

# ***LONG DISTANCE WALKERS ASSOCIATION – Kent Group***

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

# ***NEWSLETTER***



**Jeff Ellingham and Peter Barnett on the Sevenoaks Circular in 1982**

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**[www.ldwakent.org.uk/](http://www.ldwakent.org.uk/)**



# Forty years of Kent Group of the LDWA



May 1985 - Some of the Kent members who took part in the Yorkshire Dales Hundred based at Settle. From left: John Stew, Ron Roweth Jack Burgoyne, Peter Rickards, Peter Barnett, Ernie Bishop, Brian Buttifant and Trevor Blake.



Andrew Boulden setting off on the Sevenoaks Circular from the ornamental gates into Knole Park.



Dave Cowley and Brian Buttifant lead The Kemsing Caper in July 1988.



September 16-17 1989 - The Vanguard Way, 62 miles from Croydon to Seaford: the eight walkers at Croydon.



June 1991 - Walkers await the start of Paul Hatcher's Cream Tea Walk



May 1996 - Shirlie Gill and Keith Warman at the start of the Yorkshire Dales Hundred.

## **INTRODUCTION TO THIS SPECIAL NEWSLETTER**

WELCOME to this special edition of the Kent Group of the LDWA newsletter. This year is our 40th anniversary and there are a few things happening, mainly the one-off return of the Wealden Waters - our first overnight walk - and our birthday barbecue (being held by the kind permission of Roger and Linda Munn) on Sunday June 1. We have also had some memorable days on Peter Jull's series of walks based on the route of the 1992 Invicta Hundred. Incredibly, it seemed Peter was also able to arrange excellent weather on every stretch of the walk. Later in the year, Peter has also arranged the Millennium Hundred, again in various stretches as a series of social walks, so that's something to look forward to.

Over the last couple of months, I have been going over some of the articles in previous newsletters (going back to the 1980s) and re-inputting them for this special newsletter. As members will see, they recall some of our memorable social walks and challenge walks. Our chairman Brian Buttifant and Kent Group member (and, let's face it, LDWA legend) Jill Green have also contributed special articles, for which I am grateful. There are also several photographs from our Kent LDWA picture albums, which I have scanned in.

I do hope our members enjoy the articles and the photos, and that they bring back a few memories. I certainly enjoyed re-inputting the articles and scanning in the photos. I have only been an LDWA member since 1995 (one of the few regrets of my life is that I did not join the LDWA earlier) so I found them very interesting and informative. I have heard lots of stories about Kent LDWA characters like Peter Barnett and challenging social walks like the Vanguard Way in a day, so it was so illuminating to actually find out more about LDWA stalwarts like Peter and about the crazy things we used to do (we still do them, like my 100k Cinque Ports Challenge which starts at 9pm on Friday May 2 - I hope to see some of you there for that!)

If anyone feels there is a Kent LDWA member who has not been mentioned in this special newsletter, or a significant challenge walk or social walk over our 40 years which has been omitted, then I can only apologise. As I say, I haven't been an LDWA member for 20 years yet.

By way of explanation, the nostalgic parts of this newsletter - the old reports and the old photos - are being dealt with in the earlier pages. The latter pages deal with the usual features like reports of social walks, news of Kent challenge walks, future Hundreds and social walks pictures. Most importantly, the all important social walks programme - compiled so painstakingly by Mike Pursey - is on a page near the back, as opposed to the usual page 3. Apologies if any of this is confusing, but I really couldn't think of a simpler way to do it.

The LDWA is a fantastic organisation, never better than when organising Hundreds, and here in Kent we can be very proud of what we have achieved over the last 40 years - three excellent Hundreds, three very well organised annual challenge walks and a reputation for reliability and first class checkpoints, with food which is second to none, whenever we have been asked to organise one.

As always, many thanks to Bryan Clarke for printing our newsletter and to Shirley Higgins for ensuring that members get it (and also for supplying then crossword, at a time when she was coping with some personal issues).

I do hope you enjoy it. I hope to see you at Roger Munn's Staplehurst farm on June 1, if not before on a walk.

We've had a great 40 years - here's to Kent Group's 50th birthday in 2024!

**Graham Smith, Kent LDWA secretary and newsletter editor**

## **1982 - SOME ADVICE FROM ERNIE BISHOP**

ERIC Rolfe thought Kent Group members would like to read the letter below which was sent to him from Ernie Bishop before the Kent Pilgrims Hundred in 1982. Says Eric: "I was over enthusiastic after completing my first 100, The Downsman, in the summer of 1980. I had eyes on the Kent Pilgrims 100-plus in 1982."

Hence the letter below from Ernie, dated December 18 1980:

"Many thanks for your inquiry re the Pilgrims Hundred (not quite sure of the distance yet until route is finalised).

"Your times will certainly qualify you although I would still recommend keeping up the training and doing some events in 1981. A distance of around 150 miles will be new territory for all of us, for which we will need to be very fit.

"Best wishes for Christmas and the New Year."

Continues Eric: "Good sense prevailed. I retired tired, cold and wet on the 1981 Cumbria 100. And so I was on Checkpoint Duty - CP10 Cobham Farm Distance 80/120 miles for the 1982 Pilgrims 100-plus."

## **PAST GROUP MEMBERS (deceased)**

### **PETER RICKARDS**

As a South East representative of national LDWA, he set up the Kent Group and the Essex/Herts Group. Peter did not hold a group office as he favoured an open forum system. He started the Sevenoaks Circular 30-mile event in 1975. The venue then was from Otford scout hut. Peter was the first Kent member to achieve 10 Hundreds. He also ran in the first few London Marathons. A very resourceful man with a good sense of humour.

Peter borrowed an old ambulance (from his work) driving up to North Yorkshire with group members for a Captain Cook



memorial walk in the 1980s from his birthplace at Great Ayton, going over the moors to Staithes, where he first worked before going on to Whitby. The rest was history. Another of Peter's trips in the same transport was a group weekend on the Isle of Wight, centred around the now defunct Vectis Marathon.

#### **PETER BARNETT**

Kent Group's fourth chairman, a strong and true walker who achieved 12 Hundreds. With Pauline he organised our Brecon Beacons weekends in January for six or seven years, based at a centre by Talybont Reservoir. These were fine weekends enjoyed by 20-plus members.

#### **PHIL HASTINGS**

He was a proud member of the Table Mountain Mountaineers Club as a born South African, but spent all his adult life in Kent. An active walker (he never drove), he completed 11 LDWA Hundreds, a number of continental Hundreds, and as a race walker he became a Centurion. Tragically, he was killed with his wife Ann in a car crash in South Africa.

#### **GORDON BEATTIE**

A fit young man who cycled to many events, he completed five LDWA Hundreds and as a race walker became a Centurion. Tragically he drowned in the River Medway while out training in the winter.

#### **MIKE SMITH**

The planner/organiser of the Wealden Waters 100k Walk in 1982, and the 25-mile Tunbridge Wells Circular in 1994. He did a fundraising walk for the RNLI, calling at lifeboat stations on his way from Tunbridge Wells to Weymouth. Records show he did six Hundreds.

#### **JOHN PROBERT**

A good walker/eventer who completed two Hundreds. A good group member.

#### **TED LAUNDON**

A one time group treasurer, an active eventer who completed one Hundred. Ted has a memorial seat on the North Downs Way at the top of Otford Mount. He lived in the village.

#### **TOM SINCLAIR**

Tom had been a National Committee man, serving as secretary and chairman. He also served as group secretary. His walks were of 20-30 miles but he completed a Wealden Waters. A good checkpointeer, involved in group activities.

#### **TOM EMERY**

A jolly fellow and good group member on checkpoints and social walks. His distances were 20-30 miles. Tom has a memorial seat on the Greensand Way, near Ide Hill.

**Brian Buttifant**

#### **FEBRUARY 26 1983 - ROYAL MILITARY CANAL WALK**

IT was dull and misty as Brian and I drove down to Hythe to meet up with the large, enthusiastic group of Kent LDWA members, who would undoubtedly join us there for the planned walk in the Romney Marsh area. By 9.20am the mist had cleared, the sun was attempting to break through and not another soul had turned up! So the two of us set off westwards along the bank of the canal for several miles before climbing up onto the range of low hills which overlook the marsh at Lympe.

At the top we paused briefly to survey our proposed route on the flat marshland set out below, and then descended steeply (passing two elephants on the way!) to cross the canal and head south towards Burmarsh. I had remembered Romney Marsh as being mainly pastureland - short-cropped turf with sheep and lambs. We found that it is now largely arable land - plenty of sticky mud with sparse winter wheat struggling through. On the map there are plenty of footpaths shown, but on the ground they seem to have all but disappeared.

After struggling along for several miles through this trackless, glutinous mud, we arrived at Newchurch and decided to take the lanes in order to make further progress. Then at St Mary's Bay, having had enough of road walking, we marched along the track of a miniature railway to Dymchurch. Here we changed our final choice of terrain - the smooth, firm sand of the beach which led us back from Dymchurch to Hythe.

An interesting 20 mile circuit, with plenty of variation in conditions underfoot. Pity about the lack of company!

**Laurie Lowe**

#### **AUGUST 25-26 1984 - AROUND THE WEALDEN WATERS**

ON a steamy, humid morning in late August, Mike Smith led a band of ramblers out on the Wealden Waters route. Ron Roweth, Steve Rackett, Ernie Bishop and your scribe followed him out and within a short time started dripping. Many a fleshy pound was to be lost during the course of this hot day. Ernie knew best and at Bewl Bridge he discreetly retired to home, some visiting friends and no doubt a cold lager! Celia Bishop had met us with drinks and biscuits for which we were



most grateful. At this point a trip on a boat on the reservoir looked more inviting than the hack to Forest Row.

