

LONG DISTANCE WALKERS ASSOCIATION — Kent Group

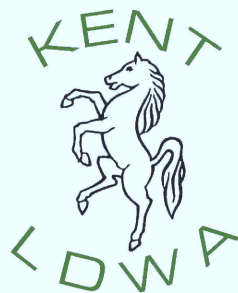
Aim: to further the interests of those who enjoy long distance walking

NEWSLETTER



View of Ide Hill from this year's Sevenoaks Circular. *Photograph by Eric Rolfe*

Number 87



April 2012

www.ldwakent.org.uk/



Tunnel under the A21



Cloud/fog on the North Downs



Traffic on a bridleway



CP 1 Dry Hill



Maria Davis - CP 2 at Knockholt



Dave Sheldrake and Mike Attewell at CP 2

Sevenoaks Circular 2012 - *Photographs by Eric Rolfe*

KENT GROUP SOCIAL WALKS APR to AUG 2012

Fri Apr 6 (Good Friday) A South Downs Way Loop

c26ml. or c20ml. Meet 9am at Eastbourne, western end of promenade (B2103) at South Downs Way marker post GR TV600972. Map: Exp 123. Park near school on left. Lunch stop at Alfriston. Ldr: Graham Smith.

Sun Apr 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 at St Margaret's. 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: Exps 124, 125 & 138. Several cafes and pubs along the route for refreshments. For more details contact: L: Graham Smith

Sun May 13 A Plod Around The Parks

c20ml. Meet 9.00am at Adisham rlwy stn GR TR234539 Map: Exp 150. Pub stop. L: Peter Jull

Sun May 27 Duck Pond Alley

c20ml. Meet 9.30am at Worth Duck Pond GR TR337562 Map: Exp 150. Lunch stop at Guston. L: Richard Frost.

Sun Jun 24 Andredsweald Marshals' Walk

For details contact Neil Higham.

Sun Jul 8 Andredsweald main event

See Events Diary.

Sun Jul 15 Fish & Chips - Yet Another Helping

c21ml. Meet 8am in Jefferstone Lane, St. Mary's Bay GR TR090275 Map: Exp 125. Park on roadside nr Village Hall. Pub stop (fish & chips optional). L: Mike Pursey.

Sat Jul 21 Summer French Challenge

c.23mls from Coquelles, just outside Calais, after taking Le Shuttle at approx 7am. If interested, please contact Graham by June 23 LATEST and again by July 14 for meet time and place (or check Kent Group website). L: Graham Smith.

Sun Jul 29 Another Far Thing from the Common

c23ml. Meet 8.30am at Farthing Common GR TR136404 Map: Exp 138. Pub stop. L: Mike Pursey.

Sun Aug 12 Cream Tea Walk

c20ml. Meet 9.00am at Grafty Green GR TQ872488 Map: Exp 137. Park on roadside. Pub stop at Stalisfield Green - food available. Ls: Neal & Jan O'Rourke

Sun Aug 19 The Sholden Casuals

c20ml. Meet 9.30am at Sholden New Road, West Deal GR TR356525 Map: Exp 150 Lunch stop at Shepherdswell. L: Richard Frost

Sat Aug 25 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.

Sat Sep 8 White Cliffs 50 Marshals' Walk

For details contact Mike Pursey

Sat Sep 22 White Cliffs 50 Main Event

See Events Diary in Strider.

COMMITTEE

Chairman - Brian Buttifant,
Secretary/newsletter editor - Graham Smith,
Treasurer - Neil Higham
Walks Secretary - Mike Pursey,
Membership Secretary - Nick Dockree
Webmaster - Michael Headley

Members

Phil Butler -
Joy Davies
Nick Dockree -
Stephanie le Men

Pictures on the newsletter cover, back page and inside back and front pages were taken on this year's Sevenoaks Circular by Bryan Clarke and Eric Rolfe

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.

NEW MEMBERS

Nick Allen, Swanley; Carol and Phil Capon, New Ash Green; Jim Catchpole, Isle of Wight; Steve Creed, Sheerness. Please make Nick, Carol, Phil, Jim and Steve welcome on walks.

NEWS OF KENT CHALLENGE WALKS

Sevenoaks Circular

Results for this year's event have gone out with this newsletter, and it has generally been agreed that the new route - or rather the old one, as it's the 1992 route - is excellent. In fact many people feel it is the best route for many years, and it is hoped we can continue this route for at least a couple more years.

Typical of the comments we received after this year's Sevenoaks Circular is the following note from John Lay of Surrey Group, who sent it to us the day after the event:

Sincere thanks to all in Kent Group for yesterday. I've done this challenge many times in the past years but this one will go down in my memory as one of the best, partly because of the really super weather but mainly for the truly friendly atmosphere all around, at the checkpoints, at the start and at the finish, the marshals and all the helpers really went out of their way to make things happen.

... and another, this time from Gareth 'Gaz' Davies, from Croydon:

Thank you to all the LDWA Kent team for putting on a fantastic event today at the Sevenoaks Circular - the route was superb, but tough. The warmth and kindness of the marshals and the team organisation behind this whole event was exceptional. Long may this continue - and I will certainly be recommending the event and the LDWA activities to my friends and contacts in the sporting world

Details about next year's Sevenoaks Circular will appear in the next newsletter.

Andredsweald

This year's Weald challenge walk will be based at Forest Row, and will be on Sunday July 8, with the marshals' walk on Sunday June 24 (see walks programme above). There will be routes of 26, 20 and 15 miles, all of which will visit the beautiful Ashdown Forest, so it should be a memorable event.

Anyone wishing to marshal on the Andredsweald is asked to contact organiser Neil Higham - details above.

White Cliffs Challenge/KSS Triple Challenge

This year's WCC is Kent Group's contribution to the LDWA's 40th birthday celebrations. Also, of course, it is the Kent leg of the KSS (Kent Surrey Sussex) Triple Challenge. The event will be over the weekend of September 22-23, at the new venue of Deal and Betteshanger Rugby Club, with the marshals' walk on September 8-9 (see walks programme above).

There are two routes - 52 and 18 miles. Everyone entering, as well as all the marshals, will receive a commemorative red plastic mug, with Kent Group's logo on one side and the LDWA logo on the other. Also, everyone entering, and those on the marshals' walk and the marshals, will have their names entered into a prize draw - details of the prizes in the next newsletter. And it is planned that there will also be a special birthday cake - or probably cakes.

As the event is part of the KSS, Surrey and Sussex groups will be taking on a checkpoint each, but we will also need plenty of marshals from Kent Group. Anyone wishing to marshal is asked to contact Graham Smith - details above.

Also, as this year's WCC is our LDWA 40th anniversary walk, special LDWA 40th anniversary badges will be available on the event. We have 50 of the badges, which have been produced by the national committee.

Meanwhile, Brian Buttifant and Graham Smith have met with representatives from Surrey and Sussex groups to review the progress of the KSS, now in its fifth year. It is generally agreed that the three events have proved consistently successful, and there are lots of benefits from working together like this.

Awards are to be introduced for sets of completions - a silver award for completing the walks twice (i.e. six walks in all), gold for three sets of completions (nine walks) and platinum for four sets (12 walks).

Next year will see the return of the Sussex Stride, so this means that walkers who will have done all six KSS events will be eligible for a silver award. It is hoped to have details of next year's Sussex Stride in the next newsletter.



ANNUAL DINNER

THIS year's annual dinner will be held at the London Beach Hotel, at Tenterden, for the fifth successive year. It will be on Sunday December 2 - so put that date in your diaries now.

The London Beach is an excellent venue, which always provides us with a first class meal and very friendly service. This year Jan O'Rourke has kindly agreed to take over the booking arrangements, instead of members booking directly with the hotel, as they did last year.

There will be more details of our annual dinner in the August newsletter.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

THE date of next year's AGM has provisionally been set for January 17, and will again be at Lenham Community Hall, the excellent venue where it was held this year. More details will appear in the August newsletter.

NEW COMMITTEE

AT the elections for the Kent Group committee at our AGM in January, there was only one change. This was Phil Butler replacing Bill Gillibrand, who stood down. Bill, who held the post of secretary for seven years and did a marvellous job for the group, has been one of the stalwarts of Kent Group, and at the meeting he was thanked for his hard and unstinting work. In the meantime we welcome Phil to the committee.

