

LONG DISTANCE WALKERS ASSOCIATION – Kent Group

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

NEWSLETTER



Nicola Foad, Peter Jull and Mike Pursey at the end of the Time Ball Walk

Number 90



April 2013

www.ldwakent.org.uk/



New Year on the South Downs, *photos by Liz Davies*

KENT GROUP SOCIAL WALKS APR to AUG 2013

Sun Apr 7 Zulu 23

c23ml. Meet 09.00 at Walmer Castle c.p. GR TR379501 Maps: Exp 138, 150. Lunch stop at Ash. L: Richard Frost.

Sun Apr 14 Fuller's Frolic

c20ml. Meet 09.00 at Hastings Country Park at top, just off Fairlight Road GR TQ858118 Map: Exp 124. Pub stop at Udimore, food available. L: Neal O'Rourke.

Sat Apr 27 Cinque Ports Challenge

c100km. Meet 09.00 at Sandwich rly stn GR TR333576 Maps: Exp 124, 125, 138. An unsupported walk from Sandwich to Hastings, linking the Cinque Ports and associated towns. Finish at Hastings rly stn. Includes night walking - bring warm clothing and torch. Several pubs and cafes along the route for refreshments. For more details contact L: Graham Smith.

Sun May 19 White Cliffs Anti-dote

24.3 ml. Meet 10.05 Kearsney Abbey, in front of tea rooms GR TR288438 Map: Exp 138. Free parking. 08.05 train from Victoria will be met at nearby Kearsney rly stn. Steep climbs near start followed by the White Cliffs of Dover from the west. Return through downland countryside. Pub lunch stop. L: Peter Jull.

Sun Jun 9 River Stour Nettle Walk

c20ml. Meet 09.30 at Worth Cricket Pitch GR TR332560 Map: Exp 150. Lunch stop at Pluck's Gutter. L: Richard Frost.

Sun Jun 30 Heart of the Weald Marshals' Walk

For details contact Neil Higham.

Sat Jul 6 Summer French Challenge

c30ml or 23ml from Coquelles after taking Le Shuttle at 07.00 approx. A circular walk in the Nord Pas de Calais visiting the viewpoints of Mont de Couple and Cap Blanc Nez. Lunch stop at Wissant. If interested, please contact leader by June 8 LATEST, and again by June 29 for meet time and place (or check Kent Group website). Don't forget your passport! L: Graham Smith.

Fri Jul 12 Summer Night Walk

c18ml. Meet 21.30 for 22.30 start at the Five Bells PH, Ringwould, on the A258 Dover - Deal Road GR TR359483, Map: Exp 138. L: Graham Smith.

Sun Jul 14 Heart of the Weald Main Event

See Events Diary

Sun Jul 28 A Different View of the White Cliffs

24.7 ml. Meet 10.15 at Western Heights c.p., Dover GR TR313410 Map: Exp 138. Free parking. 08.08 train from Charing X will be met at Dover Priory rly stn. Chance to see the White Cliffs of Dover from below and then climb them followed by the picturesque Alkham Valley. Return through downland countryside with views of France near end. Pub lunch stop. L: Peter Jull

Sun Aug 4 Cream Tea Walk

c20ml. Meet 09.00 at Grafty Green GR TQ873488 Map: Exp 137. Park on roadside. Pub stop at George Inn, Leeds village, food available. L: Neal O'Rourke.

Sat Aug 10 South Downs Thirty

c30ml. Meet 08.00 at Eastbourne, western end of promenade (B2103) by South Downs Way marker post GR TV600972. Map: Exp 123. Park nr school on left. A circular walk on the South Downs via the Seven Sisters, the Cuckmere valley, Firle Beacon and Willingdon Hill. Lunch stop at Alfriston (c22ml). Food also available at Firle (c17ml). L: Mike Pursey.

Sun Aug 18 White Cliffs Challenge (28ml) Marshals' Walk

For details contact Mike Pursey.

Sat Aug 24 The Three Pits Walk (Deal Walking Festival walk).

c18ml. Meet 08.30 at Northbourne Village Hall GR TR334523 Maps: Exp 138, 150. A walk visiting the former Kent mines of Betteshanger, Tilmanstone and Snowdown. Pub stop. L: Graham Smith.

Sun Aug 25 Timeball and Telegraph Trail (Deal Walking Festival walk).

c. 14.5ml. Take 15a bus from South Street, Deal, at 10.05am. To commence the last section of the Timeball & Telegraph Trail from the Greenwich timeball. L: Peter Jull.

Monday August 26 Evening walk with fish and chips (Deal Walking Festival walk).

c 10ml. Meet 5.30pm at Walmer Station (GR TR 363503). Maps OS Landranger 179 or Explorer 138. Evening walk to Dover, having fish and chips at the end (not in a restaurant) and taking a train back to Walmer from Dover Priory Station.

Sun Sep 8 White Cliffs Challenge.

See Events Diary.

COVER STORY

PETER Jull, Mike Pursey and Nicola Foad are pictured by the Greenwich Observatory at the end of the last stretch of Peter's Timeball and Telegraph Trail. The trio were the only three walkers who completed all five stretches of the 103-mile walk, which has been devised by Peter to link the timeballs at Deal and Greenwich, going over nine hills on which stood the predecessor mechanical telegraph.

The five stretches were Deal-Chilham (27 miles) on September 30, Chilham-Teynham (19 miles) on October 14, Teynham-Rochester (21 miles) on November 11, Rochester-Dartford (19 miles) and Dartford-Greenwich (17 miles) on February 17.

On the last section we were accompanied by several members of London Group.

Everyone who did all or any parts of the TTT will agree that it is an excellent and unique walk - very well thought out and planned, with a very good route description. So much credit is due to Peter for devising it.

Peter is planning to put the trail on again, going from Greenwich to Deal this time. He is also putting on a 14.5-mile section going to Deal as part of Deal Walking Festival on Sunday August 25 (see social walks programme above). Further details will appear in the next newsletter.

YOUR COMMITTEE (AND OVERDUE SUBS)

AT our annual general meeting, the existing committee were re-elected. The only change is that Nick Dockree has handed over responsibility for membership to Neil Higham. Nick is staying on the committee. But this means Neil is now responsible for collecting subscriptions - and many members are overdue with those. Please get your subs off to Neil as soon as you can.

Committee details as follows:

Chairman - Brian Buttifant,

Secretary/newsletter editor - Graham Smith,

Treasurer/membership secretary - Neil Higham,

Walks secretary - Mike Pursey

Webmaster - Michael Headley,

Members

Phil Butler, Joy Davies, Nick Dockree, Stephanie le Men, Mike Ratcliff.

If members have any issues they wish to raise about the organisation of Kent Group of the LDWA, then please contact a member of the committee.

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.

PAT CLARKE 1934-2012

KENT Group lost a very valued member, supporter and checkpointeer when Pat Clarke, wife of Bryan, lost her battle with liver cancer last November.