A few more miles and a welcome stop at the 4Ks pub at Wadhurst. Carbohydrates and liquor downed, off to Bowles Centre we headed where we had a further rest and recuperation period. New ground from here for me, as 1983's weather had forced me to retire at this point on the actual event.

Where fern and bush now boldly grew, some testing navigation was called for by the team before we reached Broadstone Warren and a thousand happy campers. It grew a little cooler as darkness came but light enough for us to see the door of the 'Swan' at Forest Row where Nick Woollett joined us. The next nine miles were trekked to Nick's House at Hever, where an early morning breakfast was partaken and where Laurie and Eileen Lowe appeared, to act as our ministering angels for the rest of the walk.

Outrageously nettle stung and bramble torn, and in Steve's case bee stung as well, we started on the final quarter. Ailment overtook our leader who manfully struggled on. Steve's feet were suffering badly and Ron and I, in sympathy with them (Mike and Steve, not the latter's feet!!), hurried on to Checkpoint 'Lowe', in order to drink the gorgeous chicken soup before they got there. Penshurst Castle came and went and another 'Checkpoint Chicken' stop. Some time after the Pantiles hove in sight. All of us had got round and though I promised to 'Tyburn Tree' the man who led us, he was let off on the promise of better weather for WWW 1985. Many thanks to Celia, Nick's hospitality and Laurie and Eileen for all their support and late night and morning comfortings.

**Harry Bishop**

### **JANUARY 18 1985 - WINTER NIGHT HIKE**

IN spite of the bitterly cold spell of weather during the week preceding the night walk, we once again had a good turnout for this traditional mid-January activity. Night temperatures as low as -12 degrees Centigrade had been recorded prior to Friday the 18th, and people turned up clad in layer upon layer of protective clothing. In the event, the weather was relatively mild, according to the thermometer strapped to the outside of Mike Smith's sac, it was only just below zero! So a calm night and a thick covering of snow made for a pleasant 24-mile ramble round the area north and east of Maidstone.

At 10.30pm an 'expectant' John Skinner led the group of about 17 walkers out from Aylesford northwards up onto the Downs. While travelling along an ice-covered lane, we came upon a stranded motorist whose car had slid into a ditch. He could not believe his luck as 17 figures loomed out of the night and manhandled his vehicle back onto the road! Progress was good, although heavy drifting along the edge of the Downs slowed progress in places, and later, on the NDW, several deeply ploughed fields caused havoc due to an evil combination of hard frozen ridges separated by deep, snow-filled furrows. We stumbled across these, turning ankles and cursing loudly.

We had an early morning (2.30am) break in the churchyard at Cuxton without unduly disturbing the inhabitants. At Holly Hill we descended the steep slope of the Downs in a fairly exciting and uncontrolled manner and then worked our way south to West Malling, then through East Malling and back to Aylesford.

Our thanks to John for planning and leading the walk and also to his wife Christine, who managed to delay their 'happy event' long enough for him to take part in the walk! Congratulations to them both on the birth of their daughter Jasmine.

**Laurie Lowe**

### **JUNE 6-7 1986 - THE KENT-SUSSEX BORDER PATH**

CONTINUING the Kent group's healthy tradition of long-distance social walks, the 'Magnificent Seven' (Ernie Bishop, Peter Barnett, Brian Buttifant, Gordon Beattie, John Probert, Keith Porter and Don Newman) assembled at East Grinstead on Friday evening. With Ernie in the lead, we waved goodbye to the 'supporters club' and set off towards Cowden. Would we make it to the pub before closing time? It was a fine evening and the going was generally firm. "Just follow the Gatwick flightpath!" Navigation proved a little more difficult than that, but Ernie got us there in time to deprive the locals of all the remaining pies and pasties.

Suitably fortified and in jovial mood, we set off again through the village. Darkness had now fallen. "I used to live here," someone said. Five minutes later we were lost! We eventually found the well concealed bridge, then another and another! "Haven't we crossed this one before?" Black and white cows (and their droppings) obstructed our path. "Don't trip over these Dalmatians!"

Joking aside, Ernie's navigation was superb. With hardly a signpost in evidence, each field we entered called for a decision as to direction, and Ernie got it right each time. We rested twice, in a well stocked barn ("This isn't doing my hayfever any good!") and beside a pile of logs. As we walked on through the night, the native cows became more restless, stampeding alongside us and gathering around the stiles. We passed under a railway line several times. "Wouldn't it be easier to just walk along the tracks?"

At 3.30am it was getting light, and Wealden Waters veterans soon recognised the terrain. We were treated to the sight of the sun rising over Bewl Bridge reservoir. A long trudge round the banks was followed by the highlight of the trek - the breakfast stop! Having covered some 40 miles, we were all happy to lounge in Ernie and Celia's garden for a couple of hours. Porridge was served first, followed by a full cooked breakfast. "This is the best checkpoint I've ever been to!" Tea

and coffee came in large mugs. Blisters and sore feet were treated. Reluctantly we stirred ourselves at last, and followed Ernie and his four-footed pathfinder Clementine onto the trail again.

Four miles further on we stopped again, to collect Maurice Faircloth. Maurice made us tea and broke the sad news of England's poor performance against Morocco in the World Cup. Undaunted, we strode off along the tracks towards Bodiam. By now it was getting hot.

Bodiam Castle made a fine sight as we strode downhill towards it. "It's all downhill from here to the sea." Here we were accosted by a strangely clad lady who tried to talk us into playing games with her friends. We declined on the grounds that we were all too tired. She gave us a leaflet which no one was in the least bit interested in (by the way, who has it?)

A pub stop was the next necessity, as we headed uphill to Ewhurst Green. Again the locusts struck, devouring some very good pub food served by two 'lovely boys' (there are some strange people in this part of the world). Then it was out into the hot afternoon sun again, and into the next hazard, a head-high field of rape oil seed crop. By now everyone was looking forward to the finish, but there were several more miles yet. First we had to find the River Rother, which Ernie did despite tricky patches of woodland, undergrowth and barbed-wire fences where there should have been stiles. The river bank seemed endless as it curved around with the hills on our right. "I used to live here. We'll see Rye any minute now!" About an hour later the ancient town came into view. One last stop for a final refreshing gulp of electrolytic liquid, and then it was on towards the objective. Final encouragement was provided by the ever faithful supporters club who strode out along the bank to meet us.

All good walks should end in a pub, and 'The Ship' provided a suitable venue in Rye. Ernie and Celia (and Clementine) had certainly done us proud on this little jaunt. Estimates of the distance covered varied from 65 to 70 miles. What was certain was that Ernie had navigated faultlessly and Celia can cook a great breakfast! With a final flourish, Ernie produced a batch of 'Kessex Border Path' T-shirts to make this an even more memorable occasion. Watch this space for the next epic account (The Sursex and Hamsex Border Path?)

**Don Newman**

### **1986 - ON THE SAXON SHORE WAY**

AS I waited at Herne Bay station for Trevor, Richard and Ron, the evening sun was warm and the sky promised a good start to our night walk. This was contrary to the forecast, which spoke of a wet weekend.

The lads arrived at 7.45pm and 15 minutes later we were off along the seafront. Darkness had fallen when we got to Reculver, so realising that this was probably our last chance of a beer, we called in at the 'King Ethelbert'. From here we struck inland to follow what the guide book described as 'The Lost Seaway' - the Wantsum Channel, or the coastline as it was in Saxon times. This section took us over the marshes of East Kent which, with the moon shining on the waters of the dykes and the River Stour, reminded me of my home area of the Fens. The lights of the cooling towers of Richborough Power Station were seen from miles and as we progressed along the banks of the river, their massive bulk loomed larger. We left the river and then found ourselves in a new car compound! After scrambling out onto the main road into Sandwich, we read the warning notices ... Oh well, the dogs must have had a sleeping draught.

It was as we made our way towards Pegwell that the threatening storm broke. The lightning was spectacular over the sea but the heavy rain was a bit much as we walked over the golf courses to Deal. Soon it was getting light and this section to Dover was probably the most scenic of our route and fortunately the rain had stopped, so we were able to enjoy this early morning walk over the cliffs to Dover, and thoughts of a pre-planned breakfast helped even more. The cliff walking gave us good views of the busy Channel shipping and later, as the weather brightened, the coast of France was clearly visible.

Some feet were beginning to get sore so the pace slackened and when we got to Folkestone, Trevor and Richard were overcome by tiredness. We all know what happens to Trevor wherever he sleeps - yes we have 'heard' it all before! After fish and chips and a beer or two (who's counting?) progress waned even more and arrangements were made for an earlier pick-up in Hythe. We had walked about 50 miles, not as far as had been planned but we had enjoyed ourselves, which is what it is all about.

In closing we must again offer our grateful thanks to Bryan Clarke for picking us up so promptly.

