

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

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

# ***NEWSLETTER***



**Jane Dicker at checkpoint 1 (Dry Hill) on the Sevenoaks Circular on March 22**

*Photo by Sarah Turner*

**Number 96**



**April 2015**

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

**Photos of this year's Sevenoaks Circular**  
*by Bryan Clarke and Sarah Turner*





## KENT GROUP SOCIAL WALKS APR to AUG 2015

**Fri Apr 3 (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 5 Tulip Fever Circular** - 20ml. Meet 09.01 at Sole Street rlwy stn (08.04 Victoria) GR TQ656676 Maps: Exp 162/163. An excuse to take the footpath closest to Cobham Hall where the outdoor sets of Tulip Fever were filmed and some extra paths in the North Downs to make up the distance. Pub lunch at Birling. Joint walk with LDWA London. **L:** Peter Jull.

**Sat Apr 11 Kemsing Walk** - c15ml. Meet 09.30 in Kemsing village c.p. (free parking) GR TQ555587 Map: Exp 147. An alternative to the 40-miler below, visiting the North Downs, Knatts Valley & Shoreham. Pub stop but bring packed lunch. **L:** Judy Rickwood.

**Sat Apr 11 The Four Pits** - c40ml. Meet 08.00 by the bridge over the River Stour at Fordwich GR TR179598 Maps: Exp 150,138. A circular walk taking in the sites of the former Kent Pits of Chislet, Betteshanger, Tilmanstone and Snowdown (this is an Anytime Challenge and certificates are available for completions, and badges can be obtained for £2). Various stops en route. Likely to be a late finish so bring a torch (or more appropriately miner's lamp!). **L:** Graham Smith.

**Sun Apr 26 On and Off the Marsh** - 18ml. Meet 09.30 at Hamstreet Nature Reserve c.p. GR TR003337 Map: Exp 125 (from A2070, TL at Xrds in village, then 1st L). Four changes of landscape between Low Weald and Romney Marsh. Outstanding bluebell display near end, season permitting. Pub lunch in Bilsington. **L:** Peter Jull

**Sun May 10 Peter's Ancestral Trails No. 2** - 19ml. Meet 09.00 at Selling church GR TR039568 Maps: Exp 148, 149. Circular walk linking places associated with Peter's genealogical research, but really an excuse to visit villages in the North Downs that haven't appeared in a recent itinerary. This time it's Sheldwich, Throwley, Doddington, Newnham and Eastling. Pub lunch. **L:** Peter Jull

**Sun May 17 Crab 18** - c18ml. Meet 09.30 at Sandown Castle GR TR375542 Map: Exp 150. Park in road-end nearby. A sideways ramble. Lunch stop at Ash. **L:** Richard Frost.

**Sun Jun 7 Canterbury Circular** - 24.5 ml. Meet 09.00 at Larkey Valley Wood c.p. GR TR123556 Map: Exp 150. Circular walk right round Canterbury with lots of woods. Pub lunch. **L:** Peter Jull.

**Sun Jun 14 Singalong** - c20ml. Meet 09.30 in Sholden New Road, Deal GR TR354529 Map: Exp 138. Park at roadside. A sing as you swing ramble. Lunch stop at Shepherdsweil green. **L:** Richard Frost.

**Sun Jun 21 A Walk with the Smugglers Marshals' Walk** - For details contact Neil Higham.

**Sun Jul 12 A Walk with the Smugglers Main Event** - See Events Diary.

**Sat Jul 18 Summer French Challenge** - c30ml or c23 ml. Meet at 05.50 latest at Castle Hill, Dover GR TR323415 to take the 06.40 P&O Ferries sailing from Dover to Calais, then a short drive to Coquelles for a circular walk. The 30ml will visit Cap Gris Nez and the viewpoints of Mont de Couple and Cap Blanc Nez. The 23ml will exclude Cap Gris Nez. Lunch stop at Wissant and hopefully finishing with some shopping at the Auchan hypermarket and a meal. If interested, please contact leader by **June 20 at the latest**. For confirmation of times and meet point in Dover. Don't forget your passport! **C:** Graham Smith

**Sun Jul 26 Peter's Ancestral Trails No. 3** - 19ml. Meet 09.00 at Wye church GR TR053468 Map: Exp 137. Circular walk linking places associated with Peter's genealogical research, but really an excuse to visit villages in the North Downs that haven't appeared in a recent itinerary. This time it's Molash, Challock and Hastingsleigh. Pub lunch. **L:** Peter Jull

**Sat Aug 1 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.

**Sat Aug 8/Sun 9 White Cliffs Challenge (53ml) Marshals' Walk** - For details contact Mike Pursey

**Sun Aug 16 Cream Tea Walk** - c20ml. Meet 09.00 at Boughton Malherbe church GR TQ882495 Map: Exp 137, park in field opp. Pub stop. Cream teas at church at finish. **L:** Neal O'Rourke

**Thur Aug 27 Fish & Chips Walk (part of the White Cliffs Walking Festival)** - c10ml. Meet 17.30 at Walmer Station GR TR363503, and walk to Dover via the White Cliffs. Fish & chips in Dover and return by train or bus. **L:** Graham Smith.

**Sun Aug 30/Mon 31 White Cliffs Challenge Main Event** - (Part of the White Cliffs Walking Festival) See Events List

**Mon Aug 31 Samphire Hoe and The Warren** - 10ml. Meet 11.00 at Western Heights c.p. (the one overlooking the town) GR TR313410 Map: Exp 138. Pub lunch. **L:** Peter Jull

## **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.

## **MARSHALS – WE NEED YOU (AND YOU, AND YOU, AND YOU)**

KENT Group of the Long Distance Walkers Association organises three highly successful challenge walks each year – our Sevenoaks Circular in March, the Weald Walk in July and the White Cliffs Challenge in August. These events are known throughout the association for being well organised, for having very nice routes, and for having very helpful personnel manning our checkpoints and as well as lots of good food and drink on offer at those CPs. So we have a very good reputation – but that's only because of the number of people from Kent Group who run our events. Those people who volunteer to man the checkpoints and the HQs at our challenge events work very, very hard. They work particularly hard at our White Cliffs Challenge, which is a 50-plus mile walk taking place every three years. It can mean that some of us have to work all day and throughout the night, not going home until the last walker has been catered for and the venue completely cleaned up.

But we do have a problem, and it's becoming an increasingly important and urgent one. We do not have enough marshals. Too often it appears that it is the same people who are marshalling at our events time after time after time. Also – and let's face it - some of those wonderful people who work so hard at our events are, well, getting on a little in years. It is no longer so easy for them to put in shifts lasting several hours as they used to. If we carry on like this, there is a danger we just may not be able to muster enough volunteers to enable us to organise an event properly.

Just before this newsletter was printed, we had our Sevenoaks Circular, when we did struggle to get sufficient marshals to cover all the checkpoints as fully as we like. We have two more challenge events this year – the Walk With The Smugglers on July 12 and the White Cliffs Challenge on August 30-31. Main organiser of the Walk With The Smugglers is our treasurer Neil Higham and the main organiser of the White Cliffs Challenge is our secretary Graham Smith. Neil and Graham would really like to hear from anyone who feels he or she can help out on one of both of these events, no matter how small a contribution they feel they can make. The telephone numbers and email addresses for Neil and Graham are just above this article.

## **CINQUE PORTS 100**

AS reported in the last newsletter, LDWA national committee has awarded us the annual Hundred for 2018. It's great news, and we are making plans. Below is a summary of what's happening.

The event is the Cinque Ports 100, and the idea is to link the Cinque Ports (Hastings, New Romney, Hythe, Dover and Sandwich) and some of the associated towns. The excellent logo, on right, was done for the event by Robert Brown, a former graphics designer who lives in Whitstable and who designed the equally impressive logo for the White Cliffs Walking Festival.

The event will be based at the Duke of York's Royal Military School, just outside Dover, and will be semi-linear, with walkers being bussed to Hastings, where the walk will actually



start from Sussex Coast College, which is next to the station in the town centre. The start venue is very modern and swish and will be absolutely ideal.