Pat was always there, with Bryan, to help me with the Sevenoaks Circular and at other group events. She also helped at Kent checkpoints on LDWA 100s all over the last three decades.

As a trained teacher, she quietly organised us to make the events so successful. Her help will be greatly missed by all who worked with her at events.

Another of Pat's passions/talents was writing short stories, having had some published.

The large number at her funeral demonstrated the high esteem in which Pat was held by her friends - Kent Group was well represented.

Our sympathies and support are extended to Bryan and his family.

Brian Buttifant



NEWS OF KENT CHALLENGE WALKS

Sevenoaks Circular

Unfortunately this year's Sevenoaks Circular was hit by some of the worst weather we have had in the entire history of the event - as have so many LDWA events over the last few months.

But despite the 70-plus no-shows (a figure which was hardly unexpected) those who braved the cold enjoyed it, and the feedback from walkers about the route and the checkpoints was very pleasing.

We won't have the date of next year's Sevenoaks Circular until the rugby club issues its 2013-14 fixture list, so we should have it in time for the next newsletter. But we are likely to repeat the same routes (of 30, 20 and 15 miles, and which have proved very popular) we have had for the last two years.

Heart of the Weald

THIS year's Weald challenge walk is on July 14, and will be based at Wadhurst. There will be three routes - 26, 20 and 15 miles. The marshals' walk will be on June 30. Marshals will be needed, so please contact organiser Neil Higham.

White Cliffs Challenge

THIS year's WCC will be on September 8, with routes of 30 miles and 15 miles, and will again be at St Margaret's hall. The marshals' walk will be on August 18. It will be the same route as it was the last time we put on the 30 and 15 mile WCC, in

2011. The committee has agreed that the route description will be online before the event, the first time we will have done this.

KENT SURREY SUSSEX TRIPLE CHALLENGE

THIS year Sussex Group are holding the Sussex Stride, the next leg of the Triple Challenge of 50-mile walks, along with our own White Cliffs Challenge and Surrey Group's Surrey Tops.

The Sussex Stride will be held over the weekend of September 21-22 and will be at the usual venue of Longhill School, Rottingdean. The marshals' walk will be held over the bank holiday weekend of August 24-25. As usual, we will be organising a checkpoint, with a few of us taking part in the marshals' walk. This will be at East Dean, and will be about halfway.

Anyone interested in marshalling on the event is asked to contact secretary Graham Smith - details above.

Next year will be the return of the Surrey Tops, which will be held on the third weekend of September, with the marshals' walk held over the August bank holiday weekend.

KENT GROUP'S 40th ANNIVERSARY

NEXT year - as people who have read the excellent LDWA 40th anniversary edition of Strider may know - is our own 40th anniversary.

We are looking at various ways of marking our special birthday. The main one would be organising a one-off Wealden Waters challenge. This is a 100k walk which was Kent Group's first challenge walk of more than 50 miles, and which was last held in 2003. This will replace our usual Weald challenge walk which takes place during the summer, and at the moment we are just starting to plan for it. In addition to the 100k route, there may also be shorter routes of 40 miles and one of 15-20 miles, the latter aimed at encouraging new members. A special project group is going to be formed to organise this.

Apart from the Wealden Waters, we are also looking at organising a social event, preceded by a short walk, to which longstanding members of Kent Group, who may have left the area, will be invited.

Also, newsletter editor Graham Smith is looking at producing a special edition next year, with articles about the formative years of our group. So, if anyone has memories of our early days which they would like to share with other members (and those memories can be good, bad or indifferent) please send them to Graham - details above.

More details about our 40th anniversary events will appear in the next newsletter.

CAMEL-TEIGN HUNDRED (Ivor's Dream).

THIS year's Hundred, organised by Cornwall and Devon Group, is almost upon us. Many Kent Group members have entered the event, which promises to be one of the best Hundreds in recent years.

Kent Group will be organising a checkpoint at Callington - 44 miles. As usual, marshalling on the Hundred is being co-ordinated by chairman Brian Buttifant. Anyone wishing to join Brian and Graham in marshalling on the event should contact Brian as soon as possible - details above.

VALLEYS HUNDRED

THE 2014 Hundred is being organised by South Wales Group, and we will be organising a checkpoint. This will be at Deri, and will be at 47 miles. Further details will appear in the next newsletters.

2018 HUNDRED

AS reported in previous newsletters, we have submitted a 'bid' to the national committee to host the 2018 Hundred. It would be a Cinque Ports Hundred, starting from Hastings and finishing in Dover. The event would actually be based at the Duke of York's Royal Military School, just outside Dover, and we would bus people to Hastings for the start. After leaving Hastings, the route would visit the Cinque Ports of New Romney, Hythe, Dover and Sandwich, and the Antient Towns of Rye and Winchelsea.

We gather a decision on 2018 will not be made until October next year, because the decision has not yet been made on the 2017 Hundred. This is likely to either be in Yorkshire or Scotland (it was last held in Scotland in 2010, many members will recall), with a decision being made this year.

We will keep you posted through the newsletter. If we do get the nod - and we understand we have been earmarked for it - then it will be a great thing for Kent Group, albeit one which will involve a lot of work from a lot of people.



MBE FOR OUR JACK

JACK Denness - whose many claims to fame include being a member of Kent Group of the LDWA - has been awarded the Member Of The Order Of The British Empire for services to charity.

Jack, now 77 and from Rochester, has completed more than 100 marathons, raising thousands for various charities.

A grandfather, Jack was awarded an MBE after raising thousands for children's charities by completing gruelling desert marathons. He said he was shocked the honour

had gone to an "ordinary fella".

Since he gave up smoking aged 45, the school caretaker has completed 12 135-mile Badwater Ultra marathons through the scorching Nevada desert heat of up to 55 degrees. In addition, "Death Valley Jack" has completed more than 100 marathons and scores of half marathons and a dozen London marathons to help raise cash for causes to help children



with conditions such as cerebral palsy. In total, he has raised more than £100,000, completing all his runs. The father-of-two, who is married to Mags, said of learning about the honour: "My first reaction was of disbelief. I thought it was a wind-up when I saw the letter with On Her Majesty's Service written on the envelope and inside it said it was from the Cabinet Office, I thought, 'Oh dear, what have I done wrong'." Then I read it and I was shocked they would give this to me. I'm just an ordinary fella from a humble background." His last endurance race was in 2010, aged 75, when he completed the race through Death Valley in California in 59 hours and 13 minutes. He broke his own record of being the oldest person to finish the race. Jack has now given up running but said he is still taking part in charity walks. Jack has also completed various LDWA events, and got part of the way round the Games Hundred last year. Well done Jack!