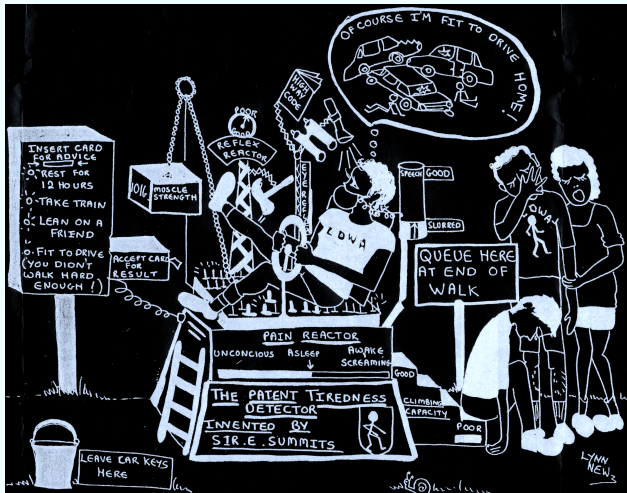
**Brian Buttifant**

### **1992 - A BIRTHDAY ACCOUNT OF THE WEALDEN WATERS**

'L I'm getting older (51 if you're not Roman)

1992 was my sixth Wealden Waters. They have all been memorable in different ways. My first attempt in 1987 also fell on my birthday. How well I remember the checkpointers singing 'Happy Birthday' to me in the pouring rain at Bowles Rock. The rain kept on, and on, and on. The River Medway bust its banks. This was even on the television news. My mother was quite worried about me as she knows swimming is not a thing I have ever been much good at. We even had thunder and lightning. When I pass the bus shelter near Penshurst I always remember sheltering there with Laurie Lowe as I was afraid of being struck by lightning. That walk took me 23 hours 30 minutes. However only about half of us made it, and I was rewarded with a bath at the end.





In 1989 I went round with Tony Twyman so I had a very entertaining walk. Tony was complaining at checkpoints that we were both suffering from moonstroke. That was such a happy walk. We got round in 18 hours 50 minutes. It just goes to show what a difference the weather makes. Congratulations to Tony as that year was his 10th. It was great to meet him in the car park with a big smile, clutching a bunch of balloons that declared 'TWYMAN'S 10th' on them.

I can never walk the long path round the water to checkpoint three without remembering the year I was with Harry Bishop reciting his poetry. He was also good company. Last year I got lost. Perhaps you may remember the limerick about that silly old walker from Wight, who got hopelessly lost in the night. Keith Warman rescued me and we composed several verses:

There was an old lady from Wight  
Who got into a Wealden plight,  
After denting her pride,  
She followed her guide  
Through the rest of the damp foggy night.\*

This year was **GREAT** - thank you everybody. When I got to Swaylands, there were Happy Birthday Jill balloons hanging up, and I was given a gingerbread man (person) with pink buttons. I was so overwhelmed that I went out of the checkpoint and promptly went the wrong way. Quite amazing that on the sixth time it is possible to do such a thing.

The new, posh, Royal Tunbridge Wells Tennis Club is very nice, but it does lack that bath. The cool shower may have been invigorating but it's just not the same. I came out clean, and wide awake, ready to sample the gastronomic delights that Kent Group are now so famous for. What a surprise I had. The less famous Kent Group Choir sang Happy Birthday very loudly. They woke several people up who were trying to sleep. I was then presented with a cake complete with candle. It was super. To add to the happy occasion I am so pleased that Dave managed his first 100k in this country. The other one he did in Belgium wasn't the same - no long night, no mud!

**Thank you to everyone for another great walk. Jill Green**

\*Below are the other verses:

There once was a walker from Kent.  
On a very long walk he got sent.  
He gathered a crowd  
But found them too loud,  
That fit young walker from Kent.

There was a long distance walker from Wight  
Who got hopelessly lost in the light.  
The darkness comes fast,  
She was already last,  
That happy old walker from Wight.

That long distance walker from Kent  
Turned out to be a real gent.  
He led the way  
All night and day  
So to him grateful thanks are now sent.

## SEPTEMBER 1995 - THE WEALDEN WATERS MARSHALS' WALK: A BEGINNER'S REPORT

GRIT, determination and stubbornness are one thing. Sixty-two miles are quite another. The challenge was there and, as it turned out, on the day so was I - wondering what on earth I had let myself in for. I do not consider myself a particularly

experienced walker - I have done only a few walks with the LDWA and I think the longest one was about 25 miles. I was now about to tackle over double that and, just a minor additional factor, I had never walked at night before. However, at 8.40am on Saturday September 2 this keen green novice set off from Tunbridge Wells with Keith Warman to attempt what I soon considered to be the impossible. I could perhaps write a thesis on the next 24 hours but time and space need to be considered ... so:

### **THE GOOD BITS**

Setting off in sunshine with cheery encouragement from Paul Hatcher.

Being able to rely on Keith Warman to do the route/map reading.

The constant and mega-massive encouragement I received all the way from fellow walkers - particularly Neil, Brian and Moira.

The amazing back-up at least every seven miles. I was extremely impressed and more than extremely grateful for all the efforts throughout the day and night to provide the walkers with seats, hot food and drink, sarnies, trifles, cakes, biscuits, yoghurts, fruit, home grown tomatoes, cooked breakfast etc ad infinitum. A veritable feast.

The Alta Rice Coffee at checkpoint 2 (it just happens to be the only coffee I drink!)

The cow on the enclosed footpath that needed 20 minutes persuasion to return to its field.

The sound of the owls in the dead of night.

The stars.

Scrumping greengages by torchlight (naughty but nice).

The sight of Paul, Kevin and Jean at the finish.

Removing backpack, trailbusters, socks.

The hot bath.

The welcome bed and deep, deep sleep!

### **THE BAD BITS**

Not having any sleep for two nights BEFORE I started!

The heavy cold that descended on me during Friday night.

Realisation that came mid morning.

The ploughed-up fields.

The six blisters (five on one foot and one on the other - three of them under toenails).

The night walking - it took me a good few hours to become used to following a beam of light. I was apprehensive and somewhat nervous and definitely did not like the sound of running water at night - I was convinced I was going to walk straight into a reservoir/lake/river/bottomless pit!

The stiles and gates at night which I swear grow taller in the dark.

The need to spend so many pennies during the night (I keep wondering why - I rarely do at home) - I was never quite sure just where to put my torch!

The last 12 miles.

### **THE BEST BIT**

Jogging in for the last quarter mile in an attempt to complete the walk in less than 24 hours (a deadline I had set myself) and being told by Paul that we had made it in 23 hours 55 mins. Yippee!!!!!!

### **AND FINALLY**

When asked by Tom at one of the checkpoints if I would write an article about 'your first 60' I laughed as I did not think I would actually finish it, but I would say, Tom, that the hardest part was the last TWO miles so I tell my friends that I walked 62 miles - those last two miles seemed like 20!

For a fact I know that I could not have done it without the help and encouragement from everyone involved. Thank you, thank you all - from the bottom of my feet!

**Shirley Gill**

### **AUGUST 1996 - THE CHANNEL CLIFFS CHALLENGE**

ON Saturday August 17 seven LDWA members from south and east Kent completed the Channel Cliffs Challenge - 38.5 miles between Dover and Folkestone and Boulogne and Calais, transported by seacat and hovercraft.

The CCC is the idea of Kent members Joy Davies, Mike Pursey and Graham Smith, a project which originated when this trio walked from Boulogne to Calais last year, taking the hovercraft to Dover to Calais, a train to Boulogne and then walking back via the coast.

They decided to extend the walk by making it a round trip, utilising Hoverspeed's Dover-Calais hovercraft and Folkestone-



Boulogne seacat services.

The first attempt at the CCC this year was made on July 13, when 11 LDWA members from south and east Kent met at Dover hoverport for the 7am hovercraft - Joy, Mike and Graham, plus Pat and Jacqui Clay, Peter Carter, Nicola Foad, Bob Field, Dave Cotton, John Donnelly and Liz MacNaughton.

The plan was to walk from Calais to Boulogne and then take the 5.15 seacat to Folkestone - around which the whole day was planned - to walk back to Dover. Sadly the attempt failed because (and it's embarrassing to admit this) the distance between the two French ports was a good 4-5 miles more than Graham and Mike - who had walked between Calais and Boulogne several times - thought it was. The distance is actually 30.8 miles, but on that day it was 32 because of a diversion to avoid walking on the beach.

French time is an hour ahead of British, so the CCC party were losing an hour and under pressure from the start. They cracked on but at Ambleteuse, eight miles from Boulogne, the party finally realised they would not make the 5.15pm seacat unless the pace was upped to an impossible five miles an hour. They admitted defeat and retired to a bar to revive flagging spirits. The next seacat was not until 9.15pm and no one fancied walking the last 7.7 miles in the dark, so it was decided to put the failed CCC attempt down to experience - or, more accurately, inexperience! Tribute here must be paid to John Donnelly, who bravely battled against severe blisters to hobble the remaining miles into Boulogne.

Some of the party were very anxious to have another crack at the CCC as soon as possible, so the next attempt was planned for August 17. This time the plan was to do the walk in the opposite way to the first attempt, making the second crossing via hovercraft back to Dover, rather than the seacat back to Folkestone. There are more hovercraft crossings than seacat ones, so if the connection was missed, the party would not have to wait four hours for the next one, as they had before. Also, as Pat Clay pointed out, it would be better psychologically to finish the CCC after the longer French stretch had been completed, rather than complete that stretch, have a long break on the seacat and then raise aching limbs to walk another 7.7 miles.

Due to other commitments Joy, Liz, John, Peter, David and Bob could not make it on August 17, but Mike, Graham, Pat, Jacqui and Nicola were there, plus Peter Watson and Cathy Mahon, who had both wanted to do the walk on July 13 but had been otherwise engaged. It was one of the hottest days of the summer, with temperatures in the 80s, but it couldn't have gone better.

