

LONG DISTANCE WALKERS ASSOCIATION — Kent Group

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

NEWSLETTER



Some familiar faces at the start of the White Cliffs Challenge on August 30-31 – including Jill Green, Jim Catchpole, Christine Usher, national LDWA chairman Gail Elrick and husband John, and Don Newman. *Photo by Eric Rolfe*

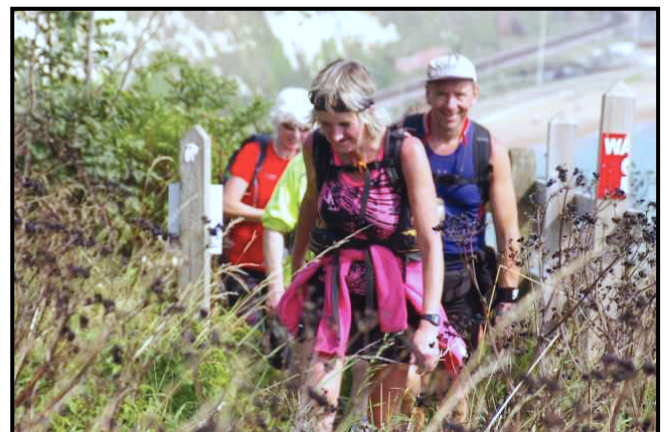
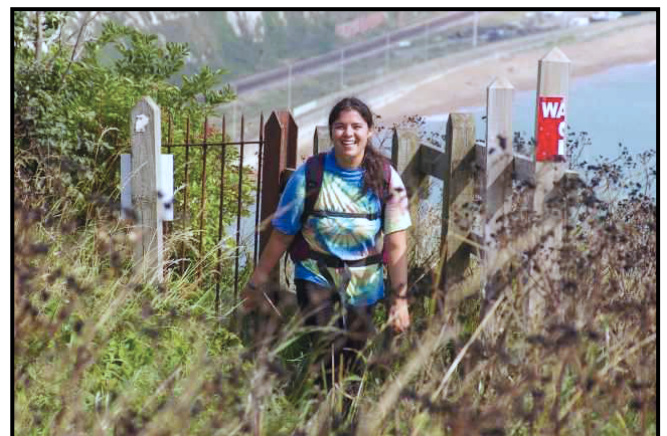
Number 98



December 2015

www.ldwakent.org.uk

Photos from the White Cliffs Challenge 2015
by Eric Rolfe



KENT GROUP SOCIAL WALKS DEC 2015 to APR 2016

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.

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

Fri Jan 15 Winter Night Walk - c17ml. Meet 21.30 for 22.30 start at the Rose & Crown PH, Wrotham GR TQ612592 Map: Exp 147. **Bring torch.** **L:** Dave Sheldrake

Sun Jan 24 Questions from Kent – When (when did we last go this way?) - 20ml. Start 09.00 in The Square at Hadlow GR TQ634498 Map: Exp 136. Pub lunch at Brenchley. **L:** Peter Jull.

Sun Jan 31 AGM at Lenham Community Centre, preceded by a walk of c7ml.

Sun Feb 7 Around the Planet Thanet - c19.5ml. Meet at Sandwich rlwy stn GR TR328580 Map: Exp 150 for 09.06 train to Birchington (arriving 09.35). A walk around the Thanet coast finishing back at Sandwich. Pub lunch stop. **L:** Graham Smith.

Sun Feb 21 Merry in Mereworth - 20ml. Meet at 09:25 at Borough Green rlwy stn to meet 08.36 from Victoria. GR TQ609574 Map: Exp 147. A walk taking in some of the less frequented paths in west Kent. Pub lunch at Mereworth. Joint walk with LDWA London. **L:** Peter Jull.

Sun Mar 6 Sevenoaks Circular Marshals' Walk - For details contact Brian Buttifant.

Sun Mar 13 Questions from Kent - Why (why not Wye?) - 23ml. Start 09.00 at Hawkhurst church (old St. Laurence on A229, not the one by BP). GR TQ755295 Maps: Exp 136,137. Pub lunch. Joint walk with LDWA Sussex. **L:** Peter Jull.

Sun Mar 20 Sevenoaks Circular Main Event - See Events Diary.