SUMMER FRENCH CHALLENGE

SATURDAY July 6 sees what is by common consent one of the highlights of the Kent Group social walks calendar - our Summer French Challenge. It will follow the same formula it has followed for the last few years - getting Le Shuttle to Coquelles, and leaving cars at the Auchan hypermarket before we do our walk. The walk is usually 23 miles, and includes the wonderful viewpoints of Mont de Couple and Cap Blanc-Nez. This year, for those who fancy it, we may well throw in an extra loop, to take in Cap Gris-Nez. Cap Gris-Nez is a very prominent spot, as it offers extensive views towards Boulogne one way and towards Calais the other. It is also the closest point of France to England, and for this reason it is where the Channel swimmers aim for. This loop would make the walk around 30 miles, although the 23-miler would still be available for those who want it. And the plan would still be to have a meal at some stage, either at lunchtime or before we go back, as well as time for a bit of shopping in Auchan. So people wishing to go are asked to book by June 8, as there will be a restricted number of places - see social walks programme above.

NEW YEAR ON THE SOUTH DOWNS

NINE LDWA members met at the start (or end, depending on how it is walked) of the South Downs Way at the end of Eastbourne promenade for Kent Group's annual New Year's Day walk.

This Kent Group tradition is now a good 10 years old, and is either a South Downs Way loop to Alfriston and back to Eastbourne, or it is Rye to Hastings and back. This year it was the SDW, and what a fabulous day it was. Conditions were ideal, with lovely sunny weather, although a little blowy, and the views were just about the clearest and most extensive we have ever had on this walk.

After meeting at 9am we followed the SDW to the Birling Gap before going over the Seven Sisters to the Cuckmere Valley, at the end of which were wonderful views of the South Downs stretching away to the west. On this walk we usually cross the valley and take the River Cuckmere to Alfriston, where we have lunch. But this year the rain of the previous two months had made our normal Cuckmere crossing impassable, as well as making the riverside path, which we would normally follow, extremely boggy. So we instead kept on the SDW to Exceat, and a short sharp climb up a slope for our first stop, with sunshine and fine views. We then kept on the SDW, past Westdean and Litlington, and then the road to the pretty village of Alfriston and our lunch stop.

We then went past Milton Street and started a long but steady ascent of Wilmington Hill, from the top of which we followed a very pleasant ridge before dropping down to our next stop, The Eight Bells at Jevington (where walk leader Graham was very glad the rest of the party indulged him and did not complain when he drank his beer). After that it was the Wealdway and the SDW back to Eastbourne, arriving at 4.30pm, while there was still plenty of daylight.

It was a memorable day, an ideal walking start to 2013, and many thanks to Liz Davies for supplying these excellent pictures of it which are on the inside front cover of this newsletter (and also appear in the current edition of Strider).

DOGS ON OUR WALKS

THERE has been some discussion at national level, prompted by a decision of one group not to have dogs on walks, about our four-legged friends. This led to a debate - some of it quite heated - on the national forum. It was also discussed at the last meeting of Kent Group committee.

There is an article about dogs on LDWA walks in the current Strider, and in Kent we adhere to the national guidelines whereby the decision of whether dogs should be allowed on a walk rests with the walk leader or organiser. We do get dogs on our challenge walks, and sometimes members bring them on social walks. There have been very, very few problems. Dogs on our walks have invariably been well behaved, with their owners keeping them under control, which means they have been on leads when the walk has gone into fields where there have been livestock. This is common sense, and it is what the vast majority of dog owners do anyway. If someone came on one of our walks with a dog and their pet ran loose in a field containing livestock, then they would be asked quite firmly to keep the animal on a lead. If they did not comply, then they would probably be told they neither they nor their dog would be welcome on one of our walks in future.

The rules for two Kent Group events - the White Cliffs Challenge and our summer Weald challenge - state that dogs are the responsibility of the owners. With our other event - the Sevenoaks Circular - we asked for people not to bring dogs because the walk takes place during the lambing season.

The group which banned dogs did so because of advice that if a dog accompanying a member on a walk causes an incident, there could be a problem with liability insurance. This appears to now have been superseded by the advice from the national committee.

For those Kent Group members who have dogs and sometimes take them on walks, they would be advised to check that their pets are covered by 'liability' (sometimes called 'third party') insurance. Again, this is common sense.

But the message from Kent is that dogs are welcome - providing they are well behaved.

FOUNDERS CHALLENGE

GORDON Parker, of London Group, has contacted us about this year's Founders Challenge, which takes place on October 20. The marshals' walk will be on Sunday September 1, and Gordon says that all those who wish to enter or marshal will be very welcome. Entries opened on April 1.

Perhaps we could get enough Kent members to organise a checkpoint. If anyone wishes to do so, please contact secretary

Graham Smith - details above.

In the meantime, please see www.ldwa.org.uk/London/W/2307/2013.html and for online entries www.sientries.co.uk/event.php?clid=Y&event_id=991

LONDON TO BRIGHTON 100k WALK - June 22-23

THE organisers of the above walk have contacted Kent Group, and invited members to take part in the event.

The walk must be completed in 24 hours, and is to raise money funds for the Blind Veterans UK charity, which supports blind ex-servicemen and women. It starts from Putney, in south-west London, and finishes at Ovingdean, Brighton.

One of the organisers, Aaron Tillyer, says: "This memorable 24 hours will take you from London along the trail footpaths of Surrey and Sussex to a momentous finish 100 kilometres later. The challenge comes to an end at the Blind Veterans UK centre in Ovingdean, Brighton, where you can celebrate the amazing achievement of the last day.

"The event is a fantastic personal challenge for anyone who wants to take part; experienced walkers, recreational strollers, or beginners who want to do something great for themselves and for charity.

"You can take part in the full 100km challenge as an individual or with a team of friends; whichever you choose you will be supported every step of the way."

For more details telephone the charity on 020 7616 7927 or visit its website www.walk100.org.uk

GROUP WALKS - TWO VIEWS

1) From Laurie Lowe

I HAVE been giving some thought to the request in the December newsletter for suggestions for ways of increasing the number of participants on group walks. I speak as a long-time member of the Kent Group, but one who is no longer able to contemplate taking part in LDWA social walks. I now find myself limited to a maximum of about 12 miles with a local Ramblers' group but can at least confirm that there is life after the LDWA! The pleasure to be gained when walking with, or occasionally leading, a group is much the same whether it is 12 miles or 25 miles. My comments are those of one who has spent many happy years with the Kent Group, whether on social walks, challenge walks or those bizarre winter night hikes! The most important factors to be taken into account when deciding whether or not to take part in a group walk are distance and pace. When browsing through the group programmes in Strider, it has often seemed to me that the Kent Group tends to undertake longer social walks than many other groups. I decided to check this impression by totting up the walk distances in the December 2012 Strider and finding the average distance for groups local to Kent. The results are as follows:-

Kent - 25.5

Essex & Herts - 18.5

Surrey - 17.8

Sussex - 17.5.