Also, Mike Ratcliff has handed over responsibility as membership secretary to Nick Dockree. This means that it will be Nick, and not Mike, chasing up members who are late paying their subs. On which subject ...

LATE SUBS

WE still need subs from quite a few members. Could those people who have not yet paid up for this year PLEASE send cheques, made payable to LDWA Kent Group, to Nick Dockree.

Our subs are still only £5. A separate reminder has gone out with this newsletter.

THE LDWA GAMES 100 by Neil Higham

SO, the Games 100 (as it is now officially known) is almost upon us - and a lot of water has flown down the Thames over this past year.

The route has now been published on the dedicated 100 website (which also provides a template for future 100s to use) and a lot of detail is coming together. It has been - and continues to be - an exciting, fast-moving project, with something new to consider almost every day; thank goodness for e-mails, as the organising committee are widely spread!

There have been a number of positive developments since last year, a few neutral ones, and a few negative ones.

The assembly venue has been changed from Victoria Park (where they are due to be erecting staging etc for a Diamond Jubilee event) to nearby Gainsborough School, while the actual starting spot has now been agreed as being White Post Lane Bridge, which has a view of the Olympic Stadium etc. Negotiations have been carried out with a number of local authorities, British Waterways, Canary Wharf trustees and the like, and I am pleased to say that these have generally been positive; two slight disappointments were the fact that Greenwich Park would only entertain us at great cost (which we declined) and, at the time, could not guarantee access (due to their uncertainty regarding construction of the Olympic equestrian event infrastructure), while the intended replacement route here - through the Naval College, on the public right of way - has now had to be re-routed, as there is due to be a (public) event in the Naval College on June 2, the Big Lunch. And the intended re-route past the Naval College may be impassable if the Thames has a higher than abnormal high tide (coinciding with the full moon due on June 2), so we will have a couple of marshals here on the day who will determine the 'best' way.

Minor route changes may still be required in the London area, for instance around the western/southern end of the new cable car, which is currently being constructed very close to the O2 Dome, and we have contingency plans in place in case of last minute

issues (eg with the police closing roads or parks after an 'incident'). A crack unit has been established which will cycle the first few miles of the route on the morning, ahead of the runners, and report back with and attempt to resolve any major issues. Once past the Thames Barrier (at 10 miles), away from the river and out along the Green Chain Walk, etc, we are hopeful that we will not have such issues, but we are not being complacent, with a few possible last minute alternatives being considered should they be required (eg if the 250+ stepped descent of Box Hill on the NDW is considered too dangerous on the day because of prevailing conditions).

At the other end of the event, Windsor Great Park, we have been disappointed on two fronts, namely the (understandable, I suppose) intransigence of the park authorities to permit "second night" finishers to walk through the park at night, and the fact that the checkpoint facility within the park itself will now be solely of the tented variety; walkers will be permitted into the park from 'dawn' on the Monday morning, but certain details still need finalising (eg what time is 'dawn'?) before we issue confirmation of the position. Those who have entered will be aware that they are receiving updates e-mailed (or posted) through to them, with further information.

Merv and Fiona Nutburn have kindly walked a couple of the sections at night, and pointed out a couple of places where the route description could be enhanced (ie where something that is clear in the day isn't quite as obvious at night), and our man on the ground in Peaslake - the one and only Don Newman - has been doing some sterling work in that area. In addition, Keith Warman has been the route warden responsible for walking and keeping tabs on the 19 mile section between Mottingham and Woldingham, while the Woldingham to Tanners Hatch section (21 miles) has been in my hands.

What some readers may be interested to hear (and I personally am very thankful for) is that once one has left the Woldingham checkpoint, there is a stile after ½ mile but the next stile is not until well after crossing the A25, some 23 or so miles later; there are a few kissing gates to slow down the super fast, and of course there are 250+ steps to descend at Box Hill, so it's certainly not a completely smooth passage. Talking about steps, there are a good number of places in the first 20 or so miles where there are steps over railway and road crossings, as well as up and over the A12 and a combined 187 steps down into and up out of the Greenwich Foot Tunnel, so participants will be getting their fair share of ups and downs.

I have now walked the whole route (excepting the alternative route avoiding Windsor Great Park in the second night, and a few places where the route has been slightly amended), in stages, and really enjoyed it - yes, there were one or two slightly less interesting stretches, but that's only to be expected. Overall, and considering the proximity to London, I would say that it really is an enjoyable route and one that I hope everyone who completes it will approve of.

A bespoke map has been sourced from Harveys; the map is double sided, on a scale of 1:50,000, waterproof and shows the entire route together with the location of all checkpoints (unfortunately the Biggin Hill checkpoint is shown in the wrong place; it is shown west of the A233, but is in fact just to the east). A special feature is the inclusion of 32 photographs around the perimeter showing sites visited on the 100 and points of interest, together with a feature on the LDWA founders' sites. As well as providing the entrant with one map for the whole route, it is an attractive and practical memento. There is a form on the 100 website (see below).

In addition to this, a set of historical notes - with photographs - is being drawn up, and I believe that this will be freely available on the 100 website soon; I have had a preview, and it contains some very interesting information.

There is a small range of merchandise, namely T-shirts, polo shirts and sweatshirts, and information and an order form can be found on the 100 website; note - those helping at the Kent Group checkpoint will hopefully be wearing their red Kent Group Welcomes You T-shirts.

Inspire Walks

On the 100 website you may see that there is a set of Inspire Walks, and you are very welcome to join these, which are some 8 to 10 miles in length and aimed at 'newbies' as well as LDWA family members who are not (yet?) into the longer distances; these are on April 15 (Greenwich to Woolwich), May 19 (Windsor Great Park), June 16 (Box Hill & Ranmore) and July 14 (Woolwich Heritage Walk). Perhaps regrettably, the first Inspire Walk only inspired two 'newbies', but at least we are trying ... Importantly, as the route is 'continually' being updated, if you are going out reccing or just wish to follow part of the route, then please refer to the 100 website for the most up-to-date version of the route description - actually, having said that, you may wish to e-mail me and I will let you have the absolute latest version that I have, but even this may be slightly out of date. Tony Gorman (route editor) and Paul Lawrence (organiser and chairman of the national committee until March) have just now (March 22) completed their own final walk-out and I have no doubt that they will be making a few further minor amendments (to the wording, but not necessarily the route).

I would urge you all - entrants, those kindly marshalling, and all those interested - to visit the dedicated 100 website, www.ldwa.org.uk/2012Hundred for further information (and this is being added to all the time).

As mentioned earlier, entrants will receive a series of updates with relevant information, eg times of Windsor Great Park opening, request to specify start time; in addition to this, and on the main LDWA website, there is "chatter" on the relevant FORUM topics (which I have only recently come across - perhaps worth a looksee if you haven't been on there yet, all sorts of interesting and varied topics).

As many - and hopefully all - of you are already aware, the Kent Group checkpoint is at Biggin Hill, in the Spitfire Youth Centre. This is at the 29.7 mile mark and, because of logistics, it will be the first major checkpoint (it is checkpoint number 5); what do I mean by this? Simply that it will be the largest checkpoint so far and the first where it will be possible to provide 'proper' hot food; the preceding checkpoints are too soon, smaller, effectively outdoors or we are prohibited from serving up other than hot drinks and cold food. A pattern is then established from Biggin Hill of a major CP followed by minor/outdoor CPs all the way to the end.

The marshals' walk will be taking place on May 5-7 and I understand that the following will be representing Kent Group - Graham Smith, Mike Pursey, Keith Warman, Merv Nutburn, Wendy Thurrell, Christophe Delogne and Stephanie Le Men - (hereinafter referred to as the magnificent ??) and you may wish to support them. The helpers for the marshals' walk have generally all been sourced by Lynn and Dave Yorston (who are the organisers here) and so Kent Group is not directly involved

this weekend, but if anybody desperately wishes to help then please contact me - there is one particular spot at c.39 miles (Woldingham) where we could possibly do with some more assistance.

