offa’s Dyke Path has its fair share of stiff climbs, about 1,800 feet of them to the next checkpoint at Newcastle.

40 miles . . . Under inky-black skies, we caught up Alan Stewart and Kevin Puttock on Cwm-sanaham Hill. The route description claimed, “A fine panoramic view” from here, but not at this time of the night! Battling against the incessantly roaring wind, we had to shout to make ourselves heard.

42 miles . . . A lonely high-level traverse of Llanfair Hill and I was struggling to keep awake. As we descended into the Clun valley along a narrow lane, we felt entombed between the imposing high hedges.

44 miles . . . Arrived at checkpoint 5 in Newcastle (not upon-Tyne or under-Lyme but on-Clun) to be greeted by Kent Group at 4:30 am. I told Len I needed a short sleep here so I sent him on. Little did I know that I wouldn’t see him again until at the finish over 30 hours later!

46 miles . . . Having had the benefit of 38½ winks, I left in early light to face the two steepest climbs on the route, both on Graig Hill, to reach self-clipper number 2. It was a very lonely morning, with just birdsong and wind searing the silence. I strolled through hill and vale, joined the Shropshire Way and then left the Offa’s Dyke Path for the final time to head for the hamlet of Mainstone.

49 miles . . . London Group welcomed me into checkpoint 6 in Mainstone Community Hall at 7:15 am and I knew that the worst of the borderland hills was conquered. Just the Stiperstones and The Long Mynd to come...

52 miles . . . Over halfway now and still no sign of Len ahead as I made my way through yet more pastureland and an arable field near Reilth Top to arrive in the lovely town of Bishop’s Castle. It was still early, so human activity was limited to the occasional dog-walker and collecting the Sunday papers.

56 miles . . . I was so pleased to meet Shirlie again, on the outskirts of Lydham, and we walked together to the breakfast checkpoint in the Village Hall. It was 10:00 am. I met Bill Warbrick (with whom I would eventually finish) leaving as I arrived. With freshly-laundered feet, clean clothes and plentiful food and drink, I left at 11:00 am to attack Linley Hill under threatening skies on the longest leg, 10.70 miles.

58 miles . . . The wind speed had increased as I struggled along the ridge of Linley Hill through a magnificent avenue of mighty beech trees to reach self-clipper number 3. Then it began to rain.

60 miles . . . After another steep drop and ascent, I reached the end of the Stiperstones ridge at The Rock outcrop, where the rain was driving in from the west at an acute angle. Shirlie met me where I crossed a minor road by The Bog (a hamlet not a public loo!) and she gave me welcome encouragement. It was hard keeping the wind and rain out of my face but I was warm, dry and happy.

63 miles . . . “Glorious views into Wales” I read on the route description, but not for me, although the grey rain was abating as I reached the lonely farm at Blakemoorgate. From here, it was a long gentle descent back into civilisation at

Habberley.

66 miles . . . Staffordshire Group was in charge of checkpoint 8 in the Village Hall and two of its famed oatcakes slid down the hatch. If you are ever offered these hot cheese pasties, decline at your misfortune! 3:30 pm. I turned south here to head Ludlow-wards.

69 miles . . . Successive undulations of Huglith, Westcott, Cothercott and Betchcott Hills led me to meet Shirlie again at another isolated road crossing. Self-clipper number 4 was found and I was on my way down the delightful valley of the Darnford Brook in, oh yes, afternoon sunshine.

73 miles . . . On the approach to Bridges, checkpoint number 9, I found a walker in a state of distress. He insisted he was fine, but I alerted the marshals and they went to his aid. I hoped he was all right but I doubted if he would be able to continue. As Betty Lewis once said, "There is a lot of luck in this game", and I counted my good fortune. 6:15 pm.

75 miles . . . In perfect conditions, I began the long ascent to Pole Bank. At 1,693 feet it is the highest point on both The Long Mynd and this route. Felt good.

76 miles . . . Reached the outdoors drinks point at Pole Cottage (not a building in sight!) at 8:00 pm. A lonely vigil for the lone marshal. From here, it was an easy grassy stroll along the top, passing the gliding club. The views in the early evening light were inspiring as the path gradually dropped off The Long Mynd.