BBN - 15.5

I have ignored half-day walks, e.g. pre AGMs, marshals' walks for challenge events, etc. Perhaps more walks of around 18 miles may encourage more participants. Another important factor (in my opinion) is whether the group insists on staying together as a group, especially over the longer distances. I have an impression that in past accounts of the longer Kent Group sorties, there have been occasions when the initial group has become split and perhaps two groups of walkers have progressed separately. I believe that at the outset of a long walk, especially an overnight walk, it should be made clear that the group will make every effort to stay together and progress at the pace of the slowest. There may be circumstances when a person (or persons) is unable to continue and is forced to separate from the main group, but this should only be by mutual consent. I hope that my comments on the problem are not construed as being too critical and I look forward to hearing other views on the subject. I shall continue with my subs to the LDWA and the Kent Group, if only to be able to read the excellent group Newsletter. Keep up the good work!

2) From Liz Keeler

NOW that my pace has slowed (see The Aspect - Pace in the December Strider), I do feel social walks feel like mini challenge walks. Is this because our most active leaders until recently have been our best 100 milers and challenge walkers and use these walks as a bit of practice for main events?

I just feel everybody is thinking I am going too slow. I had a good turnout for my last Minnis Meander and everybody said they enjoyed it (8.30-4.30 - still time to spend with family?).

When I first joined 20 years ago, I did feel all the walks were in the west of the county, and I thoroughly enjoyed them. But then most of the committee were from that area. Now our most active leaders are from East Kent and, as the last newsletter said, petrol prices keep rising. Should we make more effort to car share?

Perhaps the walks organisers could ASK potential leaders from West Kent to lead a walk. People need to be asked as they will not volunteer, I find.

I did feel social walks were lovely, and I have not felt that for some time now. Is it only me?

I hope we can sort out the problem. It seems such a pity when we have more than 100 members but only 12 or so are active social walkers.

Graham Smith responds: thanks very much to Laurie and Liz for getting these views to us, and so promptly (they were both received by the newsletter editor within days of the last newsletter being posted out). There is no doubt that we sometimes appear to have a problem with social walks, and perhaps more people would be encouraged to go on them if more of us simply followed some basic walking etiquette:

1) Don't walk far ahead of the leader, as this can lead to walkers getting strung out and increases the risks of groups of walkers breaking up if there is a sudden bend. It can also appear quite rude and selfish, and is inconsiderate to the leader, who is responsible for not only leading the walk - but also for trying to ensure that everyone sticks together.

2) As Liz says above, social walks are not challenge walks, and really should not be used as practice walks for challenge events.

3) It might be an idea for walk leaders to appoint back markers on walks on which there are several walkers. This is common practice in ramblers groups, and was suggested at our AGM in January.

DEAL WALKING FESTIVAL

THE above takes place between Thursday August 22 and Wednesday August 28. For the past five years it has been organised by Alan Sutton, a member of LDWA Kent Group, who lives in Deal. Alan has now decided to hand over the event to the White Cliffs Ramblers, the branch of the Ramblers organisation responsible for south and east Kent. The festival is going to be considerably developed, and there will be some LDWA involvement, with Kent Group members Peter Jull and Graham Smith both putting on walks (details in our social walks programme above). A few years ago, Deal became the first town in the south of England to attain Walkers Are Welcome status, partly thanks to the annual walking festival. This year's festival will feature a range of different walks, from a one-and-a-quarter hour guided walk looking at the smugglers' haunts in Deal led by town historian Gregory Holyoake, to Graham Smith's 18-mile Three Pits Walk (which he has been leading for at least 20 years) visiting the sites of three of the Kent coal mines. There will be walks every day, including an evening walk to Dover, finishing up with fish and chips, and one of Peter Jull's Timeball and Telegraph Trail walks. The festival will end with a short walk on August 28, followed by a social event in a Deal pub. Most of the walks will be shorter than ours usually are, but Deal Walking Festival promises to be quite a big event, and it will certainly be good for us to be involved with it. We may even be able to recruit some more members. It is going to have its own website, which will have a link to the national Walkers Are Welcome website.

The entire festival walks programme will feature in the August newsletter

VICTORY FOR WALKERS AT CAPEL

WALKERS have finally won in a long-running battle over access to land adjoining the Battle of Britain memorial at Capel, close to the route of our own White Cliffs Challenge.

Last year a court told businessman John Button to remove obstructions he put over two gates to block access to the battery site, so called because it housed three big guns during the Second World War.

The site had been designated open access land under the Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act. It was the first time legal action had been taken under the act.

In actions which were totally confrontational, Mr Button fenced off the land, and ignored warnings from Kent County Council, which is the rights of way authority. When KCC installed gates to give access, Mr Button promptly blocked them off by putting wire across them and - just to reinforce his message - dumping huge mounds of earth there. KCC had no choice but to take Mr Button to court.

After he lost the court case, Mr Button applied to Natural England, the government body which administers open access land, for large parts of the site to be exempt from the ruling, thus still denying access to walkers.

But after negotiations with Mr Button, Natural England has ruled that 'a restriction of public access to the open access land at Capel battery would not be reasonable'.

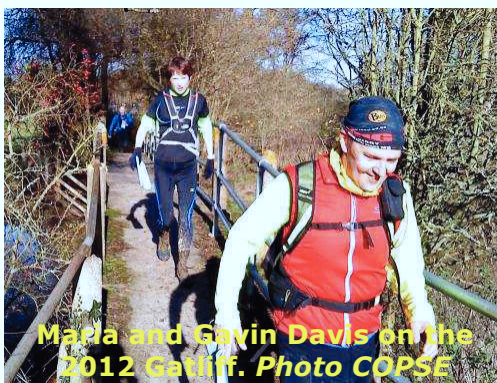
The site will be open, apart from a compound which Mr Button wants to develop.

The obstructions have been removed, and walkers are now free to roam on the site.

Members of the White Cliffs Ramblers - the branch of the ramblers organisation covering south and east Kent, which backed the legal action after reporting the obstructions, and to which several members of Kent Group of the LDWA belong - are delighted.

Chairman Margaret Lubbeck said: "Common sense prevails. We have the right to roam now on another small part of the White Cliffs."

So if anyone ever wonders why Kent Group of the LDWA is affiliated to the RA, this is all the reason we need. Well done to everyone who reported Mr Button's illegal actions to the rights of way authority.



Maia and Gavin Davis on the 2012 Gatliff. Photo COPSE

THAT GATLIFF

LIKE many people who have walked or run the Gatliff Marathon, my feelings about the event are quite ambivalent. When I first took part in the event, a good 15 years ago, I was walking with Mike Pursey and all was going well until, when we had done fewer than 10 miles, we went horribly wrong somewhere in the Ashdown Forest and we had to do a fair bit of extra walking on the road to get back on the route - by which time there was no way we were going to return to Edenbridge in the 10 hours required. Mike and I both blamed the route description for our unscheduled detour, and we were both not a little annoyed. We ended up retiring, but we didn't particularly care, as we were both quite peeved.