Fri Mar 25 (Good Friday) A South Downs Loop - c26/20ml. Meet 09.00 in Eastbourne at western end of promenade (B2103) by South Downs Way marker post, GR TV600972 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 Mar 27 Questions from Kent - How (how, how, how & how?) - 20ml. Start 09.00 at Chilham village c.p. GR TR068535 Maps: Exp 137,150. Pub lunch near Chartham. **L:** Peter Jull

Sun Apr 3 Questions from Kent – Which (which way is witch?) - 23ml. Start 09.00 at Hucking Country Park c.p. GR TQ847581 Maps: Exp 137,148. Pub lunch near Charing. **L:** Peter Jull

Sun Apr 17 Fuller's Follies - c20ml. Meet 08.30 at Etchingham rlwy stn GR TQ442273 Map: Exp 136 - park in west side c.p. (poss £1 charge). Pub stop (poss) at The Wheel, Burwash – food available. **L:** Neal O'Rourke.

Sun Apr 24 Questions from Kent – What (what is what?) - 21.5ml. Start 09.00 at Cobtree Manor Park GR TQ743587 Map: Exp 148. Pub lunch at Otham. **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.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING – HAVE YOUR SAY ON THE RUNNING (OR WALKING!) OF OUR GROUP

OUR AGM will be on Sunday January 31 and will again be held at Lenham Community Centre. Michael Headley will again be leading a short walk before the meeting, as he has for the past four years, and a free meal will be provided for everyone attending. The walk will start at 10am, leaving lots of time for us all to socialise and enjoy our meal before the meeting, which will start at 2pm.

We want to know the views of you, our members. So please feel free to let committee members know how you feel about the group before, during or even after the AGM. Are our social walks too fast, or too slow? Or are they too long, or too short? Are there enough of them? What about our challenge walks? Would you like to get more involved in them? Would you like to see other social events for the group? We want to know your views, so please don't be shy about contacting us. Feel free to contact our secretary Graham Smith, whose details are above.

Nomination slips for the committee are with this newsletter.

NEW MEMBERS

SINCE the last newsletter was published, five new members have joined our group – Sally Foy from Maidstone, Lee Harris from Tonbridge, Cliff Hugget from Boughton-under-Blean, Mark Love from Sheerness and Paul May from Sittingbourne.

We extend a warm welcome to them all, and look forward to seeing them on walks soon.

NEWS OF KENT CHALLENGE WALKS

Sevenoaks Circular

Next year's Sevenoaks Circular has been arranged for March 20, with the marshals' walk on March 6. The venue will again be at West Heath School, just outside Sevenoaks – as it was this year – and the distances will again be 30, 20 and 15 miles. Roger Dean is now working on the routes and – by public demand – it is planned that they will go through Knole Park.

Andredsweald

Next year's annual Weald challenge walk will be the turn of the Andredsweald, based at Forest Row and last held in 2012. Organiser Neal Higham was working on the event as the newsletter went to press, but

it is planned that there will be two routes – of 26 and 15 miles – with the event scheduled to be held as usual on the second Sunday in July, July 10, with the marshals' walk two weeks previously, on June 26.

White Cliffs Challenge

After this year's big one – the 52-mile WCC – next year we go back to the shorter version, with routes of 32 and 15 miles. The date has been earmarked for Sunday August 28 – to be part of the White Cliffs Walking Festival - and the event will be based at St Margaret's Village Hall. There is no date yet for the marshals' walk, but this will appear in the April newsletter. The route is likely to be – more or less – the same one we used in 2014.

2017 White Cliffs Challenge: Graham Smith is planning to revamp the 2017 WCC, with a major rerouting to make it a linear walk, much like the Dorset Duddle (which is anything but!) which a few of us have done. Graham's plan is to base the event in Folkestone or Capel, with walkers taken by bus to somewhere near Margate and they then walk to the event HQ, taking in the White Cliffs of Thanet (which are very pleasant and quite under-rated) and the White Cliffs of Dover, as well as Pegwell Bay, Pegwell Bay Nature Reserve and the Cinque Port of Sandwich – a key part of our Cinque Ports 100, of course. This route would be something in excess of 30 miles and there would also be a shorter version of the walk as usual, which would also be linear. This would involve bussing walkers to Deal and they then walk back along the traditional WCC route. The event would be held over the August bank holiday weekend so that it remains part of the White Cliffs Walking Festival. Graham plans to work on this project next year, so any offers of help from members who live in Thanet (and also from those who don't) will be gratefully received.