The seven met at Dover hoverport, having had about eight hours sleep between them, and started walking at 4.30am to catch the 8am seacat. It was pitch dark to start with, and day didn't begin to break until 5am, by which time they had completed the first stiff climb - Shakespeare Cliff - and were making their second - Round Down. It was good to get those climbs out of the way early on, when limbs were fresh and spirits very willing.

The walk over the white cliffs to Folkestone is always a fine one. The clifftop tracks are very good, as you would expect from a part of the North Downs Way, and the views can be excellent. In fine weather they are superb, as you can see out to the cliffs on the other side of the Channel, where the party was heading, as well as the variety of ferries and hovercraft just behind you.

Pat's pedometer made the walk from Dover to Folkestone 7.7 miles, and the seven trooped into the port's harbour just after 6.40am, with plenty of time for breakfast and coffee before the 8am seacat.

In fine weather the seacat crossing is delightfully smooth, and that's how it was on August 17, as the high temperatures made for some of the calmest conditions on the Channel all year. The crossing takes an hour, so there was time for more coffee. It was too early for beer, although more than one of the seven was tempted. With French time an hour ahead of ours, arrival in Boulogne was 10am local time, and the seven started walking right away. The return hovercraft crossing had been booked for 11pm which, everyone agreed, would give plenty of time.

The sun was rising rapidly, and it wasn't long before it was taking its toll. The first drink stop (not beer, despite there being no shortage of bars) was at Wimereux, a few miles out of Boulogne, and the first beer stop was at Ambleteuse. With the sun blasting down now, that ice-cold lager was very welcome.

The first part of the CCC's French stretch, from Boulogne to Cap Griz-Nez, is not particularly brilliant. The scenery is a bit dull and the walking itself is a mixture of beach bashing (with the tide out it was firm so it wasn't too bad underfoot) and clifftop walking. The cliff path is reasonable here but badly eroded in parts and generally not as well maintained as on the Dover-Folkestone section. The fierce sun brought a haze with it, which prevented any views back to the white cliffs the party had just walked over.

Lunch was taken in a convenient clifftop cranny a mile from Cap Griz-Nez, and in that heat the seven were physically incapable of ignoring the bar at the Cap itself shortly afterwards. Cap Griz-Nez, with its lighthouse, is a real landmark. It is the closest part of France to England and - hence - where the Channel swimmers head to. It's also where the CCC takes a decisive change of direction, from almost due north to east and then north-east.

At Cap Griz-Nez the scenery improves. Suddenly you see rolling French countryside and you leave the scrubland, which makes up a large part of the scenery from Boulogne, behind. The beaches are golden, much better than anything on the English side of the CCC, and that's just as well, because the next few miles are entirely on the sand. Again, it's firm sand, so the going is pretty good although it gets a bit tedious after a while. But the beach bashing is infinitely preferable to the two alternatives - diverting from Cap Griz-Nez to the road (adding 1.3 miles, and harder underfoot) or negotiating the sand dunes (which Graham and Mike had done and it's a nightmare).

There was a two beer stop at Wissant and then more beach bashing before, at long last, the seven left the sands and picked up a clifftop path again, leading eventually to Cap Blanc-Nez. Here the cliffs rise dramatically and there's a steep, 440ft, climb to the obelisk that's a memorial to the Dover Patrol - the men who died patrolling the Channel during the two world

wars. Cap Blanc-Nez is a tourist honeypot, and the Channel Cliffs Challengers were rewarded for their toil to its summit (which offers the best views of the walk in clear weather) by ice cream vans and a large mobile van selling fast food and cold drinks, including beer.

From here the party took a high inland route to Coquelles, the last village before Calais, rather than hugging the coast, which involves a lot of laborious trudging over soft sand. The tracks are good, and are part of a French long distance path (known as grande randonnees). The tracks also offer fine views in clear weather.

Coquelles provided another beer stop, before the last few miles into Calais. These took the party past a shopping complex which included a McDonald's (yes, they're big in France too), then along a disused railway track which goes alongside some allotments, until the outskirts of Calais.

In Calais there was time for a dinner of frites (chips) and another beer, which the frites van sold, before the worst part of the CCC - a couple of miles trudging through the uninteresting port environs of Calais to the hoverport, situated more than a mile from the ferry terminal. The seven checked in for the hovercraft just before 10pm.

**Graham Smith**

### **1999 - FAREWELL TO A FRIEND (tribute to Peter Barnett)**

I RECALL first seeing Peter on a walk in Cambridge in 1990. This somewhat elderly gentleman with white hair and green top was off like a shot at the start. I didn't know his name but thought I would catch up and pass him within a few miles. Sure enough, just before the first checkpoint he appeared on the horizon but to my surprise he was coming towards me. Just before we reached each other Peter took a left turn and I went right. Peter was back on the official route and again pulling away from me. This happened on two more occasions and he still arrived back at the finish before me. Why did he keep going wrong when the route description seemed perfectly clear? It only became clear to me, after I got to know Peter, that he could sometimes be very dangerous with a route description in his hand, especially when it was raining. The glasses would steam up and the lines would merge into one another. This was highlighted during an overnight walk with Peter and Gordon Facer. I was a few yards in front route finding, but wanted to double check what that we were still on course. I turned around to ask both of them, who were chatting away. The response from Peter was along the lines of "Not sure - I can't see a thing in these glasses when it's dark." Gordon was no better! I thought, 'Why me?'



**Peter Barnett with Don Newman**

My official introduction to Peter was undertaken on the Surrey Summits in 1991. As I approached Peter just before Box Hill, I thought now would be a good time to formally introduce myself. Peter's response was somewhat sharp, as I had been calling myself a member of Kent LDWA without paying the subs. When I joined the LDWA I thought it was like the Ramblers i.e. you automatically became affiliated to your local group. Peter put me straight on this point and I pulled away thinking "Miserable old sod, I'll lose him up Box Hill." Halfway up Peter is breathing down my neck, telling me who to pay the monies to. At the top he is still on my tail. These early exchanges set the scene and made it very clear that I was dealing with no ordinary man!

Peter passed me on a few walks that year but I had now paid my subs and had nothing to fear. That was until the Gatliff in 1991. Getting ready for the start, Peter approached me and stated (not asked!) that I could walk with his group. My life would never be the same again.

Peter and Pauline started the Brecons weekend in 1992 and it was not long before I was invited to spend a weekend each year in October with Peter planning the walks. The weekend would start on Friday night with me going off early Saturday morning. I will always remember our first weekend. With a grin on his face, as I do not like getting up in the middle of the night, Peter advised that he would give me a knock at 4am. My watch must have been slow as the knock arrived just after 3.30. It was only after I had showered and gone downstairs that I was to discover my watch was OK. The grin was still there!

The journey to South Wales would always be broken by stopping for breakfast at Delemere Service Station. Saturday would be spent on the hills before retiring to our B&B where the hosts were well known to Peter. We would normally go down the pub to eat but occasionally dinner would be provided. A few beers and a bottle of wine later, pudding would be served. I was already full but every effort must be made to enjoy the feast of home-made cooking. Peter was no exception. That is until he was undecided whether to go for the trifle or apple pie. Both was not an option given the amount that had already been consumed. I was wrong. Peter opted for the trifle but asked if he could take the apple pie home with him. I thought he was joking until it arrived on Sunday morning as we prepared to leave. Few people would have had the nerve to ask, let alone get away with it.



While the walks were always carefully planned, their execution sometimes left a lot to be desired. One year the route took us over the Black Mountains. The weather was terrible so we decided to drop off the tops and regroup. Peter had the maps so I had not bothered to take mine. When the map was located from Peter's rucksack, it was for the Forest of Dean, where we had been the previous day. "How could that happen?" we asked. Peter, without hesitation, conveyed that Pauline must have left the wrong one on the bed for him to pick up. We were not convinced, especially when you could see the smile on his face. In one short moment I was no longer cold or disappointed that the walk had been cut short. Peter was never allowed to forget this incident.

Peter would sometimes be rude to me, and indeed others may have experienced the same. I was never offended, as I knew this was Peter's way of letting me know that he liked me. I in turn would tease him. Given Peter's pedigree as a champion cyclist, I would often ask how difficult it was to get onto a penny farthing, let alone race one. The look I got told me that very few people could have got away with such a remark. I was one of the lucky ones.

I feel very fortunate to have been given the opportunity to call Peter a close friend and share part of his life away from the normal rigours of challenge events. He was very proud of Chris, Elida and young Peter, his grandson. I remember sitting in the family home with Peter when his grandson arrived for my first meeting with him. It was a very special moment to see the joy on both their faces. The bond between them went a lot deeper than a normal grandfather/grandson relationship. They were good friends.

It is customary to save the best to last. They say that behind every good man is an even better woman and in Pauline this was clearly the case. It did not take me very long to realise that Peter was only one half of a very special double act. I will miss him.

My thoughts are with Pauline, Chris, Elida and young Peter.

**Andrew Boulden**

## **2000 - A HUNDRED MILE WALK**

WE have had many contributions from the successful. I thought I would write a short note on behalf of the 160 or so people whom failed to finish this year's Hundred.

Left Canterbury, May 27, at 10.00 hrs. Walked across country to Walmer Castle and then along coastal path to Folkestone. Route, although muddy in places and involving brief climbs to the top of the Downs on five occasions, was good. After 34 miles Capel-le-Ferne village hall exactly on time, at 20.55 hrs, for cooked supper.