The route will go from Hastings to Rye, and then across the Weald to Tenterden in a loop, coming back to visit Lydd and New Romney. The breakfast stop will be at Brockhill Park Performing Arts College in Saltwood, situated in delightful Brockhill Park. Then it's over to the coast and up those White Cliffs to Capel, then on to Dover, Deal, Sandwich, Easry and back to the Duke of York's Royal Military School. The whole event has been formally backed by the Confederation of the Cinque Ports (see the note below from Ian Russell, Cinque Ports Registrar), and several checkpoints are going to be in town halls or town council offices provided for us for free.

As you can imagine, the feet of ascent won't be anywhere near as much as it usually is on a Hundred, because of the nature of the terrain. The recommended feet of ascent is 8,000, but for our event it will be about 5,000, which the national committee is happy with. Obviously, for a walk going between Hastings and Dover, there's never going to be a vast amount of ascent, and Graham and Mike Pursey – who has taken on the job of route coordinator – didn't want to make the route a contrived one by making it go over hills just for the sake of doing so, and missing out on the Weald, which is a lovely part of the route. Also, and let's face it, there's no such thing as an easy Hundred. Walking 100 miles in 48 hours is a massive undertaking for anyone (even our Andrew Boulden!)

We've set up an organising group. Members and their responsibilities are below.

Chief organiser/Dover HQ/publicity - Graham Smith.

Route coordinator - Mike Pursey.

Secretary - Stephanie le Men

Treasurer/start HQ - Neil Higham.

Entries secretary - Phil Butler.

Checkpoint coordinator - Neal O'Rourke

Safety and medical - Roger Dean.

Catering manager - Gordon Harker, Joy Davies.

Transport manager/merchandise - Peter Jull

Equipment officer - Sarah Turner

Website/communications-tracking-results - Michael Headley.

Marshals' walk - Stephanie le Men.

Plans are progressing. The organising committee has had its first meeting and the members are getting on with their various jobs. Mike Pursey is in the process of walking out the entire route and committing it to a route description. Mike's plan is that the entire route will go on our social walks programme as a series of social walks early next year. Neal is in the process of visiting some of the town halls and town council offices to arrange checkpoints, and Peter has been in touch with some coach companies to arrange the bus travel from Dover. Graham has been in regular contact with national 100s coordinator Gail Elrick, who has been very supportive and a great help. Also, we have already had some offers from other groups up and down the country to organise checkpoints for us.

It cannot be stressed enough that this is a huge project for the group, and we are going to need help from everyone. Anyone wanting to help out in any way is asked to contact Graham – details above.

More news about the Cinque Ports 100 will appear in the newsletter and on our website.

Below is a note of support from Ian Russell, Registrar of the Confederation of the Cinque Ports:

*"Further to my holding reply of 13 January, I confirm that I reported to the Confederation, at a meeting yesterday, on proposals for the 'Cinque Ports 100', in 2018.*

*As I hoped and expected, the Confederation warmly welcomed the proposed event and urged the member towns and their mayors to co-operate with you and your colleagues.*

*I am also pleased to confirm that there is no objection to the proposed logo as attached to your message.*

*Please let me know if I can be of further assistance.*

*Ian Russell, Registrar of the Cinque Ports"*

## **2015 COMMITTEE – SAME TOP TEAM AS BEFORE!**

AT our AGM, held at Lenham Village Hall on January 25 (and preceded by a very pleasant seven mile walk led by Michael Headley) members re-elected the existing committee to serve for another year.

So once again we have Brian Buttifant – chairman; Graham Smith – secretary and newsletter editor; Neil Higham – treasurer; Roger Dean – membership secretary; Mike Pursey – social walks; Michael Headley – webmaster; plus Phil Butler, Joy Davies, Nick Dockree and Stephanie le Men. Carry on the good work!

## NEWS OF KENT CHALLENGE WALKS

### Sevenoaks Circular

THIS year's Sevenoaks Circular was based at a new venue – West Heath School, a mile out of Sevenoaks. It was the first time a Kent Group event had gone over to the SIE system of online entries. Although there were one or two relatively minor teething troubles, the event was fully subscribed, with entries secretary Neil Higham having to set up a waiting list. It was the fourth year we had used this particular route. The general feeling was of great satisfaction with the day, from the feel of the ground underfoot to the quality of the chandeliers overhead, with particular praise for both the route and the route description. Details about the 2016 Sevenoaks Circular will appear in the newsletter and on our website.

### Walk With The Smugglers

FOLLOWING last year's special Wealden Waters 100k walk to mark our 40th birthday, in July we return to our normal Weald challenge walk, with the Walk With The Smugglers, based at Goudhurst. This will be on July 12, with the marshals' walk provisionally set for June 21. Distances will be 26, 20 and 15 miles. Organiser Neil Higham is going to need lots of marshals – his details are above.

### White Cliffs Challenge

THIS year's White Cliffs Challenge will again be the Kent leg of the KSS (Kent Surrey Sussex) Triple Challenge of 50-mile walks. The date will be the Sunday and Monday of the bank holiday weekend of August 30-31, to tie in with the White Cliffs Walking Festival (see separate story in this newsletter) and the event will be at Deal and Betteshanger Rugby Club, as it was in 2012. Distances will be 53 miles and 18 miles. The marshals' walk will be over the weekend of August 8-9. This is a big event and we're going to need as many marshals as we can muster. Please contact main organiser Graham Smith – his details are above as well. And, in case anyone is wondering, the reason we are holding the event on the Sunday and Monday of the bank holiday weekend is that on the Saturday, the rugby club is hosting a beer festival, so there would be a clash of events. Yes, we are aware that quite a few members wouldn't mind the event clashing with a beer festival, but it was felt it might not be such a good idea!

## RED ROSE HUNDRED (AND OTHER FUTURE HUNDREDS)

THIS year's Hundred takes place in Lancashire over the bank holiday weekend of May 23-25, and as usual, we have agreed to organise a checkpoint on the event. This will be at Dunsop Bridge (60.5 miles). Brian Buttifant is finalising checkpoint arrangements, so there is still time for you to contact Brian if you would like to help out.

We have also agreed to organise a checkpoint on the 2016 Hundred, in Dorset. This will be at Evershott (49 miles).

And the 2017 Hundred will be the North York Moors 100. We have already been approached by the organisers with a view to doing a checkpoint, and it has been agreed that our checkpoint will be at Wombleton Hall (17 miles).

And then, there's the 2018 Hundred ...

## SEVENOAKS TO JERUSALEM – IN 7.5 MILLION STEPS



A DETERMINED grandmother – and Kent LDWA member - trekked 3,000 miles in an incredible five-month pilgrimage from Sevenoaks to Jerusalem. When Dominique Grattidge left her Chichester Drive home to walk to the Holy Land on July 7, little could she imagine the adventure she was embarking upon. The mother-of-four walked up to 20 miles per day - about 50,000 steps - with a fellow pilgrim, passing through France, Germany, Austria, Slovakia, Hungary, Serbia, Bulgaria, Turkey and Cyprus on their way.

And, after returning to Sevenoaks at the end of November, Mrs Grattidge is still struggling to comprehend the scale of her adventure as she prepares for Christmas at home.

“When I’m talking to people about it, I still think ‘was that me, did I really do that?’” she said.

“I’m still in a sort of disbelief about it. I’m not normally an adventurer, but the opportunity to do this came up and it really appealed to me.

“I did the Camino de Santiago pilgrimage in late 2012 and a fellow pilgrim, Alasdair McBay, said he was going to do the Jerusalem one. He said I was welcome to come along, so I did.

“Although it’s an important religious pilgrimage, that’s not the only reason I did it. It was a personal challenge as much as anything.

“Looking back now, it’s a big distance to cover, but you just take each day as it comes and it isn’t as big as it looks.”

Mrs Grattidge, who has lived in Sevenoaks with husband Ian for almost 30 years and has four children aged between 21 and 35, walked almost the entire way.

The only alternative travelling was a ferry from Dover to Calais, a handful of short train journeys in Turkey, a ferry to Cyprus and a flight to Tel Aviv.

But, rather than aching limbs and searing blisters, the biggest challenge lay in the more ordinary aspects of a once-in-a-lifetime trip. "The physical side, the sore legs and tiredness, you get used to after a month," she added.

"It was the more ordinary things that caused bigger problems, finding food and accommodation and planning the travels.

"In terms of highlights, walking the mountains in Serbia was incredible. It was so isolated and to look back and see what I'd travelled was great.