81 miles . . . I stopped to torch-up by the well-preserved Plowden old railway station, which was on the quirky Bishop's Castle railway line. Sadly, it closed way back in 1935. Just after my train moment, I stumbled upon Bill Warbrick, resting by the wayside and claiming to be waiting for me.

83 miles . . . We arrived at checkpoint 10 in Edgton Village Hall, run by Cornwall & Devon Group. 11:15 pm. Shirlie was there too and, as always, we were well looked after.

85 miles . . . Along the edge of Hopesay Common in swirling mist, which made it difficult to find the stile we needed to Sibdon Carwood park. Bill started asking odd questions like, "Why are we going down this footpath, Keith?" A few more comments like this and I soon realised that he was away with the fairies in a parallel universe, bless him. He continued to talk gibberish until the finish. He kept asking what we were doing, why are we going up here, where do we get our tallies clipped, etc. He would gladly accept my answer, then promptly repeat the same question again. I should explain here that I have Bill's permission to tell it like it was, because he wants to know what happened that night too!

90 miles . . . Stumbled through the hamlet of Aldon and Bill was slowing down even more. On the next footpath and overcome by sleep, he fell into a hedge and ditch. "Get me out", he pleaded and, after much kerfuffle, I eventually did. He then wanted to know why we couldn't go down the road to the checkpoint. I said, "We don't want to be disqualified, do we Bill?" "Certainly not", came his prompt reply. At every change of direction he asked, "Is this where we get our tallies clipped?"

92 miles . . . We reached the isolated tented checkpoint 11 at Whittytree Farm at 3:45 am and Shirlie was there, worried about our progress. We had slowed down but our resolve was undiminished. Marshals looked on with raised eyebrows when Bill kept asking me, "But Keith, who decided to put Whittytree Farm here?" I was concerned about our pace and Shirlie arranged for a roving sweeper (Keith Bailey from Staffordshire) to join us to the finish. We set off in first light, but the rain clouds were blowing in fast.

94 miles . . . An easy low-level section and then the heavens opened. However, the torrential rain didn't dampen Bill's never-ending stream of whacky comments and questions. Found self-clipper number 5 tied to a slippery stile. Bill asked, "Do we get our tallies cut off in assembly?" After some time I realised he was referring to the finish in the assembly hall at the school!

96 miles . . . Our dishevelled threesome reached the final checkpoint in the old school at Bromfield at 6:00 am. Bill and I had a short nap here and then we were soon ready to bid Shirlie farewell and begin the final stagger to the finish.

98 miles . . . Straightforward navigation led us to Dinham Bridge over the River Teme at Ludlow, nestling below the castle ramparts. From here, the sting in the tail was a viciously viscous climb of 600 feet up and over Mary Knoll Hill, initially a narrow uneven path, and then a forest ride. An ankle-twisting descent into the adjacent Mary Knoll valley was followed by a more friendly descending track to the road by the entrance to Moor Park School. Nearly there.

101 miles . . . Awash with great relief and just 40 minutes to spare, Shirlie greeted us at the finish in teeming rain outside the assembly hall, where Bill could finally 'have his tally cut off' which he'd been hankering after since Whittytree Farm! We congratulated each other and then enjoyed good food, drink and the company of other walkers and marshals. Twenty drenched people finished behind us, each to great applause and delight.

I would like to thank the organising committee for the hard work, together with all the marshals who gave up their time for us. It was an excellent Hundred through Those Blue Remembered Hills in this Land of Lost Content (A. E. Housman) and a joyous and wonderful experience. I hope to be able to take part in these capers for a long time yet to come.

I'M NOT A BURGLAR - I'M A WALKER

KENT Group members may be interested in the experiences of Richard Frost, after an off-duty policeman spotted him innocently putting a wheelie bin back into someone's garden. The story is reproduced with permission of the East Kent Mercury.

A MAN was arrested and locked up in a cell for 18 hours after he moved a wheelie bin off the pavement. Richard Frost says he was spotted by an off-duty police officer moving the wheelie bin back into the garden of the house, in St Andrew's Road, Deal, at 9pm on a Tuesday evening. He had been walking to his home at The Marina, Deal, after visiting the town's Sainsbury's store.

Mr Frost, a 56-year-old self-employed gardener, told the Mercury: "The house was empty and the wheelie bin had been blocking the pavement. The officer must have thought I was casing the joint.

