

LONG DISTANCE WALKERS ASSOCIATION – Kent Group

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

NEWSLETTER



Judy Rickwood with Chairman Brian Buttifant at Kent Group's Dunsop Bridge checkpoint on the Red Rose 100. It was Judy's first Hundred since 1998. *Photo by Sarah Turner*

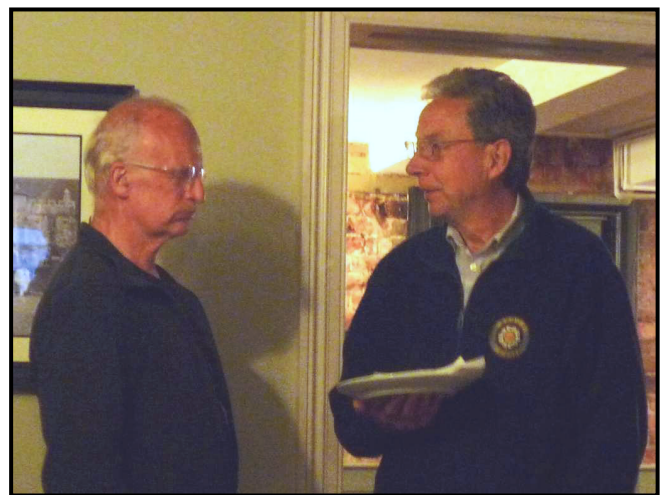
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www.ldwakent.org.uk

Photos from this year's Post Hundred Gathering
by Bryan Clarke



KENT GROUP SOCIAL WALKS AUG to DEC 2015

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 53 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

Thu Aug 27 Fish & Chip Walk (part of the White Cliffs Walking Festival) - c10ml. Meet 17.30 at Walmer rlwy stn GR TR363503 Map: Exp 138. 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

Sun Sep 6 Isle of Oxney - 22ml. Meet 09.00 in Tenterden High Street by church entrance GR TQ883333 Map: Exp 125. A crossing of this marooned island. Pub lunch. **L:** Peter Jull

Sun Sep 20 Military Canal March - c34ml. Meet for 07.30 start at finger-post GR TR836926 Maps: Exp 138, 125, 124. Park on Seabrook Road or Princes Parade (by sea-wall/promenade). Pub lunch stop at Appledore. At end, return to Winchelsea to catch bus back to Seabrook (approx £5 fare). **L:** Neal O'Rourke

Sun Oct 11 Greensand Way – The Missing Bit - c.18ml. Folkestone East Cliff – Hamstreet. Linear walk. Meet 08.30 at Hamstreet rly stn GR TR001337 Maps: Exp 125, 137, 138. Will then arrange cars to drive to start of walk. Pub lunch stop at Lympne. **L:** Mike Pursey

Sat Oct 17 Stour Valley Group Walk - 18ml. Meet 09.50 at Canterbury West rlwy stn GR TR146584 Map: Exp 150. Linear walk finishing at Sandwich rlwy stn (by 18.00). Lunch stop to be advised (check website). Joint walk with LDWA London. **L:** Rod Smith **T:** in Strider.

Sun Oct 25 Another Minnis Meander - 12 - 15ml. Meet 08.30 at Ivy House, Stelling Minnis GR TR147483 Map: Exp 138. Bring packed lunch. **L:** Liz Keeler

Sun Nov 8 Lewes Loop - c18ml. Meet 09.00 at Lewes rlwy stn GR TQ417098 Map: Exp 122. A circular route on the South Downs. Pub stop. **L:** Graham Smith.

Sun Dec 6 Christmas Lunch - Preceded by a walk of c7ml. Starting 09.30

Sat Dec 12 Christmas Cruise around Calais - c14ml. A circular walk in the Nord Pas de Calais visiting Cap Blanc Nez. Meet 7.30am by P&O Desk, Dover Eastern Docks for 8.30am sailing (return 9pm local time – 8pm British time). Ring P&O reservations 08716 646464 for foot passenger day return. Alternatively, crossing as car (ferry) passengers may be planned. Don't forget your passport! **Please ring Graham** for means of travel and confirmation of times. **L:** Graham Smith

Mon Dec 28 Post Christmas Sevenoaks Stroll - c17ml. Meet 08.45 for 09.00 start at Shipbourne church on A227 GR TQ592522 Map: Exp 147. Park in road opposite church. Pub lunch stop. **L:** Dave Sheldrake

2016

Fri Jan 1 New Year in Sussex Again - c23ml. Rye to Hastings & return. Meet 09.00 Rye rlwy stn c.p. (£1.50 charge) GR TQ919205 Map: Exp 125. Bring torch. Lunch stop at Hastings. **L:** Mike Pursey.

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.

CHRISTMAS FAMILY LUNCH

FOR our Christmas Family Lunch this year we will be returning to Chart Hills Golf Club, in Weeks Lane, Biddenden, near Ashford. As everyone who went last year will agree, the venue and food were excellent, and we are very grateful to Neal O'Rourke for finding the venue for us. As usual this will be preceded by a short walk of approximately seven miles, which will be led by Neal. The walk will start at 9.30am from Biddenden car park on road junction, GR TQ 850 383, and we will be able to use the changing room facilities at the golf club upon our return. Lunch will be served at 1.30pm. All guests to arrive by 1pm. Please bring along a raffle prize.

The cost of the meal will be £19.95 per person for three courses followed by coffee and mints. If only two courses are required, this will be £16.95. One course will be £12.95.

A booking form is with this newsletter. Please complete and tear off the form's slip indicating your menu choices (by ticking the relevant box for starter, main course and dessert) and confirm if you will be attending the morning walk. Please send this along with your cheque, which should be made payable to Kent LDWA, to Jan O'Rourke.

This should be received by Saturday November 21 to ensure your booking.

NEWS OF KENT CHALLENGE WALKS

White Cliffs Challenge

THIS year's White Cliffs Challenge is very nearly upon us – and if Graham Smith hasn't already contacted you asking you to carry out checkpoint duties, please give him a ring or drop him an email, as all offers will be very gratefully received. The event 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, and the event will be at Deal and Betteshanger Rugby Club, as it was in 2012. Distances are 53 miles and 18 miles. The marshals' walk was taking place 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. 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, and we wanted to avoid a clash of events.