"It was difficult to leave my family behind and although Ian joined me for parts of the journey, it was just as difficult when he left again.

"I didn't get much of a chance to sight-see, we were too busy trying to complete the routes we had planned, but there were places which I thought were lovely. Istanbul, for example, was magical.

"I'm not a sporty person at all, I think I've only been to the gym twice this year, but it was a challenge I really wanted to do.

"Even when I was starting, I didn't really think I'd be able to do it all, I thought I'd be lucky to get to Canterbury. I'm so glad I've managed to complete it."

Dominique and Ian are both members of Kent LDWA.

*The article above appeared in the Sevenoaks Chronicle in December.*

### **WHITE CLIFFS WALKING FESTIVAL**

THE White Cliffs Walking Festival takes place between August 27—September 3. The festival – which has now become an annual event – is organised by the White Cliffs Ramblers, to which some Kent LDWA members belong. The festival will feature a total of 40 walks, ranging from special interest or historic walks of 1.5 miles to our own White Cliffs Challenge – 53 miles, with an 18-mile option. Graham Smith, who is on the festival organising committee, is also putting on his popular Fish & Chips Evening Walk (start at Walmer Station at 5.30pm, walk to Dover via the White Cliffs to see the town's seafront lit up, then it's fish & chips and back to Walmer by train) on the evening of the opening day, Thursday August 27. This will be the third year of the festival, which last year attracted more than 1,000 people on its 32 walks.

More details about the festival on the website

[www.whitecliffsfestival.org.uk](http://www.whitecliffsfestival.org.uk). There is also a very good YouTube promotional video you can watch by logging on to <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1SslRbGQ6Lg>



### **SAD NEWS ABOUT RON**

JUST as this newsletter was going to press, the sad news came through that Ron Roweth – a stalwart of Kent Group of the LDWA for many years – had died.

Ron, who moved to Edale in Derbyshire some years ago, had been an LDWA member since the 1980s. He was treasurer and then chairman of our group, and a very strong walker. He gave a lot of input to Kent LDWA and had lots of friends in the group.

Ron had been in poor health for some time, and his partner, Ann Beeching, contacted secretary Graham Smith back in January to say that he was very poorly and in hospital.

Our thoughts go out to Ann and Ron's family at this time.

A proper obituary of Ron will appear in the next newsletter.



## **THANK YOU FROM TREVOR**

LONG-standing Kent Group member Trevor Blake, who has had one or two health issues in recent years, has sent the following message to secretary Graham Smith:

Dear Graham,

I would be very grateful if you would kindly arrange to place a small note in the next newsletter expressing my thanks to all the Kent members for their kind wishes to me after my latest operation.

Fortunately the op was a success, and touch wood, the various scans show there are at present no more tumours on or around my spinal cord. I do hope this will remain the case as they are not only quite dangerous but extremely painful. This latest operation was the 15th I have had, and certainly I hope the last.

I'm very grateful for the good wishes I have received from the membership, and hope when I fully recover to meet up with you all in the near future.

Yours very sincerely,

Trevor Blake.

## **BRECON BEACONS TRIP by Mike Pursey**

A TRIP is planned to the Brecon Beacons in late September. Anyone is welcome but must arrange their own travel and accommodation. This attractive National Park has plenty of accommodation available (there are several websites including the National Park's own). The plan is to travel to the Brecon area on Thursday September 24 and to meet up in Brecon in the evening at a point yet to be fixed. The three days' walking (Fri 25th, Sat 26th & Sun 27th) will comprise two days on the hills and one waterfalls walk and will be led by me - all, of course, weather-permitting. We can then travel home on the Sunday, after that day's walk. Anyone, naturally, is quite free to plan their own walks and is not obliged to walk with the group.

The National Park area is covered by three OS Outdoor Leisure maps: the planned walks will be on the Central & Western sheets.

For further details contact Mike Pursey

Any updates to the above can be found on Kent Group's website.

## **NEW COASTAL PATH TO LINK SANDWICH WITH DOVER**

A NEW coastal path will create access to the White Cliffs of Dover, Sandwich and Richborough.

Elizabeth Truss, secretary of state for environment, food and rural affairs, approved the 59km route from Folkestone to Ramsgate at the end of March. Work will now begin and the path should open later this year.

The route includes Kent's most familiar landmark, the White Cliffs of Dover as well as Pegwell Bay National Nature Reserve.

It will include new access to the historic site of Richborough port, which played a significant role in campaigns during both world wars, and will also lead through Sandwich town.

Graham Rusling, public rights of way and access service manager at Kent County Council said: "The route brings with it some fantastic new recreational walking opportunities from Sandwich - already an important tourist destination. New access along the Environment Agency's flood protection defences for Stour estuary opens up significant new opportunities on the doorstep of Discovery Park, which can only add to the attractiveness of the area.

"Equally exciting is the fact that tourists from mainland Europe will be able to walk off the ferries at Dover and straight on to the new national trail."

The trail will also make use of existing coastal paths such as the Saxon Shore Way, Stour Valley Walk, Thanet Coastal Path and the North Downs Way.

KCC is now working on new infrastructure, such as signs and gates. The new walking rights will commence once the route has been established and works have been completed.

James Seymour, Natural England manager for Sussex and Kent, said: "We are delighted this route, which takes in famous and historic landmarks has been given the green light. I'd like to say a huge thank you to everyone who has been involved in the preparations, as their significant knowledge and expertise has been invaluable in helping to shape the route."

Margaret Lubbock, chairman of the White Cliffs Ramblers – which campaigned for access at Richborough port to make the route possible – said it was great news.





### COUNTY COUNCIL TAKES ACTION OVER 4x4s ON NATIONAL TRAIL

PRESSURE from the White Cliffs Ramblers - the south Kent branch of The Ramblers and to which several Kent LDWA members belong - has led to action being taken over a byway near Dover which has been churned up by 4x4 vehicles, often making it impossible to use.

The byway, which stretches for several hundred yards between Guston and Pineham, is on the 153-mile North Downs Way National Trail from Farnham, Surrey, to Dover. It is also near the end of our planned route for our Cinque Ports 100.

Use by 4x4s has caused huge ruts which get filled up with water when it rains and can make the byway impossible to walk, even in the summer.

The White Cliffs Ramblers complained to the county council, which is responsible for maintaining paths and byways. They also protested to Dover MP Charlie Elphicke and Mayor of Dover, Cllr Pam Brivio, who is a member of the White Cliffs group.

The protests have paid off, as KCC is putting in concrete blocks to stop the vehicles from using the byway, and is planning to repair the damage. The byway was closed temporarily for the surface to recover. Averil Brice, group secretary, said: "This is good news, and not before time. Mainly at the weekend, between 20 and 30 drivers and their off-road vehicles have been meeting up to have fun bumping and splashing along this track.

"The more water and mud, the happier they are. The track now has axle-deep ruts filled with rainwater. The current wet climate has caused the water to overflow the ruts and completely flood long lengths of the track, preventing access to any other users.

"If the ruts they have created are too deep for the vehicles to negotiate, drivers enjoy creating other points of access nearby. This can involve removing trees and hedging. If they get stuck, winches are brought into use. Every weekend countless byways are suffering wanton destruction like this. This has turned them into no-go areas for walkers, cyclists, and horse riders."

Andrew Hutchinson, Kent County Council's rights of way officer, said: "Concrete blocks will physically prevent the vehicles from using it.

"We are liaising with all landowners who support our actions. Closure is to prevent any further damage, and also due to the danger to all users now from water-filled deep ruts, hollows, and mud etc.

"Closure is likely to be in place until we can repair.

"We're currently drawing up a specification with a view to repairing in the summer.

"We will be bidding for 50% funding support to Natural England [the government body which supports National Trails across the country].

"Generally speaking, motor vehicles in the countryside is a big national and county problem," he added.

### THE WEALDEN ROUND

PETER Titchmarsh, who is in his 90s and lives in Edenbridge, has devised a new 50-mile Weald walk and has written a guidebook for it. The Wealden Round is a circular walk which either visits or goes near Sevenoaks,

Tonbridge, Chartwell and Ightham Mote, passing 12 welcoming pubs. Being circular, the walk may be started and finished at any point along the route.

Peter has also devised the Macmillan Way and Shakespeare's Way. Unlike those two efforts, the Wealden Round is not specially waymarked, but it does offer a pleasant route around some of the more interesting parts of the Weald.