If anyone anticipates that they will have some time to spare in the two weeks at the end of May, ie just before the (main) event, then please contact me as we will need to deliver a large number of Routesider leaflets (from Biggin Hill onwards) to remote and not so remote places along the route.

In addition, if anyone wishes to go to the start and help out, at Gainsborough School (Hackney Wick area), or help out around the 6 - 8 mile mark (Checkpoint 1, Thames crossing and O2 marshalled clip point) then I am sure that they will be much appreciated. There will, of course, be sufficient time for those helping at the Kent Group checkpoint to also help at the start first. Finally, if anyone wishes to spend the Saturday or Sunday night under the stars or Sunday day under sun, then there are a couple of outdoor checkpoints where we could do with a few additional helpers.

Please contact me on neil.igham1@tesco.net with any offers of help.

POST-HUNDRED CELEBRATION

BRIAN Buttifant is planning a Games Hundred celebration for Kent Group members who have been involved with the event and/or the marshals' walk - walking, marshalling or just supporting. This will be held at The Plough pub, Trottisccliffe (near West Malling and just off the A20 - GR 640601), on Wednesday June 27. The event will start at 8.30pm, and a buffet is being laid on. The pub will need to know numbers, so anyone wishing to go is asked to contact Brian - details above.

CAMEL-TEIGN HUNDRED (Ivor's Dream)

NEXT year's Hundred is being organised by Cornwall and Devon Group, and will start from Wadebridge in North Cornwall, on the weekend of May 25-27. Plans are very well advanced, and Kent Group has been approached to organise a checkpoint at Callington - 44 miles. People wishing to marshal on the event are asked to contact Brian Buttifant (details above), and anyone wishing to take part in the marshals' walk (the date - yet to be confirmed - is likely to be the first bank holiday weekend in May, May 4-6) is asked to contact Graham Smith (details above).

More details about next year's Hundred are in the new Strider.

PLANS FOR A CINQUE PORTS HUNDRED

AS previously reported in the newsletter, Kent Group has submitted a 'bid' to host a Cinque Ports Hundred in 2016. The event would be based at the Duke of York's Royal Military School in Dover, with walkers being transported by bus to Hastings, where the walk would start in the historic setting of Hastings Castle - which would be highly appropriate, as 2016 is the 950th anniversary of the Battle of Hastings.

The route would visit all the Cinque Ports of Hastings, New Romney, Hythe, Dover and Sandwich, as well as Cinque Ports limbs including Tenterden, Lydd, Deal and Folkestone. The walk would go as far as Sandwich, and finish at Dover.

The project has received support from the town councils of several Cinque Ports towns, including Sandwich, Dover, Deal and Hythe, as well as support from Kent County Council.

Our 'bid' has been sent to national Hundreds coordinator Gail Elrick, and will be considered by the national committee, as well as another 'bid' from Dorset Group - and, to be fair, we are sure the walk being planned by Dorset Group will be a very good one. We are due to get a decision in May, so - whichever way this goes - we will be reporting it in the next newsletter. And if the nod does go to Dorset Group, then our friends down there will be assured of this group's full support.

OUR WEBSITE (www.ldwarent.org.uk) by our webmaster, Michael Headley

TWO years ago I was invited to attend a Kent Group committee meeting to discuss a few ideas I had about how we might develop our website. The committee encouraged me to get to work to produce something that would be interesting and helpful not only for our own LDWA members but also for those from further afield. If it could appeal to people who hadn't encountered the LDWA before, so much the better.

So the new website took shape and in many respects it hasn't altered a great deal since. Although I review it each month to keep it up to date, I find that most of the changes I make tend to follow the same pattern. For example, the Events page has details of our own Kent challenge events with archived results, together with a diary listing of any other (my idea of) accessible future events with links to their respective entry forms and route descriptions, if I can track them down. Previous events are there as well, listed with links to results - again if I can find them. There is also a section for recent and future Hundreds.

Our social walks have a Diary page. They are mixed in with various other dates of note such as our Christmas family meal and our AGM. There is a walks map which shows the locality of our future social walks and challenge events. The map includes other groups' walks which stray close to, or even into, our county.

The Links page lists more than 400 websites of possible interest. They are more or less sorted into categories and I highlight additions to the selection by showing them as New in March (for example) and retaining their month of inclusion for at least three months.

The Gallery has collections of photos, mostly by the prolific Eric Rolfe, of a number of our events from the last three years or so. I know that some readers of this newsletter don't have internet access but if you do, please have a look at the website for yourself. It was fun to build and I still enjoy tinkering with it, but I'd do so even more if I knew it was proving a good thing for our Kent Group members. I'd be happy to know what you think and I'll read any messages you care to send to me with great interest.

NATIONAL WEBSITE (www.ldwa.org.uk) UPDATE

WHILE on the subject of the website, we have been contacted by Simon Leck, website and internet officer for the national committee. Simon and other committee members have released an update to Local Group Admin side of the LDWA website,

concentrating on improving the way the events are managed on the website following several good suggestions from local group secretaries and webmasters.

Some of the key improvements are:

Clash Finder. This tool can be used to help plan an event or group walk. Basically you enter the date that you are thinking of holding your walk and either the postcode or grid reference of the start of the walk. You then click the blue find button and all the walks on that date are listed. Also the distance (as the crow flies) from the start of your walk is displayed too.

Stop Press. The Stop Press feature is used to update details of a walk after it has been published in Strider. To use the facility select your walk, press edit and you'll see a Stop Press edit box at the bottom of the screen. Remember you must add a reason why you've entered the stop press text.

New Buttons. Also, you'll find new buttons at the top of the events screen to add either a group walk or a challenge event. These buttons replace the drop down list which some found rather time consuming.

There's also a new button to download a historical list of all the events held on the LDWA website for groups.

Simon recommends that members "have a play with these new features" and if anyone spots anything or has any comments, then please let him know. Simon's contact details are in Strider.

SUMMER FRENCH CHALLENGE

THIS year's summer French challenge will be on Saturday July 21, and will follow the usual tried and trusted arrangements. We will take Le Shuttle to Coquelles, followed by a 23-mile walk, stopping at one or two French hostelrys, then a bit of shopping at the Auchan hypermarket, a quick meal at Auchan, and then back to Kent. We usually have a very good day on this walk, which has become one of the highlights of our social walks calendar. People wishing to go should contact organiser Graham Smith by June 23 at the latest - see social walks programme above.

WELL DONE OUR MERV

KENT Group's Merv Nutburn has completed his 500th marathon. The following story appeared in one of Merv's local newspapers, the News Shopper:

A 63-year-old man is celebrating after completing his 500th marathon.

Merv Nutburn, of Lessness Park, Belvedere, completed his latest marathon at Stratford-upon-Avon in five hours and 30 minutes after getting lost once.

The father-of-two belongs to the 100 Marathon Club and the Long Distance Walkers' Association.

He completed his first marathon aged 36 and has gone on to complete 10 London marathons - the last four dressed as a dalmatian.

In 1996, at 48-years-old, Mr Nutburn completed his 100th marathon.

He said: "I enjoy the scenery of the off-road marathons. You go to places that the car can't get to. I also enjoy the banter between the competitors. We have a great laugh.

"I'll stop running them when my body says it can't do it any more or when I stop enjoying them."

Well done, Merv. You're a credit to the LDWA mate.



WHITE CLIFFS WALK

FOURTEEN Kent Group members turned up at Walmer Station on Saturday January 21 for the 18-mile White Cliffs Walk, led by Graham Smith. From Walmer the route went to Kingsdown, where the White Cliffs start. The route followed the White Cliffs to Folkestone via St Margaret's, Dover and Capel.

At the end of the walk some walkers took a train from Folkestone to go home, others went to the town's Weatherspoons pub for a meal and a drink. Graham and Richard Frost, who both live in Deal, decided to walk home, taking an inland route.

Well, it was a nice dry night, Graham needed the mileage as training for the Hundred, and Richard wanted to keep him company - and a very pleasant winter night walk it was too.