SEVENOAKS CIRCULAR

THE date for next year's Sevenoaks Circular has provisionally been set for March 20, and is planned to be at the same venue we used this year – West Heath School, just out of Sevenoaks. There are again likely to be three routes – 30, 20 and 15 miles. Main organiser is again Roger Dean, and Phyl Butler has offered to be entries secretary – thanks Phyl! More details will appear in the next newsletter.

WEALD CHALLENGE WALK

AFTER the huge success of the Walk With The Smugglers in July, next year's Weald challenge walk will be the Andredsweald Circuit, based at Forest Row. Details will appear in the next newsletter.

KSS TRIPLE CHALLENGE

NEXT year the Kent Surrey Sussex Triple Challenge of 50-mile challenge walks, taking place in successive years, means the return of the Sussex Stride. As usual Kent Group will be organising a checkpoint, as a few of us will be taking part in the

marshals' walk. Our friends across the county border have provisionally arranged for the 2016 Sussex Stride to be held over the weekend of September 24-25.



RON ROWETH by Brian Buttifant

RON was in Kent Group for about 35 years and while living near Bromley was a very active and committed member. Apart from social walks and group weekends in the Brecons and the Dales, he had completed many events - Surrey Summits, Cleveland Classic, Salisbury Plain, Oxon 40, etc.etc Ron, who was born in 1932, would have been 83 on May 20. He entered 11 Hundreds and completed them all - a solid record. He also completed all the Munros (there were 284 when he completed them – two have since been downgraded,

and there are now 282) and in this it showed his love of the mountains. Ron had led many small groups walking in the Alps and the Pyrenees as well as Scotland.

I had walked many events with him and had a memorable holiday walking the West Highland Way.

He had served as group chairman, as well as group treasurer, and was involved in the planning of the Invicta 100.

He moved back to his home county of Derbyshire but kept group membership and contact with his friends in Kent. Ron was a quiet, helpful man and it was a privilege to be one of his friends.

Our sincere condolences to Ann, Gavin, Malcolm, Duncan and Stuart.

In April six group members attended his funeral in Lancaster, and the reception held in Kendal.

Ron's farewell was very moving. All his family and a great many friends were there including myself, Trevor Blake and Mike Attewell.

The following note was sent to secretary Graham Smith by Ron's partner, Ann Beeching:

I should like you in your next newsletter to say thank you on my behalf to all those many Kent members who sent condolences and kind words about Ron. It is a while since we were able to go down to Kent to take part in the Sevenoaks Circular but Ron always thought about you all.

A TRIBUTE TO RON ROWETH by Trevor Blake

I first met Ron many years ago, when we were members of Kent Group of the LDWA. We seemed to hit it off together, and thus started my long and enjoyable walking experiences with him.

Ron was a great walker and navigator. We have done many miles together all over the UK, also part of the GR7 in Austria, where we were joined by John Lay of Surrey Group, another very nice man to walk with. Fortunately Ron spoke reasonable German, and thus became leader of our group.

Many Surrey Summits, Wealden Waters, Cleveland Classics, Three Forest Ways, Punchbowls, Bullock Smithies, Gatliffs etc we have walked together, and all without a cross word between us. Ron was very easy to get on with, and a very reliable chap when needed.

I was very fortunate to have walked my Hundreds with him. Alas, on the last one I had to drop out, owing to my spinal neurofibromatosis, which has put paid to my walking pastime. However, I will always be grateful to Ron for the support he gave me – and others – on the various walks.

Ron was a great asset to the LDWA, in particular to Kent Group, where he was a committee member for many years, becoming treasurer and chairman, where he did memorable work for several years.

I lost a little of the close contact I had with Ron when he moved back up north to Edale in Derbyshire. So, as you can imagine, I was very sad to learn of his death. My deepest sympathy goes to his great friend Ann Beeching, who has been at his side during his illness.

We have all lost a really good friend, and a really good man, in Ron Roweth. Rest in peace, my friend.

WHAT EQUIPMENT HAVE YOU GOT?

SARAH Turner is in the process of making a list of Kent Group equipment for use on checkpoints at our challenge walks. This is very important, as it means we will know just what we have got so that it can be deployed. So if anyone has any Kent Group equipment – water containers large or small, checkpoint signs, kettles, signs, anything – please contact Sarah. It is best to email her. There is probably a fair bit of Kent Group equipment knocking around members' garages and attics, or perhaps even in the backs of their cars, so please contact Sarah. This move is not before time.

NEW MEMBERS

THREE new members have joined Kent Group – Kay Coles from Bickley, Dianne Marsden from Dover and David Thornton from Leybourne. We extend a warm welcome to them all, and we look forward to seeing them on our walks.



Keith Warman and Alan Stewart, left, and Mike Pursey are checked in by Graham Smith at the Dunsop Bridge checkpoint.

THE RED ROSE 100

KENT Group members put in a tremendous performance on the Red Rose 100 in Lancashire. Of the 12 Kent members who started, 11 finished, with only Jane Dicker having to retire. In addition, two members – Stephanie le Men and Graham Smith – finished the marshals' walk, Stephanie being the joint fifth walker home. So it was a fantastic proportion of completions compared with the figures on the event, where out of 503 starters, 361 finished and 142 retired.

There were some notable individual achievements for Kent members. Don Newman completed his 30th Hundred, Keith Warman his 25th and Mike Pursey finished his 10th, making up for his disappointment last year, when (in company with so many others) he was timed out in those atrocious conditions on the Valleys 100. This also means Mike's name will now be inscribed on the replica trig. point statue so kindly donated to us by Jane Dicker, with the names on it of all Kent members who have completed 10 Hundreds (it is one of a pair made for Jane and her late partner Keith, a keen LDWA member who died in 2005). Also, many congratulations to Judy Rickwood, who started and completed her first Hundred since 1998.

Stephanie and Graham can be very pleased with their achievements on the Red Rose 100 marshals' walk. Walkers had to cope with conditions not too unlike the Valleys 100, with a good 24 hours of rain. Of 51 starters, 18 walkers finished.

Also, it has to be said that the Kent Group checkpoint, at Dunsop Bridge (60.5 miles) was a great success. The arrangements worked out very well, with Joy Davies – “the magnificent Joy Davies” as Neil Higham has dubbed her – Mary Shillitoe and Jan O'Rourke absolute stars in the kitchen. At one stage we had to move from the village hall to a tent, which seemed to be accomplished without too much difficulty. Certainly the walkers were very pleased with the service they received at Dunsop Bridge, and the remark below, from Susan Wilkinson, is typical of the comments we received from happy customers:

Thank you for looking after me at Dunsop Bridge; I wasn't very sociable as I was feeling rough but I got my second wind by late afternoon and finished in 43:56.