The guidebook has been written with a view to raising funds for the Hospice in the Weald of Tunbridge Wells. In a letter to secretary Graham Smith, Peter writes: "I hope that a few adventurous walkers will regard it as a challenge and obtain sponsorship from friends and work colleagues."

The guidebook *The Wealden Round*, can be obtained, priced £4, from Sara Clark at Hospice in the Weald, Maidstone Road, Pembury, Tunbridge Wells, TN2 4TA (tel 01892 820 586).

### **CHRISTMAS CRUISE ROUND CALAIS: DECEMBER 13 by Graham Smith**

SEVENTEEN of us – which has got to be a record - turned up for my annual winter French walk. We were certainly a pretty diverse crew (which I suppose is an appropriate phrase considering we used P&O Ferries' services). Apart from myself, Mike Pursey, Joy Davies, Neal and Jan O'Rourke, Sarah Turner, Michael Headley and Bob Field (who have all done the walk before) we also had Jane Dicker, two Kent Group members from Belgium (Geert and Fabienne Galaude-Houthoofd – who joined the group last year), Nicholas Lawrence from Oxford, Lana Fisher from Lewisham, Martin Matthews from Wiltshire, and three members of the White Cliffs Ramblers (Eve Beach, Eve Richards and Bernadette Facey).

It has got to be at least 15 years since I first put this walk on the programme. I remember the first time (before GPS and Google maps) I estimated very roughly that it was 10 miles. A couple of White Cliffs Ramblers came, one of whom developed bad blisters, and he let me know that it had to be more than 10 miles. Since then it has generally been agreed by those going on it that it is 14 miles. We have never put a GPS on the distance, so it's probably time we did. Perhaps Eric Rolfe can join us this year, with his GPS, and then we will know.

Anyway, we all met by the P&O desk at Dover Docks at 7.30am, for the 8.25am sailing, as planned. Well, most of us were there by 7.30. Sarah, Martin and Lana had difficulty parking and were getting close to missing the bus taking us from the docks to the boat. I realised Lana was there when she rang me and I saw she was about six yards away from me, but still no Sarah and Martin. The bus driver was telling me he had to go and I was getting a little anxious (yes, I did say "Goodness me, where can Sarah and Martin possibly be?" once or twice – well, that might not be exactly what I said!) But they turned up just as the driver was about to close the doors – and off we went.

We had a smooth crossing on the *Pride of Kent*, getting to Calais at about 11am French time (10am our time). There we met Geert and Fabienne, who had travelled to Calais from their home in Bruges, booking into a hotel. We set off, going through Calais and then passing the fortifications of Fort Nieulay to the Auchan hypermarket at Coquelles. Then it was through Coquelles to pick up the GR (Grand Randonnee) which we followed to Cap Blanc Nez. The weather was improving all the time. It certainly wasn't cold, and there seemed to be more sunshine the further we walked. We were treated to the sights of hot air balloons and paragliders as we approached the Cap. We also had some spectacular views of the White Cliffs of Dover we had left behind. We had a our lunch in the December sunshine on Cap Blanc Nez, which at 134 metres (439 feet) is a fine and quite spectacular viewpoint. We then dropped down to the village of Escalles and took a road which first went uphill and then descended to Peuplingues, where we had our first beer (we had been walking for a few hours by then and we needed it). Then another mile and a half to Coquelles and our next bar stop. By then it was just about dark, and we followed the road to Auchan for a bit of shopping and a meal (very reasonably priced, with friendly and fairly speedy service) at the hypermarket's restaurant.

After that we followed the road into Calais and saw the town's Christmas lights, which were very impressive, particularly around the theatre and the town hall. We got to the docks just in time for check-in for the 9.45pm (8.45 our time) ferry back to Dover. After a very pleasant crossing on the huge *Spirit of Britain* ferry, we arrived back at 10.15pm. It had been a very good day – a fine walk in good weather, with a very nice crowd of people.

The December France walk is, more or less, a shortened version of our Summer French Challenge. This year's Summer French Challenge will be on Saturday July 18 and will be two distances – the 23 miles we have done for the last 3-4 years, and 30 miles. Both routes will take in Cap Blanc Nez and another fine viewpoint, Mont de Couple (164 metres, or 538 feet), but the longer distance will also take in Cap Gris Nez (the point where Channel swimmers set off from or head to, as it's the close part of France to England). We will be using the ferries again, this time taking cars and leaving them at Auchan while we do the walks. Details are in the social walks programme above.

## MY WALK OF LIFE

EVEN though I grew up in the Kent countryside and walked regularly, I didn't appreciate the true power of walking until a few years ago.

In June 2005, I moved from Kent to London and got a job as a secretary in the City. Just a month later, I was late for work and dashed onto an Underground train at Finsbury Park. It was rush hour so the carriage was packed and I squeezed into a space by the door. As the train made its way from King's Cross to Russell Square, an almighty thud echoed through the carriage.

"Ouch," I gasped as the train ground to a halt and threw me sideways, against the handrail.

The door next to me cracked open and thick black smoke seeped into the carriage.

As the smoke grew thicker, other passengers started to panic. Minutes dragged by and I could feel the smoke filling my lungs. My breathing became laboured and I started to worry that we'd never get out. My thoughts drifted to my parents and I started to cry as I wondered if I'd ever see them again.

Eventually, we were led through the train, and then along a second one and onto the platform at King's Cross station. Passing panicked and bloody commuters, paramedics and Underground staff, I made my way out of the station and found a café nearby.

That's when I heard on the radio that London had been bombed. I sobbed as I heard of the commuters who hadn't been as lucky as me.

That night I travelled back to my parents' place in Kent, where I pored over TV reports. With a mixture of horror and relief, I realised my carriage had been next to the one with the bomb. After three days at home, I returned to London. But, when I arrived at the tube barriers at Finsbury Park, I froze as my last tube journey flashed through my mind.

"I'll come with you," a police officer offered and I nodded. Sitting side by side on the train, we didn't speak much. It was just nice to have someone there.

As the weeks and months passed, I struggled to move on. I felt permanently on edge, panicked over the slightest thing, had terrible nightmares and retreated from my social life. On the rare occasion I did meet friends, I felt like I couldn't relax.

To try to exorcise the ghost of 7/7, I joined a support group for those affected by the attack, called King's Cross United. It was reassuring to know I wasn't alone, but I didn't really bond with anyone. In one meeting, an assessment showed I was suffering post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). I had weekly counselling, which helped a bit, and my doctor prescribed anti-depressants for me once.

Eighteen months after the attack, I moved back to Kent. It made me feel safer but also gave me another reason to stop seeing friends. One day, my worried mum handed me a leaflet about the East Kent Walking Group.

"They'll all be anoraks!" I cried. But she told me she'd met them in a pub and they were all ages and very friendly.

On a rainy Sunday, I arrived at the meeting point in Dover and was disheartened to see just one person from the group. But, as we walked along the coast together, I took in the beautiful scenery and thought: "Perhaps things aren't so bad after all." Before long, I was walking with the group every week. The exercise made me physically stronger but also did wonders for my mental wellbeing. I started to make friends and even attended the monthly socials. At first I didn't mention 7/7 to them as I'd learned from the experience that it made people feel awkward. When I did bring it up, it didn't feel such a big deal after all.

On a walk in March 2012, a new member called Mike came along. We chatted a bit during the walk and he came along to the group's next social. We soon started dating and got married in June 2014 in front of 20 of our walking friends.

I'm so grateful that I started walking when I did. It's given me a whole new life, as well as a new husband. I'd recommend walking for anyone suffering from PTSD – it certainly helped me. Yes, some walkers do wear anoraks, but don't let that put you off!

*This article by Nicola Ratcliff – wife of Kent LDWA member Mike – appeared in Walk, the magazine of The Ramblers, in December.*



## DIARY OF 100 MILES PLUS IN LUXEMBOURG by Peter Jull

ONE of the BBC documentaries commemorating the start of WW1 referred to an incident in which a railway station in Luxembourg was captured by the Germans a day before war started. It seems the Kaiser said attack,



then half an hour later changed his mind having received a message that the British might yet be persuaded to stay out of it. The stop message didn't get to the platoon tasked with taking control of Troisvierges station until they had carried out their task and a messenger on a bicycle caught up with them. They went home and invaded again properly the next day. Unfamiliar with this story a bit of Wikipediaing revealed that the countryside within the town's commune contained the highest point in Luxembourg. That sparked an idea that this might be a target area for a walking expedition.