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, and this will be CP4 - East Dean, where we were when the Sussex Stride was last held in 2013. CP4 will be the dinner stop and will be 28 miles into the route. The event has been set for the weekend of September 24-25, with the marshals' walk set for August 20-21 or September 3-4 (the date was yet to be confirmed as this newsletter went to press).

DORSET 100

AS previously reported, we have agreed to man a checkpoint at the Dorset 100, taking place between May 28-30 next year. Our CP will be at Evershot (49 miles) and once again, chairman Brian Buttifant will be making the arrangements and liaising with the organisers. Anyone willing to help out is asked to contact Brian – his details are above.

On the North York Moors 100 in 2017, we have agreed to do a checkpoint at Wombledon Hall (17 miles). It is likely that Brian will be making the arrangements yet again.

And then there's ...



THE CINQUE PORTS 100 - 2018

QUITE a lot of important work has been completed on our Cinque Ports 100 since the last newsletter was printed. Thanks to Mike Pursey, the route has almost been completed and transferred to a route description. Mike plans to put the entire route – from Hastings to Dover – on our social walks programme next year, so that the route can be checked. Nearly all the 18 checkpoints have been booked, with most of them visited, and for this we have to thank Neal O'Rourke, who has done a marvellous job visiting the proposed CPs, taking photos and reporting

back to the organising group. During the summer Graham Smith, Neal and Peter Jull visited the Duke of York's Royal Military School, where the event will be based, and were very impressed with the facilities on offer – there will be more visits in due course. On Wednesday October 21 there was a visit to Sussex Coast College, from where the walkers will start. Quite a party of us were there - Gail Elrick (the LDWA's former national 100s coordinator and now our chairwoman), Graham, Neil Higham, Mike Pursey, Michael Headley, Peter, Jane Dicker and Con Power (who both live in Hastings and who are both helping with the event) and John Grace, a former Kent police chief superintendent whose input we wanted to get for the start arrangements. It was agreed that the walk would go through the pedestrian precinct from the college to the seafront, with Brian Buttifant – not only our chairman but an LDWA stalwart - leading the walkers in this short section. The breakfast stop is going to be in the Hythe area. We had originally planned to have the breakfast stop at Brockhill Park Performing Arts College at Saltwood, but we are waiting to get this confirmed, and it is fair to say that we have not received too much cooperation from a certain individual there with whom we have been in contact, although it has to be said it would be a very good venue in a delightful area. As this newsletter was being printed, plans were being made to visit another possible venue for the breakfast stop – Hythe Sports Pavilion. There will be more news about this in the next newsletter.

As stated before, the Cinque Ports 100 is going to be a massive project for us. Graham, who is leading the event's organising group, is pleased with the progress made so far, and it is fair to say that the objectives for this year have (more less) been achieved. We have had many offers of help from people in other groups, and we have received tremendous cooperation from the Cinque Ports town councils with whom we have been in contact for checkpoints. But we are going to need much more help, so any Kent Group members who would like to help out are asked to contact Graham.

WHITE CLIFFS WALKING FESTIVAL ANOTHER HUGE SUCCESS

This year's White Cliffs Walking Festival, organised by the White Cliffs Ramblers – to which a few Kent LDWA members belong - was another huge success, with a total of 1905 people going on the 41 walks.

The festival took place between August 27 and September 2, and the number of walkers was 9% up on last year's figure.

While the largest group of people came from the Dover-Deal area, many others came from all over Kent. There were also walkers from various parts of Britain, including Surrey, Sussex, London, Lancashire, Yorkshire and Scotland. And there were visitors from the Czech Republic, Germany, Netherlands, Denmark, USA and New Zealand.

The White Cliffs Ramblers took on the event in 2013, when it was Deal Walking Festival, and decided to expand it into a White Cliffs Walking Festival the following year.

This year's programme included short, medium-length and long walks, ranging from special interest walks of one or two miles to our White Cliffs Challenge, 53 or 18 miles starting and finishing at Deal and Betteshanger Rugby Club in Canada Road. The 177 people who took part in the WCC - 120 on the 53-miler and 57 on the 18-miler – comprised a significant proportion of the total number of people going on festival walks.

Other festival walks were a 3.5-mile Three Castles Walk, visiting Deal, Walmer and Sandown castles; the five-mile Bleriot Walk, taking in the places associated with the Louis Bleriot flight across the Channel to Dover in 1909; a 12-mile Battle of Britain Walk, visiting Hawkinge airfield and a pub in the village, The Cat & Custard Pot, frequented by some of 'The Few'; the 9.5-mile Windmill Walk from Ringwould; an 11-mile Nature Trail Walk starting at Kearsney Abbey and visiting Alkham Valley and Lydden Nature Reserve; and the 1.5-mile Walmer's Colourful History, led by Deal historian and author



Gregory Holyoake.