Red Rose 100 – Kent Group results:

Wendy Thurrell – 28 hours 39 mins.

Andrew Boulden – 29.28.
Roger Dean – 37.22.
Jim Catchpole and Jill Green – 43.09.
Peter Jull – 43.15.
Judy Rickwood – 44.30.
Don Newman – 45.53.
Alan Stewart – 46.23.
Keith Warman – 46.42.
Mike Pursey – 47.12.
Jane Dicker – retired at CP3.

Marshals' walk:

Stephanie le Men – 35.41.
Graham Smith – 38.27.

Kent Group members on the Dunsop Bridge checkpoint: Mike Attewell, Brian Buttifant, Joy Davies, Nick Dockree, Elton Ellis (loaned to us by Surrey Group), Michael Headley, Jan and Neal O'Rourke, Stephanie le Men, Mary Shillitoe, Graham Smith and Sarah Turner,

THE RED ROSE 100 MARSHALS' WALK (OR DON'T GO UP PENDLE HILL IN THE NIGHT WHEN YOUR TORCH DOESN'T WORK): May 2-4 by Graham Smith

A FEW people have asked me why I entered the marshals' walk on this year's Hundred instead of the actual event, when Lancashire is so far away from Kent and would obviously involve two journeys of several hundred miles. Well, I suppose there are two reasons. Firstly, apart from a couple of brief excursions on the Pennine Way back in 1981 (goodness me, that makes me feel old – all right, I am old) I had never walked in Lancashire before. And I fancied going up there twice just to get to know the area a bit more. Let's face it, on a Hundred you are mainly pounding along with the objective of ultimately completing those 100 miles within 48 hours, and you don't really get the chance to take stock of the area you are walking in. The other reason – and I guess this applies to the three Hundred marshals' walks I have completed – is that I do get an awful lot out of the LDWA, and entering any Hundred marshals' walk means I am putting something back. So I hope that makes sense.

I was lucky enough (or was it foolish enough?) to have been able to complete the Valleys 100, and I remember saying to many people that the Red Rose 100 couldn't possibly bring worse conditions than last year's Hundred. I have to say that as things turned out, I very nearly came to regret those words – but more of that later.

On the morning of Saturday May 2, I turned up at the Anderton Centre, a few miles from Chorley, with Stephanie le Men, raring to go and with that thrill of anticipation you get before any Hundred (even last year's, when it had been pouring with rain well before the event started). After checking in and making the usual greetings to people from other groups I had not seen since – well, the last LDWA event on which I walked with them – I had my usual two pre-event cups of tea, and lined up ready for the off. After a good motivational speech from Norman Thomas – in which he reiterated that we would NOT be going into any part of neighbouring Yorkshire – we were away. I was initially walking with Stephanie, and I knew we would not be walking together for long. I think we were actually walking together for about a mile before she moved on to join the front runners (sorry, walkers), eventually finishing in 35 hours 41 minutes – coming in joint 5th (with Rod Hollands – he who completed a double Valleys 100 last year). Our Stephanie finished almost an hour before race walkers Sandra and Richard Brown – a great achievement.

After Stephanie left me I found myself walking with some people from Essex and Herts Group, including Jean Bowers, and I stayed with them (more or less) for the next few hours, until it got dark. The first miles were excellent, going over good tracks offering some very fine views. My favourite part of the first part of the walk was undoubtedly Darwen Tower, one of the best viewpoints of the entire route. I was really enjoying it. At the time the weather was fine – not sunny, but dry and clear – with the forecast for rain (and lots of it) later. But I didn't want to believe that.

It did actually start to rain not long after Checkpoint 1 (Slipper Lowe – 9.4 miles). It wasn't heavy rain but it was enough to make us walkers don our waterproofs (which stayed on for the next 24 hours). And I was still enjoying the walk, and also enjoying Jean's company. Jean and I had been joined by a few other people as we left Checkpoint 3 (Whalley – 28.2 miles). Jean had warned us that she wasn't fast on hills and that we were not to wait for her on the next stretch, which would be going over Pendleton Moor. That stretch turned out to be the toughest of the walk. When we got on the moor the rain was heavier, and we were also marching into winds so fierce that just remaining upright was an effort, let alone walking. When conditions are bad I tend to move as quickly as I can just to get away from the difficulties as soon as possible. So I moved on and caught up with Mick Abbott from The Irregulars, with whom I stayed for the rest of the walk.

After Checkpoint 4 (Barley – 36 miles), we had the ascent of Pendle Hill, which I had been looking forward to. Pendle Hill is

1,827 feet high and is (literally) the highlight of the Red Rose 100. Sadly, only the fast walkers (like Stephanie) were going to see Pendle Hill in daylight. And sadly for me, Pendle Hill is where I had some huge navigation problems and got very dirty (in fact, filthy). Mick and I had now been joined by two other members of The Irregulars, Brenda Walker and Peter Bruniges. I had a new torch and was only using it for the second time, the first time being two weeks previously on the Wye Forest 50. The four of us ascended Pendle Hill, and my new torch was on, but not far from the summit it stopped working. I kept pressing the buttons but in the rain and wind, I just couldn't get it to go on again. So I was in a bit of a mental state, which became considerably worse when I slipped over in the dark and got muddy, and then slipped over again and got muddier. I got to the summit (touching the trig. point, of course) but by now Mick, Brenda and Peter were moving ahead of me. Fortunately Neil Smith was just behind me, and let me share his torchlight as we made the descent from the summit. Now I have been hillwalking in Scotland for 26 years (completing more than 200 Munros) but let me tell you that that descent from Pendle Hill, without a torch, was the most precarious descent I have EVER made down a hill. Neil's torchlight was a fantastic help but it was still very dark and I slipped again, twice. Anyway, eventually I made it to the bottom and the sanctuary of Checkpoint 5 (Downham – 40.6 miles). I couldn't be bothered to attend to any problems in my new torch so instead I used my old torch, which I was carrying with me, for the rest of the walk.