More surfing revealed that the country is only 51 miles north to south and that there is an area they call Little Switzerland that is a popular hiking area. So let's stay there and walk from one end to the other, easily manageable surely, and do the best of the rest. A link on our Kent website led to an interactive map, like our Get-a-Map by Ordnance Survey, and route planning started. The map showed lots of promoted footpaths but they were mostly circular and short and it soon became clear that there was no obvious way to link them together to get from one end of the country to the other. They seemed to use white lines on the map which the legend called "country roads" but many looked like forestry or farm tracks on which walkers might not be welcome. Luxembourg doesn't have Streetview to see any no entry signs or similar and using it to peer over the Belgian border didn't help. So using what were definitely public roads to fill in the missing links a route was devised but it was more than 100 miles long.

What did we do before the internet allowed you to sit at home in England looking up bus times and routes between an obscure town in Luxembourg and an even smaller village miles away? That enabled the walk to be broken down into four sections based on a hotel I had booked in Beaufort, with public transport available to the start or finish each day with one spare out of a five day break for sightseeing. All I needed now was a map to carry with me, which no amount of Googling resolved where to buy. The question was emailed to the Luxembourg tourist office. No reply. But a few days later a fat packet landed on my doormat containing a number of glossy brochures, one hiking orientated. Still no clue where to buy the maps the pictures showed walkers consulting beyond a suggestion that you should print your own from the website I had been using. So I did; 21 A4 sheets.

Day 1

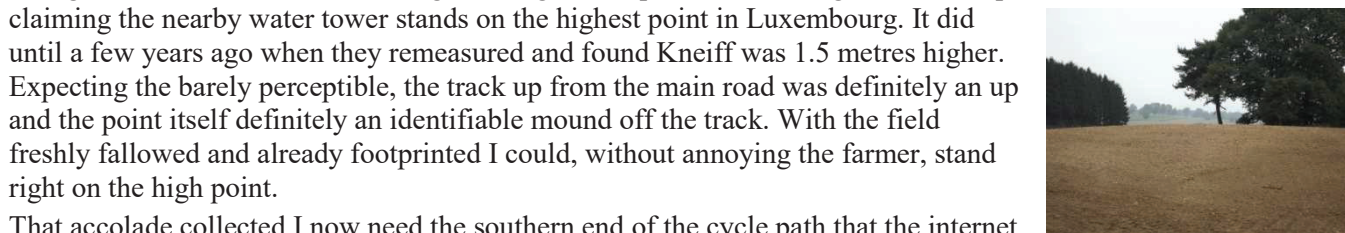
The start day Thursday in September arrived with a very early alarm call to catch a silly o'clock ferry. The captain made a hash of parking, having to let go ropes and start again but the ramp was still down on time. Delays on the



Brussels ring road but still arrived at the northern Luxembourg border within the time planned. In haste to get going I set off south only to realise that I had driven the first few hundred yards to where I'd parked so to do it properly walked back to the border to photograph the signs as evidence. When I got there, there wasn't one to be seen although there was a Belgium is next sign going the other way. The strict northern point is in a field over towards Aldi but I knew the roundabout was in Belgium so settled for a photo of the village sign next to the shopping centre car park entrance road which made such a picturesque start to the walk. Car park full of Belgian cars

(plus mine), I guess it's a tax/price thing.

Nearly half an hour seems to have slipped by before I get to where I turned round and continue beyond. It's beside a long main road but there's a wide grass verge so no problems. Soon get to a small park with a carved rock claiming the nearby water tower stands on the highest point in Luxembourg. It did until a few years ago when they remeasured and found Kneiff was 1.5 metres higher. Expecting the barely perceptible, the track up from the main road was definitely an up and the point itself definitely an identifiable mound off the track. With the field freshly fallowed and already footprinted I could, without annoying the farmer, stand right on the high point.



That accolade collected I now need the southern end of the cycle path that the internet said was the longest in Europe on old rail tracks coming 125km from Aachen but not marked on the maps. At this point the railway had been in a tunnel 150 feet below my feet but it remained closed to not disturb the bats that had taken up residence. There was supposed to be a new bypass and I had seen signs on the way up so retraced and there it was; a tunnel under the road dated 2014 built just for me. Beyond, there was smooth new tarmac



between woods and fields, so new in fact they were still tamping it down over one bridge. Half the route was on the old track bed so the gradient was also smooth and sheltered. Not everybody's favourite going, I know, but without any attractive alternative it was eating up the early miles. I did take the old footpath over the hill into Troisvierges to get the "train set" view down over the station. Beyond that and the historical connection there was little reason to visit the town, not even a shop selling a postcard of the place.

For the next stage south to Clerveaux the railway still operates in the valley bottom so the Sentier du Nord I was due to follow doesn't. Footpaths here are profligately marked by symbols on posts at junctions and also on tree trunks (of which they have plenty) and lampposts and anything else to hand. That only helps if you know which symbol to follow and I find an information panel on the edge of town that says for now I need yellow diamond. So navigation is easy enough but the going is much much hillier and often rougher underfoot. Pass the remains of an RAF plane with wings and engines clearly identifiable; crashed in 1945 the memorials say. Then I come to a junction with no signs and only left or right options when my sense of direction says go straight on. I try west but the sun position and valley direction don't feel right with no visible turns in the right direction despite the open landscape. Go back east and soon find turnings heading the right way and am relieved to find the signs again shortly after. The first place I get to in Clerveaux is the station and am perplexed at how late it is, I haven't been delayed that much. I recheck my schedule and spot that I didn't adjust the ferry arrival time for the continental hour. Concerned at leaving my car in the shopping centre car park too long after it closes and not knowing the latest check-in time at the hotel I decide it best to stop early for the day.

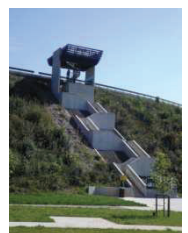


I find a bus driver whose route will cross the main road where I can change onto the planned bus back to the north. Just one other passenger in a 60 seat bus, plushly appointed and only I paid. The second bus, as big, running a half hourly schedule, and again only me and one other plus the driver's son being child minded I think. How do they make them profitable? Nearly an hour's drive to the Auberge Rustique and the hotelier is ready for me having spotted my car parking. In fact he seems so helpful it is verging on obsequiousness, would I like packed lunch, maps, bus times, even a lift back in his car if I get lost. On later reflection it was probably his upsell patter as all these things came with a price, perhaps even his car was a taxi. In the meantime I took pity on the young couple, as there were only two people in the bar who seemed more friends than customers and no other guests, so order food, a quiche Luxembourg (added sausage I believe) and a beer. A quick stroll to check on how long it takes to walk to the bus stop for the morning, back past the town's floodlit castle then early to bed.

## Day 2

Up before dawn to catch the 6.40 bus. I expected it to be as equally empty as before but it gradually fills up on its way to Ettelbruck where I am to change. Hardly anyone but me seems to pay. At the station it's busy with buses and bustling with people, many waiting for rail replacement busses south towards Luxembourg. I head north on a much quieter train back to Clerveaux to resume my walk. Divert through the western part of town to pass the church (which I mistake for the abbey later realised to be on a much bigger hill on the edge of town) and the castle which I would have gone in if it was open but I was two hours early. Climb out of the valley to the east and find the yellow triangle signs for the Sentier Ardennes-Eifel that runs from La Roche-en-Ardenne in Belgium, which I recommended after visiting two years ago, to the Eifel mountains in Germany and shares this stretch with the 7000km E3 from Santiago in Spain to the Black Sea in Bulgaria. Still miss one turning but coming to a stream crossing with path options but no bridge and no signs I have learned that I can't be in the right place and retrace to find a turn where for once there is no post but clear signs on the trees. The valleys are now less severe, or at least the route in and out is as far as Hosingen where I should have gotten to last night. Despite its size there's no shop so I start the planned Day 2 light on supplies and three hours late.