I entered the Gatliff a couple of years later and got round the 50 kilometre route in the 10 hours required, despite the heavy mud which is usually par for the course on the walk. Then I entered it the following year - 2003 - and again got round in the 10 hours. I remember enjoying that walk, as it was

nice bright day, a very good route and the route description was OK (although many people might argue that the words 'enjoy' and 'Gatliff' don't usually belong in the same sentence).

But after that, for various reasons, I gave the Gatliff a miss. Family commitments, holidays or other walks seemed to clash, and it's a long way from Deal to Edenbridge anyway, particularly when you want to get there for a 7am start. Also, I still had memories of my first Gatliff, so it's fair to say it has never been my favourite event.

Then, on the 2011 Founders' Challenge, I found myself walking with LDWA stalwart and Gatliff route maker Dick

Ockenden. It was the first time I had met Dick, and what a lovely guy he is. He has infectious enthusiasm for walking - enthusiasm so infectious that he persuaded me to enter the 2011 Gatliff, for which he had devised the route description. I walked a good half of the event with Dick, and thoroughly enjoyed it - the route was as good as Dick had said it would be, it was good clear day, with decent views, and it was pretty firm underfoot.

So I entered last year's Gatliff. It proved to be a day to remember, and I must say right away that the checkpoints were very good, with plenty of food and drink, and nice hot dogs at the end. Also, although I made at least five navigational errors on the day, in all honesty I would only blame one of these on route description interpretation - the others were all down to me and/or the people I was walking with at the time (sorry, Jan and Michael).

The issue with the 2012 Gatliff was what the entrants were walking or running on. There had been so much rain since September, which had soaked deep into the ground, compounded by more heavy rain in the week leading up to the event and several downpours on the previous day. I figured the event would be a tough one - and I can honestly say it turned out to be the toughest walk I did last year, including the Games 100, my 100k Cinque Ports Challenge and three 50-mile walks.

To say that it is tough walking for mile after mile after mile after mile on soft, rain saturated paths which were either going along field edges or across fields, is rather a massive understatement. It was very hard going, and extremely strength sapping. The puddles were pools, and the pools had become ponds. My feet had got pretty wet after an hour, so for the rest of the walk I didn't bother trying to avoid the pools/ponds. I just splashed straight through them.

Finding a track which had the semblance of feeling firm was a joy, and finding an actual road where you could walk normally (or something like it) was heaven.

I won't bore Kent LDWA members with too much detail of what happened. I walked the first few miles with Jan O'Rourke and Michael Headley, and the sun was out, so generally we were in reasonable spirits. Unfortunately we made two navigational errors, one of which gave us a fair bit of unnecessary ascent up Ide Hill. Then I made another error near checkpoint 3, the lunch stop at Chiddingstone (which I must say was excellent), and didn't see Jan and Michael again until we had finished.

I realised some time mid afternoon, at about the time I was getting to checkpoint 4 (35.2km), that to get back to Edenbridge in 10 hours there was going to have to be a fair bit of road walking. Unfortunately that was not to be - there were just more and more and more wet, boggy field paths. To add to my woes (and it must be said that I was hardly alone in having woes), going over one stile, I had an attack of muscle cramp in my right thigh, the first time this had ever happened to me on a challenge walk. And I had two more navigational errors, one with a group of people I was walking with, the other with a lady who usually runs and who was getting very annoyed about the mud and the route description.

I can't say I was getting very annoyed, but I knew by then I would not get back in 10 hours and in all honesty, I didn't care. I wanted to get back, and I knew the last few miles would be in darkness. The lady runner pressed on after the last checkpoint, so I was plodding on alone.

Darkness was just about descending so I got out my torch - to find that the batteries were flat. I wasn't best pleased, and think it's fair to say that I had had better days on challenge walks. Luckily, I met up with a group doing the 21.9 mile route who were being led by a guy from COPSE (Croydon Outdoor Pursuits & Social Events Group), which organises the Gatliff. This guy had done it scores of times and he knew the route very well, so I was lucky to find him. Like a good leader, he was keeping his group together. The pace was a bit slow for my liking, so a couple of miles later, when I spotted some torch beams in the distance, I moved on in their direction, to find they belonged to Kent Group's Maria and Gavin Davis. So I plodded the last couple of miles back to Edenbridge with them. I had got back in 10 hours 55 minutes, and to my pleasant surprise I was given a certificate (the Gatliff website says that the idea remains for the event to be completed within 10 hours, so were the organisers being especially understanding, due to the conditions underfoot? Perhaps they were).

The thing about the Gatliff is that it is a real challenge. Doing 50k or 31 miles (and I heard a couple of months later that one or two people with a GPS had made the distance 36.7 miles - which is a bit much, even by Gatliff standards) in the underfoot conditions faced on November 25 last year was always going to tax the fittest of walkers, and it certainly taxed this walker. But if it was going to be easy, it wouldn't be a challenge. The organisation was very good, so my thanks go to COPSE, particularly the guy (whose name I am afraid I do not know) who rescued me when my torch packed up. If I hadn't met him, I don't like to think what time I would have got back to Edenbridge.

I said after last year's Gatliff that I would probably enter this year's event, obviously hoping for better conditions. If the weather leading up to it is similar to last year's, then I may think seriously about it - but, as Michael Headley told me, I may enter it anyway.

POSTSCRIPT: I said after last year's Gatliff that it was the stuff of nightmares and, lo and behold, two days later, I had a nightmare about it. I dreamed I was walking along a very soggy field edge and approaching a huge puddle which I just splashed into and went up to my head. Now just how sad is it to dream about a walk like that?

Graham Smith

ANOTHER WALK IN BELGIUM

I BLAME Jill Green. A couple of years ago, while on a challenge walk somewhere, I was walking with Jill and she casually mentioned if I might be interested in doing a challenge walk in Belgium. She told me the terrain in Belgium was likely to be quite flat, but she said the walks there were 'quite different' and a very good experience. I'm usually up for a challenge so I indicated I would be keen - then a few days later, the post delivered me an entry form for the 100k Euroregio, based at Welkenradt, sent by Jill. Jill followed this with a phone call, exhorting "You are coming, aren't you?" To cut a long story short, I did come, and enjoyed the walk, and did another 100k Belgian challenge walk a couple of months later.

Challenge walks in Belgium are, as Jill said, 'quite different' but the Belgian challenge walkers are quite similar to British challenge walkers - people who love walking and don't mind putting their bodies through the



ordeals of huge distances, and (just like us) lots of them are probably a little barmy. The 100k walks usually start at 9pm, so you walk straight into the night. And instead of route descriptions, you follow arrows. There are checkpoints, which the Belgians call *controle*, which have decent refreshments on offer. These refreshments sometimes include beer.

A year ago Jill wrote to me to tell me about another Belgian challenge walk - Marche du Souvenir de la Souffrance, Houffalize-Plombières, taking place on December 14-15. I didn't think much more about it until November, when I realised by walking diary was clear. So I mentioned this to Michael Headley, and we decided to enter.