Mick, Brenda, Peter and myself marched through the night. It was still raining but there further hills to negotiate, so we were not exposed. But the continual rain and wet conditions were making my socks rub against my feet (much like last year) and starting to give me blisters. These were starting to bother me by the time we got to the breakfast stop at Newton (Checkpoint 8 – 58.7 miles). But there an absolute gem of a lady from Manchester, called Nancy, produced a bowl of warm water for me to soak my sore feet, put Compede plasters on the two blisters, and then helped me put new socks on. And my spirits were fortified by a bacon sandwich, so I was a considerably happier bunny when I left than I had been when I arrived.

I moved on with Mick, Brenda and Peter, and conditions were certainly beginning to ease. The rain was getting lighter although it was still cloudy, but it looked like there was some clear sky in the far distance. After Dunsop Bridge (Checkpoint 9 – 63 miles) we went over one of the flanks of Torridge Fell, and after the next checkpoint (Chipping – 70 miles) the rain stopped and the clouds cleared - to be replaced with blue sky and sun. We had been walking in the rain for very nearly 24 hours – not as bad, admittedly, as on the Valleys 100, but there really wasn't much in it. The conditions had been responsible for a high number of retirements – 18 out of 51 starters, a proportion not too dissimilar to the figure on the Valleys 100. And although conditions were improving by the minute, the ground was still very wet. It was impossible to keep feet dry, and mine were starting to get sore again.

We now had what, for me, was the best part of the walk – the ascent of Longridge Fell. It was certainly steep, but we had some marvellous views at the top – including right across to Pendle Hill which we had left several hours ago. We were also following some good high level tracks, and I found myself thoroughly enjoying the walk again, even if my feet were getting more sore.

Mick and I had now left Brenda and Peter behind, and we plodded on to Checkpoint 11 (Hurst Green – 76.4 miles) and Checkpoint 12 (Mellor Brook – 84.7 miles). By the time we got to the next checkpoint (Hoghton – 89.8 miles) it was starting to get dark again. Mick and I were both suffering – Mick with his back, me with my feet – but we were both determined to finish. The route was straightforward, on good, uncomplicated paths and tracks, and I must say that the route description was excellent – detailed but not too detailed, and nice and clear. We reached the last checkpoint (Brinscall – 94.3 miles, and in a church) at about 11pm.

A quick drink and then we were off on the final six-mile stretch. That final stretch is, more or less, a straight line heading south – and after about a mile, I made a navigation error. I was plod-plod-plodding along in the dark, and foolishly ignored the route description and took a right fork instead of the left one. Fortunately Cyril Williams, who was just behind me, came after me and told me I had gone wrong. By this time Mick was past me and heading for journey's end as soon as his aching back would allow. After a muddy track, the last three miles were on concrete. By that time my feet already had three blisters, but those last three miles gave me three new ones. But at that stage, just as on the last few miles of the Valleys 100, I was beyond caring. It felt such a relief to eventually reach the Anderton Centre, and I don't mind admitting that the round of applause which greeted me as I got in to the reception area made me feel quite emotional, as did the congratulatory texts I received from my wife Sarah, fellow Kent members and some work colleagues. I had done it in 39 hours 27 minutes. I have never been one for times, always feeling that the important thing on Hundreds (indeed any challenge walk) is to get round, but I was glad I had cracked 40 hours in conditions which were so challenging. And I was delighted that Mick finished, as did Neil Smith – who had helped me in the dark on Pendle Hill – and as, later on, did Brenda and Peter and Jean.

So that was another Hundred done – my eighth (actually nine if you include the 2007 one which I did in two bits).

Completing it did give me immense satisfaction (although my feet bore the scars for several days afterwards). I am very grateful to all the people with whom I walked for their companionship and assistance, and to all the people from various groups at the checkpoints for their help and wonderful encouragement. What a fabulous organisation the LDWA is.



CINQUE PORTS HUNDRED

PLANS are progressing well for the Cinque Ports Hundred, which the national committee has awarded us for 2018.

The idea is to link the Cinque Ports (Hastings, New Romney, Hythe, Dover and Sandwich) and some of the associated towns. The excellent logo above 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 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, and several checkpoints are going to be in town halls or town council offices provided for us for free.

As reported in the last newsletter, Graham Smith is chairing the organising committee and a lot of work has already been done by a few members, principally Mike Pursey, who is looking after the route; Neal O'Rourke, who is looking after checkpoints; and Peter Jull, whose main responsibility is transport.

Neal has been busy organising and visiting various checkpoints, many of which will be at town halls or town council offices and which have been offered to us for free. The help and support we have had from Cinque Ports town councils have been excellent.

Mike has been busy walking the route and doing the route description. He is putting the whole route on our social walks programme, to be done in a series of linear walks early next year. We have also had much help from Jane Dicker, who lives in Hastings and who helped find the excellent Sussex Coast College for us.

The organising committee has met twice this year, with a third meeting set for October. Both meetings have been attended by the LDWA's new chairman Gail Elrick, previously national 100s coordinator. Gail has been a great source of advice, help and encouragement.

We have also had several offers from other groups up and down the country to organise checkpoints for us.

Obviously, this is a massive project for the group, and we are going to need help from everyone. Anyone wishing to help out in any way is asked to contact Graham Smith.

There will be more news about the Cinque Ports 100 in future newsletters and on our website.

HUNDREDS IN 2016 AND 2017

WE will be organising a checkpoint on the Dorset 100, which will be at Evershott (49 miles). As usual, chairman Brian Buttifant will be coordinating arrangements, so it's not too early to give him your name if you want to volunteer! As Dorset is not too far from Kent, it is anticipated that a higher number of our members than usual will be entering the marshals' walk. And the 2017 Hundred will be the North York Moors 100. We will be doing a checkpoint at Wombleton Hall (17 miles).

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 days' 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.

WHITE CLIFFS WALKING FESTIVAL

THE second White Cliffs Walking Festival takes place between August 27-September 2. 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 41 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. There is also a very good YouTube

promotional video you can watch by logging on to

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1SslRbGQ6Lg>



THE BIG PATHWATCH

NATIONAL chairman Gail Elrick has sent the following communication from Benedict Southworth, chief executive of The Ramblers.

As you will have heard, The Ramblers is launching a project called the Big Pathwatch. The Big Pathwatch is an initiative aimed at motivating communities to survey our rights of way network—footpaths, bridleways and byways—in England and Wales, and then to report their findings, both good and bad, via our purpose-built app or our website. Once the survey closes later in the year, we aim to produce the first comprehensive nationwide analysis of the condition of our paths.