Leave on a cycle path which shares an industrial estate road. Miss the turning off but can cut across a field to rejoin. In the next village it's blocked by construction work needing a make it up yourself "deviation". Pick my way through more roadworks to join a bigger road then find that one of those map white lines is a proper road but quieter and a similar distance, so go off plan. Rejoin the more substantial road but traffic is only intermittent and all this tarmac is helping make up time. The embankments of a hydroelectric reservoir come in view high on a hill half a map page away so head down and head on towards it. On arrival I find the mapped viewpoint is a lookout tower and cannot pass it by despite the 120 steps up. Am taken aback by the buffeting of the wind which is a barely perceptible breeze on the ground. The views are long but the target town of Vianden is still hidden round the hill. Continue round the reservoir, which seems longer than getting to it, then find the track leading down into town calculating that I can still spare the two hour break originally budgeted.



The track leads into a chateau car park then round the corner, wow, that's an impressive castle. I'm still going down and the castle is definitely an up but the only signs point to two other attractions. A few yards past I decide they wouldn't make mere mortal tourists go down then up and go back to find the way in. Through the gate the Anno 1979 restoration is shockingly incongruous. Wonder, should I be prioritising finding water supplies instead? Toilets. Hand basin tap. There's a queue of the like-minded. Following the tour route round, some of the restoration work is better than other parts but learning about the wreck they had to start with, decided the €6, the time and all the steps were worth it. Picnic, postcard writing then on down into the town which clearly functions



as tourist honeypot. The postcards all show the castle from the town to get the river in but the car park view I think is more imposing.

Finding the right path out of town leads to more easy gradient cycle path. In the middle of woods come across an old railway station building and realise this is another disused line. Too much later I realise that there shouldn't be a valley on my left and the sun position says I'm heading west instead of south. There's no cut across so retrace half a mile to see that in looking at the station building I had turned my

back on signs pointing to a behind the hedge cut back that turned in the required direction out of sight. E3 has rejoined after diverging far to the north then inexplicably skirting the picturesque highlight of the town. After a stiff, mile long climb the route become merely undulating although each undulate seems to be bigger than the last; I think they really were. Leaving the E3 to follow a local route (1 on a blue flag) gets me down to cross the river Sure at Reisdorf. I know the sting in the tail is to come as the bus came down the hill this morning. There are distance cuts but not ascent cuts and as I toil up the hill the street lights begin to come on and the church bells strike 8. The last of the off road paths cuts up rough underfoot after being committed to and slows the going. Night walking wasn't part of the plan but I'm torched for the dark and get to the hotel a while after 9. Thirty-four miles in around 11 hours is about as fast as I ever get.



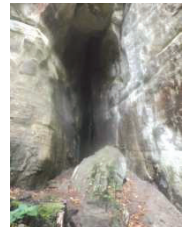
### Day 3

Up in time to start at first light. TL at the hotel door is straight onto the Mullertahl Trail. Past the castle then down the valley of the River Haupeschaach. Little more than a stream the valley is out of proportion to the current trickle over, between and under huge boulders. Although the path has clearly been manicured in places there's still much rock hopping to do and that together with looking back at the views, progress is slow. There's more than light enough to see by but with the depth of the valley with the sun still below the lip, and the trees, it is still too gloomy to take a decent photo even though the scenes look as good as any in the brochures. At confluence with the Black Ernztal TR. Bigger river, wider valley, easier going into the village of Mullertahl after which the much vaunted trails and region are known. Lots of car parking but no parkers. Lots of tents on camp sites but no visible campers. I do spot a Sprite vending machine though, to defer drinking from my water bottle.

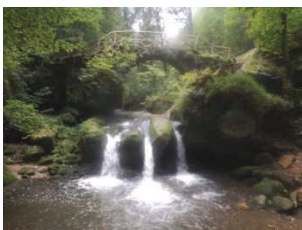


The brochure identifies three highlights a short diversion off my route so commit to the extra mile and a half there and the same back. The first is Eileburg which is a series of 'no claustrophobics' please rock crevices through which the path passes. It looks like this is where the brochure cover picture was taken with pretty girl in new hiking gear added. The next is Goldfralee which is a huge lump of rock separated from the valley side which you can climb to the top of though even more claustrophobic crevices because this time they are dark as well. Only a little further is Goldcaul, another lump of rock which is not separated from the valley side, that you can't climb to the top of and doesn't

look that much different from other lumps of nearby rock but it's got its name painted on it so it must be special. Turning back I pass the first hikers I've seen all trip, they had rucksacks and a map anyway. Back at the main path there is the much brochured Schiessentumpel waterfall with more people now around. It is certainly no more spectacular than a landscape gardener could have created but pretty enough in a small way.



From the waterfall the route continued up stream then turned into a side valley. The gradient started gently and left behind the road noise that had affected the route since the confluence. After the stream in the valley ran out the climb continued until, after nearly three miles of continuous ascent, the path eventually levelled out then began the drop down into the next village. Arriving at one end I had promised myself a beer but was too soon out the other end and starting another climb, now on the Sentier du Mellerdall (red over yellow pointy shape) which should take me all the way into the city. Only 1¼ miles up this time before it's down to the next and bigger village but the route only skirts the barless edge. The church bells strike two, yes I'm due two beers methinks. Another 1¼ mile climb before I can see a castle and hear a band on the way down into Bourglinster; hopes rise. The band



turns out to be Dutch, perplexingly practising in a car park in the middle of Luxembourg for a festival somewhere, audience: me plus two others. Whatever the castle has to offer it's off route up the wrong hill and the daylight minutes are ticking away but as hope fades I spot a large awning - Diekirch bierre blonde. The bar turns out to be empty and dingy and there is no incentive to linger after the beer has slid down very readily.

I'm excused a post village long climb this time but after yesterday's exertions my legs are now stuck in medium plod gear. Then I get to a path junction where the signs say TL and the map says TR. I'm right on a map page join



and don't have the overlap covering TL so stick to the map. That includes a short stretch of busy road but otherwise proves easy to follow and the signs rejoin later, I presume having followed a road avoiding route for which the map has yet to be updated. A long straight forest track then a long straight minor road towards the end of which I get my first glimpse of the big city; construction cranes on the horizon, across the valley. As I descend my side of the valley it starts to lose its rural tranquillity. After some suburban streets there's riverside city park before bridging the river. The path I choose up to the city turns out to be closed half way for reconstruction and the diversion leaves me off my city map. After some wanderings through city streets I get my bearings and find the Corniche, an old fortifications parapet leading round to the bridge I need. I'm heading for the hospital as my doctor's nurse insisted I get my surgery dressing changed while away and am looking forward to a long sit down in the waiting room. Thirty-one miles in about 13 hours, it felt slower.

Disturb the receptionists' TV football, am seen within two minutes and out again in little more than 20, damn, But the early bus has gone and its nearly two hours until the next and last. Wander back into the city centre, listen to a band playing, loudly, in the main square, saunter through a bar area taking in the buzz of big city summer street life then find the bus stops, with electronic departure signs. There's so many busses coming through they only give about 10 minutes ahead so there's time for a beer in the bar on the corner. I wander over to No1 which I need only to see a departure come up timed after mine which is nowhere to be seen; help. There's no one to ask, the busses are whizzing in and out too quick to speak to a driver, the one broken down driver has his phone stuck to his ear and the grouchy engineer pretends not to understand "Royal Quai?" even though its only 30 yards away. I eventually spot a plan of the bus stops and see that in addition to the Nos 1 – 6 I've been waiting by there's another No1 and 2 round the corner. It's already departure time, run, it's amazing what panic will do to tired legs and as I get there a bendy bus pulls out as another arrives with destination showing not Beaufort but a village I'd passed through on the way in. Ask the driver, it's the right bus and I'll be back in time to walk another day.

#### Day 4

I take a break from walking north to south to do some walking. I'd found on the internet the local IVV affiliate Fédération Luxembourgeoise de Marche Populaire and the event they were organising the Sunday I was there was the Wanderfalcon in Steinfort. It was right on the other side of the country, ooh 25 miles away. 6, 12 or 20km; 20km for me of course. With other things planned for later in the day I didn't want to waste any daylight but didn't want to turn up on the dot when they might still be setting up for a 7am start and timed my arrival for about quarter past. I needn't have worried, the car park was overflowing, all Luxembourg plates apart from one French. With start when you're ready there were just a few left leaving. I reported to the registration desk and paid my €1.50. "Which is your club?" Long Distance Walkers Association Kent wasn't on his list! There was a map; I'd already printed one off, but no other instructions.