The festival programme was on a leaflet, produced by the White Cliffs Ramblers, which was distributed to tourist information centres, pubs, shops, doctors' surgeries, council offices and other outlets in east Kent. The festival also has its own dedicated website.

The festival was opened in a ceremony on Deal Pier by the town mayor, Cllr Adrian Fiend, followed by a five-mile walk to Betteshanger Country Park.

Margaret Lubbock, chairman of the White Cliffs Ramblers, said: "All the organising group members worked tirelessly to make this year's event a success."

The 2016 White Cliffs Walking Festival is set to be held between August 25-31. The White Cliffs Challenge will again be part of the festival, and this has been set for Sunday August 28. Routes will be 32 and 15 miles, with the event again based at the excellent St Margaret's Village Hall (see above).

BRIAN RUSSELL

KENT LDWA members will be saddened to learn of the death of Brian Russell. Brian, who lived in Enfield, was member of Essex and Herts Group but he has also been a member of Kent Group for several years, and he had long associations with us. Brian's name is on our trig. trophy as having completed his 10th Hundred when we organised our Millennium 100 in 2000.

Many of us will have walked with Brian on various events and will have enjoyed his company. Our thoughts go out to his family and friends at this time. Brian was one of the LDWA's many characters, and he will be missed.



ISLE OF OXNEY: September 6 by Peter Jull

A MAGNIFICENT seven set out from Tenterden on a sunny and getting hotter day. After clearing the town we were faced by several fields of linseed with poorly reinstated paths but no longer pretty blue flowers the seeds were easy to trample. Chapel Hill, previously the Isle of Ebony in the now silted Rother estuary, proved to be an interesting viewpoint. Even a memorial to Donald Sinden's wife was spotted in the old graveyard at the top, a 90ft climb. On to Appledore for elevenses by the church to the sound of hymn singing from the



service being held outdoors for which the congregation inexplicably included a donkey. A short detour was taken to Fairfield church, favoured as a backdrop for Great Expectations adaptations. Accessible only on foot its isolated and picturesque setting is best photographed surrounded by water filled ditches and grazing sheep; the sheep were in another field for our photos. Approaching from the east gives the best view of the cliffs of the target Isle of Oxney, being seen in profile. Climbing the hill leads to a field of very friendly alpacas who love to get up close. And then things started to go downhill even though we were going up. Mike Pursey tried the stone in the shoe trick and missed the others turn into Stone churchyard. After waiting and mobiling it was arranged that, having gone straight on some way, he would follow the road signs to the lunch pub at Wittersham. It now getting late, a turn in haste turned out to be a turn too soon, recovery from which had added 1¾ miles and it was 2.45 by the time we caught up with Mike, now well into his second pint. Leaving Oxney by the western end, the gates were closed as we approached Wittersham Road Station and we were treated to a steam train passing by at close quarters. As we took a 1½ mile short cut back to Tenterden to make up for the earlier deviation another train was spotted in the distance and many steam whistles heard and smoke seen. Despite the travails the participants graciously pronounced the walk a success.

MILITARY CANAL MARCH: September 20 by Graham Smith

I KNOW some people in Kent Group may be surprised that I enjoyed this walk – led by Neal O'Rourke – as much as I did. I am aware that I have a reputation for enjoying hills and the Royal Military Canal is – well – flat, very flat. But it was an excellent idea of Neal's to organise a walk going along the entire length of the canal, from Seabrook, near Folkestone, to Cliff End, a few miles from Winchelsea.

The Royal Military Canal Path is an official long distance route, with a walks pack produced by the Romney Marsh Countryside Project. The guides say the length of the canal is 28 miles but Neal's walk was 31, owing to a couple of diversions.

Eight of us started: Neal and Jan, Mike Pursey, David Thornton, Nicola Foad, Keith Warman, myself and a special guest, Martin Burnell, from Thames Valley Group. Martin has a holiday home at Littlestone, so he came along to join us.

David, Keith, Martin and myself met Neal and Jan by a canal path finger post at 7.30am. Nicola, who had arrived slightly late, caught up with us after a couple of miles just as we got to Hythe. Mike – who lives in Hythe – walked down from his home to meet us, and somehow missed us. He caught up with us but a bit later, at Bilsington.