We understand that councils are facing reductions to their funding and many have cut their rights of way budgets as a consequence. Ramblers members tell us they are increasingly concerned that some of our path network is falling into disrepair and some paths are even becoming un-walkable. We also know that some councils are continuing to support their rights of way network well, finding innovative ways of working with our volunteers to ensure this statutory responsibility is met. The picture is mixed.

The Ramblers want to work with councils to find cost-effective solutions to maintain our path network. The results of the Big Pathwatch will help us identify areas which are in good repair and find good practice. It will also help us find out which maintenance issues cause walkers the most difficulty, which should help councils prioritise reported problems. Additionally, the project should increase our understanding of the impact of our volunteer path maintenance teams. Ramblers volunteers already clear and maintain paths in nearly every highway authority across England and Wales and we are looking at how to build on this work where it is most needed.

More broadly, the Big Pathwatch will help us celebrate our path network and show its value, as well as help improve the health of our communities by encouraging more people to get outside and enjoy our beautiful country.

I am writing as I know that you and your members also have a keen interest in preserving our rights of way and I would be delighted if you would share the Big Pathwatch project with your members

It's easy to take part in the Big Pathwatch:

1) Visit: www.ramblers.org.uk/BigPathwatch 2) Download the free app 3) Choose your grid square 4) Walk every path in the grid square and use the app to tell us what you find.

Don't have a smartphone? No problem – you'll be able to print off a survey card, complete it and upload the results to the above website.



PETER'S ANCESTRAL TRAILS No 1: February 1 by Peter Jull

On Sunday February 1, five from London (Bulla drove and four on the train) and 11 from Kent congregated at Hollingbourne station for 9am and Peter's Ancestral Trails No1. The walk began with a substantial session of collecting claggy, clingy Kentish mud as shoes turned to diver's boots across unreinstated arable fields, dodging from wood to wood. The strenuousness left one straggler struggling and when we'd only got to Thurnham (Peter's great grandmother baptised 1856) when she graciously offered to drop out and follow her map for a few miles at a gentler pace. Sadistic mud was followed by a sadistically steep climb straight up the North Downs scarp. Breath catching mixed with breathtaking views while the strong wind blew your breath away. Over the top a sprinkling of snow on the ground was passed and later followed by a snow flurry or two, but for the rest of the day only a biting wind impaired the weather for walking. Regrouping at Thurnham Castle (no relations) was followed by a tree hugging/fence clinging very steep and slippery descent of the motte. The rest of the morning was gentler varied terrain, passing Bicknor and with some views of Sheppey and glimpses of Essex. Stile congestion kept the field strung out and counting them off at the last turn to lunch went 10,11,12...wait...wait...uh oh. Back to the road, into the village where straight on would have taken them, round the long way to the pub to find a GPS had got the missing three there anyway. Speedy service at The Sun, Bredgar, allowed a speedy afternoon arable start. The flinty soil of these higher fields made them less arduous despite their size. A stretch with seesaw stiles and unopenable gates hampered the crossing of a deep valley approaching Wormshill (Peter's 13 greats, grandfather born c1440). A few more large fields and it was downhill, gently, all the way back to Hollingbourne.



FAIRLIGHT FROLIC: March 15 by Peter Jull

TEN plus Fen set off from Firehills car park downhill, down and down realising that there would inevitably be an opposing up, up and up towards the end. There were more ups and downs to come much sooner. From the Marsham Valley up to Pett and down. Up down up down and up to Icklesham where the sound of fake church bells fooled no one. Down into the Brede Valley and up. Down into the Tillingham Valley and up. This was sheep country with lots of nice close cropped grass underfoot and most of the mud having dried ...ish. There followed some relative respite, it being only gently down and up to Peasemarsch church and elevenses. Walking on we soon turned back south which meant the Tillingham Valley again, but at the top of the up was Udimore and lunch. Spilling out of the Kings Head 50 minutes later there was

a threat of sunshine but the sky soon reverted to overcast with occasional spits. Down and up out of the Brede Valley a westwards wander included parts of the 1066 Country Walk across varied countryside. The end - up, up and up - turned out to be 300+ft of ascent but long and steady with admired views back towards Pett which had Firlie Beacon addicts admitting Sussex had more to offer than just the South Downs ridge. Altogether the days climbing totalled 2540ft.

DOVER WELCOMES WALKERS

AS this newsletter was being printed, Dover was in the process of joining Deal in becoming a Walkers Are Welcome town. Deal became the first town in the south of England to get Walkers Are Welcome status in 2009. Towns in the national Walkers Are Welcome network have to demonstrate that they welcome walkers by various means. This includes having paths in the area which are walked and maintained, encouraging people to use public transport when they go to walks, having pubs, restaurants and other businesses welcome walkers by displaying the WAW stickers. Dover is now the second town in Kent to get Walkers Are Welcome status.

CERNE GIANT: March 22 by Peter Jull

THE name Cerne Giant caught my eye in Strider's events list. On checking out how far and how to get there it transpired it involved turning off the A35 at Puddletown towards Piddleshinton. Was I really so shallow that that was a decisive factor in entering? That it was so easy on SIEntries was probably more realistic. B&Bs close by seemed to be mostly £70+ and not that close. With an 8am start I was going to miss breakfast anyway and might miss Puddletown and Piddleshinton (shallow again) so decided to make it a day trip; I could stay in my own bed 'til 3.15.

I had spotted the O'Rourkes on the entry list but my intended surprise appearance was sprung in explaining my absence from Sevenoaks (on the same day) while doing Neil's Fairlight Frolic. Leaving home at 4am I was parked 3½ hours later in a farmyard overlooking The Giant. He wasn't looking his best in the flat light of an overcast dawn. Neil and Jan appeared 15 minutes later and posed for a quick picture in front of the gathering crowd outside the village hall, never to be seen again that day.

At 8am we were sent off round and up the back of Giant's Hill. Two more big up and downs, but with respite levels between, then a long down, passing sheep marshals at gates, led to checkpoint one in an old stone chapel. There immediately followed the hardest climb of the day, 350ft at 10% but the first half was across the slope. We were recompensed by some gentle lanes down to the ornamental gates of a big house where we were clipped at the turning point back to rejoin the 20 milers we left a while back. As the sun came out through the attractive grounds of Bingham's Melcome, the longest climb of the day began lasting 2¼ miles to the Dorset Gap. Supposedly a beauty spot it slipped by barely noticed but was followed by a long stretch with more obviously attractive long views along the side of Blackmore Vale.