"He phoned for back-up, and within four minutes two squad cars had arrived. My Sainsbury's shopping bags were then searched by five police officers."

The officers searched the rucksack Mr Frost was carrying, and found it contained a screwdriver, a pair of secateurs, a pair of gloves and a head torch.

Mr Frost uses the screwdriver, secateurs and gloves for his gardening. He is a keen Rambler, and uses the head torch for night walks.

He said: "The police thought the stuff was suspicious. I was taken to Dover Police Station, my rucksack was taken away and I was kept in the cell for 18 hours. My belt and shoes were taken away, I was photographed and fingerprinted, and my home was searched."

In the morning, after more questions, Mr Frost was released. His rucksack was returned but not its contents.

But Mr Frost, who had never been arrested before, is not making a complaint. He said: "I like the police, they have a job to do. But I would like my property back."

He added: "Is it possible I now enter the record books as the first person in Deal to be arrested in connection with interfering with one of our new black wheelie bins?"

The police say the contents of Mr Frost's rucksack will be returned.

South Kent police spokeswoman Jane Walker said: "In our work to reduce crime, officers have to be vigilant - particularly when it is dark, a time when some criminals like to operate - and we ask the public to do the same.

"There were suspicions about this man, due to the contents of his rucksack and the time of night, and he was arrested. After detectives had spoken with the man they were happy that he is a gardener and out walking at night. He was released from custody without being charged and no further action will be taken. We appreciate his understanding of why he was arrested."

So the lesson for LDWA members is, if we're on night walks - and especially if we're wearing head torches - don't try to put wheelie bins back into gardens.

HADRIAN'S WALL PATH - March 2012

AS reported in the last newsletter, Mike Ratcliff is organising an expedition for Kent Group members to walk the Hadrian's Wall Path National Trail in March next year.

But due to the date of the Sevenoaks Circular - Sunday March 25 - the dates for this trip have now been put back two days, so the trip is now due to start on the Monday after the Sevenoaks Circular - March 26. 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:

Monday March 26.

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.

Tuesday March 27.

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, Bardonia Mill, Northumberland, NE47 7AN.

Wednesday March 28.

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

Thursday March 29.

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 28 and 29).

Friday March 30.

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.

DOVER WELCOMES WALKERS

KENT Group members may recall that two years ago, Deal became the first town in the South East of England to get Walkers Are Welcome status. To do this, Deal had to satisfy certain criteria - including having waymarked paths, a walking festival, and encouraging people to use public transport when travelling to or from walks. Dover is now trying to follow Deal's example, with John Goodwin - a town councillor and new LDWA member - doing a lot of work in trying to get Dover onto the Walkers Are Welcome list. Dover would be the second town in Kent to get the status. Dover, with its access to those famous White Cliffs, is one of the best walking towns in Kent.

OLD STRIDERS

BRYAN Clarke has a box of Striders (from 1978) including binders for disposal. Anyone interested get in touch to arrange delivery/collection at an agreed time and place. Recycling is the only other option!

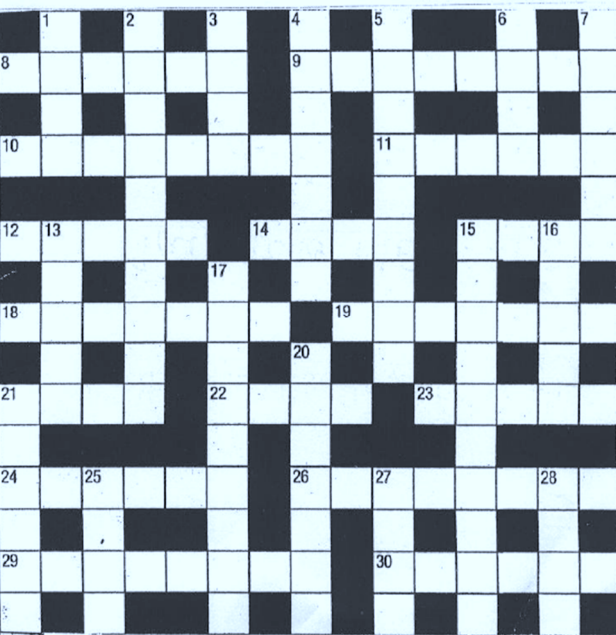
KENT GROUP CROSSWORD set by Shirley Higgins