The Marche du Souvenir de la Souffrance is an annual linear walk of 110k, alternating with Houffalize-Plombières one year and Plombières-Houffalize the next. Instead of following arrows, you are required to walk with a leader, and you can choose the group pace which suits you, ranging from 6.7km an hour to 6km an hour. Jill advised Michael and myself not to go with the 6km an hour group, as she felt this would be too slow for us. So we instead opted to join the 6.3km an hour group.

Although this might sound fast - and I suppose it is pretty fast, as it's at least four miles an hour - you are walking on road and not across muddy fields, so you can crack on. Also, you are not supposed to walk in front of your group leader or to drop behind the back marker (of which more later).

Anyway, Michael and I took the Eurostar train from Ebbsfleet to Brussels, then got another train to Lieges, where we stayed in a youth hostel. Then in the morning we got a bus for Houffalize. I was slightly concerned when I saw the snow shortly after the bus got out of Liege, but we had come too far too turn back, and in any case the forecast was for rain, which would melt the snow.

The walk started at a school at Houffalize, where we met four members of the LDWA's Irregulars group, who had also been encouraged to do the walk by Jill, and who had made their own way there.

The faster groups set off first, and left at about 7.15pm. We had some light rain, which was melting the snow, and it was a nice clear night. So as night walks go it was very pleasant. We came across *controle* every few kilometres, where we had something to eat and/or drink, and then cracked on. There was one problem after about 20km, when the leader missed our turning, and there was a heated discussion with some of the other Belgians in the group about where we should have gone. It didn't take too long to sort the problem, and on we cracked.

After about 35km, myself and Sue Clements - a member of The Irregulars group - had a real problem. Ironically it happened on the only part of the walk where we left the road. We had diverted from the road to take a forest track. The track was a bit rutted and we were walking on slush, so progress was not quick. Then we started to go uphill. Light rain had started again, and I had a quick stop to put my waterproof on. Sue, who is not a quick hill walker, was behind me. We were at the back of the group, with the back marker in front. Sue then had a slip, so I waited for her, by which time the back marker had disappeared. We didn't think this would be a problem, as we were sure we would catch the group up. But then, after another couple of hundred yards, we came to a T-junction - and we could not see the back marker, or anyone else, anywhere. And it was the middle of the night, we were in the middle of a forest, and we didn't have maps. At first we turned left and walked uphill for a couple of hundred yards. I had a gut feeling that this was wrong, so we stopped and I got my compass out, which revealed we were going completely the wrong way to our general direction. So we turned round, went back to the T-junction and kept straight on. We could see the lights of a village through the forest, and Sue and I figured that if we could take tracks in the general direction of that village, we were likely to see a sign for our next *controle*, and we would then follow the road. And that, more or less, is what happened. We followed the forest tracks, which was a bit hit and miss, but we eventually found ourselves on a road which led to the village. In the village we found a farmer who was up very early (as farmers tend to do) so we told her we were lost, we gave her the name of our next *controle*, and we asked her if she knew where it was. Luckily, she said it was four kilometres away, and to say Sue and I were relieved was bit of an understatement. In following the road to the next *controle*, we found another group, the next slowest one, and in that *controle* we found our original group. We decided to stay with our new group - apart from anything else, we felt the back marker in our first group had allowed us to get lost, and we weren't too impressed.

So we had a decent rest at that *controle*, and moved on. There were only seven of us in our new group. It wasn't long before it was daylight, and we could see the Ardennes, which are very pleasant. Apart from the main *controles*, there were some additional ones, when we were met by cars and we could enjoy chocolate and drinks, including a very nice Belgian liqueur - which gave me just the boost I needed at 6.30 in the morning.

We walked on, and on, and on, passing through some pleasant villages. And it was good to get to know the other members of the group. The last *controle* was at Welkenradt, which I knew from the Euroregion, and that was where we met up with our first group. The groups merged for the last 10k to Plombières. We eventually finished almost dead on 5pm. We had a nice pasta meal and a couple of beers.

With so much of the 110k on road, my feet were pretty beaten up at the end. I did say immediately afterwards that there had been too much road walking, and I probably wouldn't enter the event again. But that was then and ... well, the walk goes from Plombières to Houffalize this year (I mean, you've got to do it both ways, haven't you?) It's a good walk, and on the whole a very enjoyable experience. So if anyone fancies joining me, just let me know. I don't have the date yet, but it's going to be in December.

Graham Smith

JILL'S ARRAN ADVENTURE

IN spring last year, after walking the Great Glen Way across Scotland, my partner Jim and I went to stay on the Isle of Arran in Scotland to celebrate my cousin's golden wedding anniversary. We found there was a new coastal footpath around the rim. As I had walked the coast path of the Isle of Wight dozens of times, we decided it would be a wonderful project to walk around Arran. We did enjoy this, beautiful spring flowers, snow on the mountains, blue seas and crashing waves. We did not realise we would encounter boulder fields and deep boggy bits but it all added to the fun of the walk because it was so different to my Isle of Wight coast path. We used local buses on each of our four days. This coastal path goes up Goat Fell (874m from sea level). Jim fell and hurt his head on the way down Goat Fell. This was amazing after all those difficult boulder fields that we had crossed safely. He just slipped on the wet rocks crossing a stream. On our return, the family looked at his head and said "Hospital!" A phone call had been made, the little hospital was waiting for us.

We looked just like the nursery rhyme:

Jim and Jill went up the hill to fetch a pail of water,

Jim fell down and broke his crown and Jill came running after.

Well, it wasn't vinegar and brown paper but Jim did have a large bandage so he kept out of all the photos the next day at the gathering.

My fall in Morocco was very much more serious and I am still recovering from the broken ankle, but in one way it was much the same - the last descent on the final day. People have been wonderful, sending cards, messages and lovely phone calls. In her get well card, my cousin in Arran sent me a cutting from the local paper. This was an intriguing story. Thomas Burwickshaw, aged 50, had walked round Arran in under 24 hours in 1888. I am quite certain Thomas would have walked on roads, no way would he have climbed over boulder fields and been up and down Goat Fell, as Jim and I had done. When a man called Donald read this account in the Arran Banner newspaper, he decided to contact them. Donald sells out of print books, and he also has a collection of old books about Arran.

A sheet of paper fell out of one of these old books and it catalogues this challenge walk undertaken 124 years ago. Total walking time 13 hours 58 minutes. Stoppages 2 hours 27 minutes. The unknown walker left at midnight on July 19 1888. He had a breakfast stop of 55 minutes, 7 minutes for a mid morning drink, 1 hour 22 minutes for lunch and 10 minutes for a drink of milk in the afternoon. I wonder who it was? How fast could he have walked if he had back-up?

People have enjoyed long distance walking for many years. For the record, we covered 65 miles during our Arran adventure. The Isle of Wight coast path is 72 miles, but it has no boulder fields, mountains or bogs.

Jill Green



A view from the Hôtel at Dhunche.

The Climb.