At CP2 our arrival was barcode scanned into a laptop – the shape of things to come. After a good spread there followed a stiff climb demanding 2-3 breathers. Left on my own for an hour, with no competition and little respite between climbing and descending, the speed came off. Eventually we came off the hills to cross a brook, which peculiarly slurped rather than babbled, then followed a very pretty stream side path past traditional cottages through Sydling St. Nicholas to the village hall. Scanned again, the checkpointers assured us there were only two more small hills to go. The Dorsetines clearly need some lessons on the definition of small; nearly 300ft each at over 10 and 13% are not small in my lexicon. But after passing a "dogs on lead" sign which the farmer had embellished with a cute picture of Shaun The Sheep and friends, they were right that the last three miles were generally flat, following the River Cerne back into Cerne Abbas as dusk was starting to fall and the earlier chill return: 31 miles in 10 hours 36 but 13 behind me. Jan and Neal, having finished two hours earlier, were almost back in Ashford by this time.

I got home just before midnight after a safety snooze at Winchester services; a 20 hour day – madness. This will be 2016 Dorset 100 country and if it's going to be like 3 and a bit Giants bolted together (they said it was 5000ft but I made it less) it won't be so intimidating as 15500ft ascent sounds, if the weather and underfoot conditions match the 2015 Cerne Giant.

SHAKEY HAND: March 1 by Peter Jull

HOPEFULLY no more than the seven who successfully did so were looking for the rendezvous which turned out to be confusingly described. The weather was ideal winter sunshine but recent rain had left the early woodland paths muddy and



puddly in places. After 2½ miles through Blean Woods only booted feet were dry. Turning east a change of scenery to tracks, fields, lake, orchard, road then fields and track again led to the Canterbury – Herne Bay main road crossing. Beyond, an innocuous 250 yards of footpath then turned out to be anything but, heading for St. Nicholas at Wade, the wade came early the path being deeply flooded and enclosed. The leaders paddled in to find the water getting calf deep before shallowing to regular mud after 30 yards. The followers bushwhacked a path from an adjacent drive to avoid the worse. Then, at the other end, the water deepened as much again. Those with wet legs waded on; bramble bashing got the others past. Escaping to drier fields we squelched on then after a mile of road into Hoath a rest was overdue by the church. A lady there offered tea but time was going against us so we soon pressed on over the hill to join the Four Pits route. Those who had done it were allowed to miss a turn, taking a ½ mile detour and retrace.

After passing Chislet we left the Four Pits to follow the Sarre Penn. With flagging spreading the field, lunch was brought forward from St Nicholas at Wade to Sarre. Except The Crown was full for food so those with sandwiches came off best. Up onto Thanet and down again from St Nicholas, concerns that the Wantsum marshes would be even soggy than our morning experiences turned out to be unfounded. The afternoon session was much shorter with Herne windmill soon in sight. The leading ladies voted with their feet to take the shorter main road route back to the start in preference to more muddy paths and finish in the planned 21½ miles.

SUMMER FRENCH CHALLENGE: July 18 by Graham Smith

AS many Kent Group members know, there have been a few changes to our Summer French Challenge over the years. First - and this must be more than 20 years ago now - it was the Channel Cliffs Challenge, when we started from Dover's then hovercraft terminal at 5am, walking along the clifftops to Folkestone to take the Seacat to Boulogne, before walking back to Calais and then taking the hovercraft back to Dover. Then after Hoverspeed stopped its Seacats operating at Folkestone, we would take a ferry to Calais, then a train to Boulogne, and then walk back. Ferry company restrictions on the times at which foot passengers could travel made that increasingly difficult, so a few years ago we started taking cars on the ferry to Calais, and we would drive to the Auchan hypermarket at Coquelles and have a lovely 23-mile walk which takes in the two excellent viewpoints of Mont de Couple and Cap Blanc-Nez. This meant we would also have time for a bit of shopping at Auchan and a quick meal as well.

This year it was decided to throw in Cap Gris-Nez - quite a prominent spot which is at the other end of the fine sandy bay which is several miles long and almost stretches to Calais. Mike Pursey estimated that going to Cap Gris-Nez would mean an extra seven miles (of which more later).

A total of 17 of us - which is, arguably, a record number for our summer French walk – booked up for this year's Summer French Challenge. Nine of us were opting for the Cap Gris-Nez option while the other eight stuck with the tried and tested 23-miler.

We got the 6.40am ferry out of Dover, drove to Auchan and started walking, taking the normal route through Coquelles and then good tracks - offering fine views across to the White Cliffs of Dover we had left behind. Then we took our usual Grand Randonee at Escalles and past the painted bus shelter for the obligatory photo of those first timers on the walk - which in this case was Cliff Abbott, Betty Sherry, Eve Richards, Mike O'Sullivan and Dianne Marsden. Then on to Mont de Couple, for our lunch stop and where we parted company. The eight 23-milers took the usual route back, via Wissant and Cap Blanc-Nez, and had a very enjoyable time. The route for us nine was a bit more interesting ...

When I saw the toposcope, on the summit of Mont de Couple, saying 11.4 km to Cap Gris-Nez, I wondered if Mike's estimate was correct. But he did take us on a varied route which involved tracks, minor roads and a grassy path which ended at a barbed wire fence. After the best part of two hours, we were on another minor road, and then at a fork, while Mike was poring over his map, I kind of felt instinctively the direction to go in, which turned out to be right. Sarah Turner followed me, and we quickly realised our instincts were correct. So we cracked on, following minor roads and two fields, to the village of Framzelle, where we had a much needed beer, before taking another road to the promised land - Cap Gris-Nez. It had taken more than three hours. The others kept straight on when we parted company, and went past Cap Gris-Nez via a more circuitous route, involving a bar at Audinghen. Sarah and I were about 20 minutes ahead of the others, and we moved on along the beach to Wissant, where we were downing our second apricot-flavoured beer - which was most refreshing - when the others arrived, apart from Michael Headley, who had somehow got separated from them, but he did turn up a few minutes later.