I soon worked out we were to follow white arrows spray painted on the ground and orange tape tied to lamp posts, trees, anything that couldn't move. Health and safety clearly dictated that the arrows should point away from junctions and across zebras on streets with no traffic and which everybody was ignoring of course. After some initial residential roads it was soon out into the countryside where, as everywhere I'd been, cattle farms predominated with their inevitable associated odour. Almost as soon it was into a village and after only about two miles the first Controle. Beer was available; it was 8 o'clock in the morning. The 6km route diverged here while we climbed a short hill up to a water tower. I was feeling better and my pace was faster but these short distance wimps weren't hanging about either. Come to a border post (orange taped) marking the start of Belgium but whether the road we followed was in one, the other or both countries was not clear. In some later woods the route

definitely became Belgian and then the 12km route turned off. The longer route turned back at Clairfontaine Abbey where Controle 2 was found. I had decided to spend some of the refreshment tokens I had been sold without really understanding what they were for but this time there was no beer in sight. The stamp on my card was a happy face. So it was cross a river back into Luxembourg and onward through mostly woods to where the 20 and 12km routes rejoined at the next Controle. The two young people manning it easily understood my English request for a beer. Stamp was a sock!?



More and slower walkers now but also a few runners coming past. Came to a large textile mill which the map (no one else seemed to have bothered with one) showed after my 20km route should have diverged again. Retraced some way to ensure I hadn't missed a sign then 100 yards beyond where I'd turned back I came to the 20L/12R sign. Out into more open countryside I expected the next Controle near where the route was to turn back again at the edge of a village. Absent, it was then unexpected when I came upon one as we got back to the outskirts of Steinfort again. Another English speaking young couple supplied a beer and a cheese roll that someone had gone to the trouble of making but no one else was bothering with. A little later back at the start (13 miles in about 4 hours) I found out why. It was lunchtime and there were long queues for the hot food,





chips, burgers etc. being served outside, and inside the sports hall tables were heaving. The lady in charge of money told me they had already had 1050 entrants with an hour to go before the last start on the short routes. In the car park another couple of French cars were spotted and Dutch. No Belgian or German seen but I'd be surprised if there weren't some somewhere or even more so had there been any other English.

Drive on to my next brochure highlight, Esch sur Sure, a village set in a loop of the river with a castle across the neck. Start with the footpath behind the "Nice Place" hotel leading up the valley side across from the village. Climbing round the outside of the loop every few yards opened up a new panorama demanding to be photographed. My target was the radio mast at the top of the hill, only a short walk of about a mile but more than 500ft of ascent. Never did find the brochure view though, I think they must have used a helicopter. Back down in the village I expected another ascent up to the castle but couldn't find the entrance into the ruins in the maze of alleys. A boot fair busied an already touristy hotspot popular with burn up bikers whose revs had disturbed any serenity even on the mountain top by abusing the echo in the tunnel. I did find where to drive up to a separate fortified tower above the tunnel looking down on the village and castle giving yet another picturesque panorama. Frustrated at seeing other people had found their way into the castle it was time to move on.



The stretch of Mullertahl Trail between Berdorf and Echternach had a number of brochure highlights I wanted to squeeze in. On the way there petrol €1.33.5 per litre (£1.05) but beer has mostly been more expensive. Also on the way Larochette had been picked out as a potential stop if time allowed but I had to restrict myself to being a drive by tourist. Lump of a castle, been there, seen that. Parked by the Mairie in Berdorf, found the right road out of town and into the woods got to the first Mullertahl fingerpost. These have destinations and distance down to .1km and I read 6.6, much less than the 11 I remembered the brochure saying. So time to spare, then realised I'd left my camera in the car. Would I be more annoyed at not having it later than annoyed at going back now? Decided to go back only to find another English car parking next to mine. I do like to challenge myself on finding holiday destinations where I see no other English people. I had heard "Thank you very much" spoken very properly to the ticket man at Vianden castle and several voices in English in Luxembourg, often American accented but some from likely stag parties. This was a definite failure though. Locked the car this time and back at the sign some 25 daylight minutes later I followed the 6.6 finger, a track repaired in places with large lumpy rocks of a Camel-Teign standard. Came to an unexpected road so retraced to read the sign again.



6.6 was to Echternach Gare which was where I was due to catch the bus from but Echternach was 5.7 downhill. That led immediately to highlight 1, a cave used as the stage for an amphitheatre built into the slope. Adjacent was the more impressive Hohllay, a cave enlarged by millstone quarrying in earlier times from where the path followed a rocky gorge passable only by a series of wooden bridges criss-crossing the

river even though it was little more than a trickle. The path continued in similar vein to that below Beaufort from yesterday as far as the next highlight Perekop, another fissured rock but less crevicey than yesterday's. Perhaps this is where the brochure cover shot was taken? Beyond Perekop the gorge became more valley down to the last highlight, Wolf's Gorge. Only this was not in the valley bottom but 260 steps plus slopes up one side. I felt too many fallen trees spoilt the impressiveness then spotted the sign I was perhaps here for; viewpoints up steps on either side. Resisting temptation to see neither I choose the one that looks shortest. Another 82 steps (you



can tell I'm tiring again if I'm counting steps) and there is a good view above the trees across and out of the valley. I skip the other viewpoint as, although I can see it's higher the town will still be out of sight round the corner. From here it's all the way down again and more into Echternach but the path is less steepy and much manicured so easier going. Before the final descent there is a nice viewpoint over the city and at the bottom the route still came out right by the bus station. 7 miles including extras in about three hours but I had been admiring the scenery rather than concentrating on forward progress.



The main street cafes appear very genteel as dusk begins to fall. I'm not the first Englishman here because the cathedral is dedicated to St. Willibrord, a Northumbrian who was an early abbot here. Walk across the bridge into Germany just to say I've done it. Sights seen at a saunter there's time to kill 'til the bus goes so treat myself to the

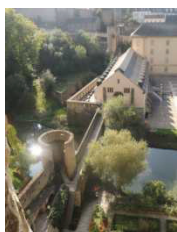
typical Luxembourg delicacy, a Turkish pizza. Back to the bus stop, bus back to the car, car back to the hotel and back to bed.

## Day 5

This morning's decision is rest until a later bus to save energy for the final stretch or go earlier to have enough time to look around Luxembourg before the UNESCO World Heritage listed Casemates I want to see open at 10am. Decide I can always sit down somewhere in the city if I'm done, so up before dawn again for the 6.50 bus. Again it fills up steadily but for once the driver is asking for tickets. This takes all the locals by surprise with much fumbling in bags for handbags for purses for tickets. They do have them though, regular plastic season tickets, electronic tickets on phones or Oyster type cards, apart from one young lad who coughs up the €2 which covers any travel for up to two hours. My ticket was €4 for all day travel, bus or train, anywhere in the country. All that ticket checking though with roadwork delays approaching the city makes the bus 15 minutes late.

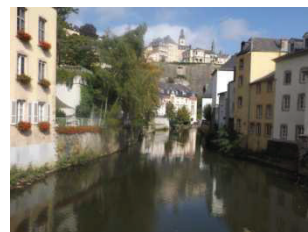


The city is perhaps not looking its best for me, the Adolphe Bridge is a scaffolder's wet dream, William II has the builders round, their hoardings literally surrounding his statue, at the Grand Duke's palace the Luxembourg Army's one soldier is zealously guarding the window cleaner's cherry picker and in most of the streets lorries are delivering to yet to open shops and city workers are clearing up including tractors hauling away Saturday's stage. I have time for a short sit down before being first into the Casemates, a complex of underground tunnels once forming part of the city's fortifications. The guide leaflet is a lesson in how not to render a 3D object on a 2D plan and a few more signs underground would have been more than helpful. Without them it puts the Minotaur's labyrinth to shame as after several spirals down a staircase any sense of direction regained after looking out of a gun port at the city ramparts is soon lost. After climbing more steps than necessary or perhaps sensible, I do find the way out.