We started the trek at Dhunche and got there by four wheel drive vehicle. Although Dhunche is in the Kathmandu Valley and not all that far from Kathmandu, the capital of Nepal, it still took a whole day to drive there. If you have ever been to Nepal and seen their roads you will know why. It is not all down to badly built roads or lack of maintenance. There are constant landslides and the roads get washed away by the heavy rains that happen from time to time. Good job we had a four-by-four!

We set out on the first day with our super light packs containing only fleece tops and water-proofs with enough water for the day thinking that this will be ok. Your Porter has all the heavy stuff, you have a Guide to show you the way, what can go wrong?



A Guide, a Trekker and a Porter!

Having been to Nepal before I knew what to expect. The Climb was neither a surprise or a problem but, my god, you do sweat! Well I do anyway. I normally spend eight hours a day at work sitting in a chair so going to six to eight hours of physical work in a day is a shock to the system. On the way up I remember wishing that the day was over and we could stop

A PROPER WALK!

I am sure that some of you make a habit of actually reading this Newsletter. If you do, you may remember that I put a piece in last year concerning a proposed trek to the Lang Tang region of Nepal. The plan was to go up to the sacred lakes of Gosinkunda and through the Laurabina Pass.

The trip happened and was excellent, you should have come!

Having completed the trek and lost 10Kg in sweat it behoves me to write an article for the Newsletter, so, here it is.

It would be simple to give you a day by day and blow by blow account of what happened on this trek but I think that this would be rather tedious so I am going to split it into three phases. That is: The Climb, High-level and Low-level. Both the trip and the scenery naturally split into these three parts so the division seems natural, to me anyway.



Actually nothing really does go wrong.

The only problem is that some bugger has put a bloody great range of mountains in the way. The trekking paths in Nepal are, in reality, very good walking. Not much mud, good grip and they tend to be made into staircases when they get steep. There is, after all a lot of rocks for them to use. A lot of trekkers walk these paths and they are well looked after, well at the lower levels anyway. Despite it being good under-foot they do go up, and up, and up. We started at under two thousand metres and, in three days, reached the top of the Laurabina Pass at four thousand, six hundred and ten metres. It is not all up.

Sometimes there is a bit of down so you have to go back up again!

Our Porter, and Guide for that matter, were carrying big loads, easily thirty kilos, but they only weighed an average of fifty-five kilos. With their packs that makes them over eighty kilos. I started the trek at over one hundred kilos without my pack so they had it easy!

Getting good Porters and a good Guide can make the difference between a brilliant holiday and disaster. We had some of the best. Having been to Nepal many times I know who to go to.

walking. I also remember thinking, in the evening over a Fanta, that I was not sure that I could do it again tomorrow. However I always managed it, and enjoyed it.

If the steepness of the climb and the relentlessness of it was not enough there is also the altitude. I start to do dog impressions when I get above two and a half thousand metres. I walk, or stagger, along with my tongue hanging out panting like a bastard. Not a pretty sight! However it seems to work for me and you must remember that at the altitude that we got to the oxygen is down to almost half its sea-level partial pressure.

The relentless climbing and the lack of air make the walking hard and can cause problems, the main one is poor sleep. Just what you need! Do not get me wrong, this was a holiday and it was fantastic but it was hard work at times. I think that these types of holiday are great. Hard, but great and the sense of achievement is worth every sweat laden, panting step.

High-Level.

Having got the first few days of solid climbing out of the way one gets to the bit of trekking that most people come to Nepal for. That is walking in the clouds and well up in the mountains. The Laurabina Pass we went through is seriously high. Four thousand six hundred and ten metres to be precise. But it is nothing compared to the height of the mountains that surround you. There are seven and even eight thousand metre peaks above you. This is what Nepal is all about, the views in the mountains.



The Hôtels at Gosinkunda from across the lake.

I have included a number of the photographs that I took but they really do not do it justice. You have to be there, you have to go and see with your own eyes.

I meet and talked to quite a few people on this trek and not one of them said “this was not worth it” they were all impressed and considered the views worth all the effort.

After up comes down. Actually in Nepal you only ever seem to be going up or down, never along. After going through the pass itself we rapidly came to a very impressive view down to the lower and more habitable areas. We could see quite a long way back into the Kathmandu valley, almost to the Capital itself.

After all that climbing and sweat it did not take us long to descend back down again. After many days of ascent we almost ran down like gazelles and the high part of our trek was over.

This year was not so good for visibility, to tell the truth. It was ok in the morning but by mid-day the clouds had come down and there was not so much to be seen. It can be like that. You are at the altitude that clouds live! You must expect them to surround you.

We stopped at the little settlement of Gosinkunda, a collection of trekking hôtels really, and tackled the actually Pass on the following day. This was a spectacular place to walk. High and a little cold despite all the work you are doing. Open, massive and definitely not the place you want to get lost or caught out in. A lot like where they filmed the first part of *The Lord of the Rings*. Awe inspiring and worth every step of the way up. Truly wonderful. I have been to a few places, such as this, where most of the worlds population will never go, or have the ability to go, and I feel very privileged to have had the opportunity to do so.



The view from the top of the Laurabina Pass.

Looking back, the way we came.

Looking forward, the way we have to go!

Low-Level.

As you go down there is a definite point when the trees return, a tree line. I always think that this marks the end of the high level part of any trek and the start of my favourite bit. It is prettier down in the vegetation but you still get some cracking vistas. There is more air to breathe as well, always a plus point!

Nepal can get very pretty down here; where all the villages and terraces for crops are. The colours are better as well, gone are the browns and greys of the higher levels and we are back to beautiful shades of green. The whole country has a more welcoming look, if you got lost and had to stay out for a night you could survive. If you got caught out at night you could find a house and knock on the door!

First you descend through forest, a lot of it rhododendron trees. Very aromatic and with bright red flowers at the right time of year. Unfortunately this was not the right time but the forest are still very beautiful and a completely different world from the stark world above. The lower you get the more habitation and cultivation you see until you are walking through a land of small farms and detached hamlets like England would have been in medieval times. Very cosy and welcoming it looks too; an almost idyllic landscape that one could fantasise for retirement. Absolute peace and quiet raising a few veggies and relaxation after a hard life of toil. Perfection!



Ganga TAMANG, Nepal New Generation Trek & Adventure
P.O.Box 24984, Jorpati-3, Bouddha, Kathmandu, Nepal
<http://www.newgenerationtrek.com>

The company is called New Generation because it is all done for the benefit of people of his village and specifically the younger ones. Perhaps it should really be called Next Generation.

COMEDY CORNER

Two Mexicans are stuck in the desert after crossing into the United States, wandering aimlessly and starving. They are about to just lie down and wait for death, when all of a sudden Luis says.....

"Hey Pepe, do you smell what I smell? Ees bacon, I theenk."

"Si, Luis, eet sure smells like bacon."

With renewed hope they struggle up the next sand dune, & there, in the distance, is a tree loaded with bacon.

There's raw bacon, there's fried bacon, back bacon, double smoked bacon ... every imaginable kind of cured pork.