I then started the night section but by the time I reached the Downs above the Channel Tunnel terminal, the gale had started with a vengeance, heralded with bits of ice being blown horizontally into the side of my face. Slithered down muddy slopes and tracks into Newington village hall. After a warning cup of tea, left in torrential downpour - 38mm of rain fell that night. All tracks and paths became a total sea of water and slimy, oozy mud, 6"-9" deep in places. Even the country lanes were flooded in places and had to be waded through. After one and a half hours of this, my waterproofs gave up and my trainers were full of mud and water.

The route took us through Hythe, along the canal, through Lympe zoo to Etchinghill radio mast. Approaching the mast, uphill along a sunken trackway, we encountered a very angry Red Poll bull. He was pounding the ground, snorting and head-butting the bank. If you wanted to see a party of 20 soaked, tired walkers going steeply uphill, increase speed to warp factor 5, now was the time!

On through Stowting, Brabourne Downs (two miles from where I live and a wonderful bed) to Wye by 08.55 hrs. At this point my feet decided to develop huge blisters, having been completely waterlogged for nine hours. I was slightly hypothermic, and I couldn't get warm.

I decided at 64 miles and 23 hours enough was enough and gave up in a fit of great despondency.

I hobbled around for a week and finally went to the chiropodist on Saturday morning. He drained the most incredible amount of fluid out from under the hard pad of my heels. Hurrah! In 24 hours I could walk normally. In total I will lose eight black toenails from the pounding my feet took on the descents.

I am certainly fit enough to walk the 100 but the soles of my feet let me down. How do I harden my feet for the event? Suggestions on a postcard please.

**Geoff Thorpe**

IN order to save the cost of postage for a postcard, I will offer here my experience on the subject of preventing blisters. Although I no longer contemplate taking part in 100s, I have completed a number of these events in the past without blisters becoming too much of a problem. My solution was to take measures to prevent any movement of my feet within the trainers. It is the friction generated by movement which is the cause of blisters. I buy my footwear half a size too large and then pack out the extra space by wearing several pairs of thick socks (typically, one pair of thin lining socks, under two pairs of loopstitch thick walking socks). This enables me to tighten the shoe laces such that the feet are well cocooned and at the same time unable to move about and generate friction. When I did Hundreds, I was convinced that wet feet were not a

problem, in fact I decided that it was a positive advantage. The moisture keeps the skin lubricated (again reducing friction) and cool. On one occasion, the first day and night were so wet my feet were fine, then Sunday dawned dry and sunny and soon my feet were burning as my socks and shoes dried out. The solution was to keep them wet, so I splashed through streams and puddles, and at one time I had to resort to standing in a cattle trough to cool my feet. Strange behaviour, but it works for me!

**Laurie Lowe**

## **2000 - WEALDEN WATERS MARSHALS' WALK**

THANKS to Hilary Thornburgh for taking us to heaven as the sun rose and the birds began to sing. In the present climate, when medals are being won with some pain on the mirror-like waters of Australia, I had my own golden moment under the lychgate at Speldhurst. The menu matched the four star comforts and all fatigue and pain floated away with the angels. Hilary must be an angel. Or was I dead at last? Having almost died at several points en route, which Dave Sheldrake can vouch for, was this it? I apologise to Dave for the occasional heavy gasps of air drawn through teeth at those points when the night seemed it would never end and the ground provided the feet with yet another particularly painful moment. I remember vividly a field of wheat under which burrowing I think would have been more successful. I presume that the farmer's combine must have broken down or was it the same man who had turned his mind to shifting great mounds of earth defences across his field to prevent hordes of strange walkers crossing his land?

As I chewed on the best sausage that I have ever tasted, it was time to ponder my return to long distance pursuits. Did I really want to prove to myself that I was still young in body? As the knee that had kept me from walking for three years throbbed painfully, there was the memory of the early part of the walk in glorious sunshine, when tables covered in glorious food sprouted in the middle of fields and there was jest and warmth in the conversation. But I would like Jim Oddy to find a higher standard of joke than 'Why you cannot hang a man with a wooden leg!' It was time to move on and get accustomed to the pain again. But there is the fellowship.

Thanks to Hilary and all her faithful helpers for making the walk so enjoyable.

**Julian Herrington**

## **KENT GROUP COMMITTEE**

Chairman - Brian Buttifant,  
Secretary/newsletter editor - Graham Smith,  
Treasurer - Neil Higham,  
Walks secretary - Mike Pursey  
Membership secretary - Roger Dean  
Webmaster - Michael Headley  
Members  
Phil Butler, Joy Davies, Nick Dockree, Stephanie le Men

PUB meetings are held on the first Monday of each month (except if that coincides with a bank holiday, when they are postponed to the second Monday) at the Rose & Crown, Wrotham. Meetings commence at 8.30pm. All welcome.

## **NEW COMMITTEE**

THERE was a good turnout at our annual general meeting in January, preceded by a nice short walk led by Michael Headley and an excellent meal provided by Joy Davies - the magnificent Joy Davies, as treasurer Neil Higham calls her! It was good for people to come along and have their say about the running of the group. Minutes of the AGM are with this newsletter. The committee was, more or less, re-elected en bloc, with Roger Dean joining, and he will take over the position of membership secretary from Neil Higham. And with Roger taking over membership, he has also taken over collecting subs. Most members have paid but to those who haven't, please do so now. Please get your subs - and they are only £5 - off to Roger (cheques payable, please, to Kent LDWA). Mike Ratcliff - who, we all know, has other things to consider right now - has decided to stand down. It is hoped Mike can rejoin the committee at some time in the future.

## **40th ANNIVERSARY - BARBECUE (See pictures on page 19)**

ACCOMPANYING this edition of the newsletter is a form for our 40th anniversary barbecue on Sunday June 1, at the home of Roger Munn and his wife, Linda.

It should be a very good social get-together, and we are hoping that lots of present and past members of Kent Group will



come. The event will replace our usual post-100 meet. Your committee (more specifically your treasurer Neil Higham) are providing the food, with a vegetarian option, and tea/coffee and soft drinks. There is also going to be entertainment provided by Merv Nutburn's group of Morris dancers. And before the meal, there will be a 4-5 mile walk which Roger has offered to lead.

All you have to do is let secretary Graham Smith know that you are coming by filling in the form and sending it in - before May 1. If you are coming, please bring your own alcoholic drinks. There is plenty of space at Roger's farm, so much space that we can move the event inside if it rains. Also, please do not bring dogs (basically because dogs and barbecues don't really mix ...)

So put Sunday June 1 in your diaries, fill in the form before May 1 - and come along.

#### **40th ANNIVERSARY - WEALDEN WATERS**

PLANS are now at an advanced stage for the return of the Wealden Waters, our first overnight challenge walk, which was last held in 2003.

The event will be held over the weekend of July 26-27, and will be based at the new sports pavilion at Hawkenbury, about 1.5 miles south of Tunbridge Wells. There will be two distances - 100k and 40k (25 miles). There will be seven checkpoints. The date of the marshals' walk has been set for June 28-29.

A sub-committee has been set up to organise the event, headed by Roger Dean, who has just joined our committee. It's going to be a lovely route, and the route description has been checked by Keith Warman (which means it's going to be very good). Marshals are going to be desperately needed, so all offers of help should please be made to Roger (whose telephone number and email address are above) - and will be gratefully received.

#### **SEVENOAKS CIRCULAR**

THIS year's Sevenoaks Circular will take place on Sunday April 27, just weeks after Kent Group members receive this newsletter. As reported in the last newsletter, the date is much later than we would like, but this was the only date we could get from Sevenoaks Rugby Club. The routes will again be 30, 20 and 15 miles, following the same route as the event has for the last couple of years.

As always, marshals will be needed, so if you haven't already offered your services, please contact chairman Brian Buttifant and do so.

It is hoped that next year's Sevenoaks Circular can revert to the traditional March date (although this does, of course depend on the fixture list, when we get it, from the rugby club).

#### **WHITE CLIFFS CHALLENGE**

THIS year's White Cliffs Challenge has a new day and a new month - Saturday August 23. The event has been moved from the usual Sunday in September because of the White Cliffs Walking Festival (see the article below) with which some of our members are involved. The walking festival is going to be a high profile week of walks, which it is hoped will result in much publicity, so it makes a lot of sense for the WCC to be held during the week.

As with last year, the WCC will be based at St Margaret's Village Hall, and there will be two distances - 32 and 15 miles. The longer route has been tweaked slightly, to include a brief excursion into the delightful Alkham Valley. The marshals' walk will be held on Sunday August 3.

#### **WHITE CLIFFS WALKING FESTIVAL**

The White Cliffs Walking Festival - which will include our White Cliffs Challenge - is being held between August 21-27. The festival follows the huge success of last year's Deal Walking Festival, when 674 people went on the 24 walks. It was decided that a natural and logical development would be to turn it into a White Cliffs Walking Festival.

It is being organised by The White Cliffs Ramblers (to which some Kent LDWA members belong) with much involvement from Kent Group of the LDWA.

The festival will feature 32 walks of various lengths in the Dover-Deal area, including four LDWA walks, the main one being the annual White Cliffs Challenge (32 or 15 miles - see events diary for details) on Saturday August 23.

There will also be a 10-mile evening walk from Deal to Dover on August 21, ending with fish and chips, led by Graham Smith; a 15.5-mile Seven Churches Walk on Sunday August 24 - visiting the churches of Ringwould, Ripple, Sutton, Tilmanstone, Eythorne, Waldershare and West Langdon - on August 24; and the 18-mile Three Pits Walk, visiting the sites of three mines in the Kent Coalfield (Tilmanstone, Snowdown and Betteshanger) and villages and memorials associated with them, on August 25.