GROUP REPRESENTATIVES MEETING AT HAWORTH by Graham Smith

IN November (how long ago that seems now) I represented Kent Group at the LDWA group reps meeting. It was also the start of a most enjoyable week I had at Haworth with my wife Sarah and our three dogs. And what a great walking area Haworth is -

Yorkshire moors, Pennine Way, not far from the Three Peaks of Yorkshire, one of which (Ingleborough), I walked, with our border collie Fen. But I digress (as my good friend Mike Pursey might say ...)

It was my first group reps meeting, and extremely interesting. Coming into contact with other groups has certainly been one of the most interesting aspects of my secretarial duties, and the group reps meeting tended to encapsulate many of my experiences. So what follows are really no more than notes of some of the issues discussed, which I have divided into headings. I hope Kent Group members find it useful.

Update on LDWA

National chairman Paul Lawrence (as he was then - new chairman, elected at the national AGM, is John Sparshatt) presented an overview of the activities and finances of the LDWA. Highlights were that membership is up by 7.1% to 7425. There had been 800 leavers during the 12 months to early November, but almost 1200 new members. There were no plans to increase subscription fees before 2014.

On finances, there was an annual surplus of £8,300, with reserves now at £132,000.

The Games 100 then had around 500 registrations and was unlikely to require a ballot to resolve entrants.

News from membership secretary Claire Duncan

In the 12 months since October 1 2010, 237 new members had been recruited, with the age split as follows - 65-plus yrs, 7%, 51-65 31%, 41-50 28%, 26-40 24%, and under 25 10%. The oldest new member is 83, the youngest is 17. Average age is between 45-55, with 27% female members overall (the new members comprise 36% females).

Claire said 754 members were without a local group and were being contacted about placement. There are about 100 LDWA members who live in Kent but do not actually belong to Kent Group. She gave me a list of all these, which I have passed to our membership secretary Mike Ratcliff. Members who have lapsed for more than three years are to be taken off the system.

Also, a special LDWA 40th anniversary membership card will be issued this year.

And the younger walkers group (the official criteria is '40 or below' but maybe members who are younger at heart will also be welcome) has 283 "members", with a meeting planned in London. This is a project on which Claire has been working with our own Mike Ratcliff.

LDWA 40th anniversary

This took up quite a bit of discussion. Anniversary walks can take place any time from March - when the national AGM was being held, but it is felt that ideally should focus on September 2012. Our own White Cliffs Challenge takes place over the weekend of September 22-23 - designated the LDWA's 40th anniversary weekend - and there is a separate item about this above. It was hoped that groups should endeavour to gain publicity from the local media for their walk, which is something I plan to do for us.

The celebration walks will be indicated by a special 'blaze' in the Strider listings.

A special Strider, commemorating and celebrating highlights of the association's history will be published in September.

What exactly constitutes a group member?

This is a perennial issue, with some groups charging a membership fee; some individuals being members of multiple groups; some officiating in a group while not being logged as a member of that group on the national website. The constitution of 2007 states that a member of LDWA can be a member of any local group. It was suggested that a member should nominate a primary group and one or several 'associated' groups. No doubt there will be more about this issue in Strider.

Progress and issues in the scheduled Hundreds

2012 - London (see separate item from Neil Higham above): help is still needed, a Harveys map and souvenir map will be available.

2013 - Cornwall and Devon (see separate item above): checkpoints booked, route risk assessment under way.

2014 - South Wales: circular, route has been walked.

2015 - East Lancs: John Sparshatt (NEC) is monitoring.

2016 (see separate item above): ourselves and Dorset have applied for this event. Applications will be considered by the national committee and we are due to know if we have been successful in May.

The next four Hundreds will go to ballot if necessary.

John Walker from Wiltshire proposed that 10 x 100s badges should only be given to those members who have completed one marshals' walk out of the 10; therefore ensuring that a qualifying member has given effort, not just taken. Those present felt it was difficult to assess who gives effort, with many members who have completed Hundreds putting in super efforts in their local organisation with organising walks, checkpointing on their own events etc. A straw poll showed 18 against the idea eight for, and four abstentions. I voted against.

Attacks by cattle - Mike Buckley, from Heart of England Group, reported that he was flung into the air and stamped by a cow on a public right of way (common to 3 long distance paths) in October. He had been walking with four members from his group and no dogs. The cow was alone with a calf and further investigation showed that the farmer knew that the cow was troublesome but still allowed it in the field crossed by the paths. An incident report form had been completed and the police and the rights of way office for the area had been informed.

Mike made the point that LDWA members need to be aware of this danger from erratic cows and Strider will contain content to this effect. If there are any such incidents in Kent, please inform a committee member and they will be reported to the county council rights of way office.

Listing of midweek walks in Strider

Several members have requested that the summary listing of weekend social walks in Strider should be expanded to include the longer weekday walks (nominally greater than 10 miles) that many groups provide. A show of hands approved this departure and Strider will include these walks from April, the current issue.

Local group news

Guy Vowkes, from Wiltshire, had proposed a new group to cover the Cotswolds but this was met with resistance from

surrounding groups and his interest since appears to have cooled. But many members on the national committee seem to believe this idea has merit and it is known that several active members from Lancashire have moved to the Tewksbury area and are keen on forming a local group. No doubt there will be more news in Strider.

Morecambe Bay and Bowland is defunct following the resignation last April of one of its key members, but someone else has belatedly taken up the reins and it is expected a new committee will be formed to keep the group active.

Following the Scottish Hundred in 2010, it was suggested that a Heart of Scotland Group could be a good proposition. It has a fledgling existence but is still “proposed” since few leaders have been forthcoming. Walks (monthly, with 5-10 attendees) are arranged by group coordinator Ken Falconer and a recruitment drive was being planned for early this year.

Cash handout: John Walker reported how Wiltshire Group had received a government grant because their challenge event went through an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB - details on their website apparently). DEFRA fund these grants and larger sums are available. I was involved in the successful bid for Deal to get Walkers Are Welcome status, and nominal (but still useful) grants were obtained from Deal Town Council and Kent County Council. So perhaps Kent Group can take this on board for some events in future.

Cash demand: But Geoff Saunders, from MerseyStride, described how the Forestry Commission is making a charge for an annual event which uses two miles of forestry track and utilises a picnic area as a checkpoint. Because the FC informed MerseyStride at short notice, the £60 fee is being reduced to £30 for this year only.

WALKERS AND RUNNERS by Traviss Wilcox

I THOUGHT I would just add to the thoughts that have appeared in the last couple of newsletters about walkers and runners. As a member of the 100 Marathon Club and the LDWA I fall firmly on the “running” side of the fence, although ironically, due to my slothlike pace and rather over indulgence in the sport, I tend to appreciate the slow pace and long time limits of the LDWA events, not to mention that the LDWA checkpoints are ten times better than any city marathon aid station!

Firstly I think that from my experience many of the runners who attend LDWA events do so because they are counting marathons, they fall within the definition of a marathon as defined by the 100 Marathon Club and so for many are a low cost alternative or supplement to a runners marathon “fix”.

If an LDWA event wished to dissuade runners from entering, without banning them, then one simple method would be to declare the distance to be under 26 miles. If an event is declared at 25 or 25.9 miles then it doesn’t count for those that are counting and thus they wouldn’t likely enter. I’d hazard a guess that perhaps 75% of runners who would enter a 26 mile event wouldn’t enter a 25.9 mile one?

A more draconian measure would be just to ban running, although unenforceable, I suspect, in practice. A recent rules clarification by the 100 Marathon Club means that a walking only event wouldn’t be counted.

Secondly, and this is something I’ve noticed in LDWA events “up north”, is that there they tend to start off runners and walkers at the same time. The benefit for walkers there is that within one minute of the start they’re on their own and then it almost tends to be two separate events on the same course. The disadvantage of this being that checkpoints need to be open for longer, but it is an option on some routes, perhaps if walking members are bothered by constantly passing runners?

Thirdly, I suspect that runners tend to plan further ahead and we tend to be used to some events filling up months in advance, so plan early. I myself usually run a schedule at least six months in advance and I know I’m not alone in this. Perhaps the solution, or at least partial solution to events being oversubscribed due to runners taking the places, is to limit the number of entry places. Perhaps to a maximum of 50%. Anyone too late then could go on a waiting list. If the walkers 50% didn’t fill then places could go to those on the waiting list. Would be a little more administration but perhaps fairer to the longstanding LDWA members who feel they are missing out?