From there we took our normal route, along the beach, up to the cliffs and then Cap Blanc-Nez, followed by Mont d'Hubert, and then those good tracks back to Coquelles. Unfortunately, our detour to Cap Gris-Nez had made us a little late, and by the time we got to Auchan, the hypermarket - and the restaurant where we planned to have a meal - was closed. It had been a long day, we were hungry and we didn't have much time before we were due to check in for the ferry home so ... we went to the adjacent McDonald's.

We reckon that, with the Cap Gris-Nez adventure, we had done a good 35 miles. I don't mind admitting that going out to Cap Gris-Nez was not the best idea for a walk I've ever had. As Nicola Foad rightly says, we've got a very good, tried and tested French walk - so next year there will be no Cap Gris-Nez adventure on our Summer French Challenge. It will be the former route, but we may throw on Mont de Sombre, which is the hill just before Mont de Couple. But this will involve a diversion of a couple of miles at most, probably not even that. Honestly



Mike and Fen on the summit of Carn Eithe



Fen on the top of Meall Fuar-mhonaigh, Loch Ness behind

GRAHAM, MIKE (AND FEN'S) POSTCARD FROM SCOTLAND

IT is now 26 years since Mike Pursey and I started going to Scotland – goodness me, that means that I was in my 30s and Mike was in his 40s when we started going there. Well, Scotland hasn't changed much since 1990 (apart from politically!) – the scenery is just as stunning, the hills are still wonderful and the midges are still bloody awful if you are unlucky enough to catch them in damp conditions when there is no wind, like Mike and I did this year - but more of that later.

For Mike and I, the days are long gone when going to Scotland was all about Munros. Years ago, we would go out in all conditions just to 'bag' more Munros. Not only are we both older, we are also wiser. We tend not to go out to climb any Scottish hill (whether it's a Munro or not) if it's pouring with rain and low cloud is making visibility difficult. You're not going to see much and you're going to get thoroughly wet and miserable. We would both certainly like to complete the 282 Munros but nowadays it's more about the whole Scotland experience.

Which is why we usually climb a hill in the Southern Uplands when we start our Scottish trips, and this year we chose Cairnsmore of Fleet (2,333ft, which makes it not far short of a Corbett – that's a Scottish hill of between 2,500 ft and 3,000ft). A few years ago, we did the Southern Upland Way and loved it. The Southern Uplands don't have the sheer grandeur and spectacle of the Highlands, but southern Scotland is fabulous, and often under-rated because so many people tend to whizz through it en route to the Highlands, which is a shame.

As with our Scotland trip last year, we were accompanied by Fen, the tri-coloured border collie who sometimes joins us on social walks. Fen is really my wife Sarah's dog, and competes at obedience and heelwork to music (otherwise known as dog dancing) competitions. Fen loves action of any kind, which is why she loves walking and swimming – and on the Scottish trips, with the hills, lochs and burns, she has plenty of both.

So on Saturday, June 20, we drove to Annan, near Gretna, camped in the town's excellent campsite, and the next day drove a good 50 miles to Newton Stewart, for Cairnsmore of Fleet. The walk itself was very straightforward. It was an easy, steady climb, but unfortunately, as we neared the summit, we got some light rain, accompanied by cloud, which prevented getting good views. In fact, light rain and cloud accompanied us on the entire trip.

But it was a good start to the trip, which began giving us our 'hill legs', as Mike would say. After that we drove to Moffat – a very nice town in the Southern Uplands and which (like Deal), has Walkers Are Welcome status – and stayed in the fine camp site there, enjoying an equally fine curry in the town's Indian restaurant.

The next day we drove to Cannich, 12 miles from Loch Ness, where we would be based for the rest of the trip. I called in at Fort William en route to purchase a new big rucksack for a backpacking trip Mike had planned for later in the week. Cannich is small village with an excellent camp site and a good pub (The Slaters Arms) whose Glaswegian landlady provides very nice meals (including a range of good curries).

We tackled our first Munros the following day, in nearby Glen Affric – Tom a' Coinnich (3,648ft and pronounced towm a choanyeech) and Toll Creagach (3,458ft and pronounced town kraylach). The weather was overcast, but dry. We followed a good path from the loch, and then had a fairly steep but steady pull to the first summit. It was still overcast so there were no

views, and we used the compass to navigate our way to the next hill – where we did get a break in the clouds to give us some limited views.

The next day there was more rain and low cloud, so we gave the big hills a miss, just doing some low-level walks in Glen Affric and Glen Cannich, and the day after that we did another Munro – An Riabhachan (3,704 ft and pronounced an reeavachan) in Glen Strathfarrar. Glen Strathfarrar is absolutely beautiful, one of the most delightful spots I have ever visited in Scotland. Going there is a real experience, as it is only accessible by a private road which is not open on Tuesdays and only open until 1.30pm on Wednesdays. You are required to knock on the door of the gate-keeper, who will then unlock the gate, take your vehicle's registration number and give you a slip of paper granting you access which you give back when you return. Then after these formalities, actually driving along that private road is an experience in itself, as it may hold the UK record for the number of potholes (which you are warned about by signs and also by the gate-keeper). So after all that, it was something of a relief to start walking – and initially we were in sunshine, something we did not see too much of in our Scotland trip this year. We took a good track and then took off shoes and socks to ford a burn, then a decent grassy track which ended in a most magnificent corrie at the foot of the hill. We walked around a lochan before a fairly steep pull to the col, and then an easy climb to the summit – where, once again, we had cloud so we couldn't get decent views. Fen and I took a slightly different route back where (more by luck than judgement) we crossed the burn at a different point so we didn't have to wade across it.

On the Friday we had our Glen Affric expedition. We left the car at the end of Loch Beinn a'Mheadhoin to walk the nine miles into Glen Affric with a view to pitching our tents and walking three Munros – An Socach (3,018ft and pronounced an sochkach), Sgurr nan Ceathreamhnan (3,776ft and pronounced skoor nan keroanan) and Mullach na Dheiragain (3,222ft and pronounced moolach na yerakan) – the following day. It was a nice walk in, sadly marred by some squall we walked into halfway in. The sunshine had returned by the time we reached our destination and pitched our tents. Unfortunately, when we awoke in the morning, conditions had changed. There had been some rain so it was damp, and there was no wind – which meant that when we opened our tent flaps, there were literally thousands of midges around our tents. Keen to leave this midge nightmare behind, we didn't hang around long. We took a long, boggy path which brought us to a col, from where we got to the summit of An Sochach. It was now very cloudy and it was raining. Fen might have fancied doing the next two hills, but Mike and I didn't, so we decided to cut the walk short and do the other two hills another time. As Mike says, they won't go away. So we went back to our tents (by which time there was breeze which had blown away the midges), packed up our gear and walked the nine miles back to the car park – and by the time we returned, the sun was out.