For full details of the festival, visit [www.whitecliffswalkingfestival.org.uk](http://www.whitecliffswalkingfestival.org.uk)

## KSS - SURREY TOPS

THIS year the Kent Surrey Sussex Triple Challenge of 50-mile walks goes back to our neighbours in Surrey, with the Surrey Tops, being held over the weekend of September 20-21. As usual, Kent Group will be arranging a checkpoint, and anyone willing to offer their services is asked to contact Graham Smith (details above). The Surrey Tops marshals' walk will be held over the weekend of August 23-24 although it must be pointed out that this is the same weekend as our White Cliffs Challenge - and we're going to be needing marshals.

Next year the KSS event is our own White Cliffs Challenge. We do not have a date for the event yet, but it will almost certainly not be held on the usual mid or late September slot. This is because Essex and Herts Group are holding their Shotley 50 over the weekend of September 26-27 (they cannot hold it earlier because of tides, and because of getting permissions from certain farmers over footpaths going over certain fields because of crops) so we have been asked to avoid a September date for the WCC. More details of next year's WCC will appear in the newsletters.

## FUTURE HUNDREDS

WE are doing a checkpoint at the Valleys Hundred, over the bank holiday weekend of May 24-26. It will be checkpoint Deri (47 miles), and will be manned jointly with our colleagues from Bristol and West Group. Once again, Brian Buttifant is coordinating Kent Group involvement on the checkpoint, so please contact him (details above) if you are able to help.

On the Red Rose Hundred next year, we have also been earmarked for a checkpoint - at Dunsop Bridge (60.5 miles, the first checkpoint after breakfast). This promises to be a first class route, with plenty of fabulous undulating Lancashire countryside, so it should be a Hundred to remember.

And on the 2016 Hundred in Dorset, we have been provisionally earmarked to for a checkpoint at Evershott (49 miles).

Also, we are due to hear from the LDWA national committee in October if our bid to stage a Cinque Ports Hundred in 2018 has been successful. It is hoped that the newsletter will be able to report some good news later this year.



These pictures were taken by Sarah Turner, who did not go on the Rye-Hastings trek, on a walk she did between her home in Ramsgate and Broadstairs the same day. As the pictures show, conditions were just the same in Thanet as they were in Sussex.

## THE NEW YEAR SUSSEX WALK by Jill Green

WE heard the weather forecast. It was really bad. However, we long distance walkers are known to be MAD, so in spite of the warning of rain and gales, Jim and I drove to Rye to meet up with similar people. There were just seven of us:-

Mike Pursey - he was the leader, so he had to come; Jane - she had a day off from her job as a bus driver; Richard from the London Group - I remember him from our Kent expedition doing the Cleveland Way; then Peter and Dave, Jim and me.

We set off for the sea wall but we could hardly stand, so we had a long walk on the road. When we reached the place where the Royal Military Canal finishes, we stopped for an 11am break. Then on up muddy paths. I have no idea where we were because of the persistent driving rain, gale force winds and deep slippery mud. We came out above Hastings and forced ourselves onwards across the common, down the steps into the town. If there had been a bus to Rye, I would have been on it. Jane pointed out that if there were buses running, she would not be with us.

Jim and I went into a small café and got a warm welcome in spite of dripping and leaving puddles. We had two mugs of hot tea each and poached eggs on toast. Jane joined us and had a hot meal. Mike came in later for a hot drink.

It was 1.45. We set out to meet up with Peter, Dave and Richard. We were blown up the steps and across the common, to walk back a different way. For a brief 15 mins the rain stopped. Dave had told me he knew the area so I wasn't worried when they went left up a field and we went across it. Eventually we came to a pub. Jim didn't want to go in. It was cold and light failing, so he just wanted to finish. I don't know what Jane wanted but I went in. Mike and Jane came in too, while Jim ate sandwiches and waited outside for the other three men, who we thought were behind us. Here we got our second warm welcome of the day. "Come in by the fire. What can I get you?" said the landlord. Mike and I toasted in 2014 with a nice



pint. Jim came in and enjoyed a hot drink with Jane, and the warmth of the open fire.

Out into the rain and darkness, we walked back on roads. Dave was waiting for us in his car. We got back at 6.20. They had been in front of us, so they had been back three-quarters of an hour. We can't say we enjoyed it, but we both agreed we were glad we went. The following day we had a nice walk on the downs. We have decided we would like to do the walk again.



### THE INVICTA 100 PARTS 1-4 by Peter Jull

AS part of their 40th anniversary celebrations Kent Group have been re-walking their first solo 100 in a series of social walks. The last 20 odd miles largely coincide with the Sevenoaks Circular challenge walk which followed shortly afterwards, but this is the story up to 78 miles. The original event was notoriously hot and sunny with several heat exhaustion cases ending up in Ashford hospital.

**Day 1** and blue skies with bright sunshine were reminiscent of the original Invicta 100 even if the temperature was not, nor the underfoot conditions described in 1992 as hard when now, any antonym of that would be inadequate. After some confusion over travel arrangements to the start a party of seven set off from Sevenoaks railway station rather than the original school. A little over a mile in, the original route was joined at "TR to cross RD under police control". No police for us of course and as we progressed it was clear ST in the old route description frequently needed now to read k/gate. Almost as often orchard was no longer accurate, a sad reflection on the changing fortunes of farming in the Garden of England, although one described as newly planted had not been grubbed for arable but was now decidedly gnarled. Lunch was in the pub opposite the original first drinks stop where chairman Brian met us with the photographic album record from 22 years before. The landscape had not changed as much as the people or the computers. Walking on, an old manor house now fenced off as a dangerous structure meant the path was diverted but where did we rejoin the route description? Rather than the words the Greensand Way markers were followed until they stopped. A short retrace and it was deciphered that stile at top of bank was now kissing gate at the bottom. Flood waters inundating Yalding just days before had receded and the village was traversed with little more than a long hop over one wet patch. A good pace was maintained but we arrived at our finish between buses. With over half an hour wait what was there to do but resort to the pub for a hot toddy.

**Part 2.** A timely break in the endless sequence of stormy rains gave us, six this time, a repeat of the weather a fortnight before. Morning news pictures had shown Yalding under water again but that was behind us. Early views across the Beult valley revealed that that our route was not as paddley as we would have found on that lower ground. Again stiles, gates and



gaps were now variously gaps, gates and stiles and orchards and hop gardens were no more but the route description kept us right with just an occasional hesitation. Until leaving Boughton Malherbe, when a combination of expecting the route description to be no longer perfect and the perennial no no of following the people in front (dog walkers) rather than the instructions, led us across a big field that turned out to be a big mistake. A map consultation revealed the magnitude of our deviation but also helped us rejoin the route without retracing surprisingly quickly so that we arrived at lunch only a little later than expected. Shirtsleeves sufficed for much of the afternoon and soon we were at the Bermuda Triangle, known locally as Hothfield Common. Fences had moved tracks had moved and we had to turn away from the Greensand Way markers. With a bit of guesswork, though, we escaped at just the right point. As we began the climb to the North Downs Way darkness fell, it wouldn't be a 100 without some darkness after all. Turning back westwards it wasn't too far to the point where we were to turn off the route down to Charing station from where we would reconvene for part three.

**Part 3** and the weather gods were reminiscing about 1992 again, providing azure skies once more. However in places the roads around the start were Sochiesque in the degree of traction offered. Rejoining the route at an angle across Charing racecourse (no meeting this week so only one galloper was encountered) it was not clear where we were on the route description until reaching the first road. It mattered little because it mostly said SO, SO, SO and many miles were covered in a few lines with North Downs Way finger posts removing any doubt. Apart from one point where a tree brought down by the previous day's storm in a sunken track required bank mountaineering to get round, we bowled along. At least we did on the surfaced sections, the equally prominent muddy bits induced significant slipping and sliding, causing an injury to one that required directions to the lunch pub by road to avoid the switchbackiest section of the NDW approaching Thurnham Castle. Reduced by that from eight to six, navigation remained error free with so few stiles expected, any changes went unnoticed and even a whole new wood couldn't hide the target radio mast. But then in an older wood a large tree, victim of this winter's winds, had crushed the marker post and hidden the required path so effectively by its size that even when the errant trailblazers were called back they missed the leader beyond it and wandered astray again. Shouted back and by some more limboing we escaped the wood and it was on to the next challenge. At the Medway crossing they have built not one but two new bridges for Eurostar and four more lanes of M2 without the slightest thought for our historic route. So it was follow the signs rather than the instructions. Picking up the pace got us within a few hundred yards of Cuxton station when the target train for the return journey rumbled past. With so long to wait for the next what was there to do but resort to the pub again!

**Part 4** and the morning weather was undecided whether to piddle on the railway engineers messing up our travel arrangements or continue with the 1992 type skies. A few steps from Cuxton station and we (six with a change of personnel) were back on the 100 route and a little further on, on the North Downs Way which we were to follow for the rest of the day. At the first confusion between the old words and the plentiful NDW signs we soon decided to favour the signs and not much later we were into the realm of a familiar (not the witch's cat sort) who led us on unerringly when there was doubt, to the extent that the route description remained mostly in pocket. Around here significant stretches of the NDW have treated surfaces so, although off road, progress was less slippery than before. But much is also byway and our outing seemed to have coincided with quad bike Sunday with participants intent on disturbing the peace but puzzlingly also avoiding any puddles and mud as much as we. After lunch in Wrotham the weather was more intent on recalling the conditions of early 2014 than 1992, to the extent that in a squally drizzle a muddy and forlorn looking horse had decided that the best shelter was with its head firmly in the V of a kissing gate from where it was determined not to be budged by anyone squeezing through, however muddy they were from its poached and muddy field. Overall the walk was straightforward and uneventful and arriving at the Dunton Green finish with cars pre-placed we could cock a snook at Southeastern's suggested changes at Orpington, Bromley, Rochester and Strood over nearly two hours to get back. The only downside was there was no excuse for another pub finale.