Lastly, on a purely personal note I would like to thank the LDWA, and LDWA Kent Group especially, for all their time, work and efforts in putting on these events and allowing runners to enter. I know that is it greatly appreciated by the long distance running community.

HAS ANYONE HAD A TRANSFORMATIVE EXPERIENCE ON A WALK?

CHARLOTTE MacGregor has sent us the following communication. Some of us might have had transformative experiences on Hundreds! If anyone has, and they would like to share the experience with Charlotte, her details are below.

As well as being a keen long-distance walker and mountaineer, I am also a counsellor and psychotherapist. I am currently doing doctoral research at New School of Psychotherapy and Counselling (NSPC)/Middlesex University. My research is exploring transformative experiences in nature - the sorts of experiences that might have been experienced by some members of the LDWA. I am keen to be in touch with anyone that has had experiences in nature that they would describe as personally transformative who might be willing to consider being interviewed as part of this research project. I would be really grateful if you would circulate this as you feel appropriate within your LDWA group.

TREKKING IN NEPAL, YOUR CHANCE TO SEE THE HIMALAYAS by Phil Butler

I AM planning a trek to Nepal in early October this year and was wondering if anyone was interested in going? This will be my sixth trip to Nepal so I have every confidence that it will be a good trek. I have a Nepalese friend who is a guide and he will be leading the trek. He will also sort out all the porters, hotels, permits etc. All you have to do is walk!

The plan is to do the Gosaikunda trek although this is not set in stone. I have been up to the sacred lakes of Gosaikunda once before and found it both pretty and not so busy. Compared with the Everest region it is deserted!

So far I have two people definitely going, myself and my niece. I have several other people who are keen but not yet committed.



The ideal would be a party of six to ten.

If you are at all interested please contact me, my details are at the bottom of this piece. I can provide more details of the trek and what it is like in both Kathmandu, the capital of Nepal, and Nepal itself.

Here are some details of the trek. The plan is to fly to Kathmandu, spend a day or so relaxing and get ready for the trek. Then trekking and finally doing some shopping and sightseeing in Kathmandu before flying back. This will make it about a two week holiday.

Gosaikunda Trek

It is a remote and high mountain trek in the Langtang region. Following the Trishuli River north out of Kathmandu, we travel through Trishuli Bazaar to Dhunche, a Sherpa village located at the edge of the Langtang National Park. We follow a rugged trail with dramatic views; to the west of Himal Chuli (7893m), Manaslu (8156mm) and Ganesh Himal (7406m). On a clear day, even the Annapurna range can be seen rising up behind and to the north across the valley. We pass a few huts in the high pastures of Lauribina cross a small ridge and have our first view of the holy lake Gosainkunda. We pass through Oak and Rhododendron forests and trek down to Ghopte after crossing Lauribina La pass. And our trek ends in Nagarkot. Nagarkot is situated at the height of 2175 metres, Nagarkot, being in the border of the valley, offer excellent view of mountains (Everest region, Paldor Peak, Dorje lakpa, Gosaikunda range, Langtang range, Ganesh Himal range, Manaslu Range etc), terrace, river, beautiful lush green valley as well as Kathmandu valley. Nagarkot is famous for most fascinating and mesmerizing sunrise and sunset view.

Day 1: Drive to Dhunche (2030m) about 8hrs.

Day 2: Dhunche - Sing Gompa (Chandanbari) (3250m) about 5hrs.

Day 3: Sing Gompa - Lauribina (3900m): walk only 3hrs.

Day 4: Lauribina - Gosainkunda (4380m) about 4hrs.

Day 5: Gosaikunda - Lauribynak pass 4610m/15122ft) - Ghopte (3430m) about 7hrs.

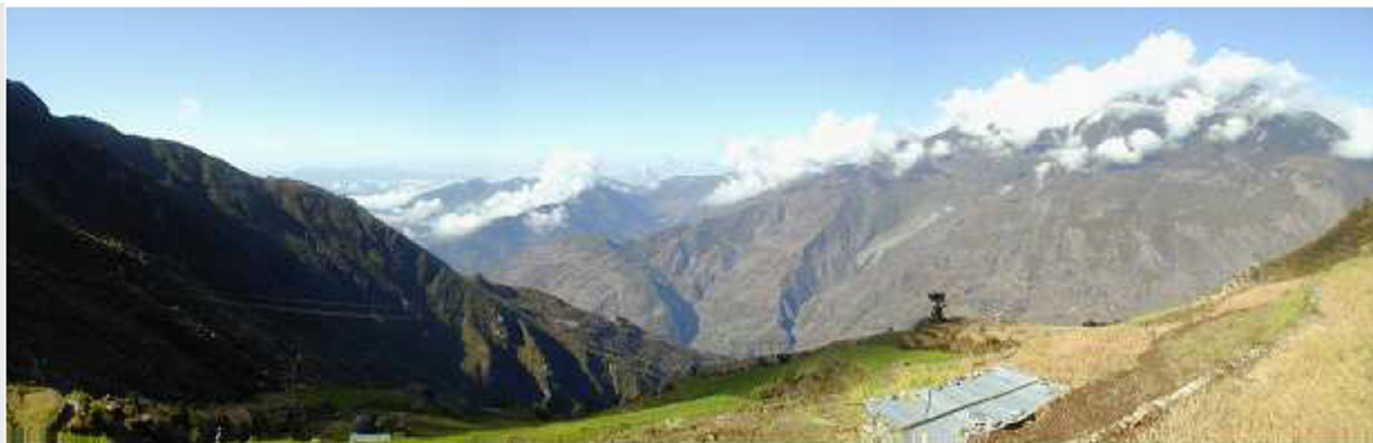
Day 6: Ghopte - Mangengoth (3220m) about 6hrs.

Day 7: Mangengoth - Google bhanajhang (2215m) about 5hrs.

Day 8: Google bhanajhang -Chisapani (1400m) 5 to 6 hrs.

Day 9: Chisapani - Nagarkot (1985m): 5 to 6 hrs.

Day 10: Nagarkot - Kathmandu (1310m) about 3½hrs.



A typical trekking view in Nepal. Photo by Eddie Cox

TRIP TO HOLLAND – FOR FREE

KENT Group member Peter Jull, who lives in Deal, is organising a day trip to Holland, to take part in a Dutch challenge walk, on Saturday July 7.

The plan is to meet in Deal at 5am, then travel to Vlissingen, on the Dutch coast and with which Deal is twinned, by coach and the Channel Tunnel. In Vlissingen there will be a choice of five challenge walks to enter – with distances of five, 10, 15, 20 or 30 kilometres. There should then be time for a couple of beers and a quick meal before returning to Kent.

Travel is free, being paid for by Deal Town Council, so you will just need spending money.

Any members interested are asked to contact Peter.

IAN McLEOD

KENT Group members will be saddened to hear of the death of Ian McLeod, of Surrey Group, whose secretary Avril Stapleton sent the following note:

Ian was a long-standing member of the LDWA (membership number 774) and staunch Surrey Group member. I think I am correct in saying that he was a Centurion. He completed 13 Hundreds - including three when aged 70 or over - from 16 started. In the 1982 Pilgrims' Hundred, he was one of just 26 people who completed the 140 miles 'Plus' route from Winchester to Canterbury in 45:00 hours exactly.

In latter years, his eyesight deteriorated such that he was registered blind, but he continued to take part (and finish) many challenge walks with the aid of 'sighted' helpers, including Avril. His last Hundred completion was on the 2008 Yoredale.

Our thoughts are with Ian's family at this sad time. There is a proper obituary for Ian in the current *Strider*.

LET FISH NIBBLE YOUR FEET

WE have received the following from Ric Bertora, owner of Feet Bliss Fish Spa in the centre of Canterbury. If anyone fancies using the fish spa, just contact Ric online - details below.

I had a couple of ladies who were in the other day having the fish spa and who loved the treatment and suggested that I contact rambling clubs to see if your members would be interested in having their feet nibbled by fish which is perfect for walkers as it really helps relax the legs and feels wonderful on the feet. As walkers also develop hard skin quicker than normal people, its also great for that too.