That done I can set off on the final leg to the southern border. At first there are a few more postcard views to look back at then a large construction site to negotiate (they're building huge high revetments for a new tram system, I believe), then a bit of back street but after about a mile I'm on a peaceful riverside cycle path. Prime joggers' territory clearly. It follows the long loops of the river upstream but the river has little fall so any gradient is barely perceptible. There may be paths across the necks of the loops but I've picked up a wrong map

sheet so can't see where they might be which answers the distance over ascent decision anyway. The sound of a motorway high overhead is for once welcome, because it comes just before crossing the river into Hesperange, when even the continuous easy going is, after so long without being able to monitor progress on a map, beginning to pall. Take a beer break outside a café looking at the church, fountain, castle and traffic jam.



From here the Sentier du Sud (yellow square) should take me all the way to the end but of course it starts by going up the castle hill. It's not too high and once up the path stays up. Under a railway, over a motorway, across countryside and through woods to a road with a sign "Luxembourg 5". Have I really walked 10 miles doing loopy loops just to avoid a bit of busy road? Next a viewpoint sign after more woods, hmm that's a very nice view over a motorway but walking on there is a distant view behind of the city and I get to watch a plane fly overhead and land at the airport even more distant. The miles are starting to catch up with me and there are too many tempting benches provided, in woods and at road junctions, to not take a rest at some. I'm eking out my water bottle until the next village which is of a size that in England would still have a local shop but not here, so where do the locals but their food? Apart from a little one in Vianden I've not seen a supermarket since Aldi right at the start. The bar looks uninviting so press on. Freight train going not so fast but the level crossing lights continue to flash; I see nothing coming so dash across. Fifteen minutes of uncomfortably busy road leading across a motorway then I'm on the last map page.

Oh heck look at that hill. There's an abbey marked at the top that I had envisaged detouring to to see the viewpoint when planning before the trip. It seems a very unattractive idea right now but I'll see if the next village has anything to help. No again, so I give myself permission to bypass the Sentier du Sud route up the hill, I'm not following the path after all just using it as a guide southwards. Another busy road but with a proper cycle path adjacent this time, doesn't avoid all of the hill either. There's more climbing beyond as well. But from the top there's an easy level track until I'm shaken out of my reverie by a sign pointing down a very rough gully. The route at this point is shared by the E2 Inverness to Nice path so surely that can't be right. But no, this nice track doesn't lead in the right direction so down it has to be. Quite soon it does level out to a nice forest path leading round a big spur halfway up the side. At the end the path contours up one side of the valley then down the other.





The sun is sitting on the valley rim so I choose to drop down into the village and hope that I won't be punished by extra climbing the other side. I'm not, but there's a big climb anyway from where I rejoin the path; 400ft levelling out over a mile. With the end in sight, if it weren't for the trees. I'm getting a second wind and it's not much further before I spot the turning off the main track signed E2. I follow it and follow it and follow it. It was only supposed to be a short way and I can see fields through the trees and the track's going down and the signs on the trees have changed to the

standard white over red GR squares, none of which should be happening in Luxembourg. So I accepted that there was no border marker to see, that I must be in France and mindful of the last bus back, STOPPED.

Twenty-eight miles in about 9 hours. Somewhat deflated that there was no definitive point at which my challenge was completed I drank the last of my squash saved for celebrating and headed back the way I'd come to TL on the path I'd spotted on the way up, leading down into Rumelange, the southernmost town in Luxembourg. Walking in the almost dark the time ticking away encouraged some speed and I found the bus stop with three minutes to spare. The next day it was back to work at a trade show in Cologne which merely involved walking miles of aisles between exhibitors stands.

## AFRICAN HEIGHTS - Kilimanjaro by Sarah Turner

UK winter is coming, what to do  
Escape the cold, the grey, the blues  
Need a plan, warm sun required,  
Aha, of course, a mountain is my desire!



Intrepid I flew, Christmas Day  
Bright blue UK skies, a promising start  
Kilimanjaro airport in-bound, in-sight  
Her warmth so beautiful, what a delight!



Rongai Route, NE approach  
Farmland, pine forest, rocky paths all ahead  
Our intrepid group excited as we march  
Remember, just 4000 metres underfoot to tread



Kikelewa Caves, Mawenzi Tarn  
African names ring out as we pass  
Some misty weather, the sun pops out  
Photos & poses abound; Kili is not afar







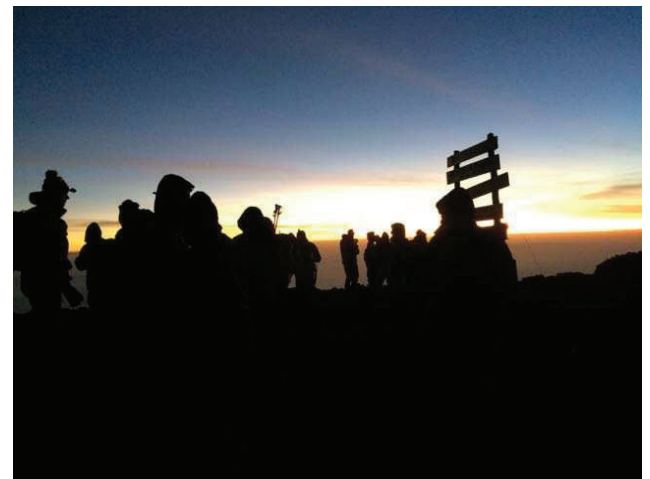
Like ants we work, ascending in the dark  
 Head torches alight her mountain slopes  
 2330 start, bitterly cold, wrapped up well  
 Hark I hear the bells, 2015, hello hello.....

The crater we make, 'Gilman's Point'  
 5685 metres – Hurrah, first step  
 Two more hours, Uhuru we desire  
 Upon snow & ice we dally lightly

Tears well up, a successful ascent  
 Effort achieves, smiles burst out  
 0555, the sky still dark? Where is our sun?  
 Victorious atop the freezing, biting summit.



Lunar landscape, she stands magnificent  
 Kibo Hut - I see you High Camp!  
 Tomorrow we summit, excited we are  
 It's New Years Eve, farewell 2014, ta ra



Kilimanjaro 5894 metres above sea level  
 Tanzania, Africa  
 25 Dec – 2 Jan 2015 with KE Adventures

Without the Crew we had no journey:



## COMEDY CORNER

Two women called at my door and asked what bread I ate, when I said white they gave me a lecture on the benefits of brown bread for 30 minutes. I think they were those Hovis Witnesses.

After years of research, scientists have discovered what makes women happy. Nothing.

Just had my water bill of £175 drop on my mat. That's a lot. Oxfam can supply a whole African village for just £2 a month: time to change supplier I think.

Seven wheelchair athletes have been banned from the Paralympics after they tested positive for WD40.

A mummy covered in chocolate and nuts has been discovered in Egypt. Archaeologists believe it may be Pharaoh Roche...

"IT'S A BOY" I shouted. "A BOY, I DON'T BELIEVE IT, IT'S A BOY" And with tears streaming down my face I swore I'd never visit another Thai Brothel!

Two Indian junkies accidentally snorted curry powder instead of cocaine. Both in hospital. One's in a korma, the other's got a dodgy tikka!

Japanese scientists have created a camera with a shutter speed so fast, they can now photograph a woman with her mouth shut.

Wife gets naked and asks hubby, "What turns you on more, my pretty face or my sexy body?" Hubby looks her up and down and replies, "Your sense of humour!"

My mate just hired an Eastern European cleaner, took her 15 hours to Hoover the house. Turns out she was a Slovak.

Since the snow came all the wife has done is look through the window. If it gets any worse, I'll have to let her in.

A married Irishman went into the confessional and said to his priest, "I almost had an affair with another woman."

The priest said, "What do you mean, almost?"

The Irishman said, "Well, we got undressed and rubbed together, but then I stopped."

The priest said, "Rubbing together is the same as putting it in. You're not to see that woman again. For your penance, say five Hail Marys and put £20 in the poor box."

The Irishman left the confessional, said his prayers, and then walked over to the poor box. He paused for a moment and then started to leave.

The priest, who was watching, quickly ran over to him saying, "I saw that. You didn't put any money in the poor box!"

The Irishman replied, "Yeah, but I rubbed the £20 note on the box, and according to you, that's the same as putting it in!"



## Photos of the Christmas Cruise around Calais on December 13 *by Sarah Turner*





**Photos of this year's Sevenoaks Circular**  
*by Bryan Clarke and Sarah Turner*