The group will be re-walking their other 100, The Millennium, later in the year to fit in with the White Cliffs Challenge.

## **THE FOUR PITS WALK (OR HOW WE NEGOTIATED THE FLOODS AND STILL DID THE WALK)**

**by Graham Smith**

AS Jill Green says, every walk is an adventure, and my Four Pits Walk on February 22 was certainly that. The walk visits the sites of the former Kent coal mines of Chislet, Betteshanger, Tilmanstone and Snowdown.

The issue with making it a Four Pits Walk, to visit the site of Chislet, has always been that of crossing the River Stour. The problem which confronted us was that two weeks before the walk, the River Stour had flooded, as had the Little Stour (of which more later).

To be honest, in the week leading up to the walk, I had been very busy (at work, and with a memorial service for my aunt in London to prepare for and attend) and I didn't check out the flooding situation in the area properly. If I had, I would have cancelled the Four Pits Walk starting from Fordwich and instead made it a Three Pits Walk starting from Northbourne.

Anyway, five of us - Bob Field, Michael Headley, Andrew Melling, Sarah Turner and myself - turned up at Fordwich at 8am for the start of the walk. After five minutes walking along the banks of the Stour came the first big problem - the bank was flooded, making it impassable. So we turned back, and walked along the A28, to the former pit village of Hersden, and the site of Chislet pit.

The crossing point of the Stour is at Grove Ferry, a few miles further on, after which the route goes alongside the river



through Stodmarsh Nature Reserve. I had driven to Grove Ferry the previous Saturday and found the nature reserve submerged in water, looking like a huge lake - so that part of the usual route was out. My Plan B was to follow the road, which was closed due to the floods. I figured that as there hadn't been much rain in the week leading up to the walk, the Grove Ferry road might have become passable. So when the five of us reached the site of Chislet pit, we had a discussion and decided to press on to Grove Ferry and hope we could find a way through, rather than walking back along the A28 to do the rest of the walk. So we pressed on, had a quick stop at Grove Ferry, and started walking along the road - to find the floods had still closed it, making it impassable. So we had a look at the map, and asked some local people for advice, and we followed the flood bank alongside the river before turning off, after which we followed lanes and paths to Wingham. It was now almost 1pm, we had walked 13-14 miles on what had been a taxing morning, so we had our next stop at one of the village pubs. I estimate our diversion had added at least two miles to the route.

We then walked on to Goodnestone, where we had our lunch, and Eastry, where we stopped in another pub. A couple of miles after leaving Eastry came the next problem. At Finglesham the route goes across some low lying land which can be boggy at the best of times. It became wetter and wetter, and when we saw a footbridge submerged in a good foot of water, we realised it was time to turn back and re-route via roads. This we did, and reached the Waiting Miner statue on the Deal-Sandwich Road, just outside Fowlmead Country Park (which was built on the site of Betteshanger, the last Kent pit to close, in 1989).

It was then 5pm, and we knew we had only an hour of daylight left. We passed the former pit village of Betteshanger, shortly followed by Northbourne, and it was just about dark when we reached Tilmanstone, the village which gave its name to the next pit we passed. There were then paths and lanes to Nonington, and by the time we reached our next pub, The Royal Oak, it was almost 8pm. The extra miles and the continual mud (which affected most paths in the early part of the year, the result of the unrelenting rain) were taking their toll, and we were all pretty tired. Sarah, who had had a bad virus the previous week, was feeling pretty weak, and she didn't feel she would be able to walk the remaining 8-9 miles back to Fordwich. She telephoned a good friend in Ramsgate, who agreed to come out to pick her up and run her to Fordwich. Bob and Andrew decided to go back as well.

So Michael and myself pressed on in the dark, passing the site of Snowdown pit, the village of Aylesham which served it, and the villages of Adisham and Bekesbourne - and shortly after that came the next problem with the floods. The Little Stour had also burst its banks and had flooded. I could see a lot of water away to our left in the clear night. Shortly before Littlebourne, the route drops and follows a concrete farm track. Suddenly Michael and I had a good 250 yards of water between ourselves and the road leading into the village. It didn't appear to be deep, and there was nothing for it but to splash on through the water. I reckoned that as long as we could feel concrete beneath our feet, then we would be OK. So that's what we did. We splashed along, with the water coming about midway up our calves. My feet were a bit sore near the end of such a long day, and I actually found the water quite refreshing.

We had a quick stop at Littlebourne, and then for the last three miles we followed muddy (often very muddy) paths to a lane which led us to Fordwich, arriving at 11pm. It been a demanding, but ultimately satisfying, day, one in which we had shown resourcefulness, enterprise and sheer bloody-mindedness to negotiate the floods.

But I must be honest and say that the big lesson I learned was to in future, pay more attention to the effect of extreme weather conditions on a walk, and take appropriate action. I could easily have cancelled the Four Pits Walk and converted it into a Three Pits Walk, and used our website to advertise what I had done. But that's hindsight - and what a wonderful thing that is.

## **RISK OF LOSING HISTORIC PATHS**

A RECENT report produced by the Ramblers has revealed a serious backlog of paths waiting to be recognised as public

footpaths. Any historic paths not officially recorded as public rights of way by 2026 will be extinguished, meaning many well-trodden paths, and other potentially useful routes in the South East would be lost forever.

The "Paths in Crisis" report revealed more than 4,000 paths are on a waiting list to be determined as legal rights of way in England and the Ramblers estimates this backlog will take more than 13 years to clear if processed at the current rate.

To help combat this problem the Ramblers has launched the Don't Lose Your Way campaign. The Ramblers has also been working with landowners, land managers and local authorities to find ways to make the process for recording paths more efficient, consistent across the country, and less contentious, helping to claim as many historic paths as possible before the 2026 cut-off date.

The group's recommendations were put forward to Government and have now been included in the draft Deregulation Bill. MP's discussed the proposals for the first time on February 3.

These proposed changes to rights of way legislation are part of a package of measures which, if taken as a whole, will benefit walkers and landowners alike. The aim is to simplify rights of way legislation, meaning the process for claiming paths will be easier so that they can be added more quickly, helping to clear the substantial backlog.

Ramblers chief executive Benedict Southworth said: "The proposed legislation has been carefully put together by representatives from landowners, paths users, and local government - including ourselves and the NFU - who have worked together for over three years to simplify the law around rights of way for the benefit of everyone.

"This carefully crafted solution should make it easier for historic paths to be added to the definitive map - the official record of all public paths. Many of these paths have existed for hundreds of years - they are an 'inscription on the landscape' made by generations of people going about their business, and are as much a part of our heritage as our ancient monuments and historic buildings. By adding them to the official map they cannot be blocked off or built upon and are protected for future generations to enjoy.

"Our network of paths provide an important role connecting people to green spaces, allowing them to travel to shops and to schools and are enjoyed by millions each year. This unique network attracts tourists from around the world and provides a vital contribution to the economy - last year alone visitors to England's outdoors spent £21 billion. We hope that this new legislation will make it easier for our historic paths to get the protection they need so that we can continue to walk and enjoy them."

## COMEDY CORNER

Subject: Punography

I tried to catch some fog. I mist.

When chemists die, they barium.

Jokes about German sausage are the wurst.

A soldier who survived mustard gas and pepper spray is now a seasoned veteran.

I know a guy who's addicted to brake fluid. He says he can stop any time.

How does Moses make his tea? Hebrews it.

I stayed up all night to see where the sun went. Then it dawned on me.

This girl said she recognized me from the vegetarian club, but I'd never met herbivore.

I'm reading a book about anti-gravity. I can't put it down.

I did a theatrical performance about puns. It was a play on words.

They told me I had type A blood, but it was a type-O.

This dyslexic man walks into a bra.

I didn't like my beard at first. Then it grew on me.

When you get a bladder infection, urine trouble.

What does a clock do when it's hungry? It goes back four seconds..

I wondered why the baseball was getting bigger. Then it hit me!

Broken pencils are pointless.

What do you call a dinosaur with an extensive vocabulary? A thesaurus.

England has no kidney bank, but it does have a Liverpool.

I used to be a banker, but then I lost interest.

I dropped out of communism class because of lousy Marx.

All the toilets in London police stations have been stolen. Police say they have nothing to go on.

I took the job at a bakery because I kneaded dough.

Velcro - what a rip off!