Would you be interested in offering special discount vouchers to your members as perhaps a benefit of belonging to the club?

I was thinking to offer your members vouchers for a 20 minute treatment at £7 each or if they wanted to buy a voucher valid for three treatments, which expires in six months, they could pay £18. Our usual price is £12 for 15 mins.

We also do after hours private hire sessions, where groups can have exclusive use of the fish spa at a normal price of £20 per head for 30 mins. However, I would be happy to offer that to your members for £15 per head if you wanted to organise a fun and social get together with your members. We have eight fish spa tanks, so can accommodate eight people at a time, though we can have two groups which use the fish spa if you were to have more than eight attendees on a given night.

Please let me know if any of this interests you.

Ric from Feet Bliss (www.feetbliss.co.uk).



HADRIAN'S WALL PATH - March 16-17-18 by Graham Smith

WHAT I euphemistically refer to as 'domestic reasons' meant I had to pull out of Mike Ratcliff's group trip to do this National Trail in March (basically, Sarah and I had just moved house, I had lots of jobs in the house to do - and she would have been pretty annoyed if I had gone off with my walking mates from a Monday to a Friday). So instead, I decided to do the walk from a Thursday to a Saturday, travelling up on a Wednesday afternoon. This meant I also had the two other days of the week to do some of the jobs mentioned above - which was much more acceptable 'domestically'.

Doing an 84-mile walk in three days, particularly when we are hardly out of winter, was always going to be taxing. But the Hadrian's Wall Path is a very good walk with a varied terrain, and full of interest. And of course, the historical aspect is pretty amazing. It is a walk which shadows the historic line of Hadrian's Wall, built by the Roman Emperor Hadrian in the second century AD to protect the Roman Empire and keep out what the Romans felt were the barbarians to the north. For long stretches you walk alongside the wall, and sometimes you can actually walk on it.

I decided to tackle it from east to west (which, apparently, is what most people walking it do, although the advantage of doing it west to east is that you are likely to have the wind at your back - and there were a few times on my second day when I really wished I had done it that way). I got a train to Newcastle on the Wednesday, arrived just before 8pm and stayed in the Travelodge, ready for what I was sure would be a very good walk - and so it proved.

Day 1: Wallsend-Green Carts farm, near Chollerford - 31 miles.

In the morning I got the Metro to Wallsend, some five miles east of Newcastle, and off I went on the 31-mile first leg of the trip. Straight away I made a fundamental mistake of navigation. I turned left instead of right, and was merrily marching along for a good half a mile, following Hadrian's Cycleway signs, when I looked at my guide book - and realised that I was heading north-east instead of south-west. It is not the first time I had made a mistake like that on the start of a big walk, and I know quite a few people in the LDWA who have done something like it. Why is it? Over-eagerness? The thrill of anticipation? Or just impatience? Probably a combination of all three. I was quite annoyed with myself, because 31 miles carrying a pack is a fair distance, and I knew I would have to really crack on to get the distance done before darkness. Anyway, on I cracked, and those first few miles are very easy, following the great River Tyne and going underneath the six famous bridges across the river when I reached Newcastle. There is then a diversion to go through a country park before returning to the river for a couple of miles before leaving it and climbing up to the hilltop village of Heddon-on-the-Wall, where I bought a very tasty filled bap for my lunch in the delicatessen. I was in a rush, so I decided against a 60-yard diversion to see the first section of the wall actually visible on the walk, correctly figuring that I would be seeing plenty of it later.

The next 16 miles were very straight, running a few yards from the B6318 for just about the whole way. Initially I did find this a bit tedious, as I was never out of earshot or sight of traffic, and there were also several ladder stiles to cross. But as I walked on, the scenery improved, literally opening out and becoming wilder and panoramic. I was now a good 30 minutes from that day's destination (a bunkhouse at Green Carts farm, near the village of Chollerford) and it was past 6pm. I diverted from the path and

followed roads to Green Carts, missing another opportunity to see (and walk beside) the actual wall. I got to Green Carts at 6.35pm. It had been pretty taxing day.

Day 2: Green Carts farm-Sandishike farm, near Walton - 28 miles.

Although I walked three fewer miles, this was a much tougher day, because of the terrain and the weather. I left the farm, and pretty soon I was back on the trail - and walking alongside a section of Hadrian's Wall. When you first see the wall, and walk alongside it, it is quite amazing to think you are following in the footsteps of Romans who built the wall the best part of 2,000 years ago. You are also in the Northumberland National Park and the scenery is wild, rugged and spectacular, with fabulous views all around. My problem was very strong winds which made it an effort to remain upright, let alone walk. Also I was fairly high up and very exposed, which made it worse. But the walking was excellent. Approaching Housesteads - the famous Roman fort - I could actually walk on the wall itself, which was a memorable experience.

Here the route coincides with the Pennine Way, which I had walked twice before. It is all up and down as you follow the wall, and there are a few sharp little climbs. After about 12 miles the elevation decreased fairly substantially, which meant the wind wasn't so strong and the going was easier. Also the scenery wasn't quite so wild, although still very good. At Thirlwall Castle (not Roman - it was built in the 12th century), the walk becomes altogether more rural. When I reached the village of Gilsland the rain, which had been forecast, started and remained with me for the rest of that day's walk. Fortunately it was just drizzle, so I didn't get a real soaking.

The route frequently runs alongside sections of the wall, and the countryside becomes increasingly rural. I reached Sandysike, a farm near the village of Walton where I had booked to stay in another bunkhouse, at 6.30pm. The last mile was along a road, which was a blessing in the rain. That day's walk had taken me almost as long to do as the previous day's walk. But it had been another very satisfying day.

Day 3: Sandysike farm-Bowness-on-Solway (25 miles).

The previous day's rain had not been hard, and there was a good log fire in the bunkhouse where I stayed, so my clothes were more or less dry when I set off. It was a bit wet underfoot, but the sun was coming out - and the forecast was that it would stay out. This was an easy, low level walk in near perfect walking conditions. Although you are walking on the line of Hadrian's Wall, you do not see the wall itself, but I was rewarded with some fantastic views across the Solway Firth to Scotland for the last few miles.

I set off just before 9am, walking with a very pleasant guy called Chris, from Sussex, who had been staying in the B&B at the farm (I tried to do a salesman's job on the LDWA with Chris, who lives in Shoreham in Sussex, but when I told him about some of the distances we walk, I got the impression he felt the LDWA was probably not for him - although I did urge him to get onto the website for Sussex Group, so I hope I'm wrong). Chris was doing the 11 miles to Carlisle, and I was doing more than twice that distance, so after walking a few miles together in pleasantly rural Cumbrian surroundings, we parted company so that I could crack on. It was easy walking, the route visiting the River Eden before crossing a bridge over the M6 and then reaching the Eden again which you follow into and through Carlisle.

The riverside walking was making for rapid progress, and when I eventually left the river, at a village called Beaumont, the route made a gradual climb which revealed the most glorious views across the Firth of Forth to the Southern Uplands of Scotland - views which remained with me for the rest of the walk.

By now it was a gloriously sunny day, and I was considering changing into my shorts (which I decided not to do, thus saving any locals from the sight of my horrible legs!) The route took me to Burgh (which locals pronounce Bruff) by Sands, and there was then a long, straight stretch of road bashing for the next couple of miles. I didn't mind the road bashing at all, because of the constant stunning views across the water. At Drumburgh the route makes a short diversion from the road, taking a track and field paths to the village of Glasson, then there is a pleasant wooded track to Port Carlisle (which is nothing like as grand as the name sounds, as the port had a very short life, the shifting sands around it making it just about unusable as a port). The last mile and a bit to Bowness-on-Solway is along the minor road, and the Hadrian's Wall Path officially ends at the sea wall, known as The Banks, with a seated shelter which is ideal to enjoy more of those wonderful views of Scotland's Southern Uplands. I had a drink and a meal at the very friendly King's Arms pub in the village, whose landlord got me to sign the Hadrian's Wall Path book, before getting the last bus (which left at 7.17pm) to Carlisle and the B&B I had booked.