"Pepe, Pepe, we ees saved. Ees a bacon tree."

"Luis, maybe ees a meerage? We ees in the desert don't forget."

"Pepe, since when deed you ever hear of a meerage that smell like bacon ... ees no meerage, ees a bacon tree."

And with that, Luis staggers towards the tree. He gets to within 5 metres, Pepe crawling close behind, when suddenly a

I am sure that the people who live here do not see it this way and would swap their seeming idyll for the noise, employment and money of any city. I do not think that you can ever forget that Nepal is a grindingly poor country where most of the people have almost nothing and survival itself can be a real challenge but, my god, it is beautiful! I did say that Nepal is only up and down. In fact you can buy t-shirts with "Nepali flat - little bit up - little bit down" on them, I have one myself. However I was not quite telling the truth because to end our trek we walked through the Shivapuri National Park which is all trees and quite different from any bit of Nepal that I have ever seen before. It really is like an English wood but on a slightly large scale. We almost ran through it! Proper, real air and somewhat flat ground meant that, after over a week of hard trekking, we could fly along. All that work at the higher altitudes had certainly made me fitter.

One of the climbers who was going to Everest in the olden days, before you could fly there, described the trip as starting in the hot and sweaty plains of India, ascending through a temperate, almost European, climate and ending up in the unknowable peaks of the Himalayas. The world in one country. Well, almost.

All good things have to come to an end. So, after nearly two weeks did this long "Walk in the Woods" (to pinch Bill Bryson's famous phrase).

Nepal is a fantastic country and it can be jaw-droppingly beautiful at times. The people are very friendly and helpful. I can not believe the holiday is over and that I will soon be going home. The idea of not spending every day walking is weird and will take some getting used to!

I will miss it.

Until next time that is.....

My entire trek was organised by an old friend of mine who I met on my first real trek in Nepal in 2001, or was it 2003? He is now the main man in a company called New Generation Trek which can sort out anything that you would want in the way of holidays in Nepal and I would wholeheartedly recommend his services if you wish to visit Nepal. You can contact him directly, e-mail is easiest and best, and I have put all his details below. I have also put my contact details below as well should you wish to ask me about anything.

machine gun opens up, and Luis drops like a wet sock. Mortally wounded, he warns Pepe with his dying breath, "Pepe... go back man, you was right, ees not a bacon tree!"

"Luis, Luis mi amigo ... what ees it?"

"Pepe ... ees not a bacon tree. Ees

Ees

Ees

Ees

Ees a ham bush ..."

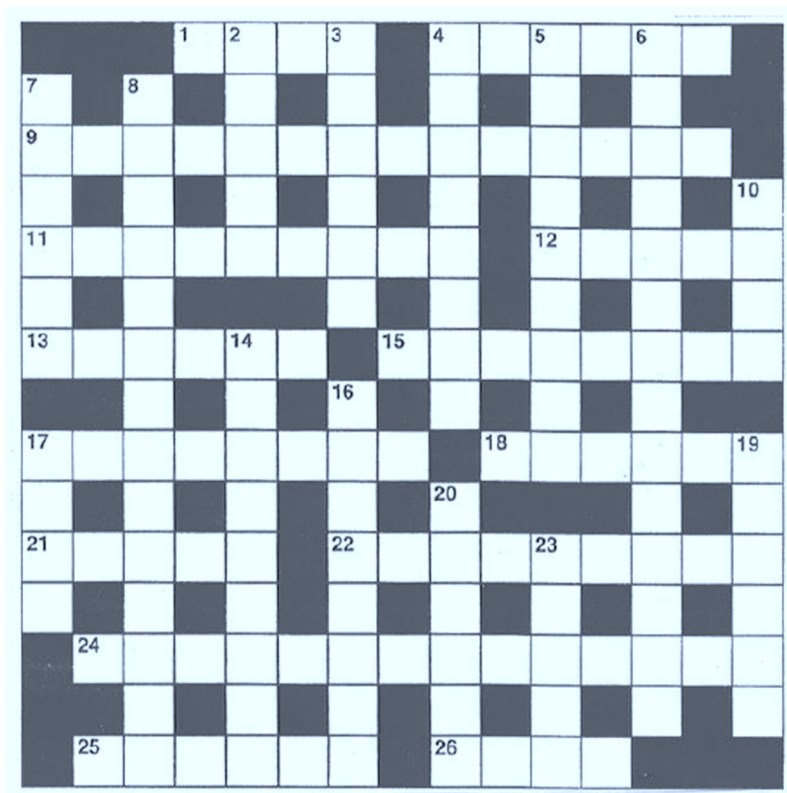
CROSSWORD set by Shirley Higgins

ACROSS

1. Irritation caused by inside stitches (4).
4. Birds swam back round outskirts of Cumbria (6).
9. Bloomer heard in city (10, 4).
11. Cut to hide cells perhaps (9).
12. Skirts limits (5).
13. A meeting place, Shaftsbury maybe (6).
15. Fighters seen at the start of many angry tirades and dozens of riotous scenes (8).
17. Feeling impulse (8).
18. Uphill struggle, like money! (6).
21. Cotton twill fabric for short trousers (5).
22. What to do if you meet a girl who is lost? Straight to centre there (6, 3).
24. Route signed poles are aids to navigation (9, 5).
25. Don't fall down or go to bed early (4, 2).
26. Snake-like creatures seen in wheelspin (4).

DOWN

2. Subject for yourself? (5).
3. Walk awkwardly, gap round outside of bomb (6).
4. Weirdly I dream in a circle (8).
5. Wire vehicles for overhead transport (5, 4).
6. Unsuccessful search, crazy bird hunt (4, 5, 5).
7. Tree seen at the start of any country area covered in ash (6).
8. Deodorant to stop sweating (14).
10. Is twice a river (4).
14. Regularly, kit at the edges of livery (9).
16. Sweet but sharp descent (4, 4).
17. Short distance in Winchcombe (4).
19. Infection for bird (6).
20. Sounds like oil country (6).
23. Unusual place seen before cross in Kent (5).



December crossword answers. ACROSS - 1 Dering, 4 Affluent, 9 Malham, 10 Offender, 12 Noah, 13 Caper, 14 Anon, 17 Silver lining, 20 Goodwin Sands, 23 Agog, 24 Raven, 25 Mere, 28 Lemonade, 29 Molest, 30 Penitent, 31 Mistakes.

DOWN - 1 Dampness, 2 Reliable, 3 Neat, 5 Fifteen miles, 6 Lies, 7 Ending, 8 Tyrant, 11 Walled garden, 15 Demon, 16 Gnash, 18 Knee-jerk, 19 Asbestos, 21 Wallop, 22 Common, 26 Gnat, 27 Moat.

The winner was Shirly Gill.



Around the Checkpoints. Pictures taken on the 2013 Sevenoaks Circular, *photos by Bryan Clarke*



The 2012 Family Lunch



The end of the Time Ball Walk