On the Sunday, the sun was still out, and we drove 12 miles to Drumnadrochit to walk Meal Fuar-mhonaidh (2,293ft, and pronounced mealfuarvonie), which proved to be one of the best walks of the trip. It was a fairly long, often boggy, ascent, but we were rewarded with superb views along Loch Ness.

Next day was the best walk of the trip – the North Glen Strathfarrar Ridge, involving four Munros: Sgurr na Ruaidhe (3,258ft, and pronounced skoor na rooy), Carn nan Gobhar (3,255ft, pronounced kaarn nan gower), Sgurr a'Choire Ghlais (3,553ft, pronounced skoor a chor a ghlash) and Sgurr Fhuar-thuill (3,442 ft, pronounced skoor hoar hil). We had to go through the rigmarole of getting into Glen Strathfarrar again, and negotiating those potholes. We took both cars, leaving mine at the end of the walk and taking Mike's to the start, thus saving a good six kilometres of road walking at the end. The first hill involved some of the most continuous boggy conditions we have ever experienced on a Scottish hill – but I did have the excitement of spotting an eagle (obviously long after the eagle had spotted us) gracefully gliding hundreds of feet away from us. The bog ended a couple of hundred feet from the summit of Sgurr na Ruaidhe, by which time the weather had clouded over again. It cleared just as we went down to the col to ascend Carn nan Gobhar, where we planned to have lunch on its rocky summit. When we got to the summit, the clouds had turned into quite a nasty squall, and we took what refuge we could in a hollow we found in the rocks. None of us were happy, particularly Fen, who doesn't like heavy rain. But it didn't last very long, and it cleared to give us decent views as we ascended Sgurr a'Choire Ghlais – then the cloud returned as we got to the summit. It was the same for Sgurr Fhuar-thuill, with the cloud lifting to give decent views en route to the top but returning by the time we reached the summit. So although we were having a great walk, we had had cloud on each of the four summits. Coming down from Sgurr Fhuar-thuill, I had a bit of a mishap. We took a narrow stalker's path on the south side of the hill, parts of which were covered by melting snow. I took a couple of steps to avoid the snow – to slip in the mud and suddenly find myself helplessly slipping down the hill. Luckily it was not steep, I was on soft mud and grass and I came to a stop after about 15 yards. I don't mind admitting I was in a bit of a panic for those few seconds. But lesson learned about melting snow on narrow stalkers' paths. After that little ordeal, it was a good path back to the car.

We had a day's rest the next day, by which time the heatwave, which had made most of England swelter for the past week, finally reached Scotland. I took Fen for some short local walks and a couple of swims (Fen, that is – not me). We got ready for the last walk of the trip, a big one involving three Munros – Mam Sodhail (3,870ft, pronounced mam sool), Carn Eighe (3,880ft, pronounced kaarn aya) and Beinn Fhionnlaidh (3,297ft, pronounced byn yoony). We drove up Glen Affric and when we started walking it was very hot. We had a good, steady ascent, and the higher we got, there was more of a breeze and it

got cooler. We then had a taxing climb up Sgurr na Lapaich (which, although being 3,773ft is not a Munro). But at the top we were rewarded with a wonderful ridge which took us to Mam Sodhail. The sun was out but it was cool and for the first time on the entire trip, we had some fabulous, extensive views which reminded us why we go to Scotland. We dropped down to the col and then had the easy ascent of Carn Eighe. From here, Beinn Fhionnlaidh (which is one of the most remote Munros) involves quite a detour. I had to get back to Kent a day earlier than Mike and I was planning to drive some 250 miles to Moffat after the day's walk. So I decided to return, leaving Mike (who wasn't planning to drive south until the next day) to go on and 'bag' Beinn Fhionnlaidh. The return included the long, delightful ridge of Carn Eighe – which was the highlight of the whole trip.

So that's Scotland done for 2015. It's just a shame we've got to wait a year before we can return. But as Mike would say, the hills won't go away.

COMEDY CORNER with Neal O'Rourke

Nicola Sturgeon is touring Perthshire in the First Minister's chauffeur driven car.

Suddenly a cow jumps out into the road. They hit it full on and the car comes to a stop.

Nicola in her usual jaunty manner, says to the chauffeur : "You get out and check - you were driving."

The chauffeur gets out, checks and reports that the animal is dead.

"You were driving, go and tell the farmer," says Nicola, "I can't afford to be blamed for anything."

The chauffeur walks up the drive to the farmhouse and returns five hours later totally plastered, his hair ruffled and with a big grin on his face.

"My God, what happened to you ?" asks Nicola.

The chauffeur replies : "When I got there, the farmer opened his best bottle of malt whisky, the wife gave me a slap-up meal and the daughter made love to me."

"What on earth did you say?" asks Nicola.

"I knocked on the door and when it was answered, I said to them, 'I'm Nicola Sturgeon's chauffeur and I've just killed the cow.'"

The difference between Oo and oO

Two young guys appear in court after being arrested for smoking dope.

The judge says, "You seem like nice young men, and I'd like to give you a second chance instead of jail time.

"I want you to go out this weekend and try to convince others of the evils of drug use.

"I'll see you back in court Monday."

On Monday, the judge asks the first guy, "How did you do over the weekend?"

"Well, your honor, I persuaded 17 people to give up drugs forever."

"Seventeen people? That's wonderful. How did you do it? "

"I used a diagram, your honor."

"I drew two circles like this: O o.

"Then I told them that the big circle is your brain before drugs and the small circle is your brain after drugs."

"That's admirable," says the judge.

Then he turns to the second guy. "And how did you do?"

"Well, your honor, I persuaded 156 people to give up drugs forever."

"Wow!" says the judge. "156 people! How did you manage to do that?"

"Well, I used a similar diagram," the guy says.

"I drew two circles like this: o O.

Then I pointed to the little circle and said, 'This is your asshole before prison.....'

Photos from the Summer French Challenge



Photos from A Walk with the Smugglers on 12th July *by Eric Rolfe and Bryan Clarke*