It had been a fairly hard but excellent three day walk. And I must thank John Grace, from the White Cliffs Ramblers, for giving me the idea of doing the Hadrian's Wall Path in three days. John completed the walk in three days last year, he loaned me his guide book and he gave me some very useful advice about the scenery, the terrain and the accommodation - and he also took the two photographs above. I must also thank Kent Group member John Goodwin for invaluable advice with my travel arrangements.

CAPEL BATTERY SITE VICTORY

KENT walkers have achieved a notable victory at the battery site at Capel, where part of the White Cliffs Challenge has been routed in at least one previous year. The site, so called because it housed three big guns during the Second World War, was designated open access land under the Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act, but the landowner had fenced it off. Members of the White Cliffs Ramblers, to which a few members of LDWA Kent Group belong, reported the matter to KCC, which put in gates, which the landowner promptly (and illegally) fenced off. The landowner was taken to magistrates court and was given 60 days to remove the obstructions. This is believed to be the first case of legal action taken under the CROW act.



Actions of the White Cliffs Ramblers received warm praise at The Ramblers' Kent annual general meeting, held at Brockhill Performing Arts College at Saltwood a few days after the court case, and hosted by the White Cliffs group. The Ramblers' new national chief executive Benedict Southworth said at the meeting: "You (the White Cliffs group) stuck at it when people put up obstructions over open access land, and dumped a huge pile of earth there." Robert Peel, The Ramblers' Kent secretary, said: "We can be exceedingly grateful to the White Cliffs group for their vigilance in spotting what was going on. It is The Ramblers at their best." White Cliffs Ramblers chairman Margaret Lubbock said: "This is great news for walkers as it means that the public will again be able to enjoy this piece of Kent countryside. "Open access land is there for everyone to use and it is sad that the entire 13 acres of this site has been fenced off for the past two years. "We are pleased that the magistrates' court saw fit to return this scenic and historic setting to the public." The 60 days to remove the obstructions allow Mr Button to apply to Natural England, the government body which administers open access land, for parts of the site to be exempt from open access restrictions.



CHANGING THE EAST KENT LANDSCAPE

ON Sunday March 11 East Kent changed forever, when the cooling towers at Richborough - part of the landscape since the power station they served was opened in 1962 - were blown up. The towers had been a very distinctive part of the landscape, visible for miles and miles around. Of course, they could be seen from lots of LDWA social walks. In fact one of the most panoramic views of the towers was from the Saxon Shore Way at Bishopstone, near Herne Bay, easily the best part of 15 miles away. The towers were even once seen from France (admittedly in exceptionally clear conditions) on one of our summer French challenges. With Richborough Power Station closing in 1996, the three towers and the chimney were redundant, and it was inevitable they would be demolished at some stage. Demolition was agreed by Thanet District Council in January this year, and the towers came down less than two months later in controlled explosions which took less than 30 seconds. The countryside in East Kent just won't be the same, and neither will some of our social walks which went close - and not so close - to them. The excellent picture of the demolition was taken by Katie Garrod.

THE FOUR PITS WALK (or how Joy Davies managed to go wrong twice, then take a bus which missed the rest of us - while not even doing half of the walk) by Graham Smith

THERE have been a few incidents on the Four Pits Walk since Kent Group members of the LDWA first completed it in 2007. But for adventure, it will be hard to beat what happened when it was walked as part of our social walks programme on March 3. The walk, as many Kent Group members know, links the county's former pits of Chislet, Betteshanger, Tilmanstone and Snowdown, and has been an Anytime Challenge since 2010. I put it on our social walks programme in early March realising that, at that time of year, it would involve some night walking. In the past it had been been on in late spring or mid-summer, with night walking at a minimum. I also figured that people interested in the walk might welcome a walk of that length as training for the Hundred. And as it happened, half of those who turned up at Fordwich at 8am had entered the Hundred, so they felt the same way. Of those who turned up who weren't entering the Hundred, there was our Joy Davies. It might put what I am going to write about her in some context if I say that she didn't plan to walk the entire route, having walked it before. I picked Joy up near Fowlmead Country Park, where she left her car, and we drove to the start at Fordwich, with Joy planning to walk back to where she had left her car.

The walk starts with a couple of miles alongside the River Stour, before going to the villages of Westbere and Hersden, the latter being the village which served the pit of Chislet. Towards the end of Hersden, there is a diversion of a few hundred yards to see the remains of some of the pit workings. Everyone took this diversion except Joy, who had seen the workings before and was not too impressed with them. Fair enough, Joy is more interested in the walk itself than any connections with the industrial heritage of our county. Now Joy - and she won't mind my saying this - is not only one of the bluntest people I know, she isn't blessed with exceptional patience. So Joy didn't fancy waiting for a few minutes. Instead she walked on, in the expectation that we would catch her up. The problem is, she didn't have a route description and she didn't have a map...

So the rest of us returned and walked on. We didn't see Joy, but she rang me on my mobile as we were approaching the hamlet of Chitty, to say she had gone straight on instead of taking a right turn shortly after setting off again. Fortunately for her, she found someone who pointed her in the right direction, and also made her a cup of coffee. She said she would meet us at our first planned stop, Grove Ferry. We stopped there for a few minutes, with no sign of Joy, so we moved on. A few minutes later I had a call from her to say she had gone straight on again instead of taking a right turn, and was in Sarre - which is not even on the route of the walk. She said there was no problem. She would take bus to Sandwich and walk to Eastry, where we planned to stop for lunch.

So we marched on, reaching Stodmarsh and Wickambreaux (where Richard Frost had joined us, having got there by public transport) and were walking through Wingham, when I had another call from her. She asked where we were and I said Wingham. She said she was on a bus and had just gone through Wingham. If she had realised we were so close to Wingham, she would have got off and rejoined us. So we walked on and Joy rode on in the bus ... and we did meet up again at Eastry. Joy had gone to Sandwich and walked there.

For the next part of the walk, everything was straightforward - just about the only time on the walk it was. We walked to Finglesham and then Fowlmead Country Park, built on the site of Betteshanger the last pit to close, and outside which is the Waiting Miner Statue. Then we moved on to the villages of Betteshanger and Northbourne, where Joy departed.

We walked on to Tilmanstone and the site of the pit that took its name from that village, before going on to Nonington, and our next stop, the Royal Oak. We didn't stop long there, because it was then well after 5pm and rapidly getting darker. So after 15 minutes we set off again, going past the site of our third pit - Snowdown - and then following the road through Aylesham - the village which served that pit. By then it was getting on for 7pm and the sun had well and truly disappeared. So we had 7-8 miles to go in the dark, and although I had never walked the route at night before, I wasn't troubled, because I do know it and I had the route description with me. We took a wrong line (should have followed the compass bearing on the RD - lesson there), heading for a gap in a hedge. Unfortunately what followed the gap in the hedge didn't lead to a bridle path, as expected, so instead we crossed the field ahead of us and - going purely on instinct - we zigged and zagged our way to Adisham. The next couple of miles were relatively plain sailing, until, a short time after we had left Bekebourne, Nicola Foad pointed out that there were eight torches and not 10. Bob Field and Richard Frost were nowhere to be seen. It was, of course, completely dark and we had just crossed a field. I knew Bob had my mobile number but I didn't have his - and I had not had any calls. So we - or rather me, as walk leader - had to make a decision. I decided we should walk on, figuring that A) Bob would ring me some time, B) they were both experienced walkers who had done a fair bit of night walking, and C) wherever they were could not be too far from a road which would (sooner or later) lead them to another road back to Fordwich. We reached Littlebourne, where we had a quick stop, and then walked the last three miles through woods and the Stour Valley Walk back to Fordwich, getting there at 9.15pm, meaning the walk had taken us just over 13 hours.

There was still no sign of Richard or Bob, and I obviously didn't feel too good about it. Suddenly I had a call from Richard, to say he had walked to Canterbury and had taken the train back to his home in Deal. He said Bob had been feeling bad, and they had walked to Littlebourne together, but then somehow they had parted company, and he just didn't know where Bob had got to. I was a bit concerned, and decided to drive to Littlebourne from Fordwich along the road I figured Bob would take, assuming he was walking along the road. After about a mile I saw a figure shuffling along, looking as if he had walked the best part of 40 miles - and it was Bob. I offered to give him a lift back to Fordwich, but in true LDWA spirit, he wouldn't hear of it. He had started the walk and he was going to finish it. So all's well that ended well, and well done Bob.