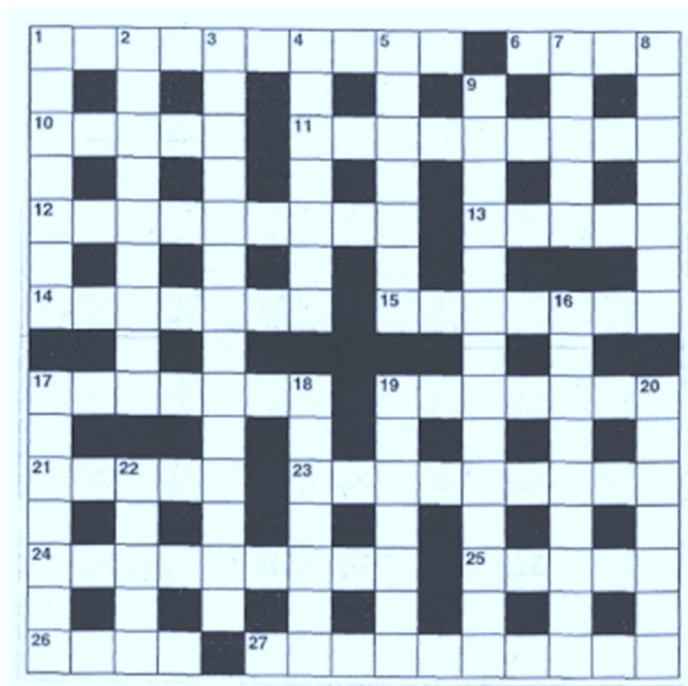
## CROSSWORD compiled by Shirley Higgins

### ACROSS

1. Take city to find another (10).
6. Friend seen at church perhaps (4).
10. Racecourse for someone up north (5).
11. Overdue once more, could it be Anita Gale (4, 5).
12. No end to hope at this place (3, 2, 4).
13. Birds or toys that can fly (5).
14. Unusual small part that might be Welsh (7).
15. Component, oxygen perhaps (7).
17. Might not move, pays Tom in a strange way (3, 4).
19. One sham becomes lack of regret (2, 5).
21. Steal weapon (5).
23. More grub (5, 4).
24. Long boring talk, could be rear end (3, 6).
25. Guides to city we hear (5).
26. Isle of this sounds like something up above (4).
27. A weird olde perfume for young person (10).

### DOWN

1. We all talk about this, rain or shine (7).
2. Pleasant get together in France (4, 5).
3. Fiery and worried. Excited (3, 3, 8).
4. Debts all paid. Sun in France at window (7).
5. Over the top. Terminal (7).
7. Cardiac centre (5).
8. Look after crystal perhaps. A habitual way of thinking (7).
9. Shelters for small horses (7, 7).
16. Condense. Cease to exist (9).
17. They will help you find the way, cairns maybe (7).
18. Begged. Not guilty possibly (7).
19. Normal, not artificial (7).
20. Have we finished? (3, 2, 2).
22. Number for our anniversary (5).



**Brian and Roger at the Barbecue site (See page 12)**

## KENT GROUP SOCIAL WALKS APR to AUG 2014

**Sun Apr 6 Ashford Circular** c26ml. Meet for 08.30 start at Hothfield Common c.p. GR TQ970459 Map: Exp 137. Pub stop at Mersham, food available. L: Neal O'Rourke

**Sun Apr 13 The 4gotten Pits Walk** 22.8 ml. Meet 9am Lydden Church GR: TR264457 Map: Exp 138. Limited parking at church; please leave front gate area clear. Parking near Bell/duck pond & walk up, 500m. Not the Four Pits anytime challenge but a route linking the 4 collieries that never achieved commercial production. They are Stonehall at Lydden, Guilford at Coldred, Hammill near Eastry and Wingham but the visual highlight will be Temple Ewell Nature Reserve. Pub lunch stop. L: Peter Jull

**Fri Apr 18 (Good Friday) A South Downs Way Loop** c26/20ml. Meet 09.00 in Eastbourne at western end of promenade (B2103) by South Downs Way marker post, GR TQ600972 Map: Exp 123. Park near school on left. The 20ml is a circular route on the South Downs via Beachy Head, the Seven Sisters and the Cuckmere valley; return on the South Downs Way. The 26ml is the same but with the addition of Firle Beacon and Willingdon Hill. Lunch stop at Alfriston Ls: (26ml) Graham Smith; (20ml) Joy Davies

**Sun Apr 27 Sevenoaks Circular Main Event** See Events Diary

**Fri May 2 Cinque Ports Challenge** c100km. Meet 21.00 at Hastings rly stn GR TQ814096, Maps: Exp 124,125,138. An unsupported walk from Hastings to Sandwich, linking the Cinque Ports and associated towns. Finish at Sandwich rly stn. Includes night walking - bring warm clothing and torch. Several pubs and cafes along the route for refreshments. For more detail contact L: Graham Smith

**Sun May 11 Martello Rabbits** 19.5 ml. Meet 09.00 by East Cliff bowling green Folkestone GR TR240368 Map: Exp 138. An inland circuit round Folkestone returning along its coastal heights and seashore passing five Martello towers and maybe some rabbits. Pub lunch at Cat & Custard Pot. Please park courteously in Foreland Avenue opposite start. L: Peter Jull

**Sun May 18 Fish & Chips - Yet Another Helping** c21ml. Meet 08.00 in Jefferstone Lane, St. Mary's Bay GR TR090275 Map: Exp 125. Park on roadside nr village hall. A circuit on Romney Marsh taking in Dungeness RSPB Reserve. Pub stop (fish & chips optional). L: Mike Pursey.

**Sun Jun 1 Kent Group 40th anniversary social** - (4-5 mile walk starts 11am, barbecue starts 1pm)

**Sun Jun 8 Nuns of Gavarone** c22ml. Meet 09.30 at Walmer Castle c.p. GR TR380501 Maps: Exp 138,150. Lunch stop at Ash. L: Richard Frost

**Sat/Sun Jun 28/29 Wealden Waters Marshals' Walk** For details C: Roger Dean

**Sat Jul 5 Summer French Challenge** c23 ml. Take 06.40 P&O Ferries sailing from Dover to Calais, then a short drive to Coquelles for a circular walk visiting the viewpoints of Mont de Couple and Cap Blanc Nez, having a lunch stop at Wissant and hopefully finishing with some shopping at the Auchan hypermarket and a meal. If interested, please contact leader Graham Smith by June 6 at the latest. Don't forget your passport! C: Graham Smith

**Sun Jul 20 Millennium 100 Part 1 Canterbury to Walmer** 21 ml. Meet 09.00 at Buttermarket, outside Canterbury Cathedral. In celebration of Kent Group's 40th anniversary, a reminiscence of the 2000 event. Linear route finishing at Walmer rly stn for return journey or contact leader for potential car share. Pub lunch stop. Part 2 will be covered by the White Cliffs Challenge. L: Peter Jull

**Sun Jul 26/27 Wealden Waters Challenge** See Events Diary

**Sun Aug 3 White Cliffs Marshals' Walk** For details contact Mike Pursey

**Fri Aug 8 Summer Night Walk** c19ml. Meet 21.30 for 22.30 start at the Thompson's Bell PH, Dover Road, Walmer GR TR368502 Map Exp 138. L: Graham Smith

**Sun Aug 10 Cream Tea Walk** c20ml. Meet 09.00 at Boughton Malherbe church GR TQ882495 Map: Exp 137, park in field opp. Pub stop at Hawkenbury. L: Neal O'Rourke

**Sat Aug 16 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

**Thu Aug 21 Evening walk with fish and chips (White Cliffs Walking Festival walk)** c10ml. Meet 5.30pm at Walmer Station GR TR363503. Maps: LR 179 or Exp 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. L: Graham Smith

**Sat Aug 23 White Cliffs Challenge** See Events Diary

**Sun Aug 24 Village Church Tour (White Cliffs Walking Festival walk)** 15.5ml. Meet 09.30 in front of The Five Bells PH, Ringwould GR TR360482 Map: Exp 138. A walk passing the churches of Ringwould, Ripple, Tilmanstone, Eythorne, West Langdon, Waldershare and Sutton. Pub lunch stop. Possible visit to modern milking parlour. L: Peter Jull

**Mon Aug 25 The Three Pits Walk (White Cliffs Walking Festival Walk)** c18ml. Meet 10.00 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



## Forty years of Kent Group of the LDWA



**December 1996 - Peter and Moira Rickards, and Neil Higham, at the Christmas Lunch.**



**March 1 1998 - The Sevenoaks Circular marshals walk**



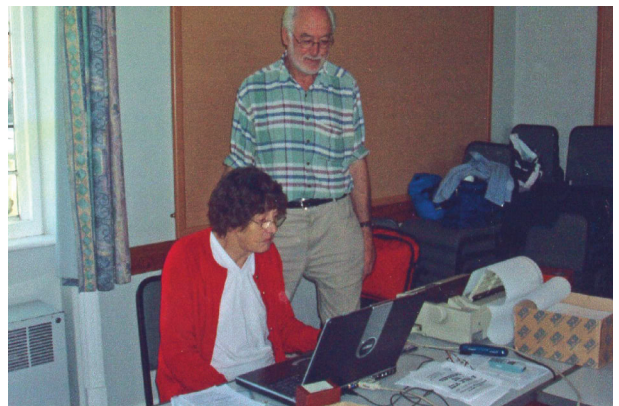
**Tom Sinclair - wearing Le Maillot Jaune and holding an official bottle - and other members of the Wednesday Wrinklies watched the Tour de France, near Sissinghurst, in 1994.**



**August 2000 - The Start of the High Weald Walk from Wadhurst.**



**March 2005 - The Sevenoaks Circular marshals walk, also known as the "Funny Hats" walk.**



**July 10 2005 - Pat and Bryan Clarke at registration on A Walk With The Smugglers on our first visit to Goudhurst Village Hall.**



## PICTURES TAKEN BY ERIC ROLFE ON THE CHRISTMAS CRUISE AROUND CALAIS ON DECEMBER 7