Across

- 8 Text for two thirds of Bible (6).
- 9 Plant the French sell to the Queen (8).
- 10 Building in Washington with five sides (8).
- 11 I'm friend to a leaping animal (6).
- 12 Pile often seen on the M20 (5).
- 14 Possible fate for cheese (4).
- 15 Essence put in the heart initially (4).
- 18 Bewitched, bothered and bewildered? (7).
- 19 Synthetic material, clasp it perhaps (7).
- 21 Enclosures for swans (4).
- 22 Jog at the start to reach old town (4).
- 23 Could be weekend or work! (5).
- 24 Seize neckband (6).
- 26 He deals with plots and plants (8).
- 29 Outside bird in former centre of dale (8).
- 30 Hidden under cover (6).

Down

- 1 Middle of sacred area (4).
- 2 I scuff fist badly in fight (10).
- 3 Clumsily tags animal (4).
- 4 Unusual burn led to gross mistake (7).
- 5 Can be prevented, a space to fit (9).
- 6 Concept, not quite perfect (4).
- 7 Opening hole (6).
- 13 Oddly the hamster is a joke (5).
- 15 Money found around obstacle causes annoyance (10).
- 16 Zigzag Oliver (5).
- 17 Steer wing strangely away from the east (9).
- 20 The way in which Shirly fell (7).



- 21 Wrinkle sounds posh! (6).
- 25 Out of time, a weird tale (4).
- 27 Walrus teeth hold fungus (4).
- 28 Quits in Chevening (4).

Laurie Lowe sent the first correct set of August crossword answers to Shirley.

COMEDY CORNER

by Bill Gillibrand

ONCE upon a time, in a land far away, a beautiful, independent, self-assured princess happened upon a frog as she sat contemplating ecological issues on the shores of an unpolluted pond in a verdant meadow near her castle.

The frog hopped onto the lap of the princess and said: "Elegant lady, I was once a handsome prince until an evil witch cast a spell upon me. One kiss from you, however, and I will turn back into the dapper young prince that I am, and then, my sweet, we can marry and set up house in yonder castle with my mother, where you can prepare my meals, clean my clothes, bear my children and forever feel grateful and happy doing so."

That night, on a meal of lightly sautéed frog's legs seasoned in a white wine and onion cream sauce, she chuckled to herself and thought: "I don't think so!"

THE LAST WORD

from the editor

WELL, here we are almost at the end of another year. Once again, it's been a very good year for Kent Group of the LDWA. We must have one of the busiest social walks programmes of any group in the country, with a variety of walks taking place on just about every weekend. In fact I know that Mike Ratcliff (who is largely responsible for us having such a busy social walks programme) would like us to have walks EVERY weekend. I'm sure that is well within our range. And once again, we've had three very successful challenge walks, the Sevenoaks Circular, the Walk With The Smugglers and the White Cliffs Challenge all producing more entrants than we thought they would. We also had a good turnout on this year's Hundred, although it is a pity that a few of our members who took part in the marshals' walk didn't quite complete it. More importantly, it is more of a pity that the organisers of the Housman Hundred didn't do anything (or, by all accounts, want to do anything) about the constructive criticisms made of the route by people like our Gordon Harker, who retired in some annoyance with just a few miles to go. That is not how Hundreds should be organised. I like to think that in Kent Group we take constructive comments on board, and if there are legitimate carps about aspects our challenge events, then we would do something about it.

Next year promises to be a memorable one for Kent Group. We are one of the Games Hundred organising groups, and as well as running one of the checkpoints, a few of us will be involved in other capacities, particularly Neil Higham, who is on the organising committee and has put in a lot of hard work. The Games Hundred should be a tremendous event, particularly as it will mark the LDWA's 40th birthday. Our own contribution to the LDWA's 40th birthday celebrations is our White Cliffs Challenge in September, at the new venue of Deal and Betteshanger Rugby Club. And in May we are due to hear from the national committee whether our bid to organise a Cinque Ports Hundred in 2016 has been successful. Some members, especially new member John Goodwin, and Mike Pursey, have already done quite a bit of work for this project. If we get the nod over Dorset Group, it will be excellent for us. The route, worked out by Mike Pursey, goes from Hastings to Tenterden and then to Rye and Sandwich, before ending at Dover. By the sheer nature of the terrain, the route won't have a vast number of hills, but it will be full of history, heritage and interest. We have already been promised much support from some of the towns in the Federation of the Cinque Ports. The whole project is very exciting, and would be a Hundred which would be totally different to any other - let's hope we are given the opportunity to put it on for the LDWA.