But on a practical level, Nicola Foad made a very good suggestion that in future, on a long walk that is likely to go into the night, it would be a very good idea to get people's mobile numbers at the start, just in case of mishaps.

* The Four Pits Walk is a 40-mile Anytime Challenge, for which a certificate is awarded, and a completion badge is available for £2. Anyone fancying having a go at it can contact me on the above telephone number and e-mail address, and I can send out a route description.

COURSES IN NAVIGATION AND MAP WORK SKILLS

DANNY Crump, Chelmsford Mountaineering Club secretary and chief instructor at UK Mountain Leader based in Essex, has informed us of the skills courses he is running in over the next few months.

This summer UKML will be providing several walking days and weekend courses, both locally and in the mountains, with a focus on navigation and map work skills. The courses are aimed at walkers wishing to learn more about safe practice on the hills, navigation techniques and route planning. The courses are also suitable for aspirant leaders wanting to refresh the skills required in gaining a Mountain or Walking Group Leaders Award.

UKML is a collective of local mountain leaders and climbing instructors, offering mountaineering skills training courses, weekend trips and expeditions throughout the UK, aiming to promote safe practice in the mountains through teaching essential skills needed to venture into more remote areas in the British Isles.

Brief details are: Summer Navigation Skills Days - May 5, June 17, June 23, all based at venues in Essex; Weekend Navigation Skills Courses - May 12-13, North Wales, May 2-3 and May 26-27, June 30-July 1, North Wales.

COMEDY CORNER by Bill Gillibrand

BILL has sent in the following from the Bromley Ramblers programme which may amuse members:

A little old lady in the nursing home holds up her clenched fist and announces: "Anyone who can guess what I have in my closed hand can sleep with me tonight." An elderly gentleman calls out "An elephant!" "Close enough" she replies.

... and by Ivan Waghorn

Quotes to remember:

You don't stop walking because you get old.

You get old because you stop walking.

Pain is temporary, quitting LASTS for ever.

When you have had to drop out of a 100 event you will remember it for ever. I know.

... and by Neal O'Rourke

BRITISH HUMOUR IS DIFFERENT

These are classified ads, which were actually placed in UK newspapers:

FREE YORKSHIRE TERRIER

Eight years old. Hateful little horror. Bites

FREE PUPPIES

1/2 Cocker Spaniel, 1/2 sneaky neighbour's dog.

FREE PUPPIES. Mother is a Kennel Club registered German Shepherd. Father is a Super Dog, able to leap tall fences in a single bound.

COWS, CALVES: NEVER BRED. Also 1 gay bull for sale.

JOINING NUDIST COLONY! Must sell washer and dryer £100.

WEDDING DRESS FOR SALE. Worn once by mistake. Call Stephanie.

FOR SALE BY OWNER. Complete set of Encyclopaedia Britannica, 45 volumes. Excellent condition, £200 or best offer. No longer needed, got married, wife knows everything.

NEW ADDRESSES

IT looks like the gremlins crept into the list of Kent Group members which went out with the last newsletter, which carried Keith Warman's old email address.

Also, secretary Graham Smith changed address (as opposed to email address) just before Christmas, after the list of Kent Group members had been compiled.

Members who change their addresses and/or email addresses are asked to let new membership secretary Nick Dockree know so records can be updated. Otherwise they run the risk of having their email messages as failed, with their address not being recognised, as happened with Keith. Apologies, Keith.

CROSSWORD set by Shirley Higgins

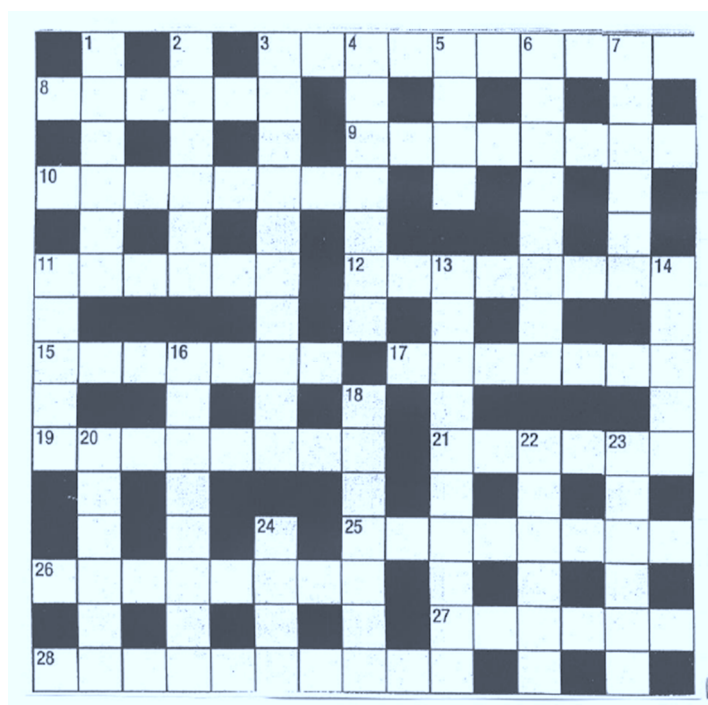
Winners of the December crossword were Pat and Bryan Clarke.

ACROSS

- 3. Strange spur held in street for Kent village (10).
- 8. Painful limb when dam bar broke (3, 3).
- 9. Perhaps coils are not good in excess (8).
- 10. Corresponding analogy (8).
- 11. One in unruly sharp district (6).
- 12. Pablo or José? (8).
- 15. Could be a celtic mineral (7).
- 17. Limestone seen circling a great lake in Asia initially (7).
- 19. Weird love area for skin balm (4, 4).
- 21. Flexible due to activity plus PE (6).
- 25. Soft edge went up for flower (8).
- 26. Party for last five perhaps (8).
- 27. Refuse babies! (6).
- 28. Maybe need crossing to start Gatcliff (10).

DOWN

- 1. Is able to have advantage over a country (6).
- 2. Silly mails about a sausage! (6).
- 3. Tiny landing place on Reading Sewer (5, 5).
- 4. Surround cage (7).
- 5. Herb found first down in Little London (4).
- 6. Revolt on a hill? (8).
- 7. Penetrate south gardens at centre of Bethersden (6).
- 11. Elf at a top drawer (5).
- 13. Classic bee could be within reach (10).
- 14. Francis raked randomly (5).
- 16. Dear French have it on near Sandgate (8).
- 18. Mottled fruit seen in outskirts of Deptford (7).
- 20. Tale of a foot? (6).
- 22. One from Penzance? (6).
- 23. Pay attention! 50 is 10! (6).
- 24. Finished! In recovery? (4).



December answers

ACROSS: 8 Script, 9 Lavender, 10 Pentagon, 11 Impala, 12 Stack, 14 Feta, 15 Pith, 18 Baffled, 19 Plastic, 21 Pens, 22 Trot, 23 Dirty, 24 Collar, 26 Gardener, 29 External, 30 Secret.

DOWN: 1 Acre, 2 Fisticuffs, 3 Stag, 4 Blunder, 5 Avoidable, 6 Idea, 7 Breach, 13 Tease, 15 Pestilence, 16 Twist, 17 Westering, 20 Howgill, 21 Pucker, 25 Late, 27 Rust, 28 Even.



Pat Clarke, Phil Butler and Alan Stewart at CP 3



Peter Johnson at CP3



Andrew Boulden at CP 3



Approaching CP 3



Peter Marien, Bill Gillibrand and Duncan Brice at CP 4



Brian Buttifant, Phil Butler and Michael Headley
at the Finish

Sevenoaks Circular 2012 - *Photographs by Bryan Clarke and Eric Rolfe*



Bough Beech Reservoir, taken on the Sevenoaks Circular



Sevenoaks Circular kitchen staff - from left: Shirley Gill, Roger Dean, Nick Dockree and Roz Dean

Photographs by Eric Rolfe