On a personal level, this year I have taken on the role of group secretary. It has certainly been a lot of work, but it has been good and very interesting to have more contact with other groups and with the national committee. I am very grateful to the other committee members for the help I have been given as secretary, and I am particularly indebted to my predecessor Bill Gillibrand, who has given me lots of advice and assistance. It is a shame Bill plans to stand down from the committee at our AGM. Bill has put in lot of work for Kent Group over many years, and he will be sorely missed.

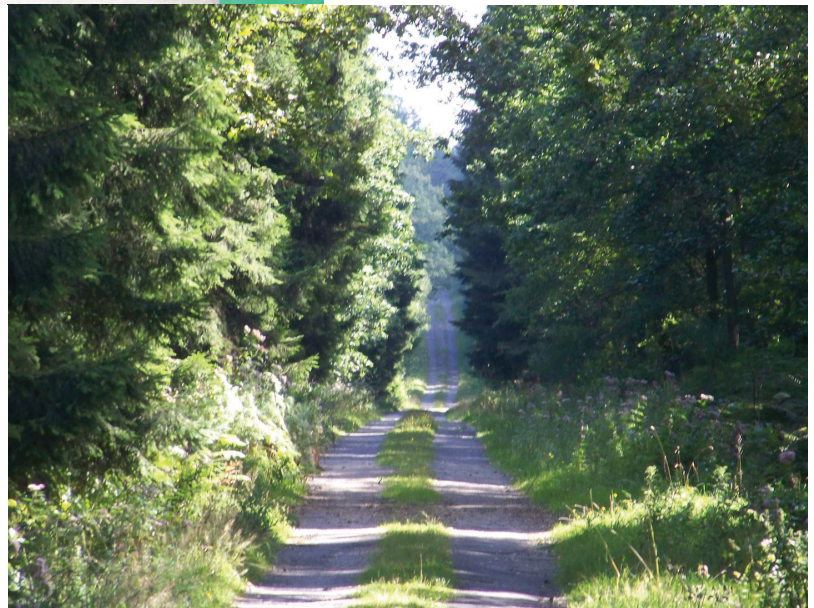
Also on a personal level, I'm afraid 2011 hasn't been the best year of walking for me. I had entered the Housman Hundred marshals' walk and was so looking forward to it, as Shropshire is an area in which I have hardly walked. Then, two weeks before the marshals' walk, while nearing the end of a solo Sussex Stride which I was doing as a training exercise, I started to get some nasty stabbing pains in my stomach. These turned out to be a hernia, which meant I couldn't do any walking, let alone serious walking, for a few weeks. So I rested, then started to get back into action, with my target the Surrey Tops marshals' walk at the end of August. I did that walk, and loved it, but started to get a pain in my knee, which turned out to be tendonitis. So I went to see an osteopath, who advised more rest, advice which - reluctantly - I had to take. The Founders Challenge was my target this time, which I loved as always. So I'm walking properly again now, although not moving quite as quickly as I would like. I have entered the Games 100 marshals' walk, and I am very much looking forward to it. I am also looking forward to marshalling on the event itself. Anyway, as I always say, editing this newsletter is a pleasure. To all members who have contributed articles for the newsletter this year, I send my sincere thanks. Please keep them coming. I promise that all your items will be used, no matter how small or (within reason!) long. It is your newsletter, and it couldn't be done without your input. Thanks also to Bryan Clarke for doing such a marvellous job with printing it, and to Shirley Higgins for getting it distributed. Wishing everyone a very merry Christmas and lots of great walking in the new year. I look forward to seeing everyone on a walk soon.

Graham Smith



Holland meets Belgium and Germany

Regimented German forest



Sandy landscape in Veluwe

Going Dutch - Photos by Peter Jull



The White Cliffs in August - Photos by Ingfrid Neumann