We had glorious later summer sunshine for the entire walk, and with such a flat walk, it was easy to get a crack on. Neal had planned the day on getting the 6.38pm bus back from Winchelsea (to which we would return having gone past it en route to Cliff End). We had a very nice lunch stop at Appledore and

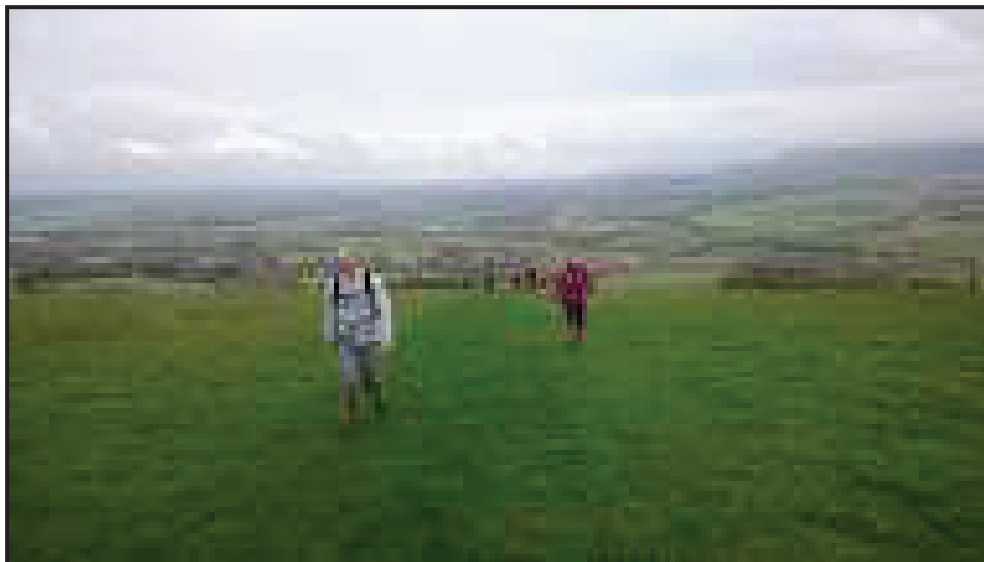
then moved on, passing the Isle of Oxney and crossing the county boundary to go into Sussex. At Rye, Mike, Martin, David and Nicola decided to take a bus and return to Seabrook. The rest of us moved on, passing Winchelsea and getting to Cliff End shortly after 5pm. We then found out that there was an earlier bus so there was no need to walk back to Winchelsea. So we had a drink in the pub, and got our earlier bus.

It had been a very good day, and all credit to Neal for organising it. As it was such a lovely day, I was tempted to walk on to Hastings - another 4-5 miles – but this would have meant getting a train to Folkestone and then walking back to the car, and as I had a busy day at work on Monday, I decided not to (must be getting soft in my middle age).



ANOTHER MINNIS MEANDER: October 25 by Peter Jull

A YET to get dirty dozen turned up at Stelling Minnis raring to go after an extra hour in bed. Four were Andrew's Hashing (running/drinking/party club) friends and not forgetting Maisie his terrier. The first chance to get dirty was soon reached but followed, as if often would be later, by long grass wet, with dew to liquidate the mud off again. The early miles were above Lynsore Bottom with extensive views of that long valley. Turning across and up the other side a new view across Stone Street was a suitable spot for elevenses in the sun, six miles in. Then it was into the darkest deepest depths of Denge Wood to find a clearing for a log pile lunch in warming autumnal sunny weather now mild enough for most to have discarded a layer or two. Back among the trees Liz's memory commendably led us unerringly through the myriad of paths that have been the undoing of many a befuddled walker. The last of the day's several cow fields had a heifer that gave Maisie's little legs some extra exercise up and down the field at pace before escaping under the stile. A last steep climb up Yockletts Bank, then through late apple laden orchards and despite being 1¼ GPS miles over the Strider top estimate it was soon home in time for tea in Liz's garden.



LEWES LOOP (Graham's comeback walk): November 8 by Graham Smith

THIS was my first walk of double figure mileage since my operation for prostate cancer on September 23. Ten of us turned up at Lewes station, including Mary from Sussex Group (who lives in Lewes and obviously knows the area very well). I warned everyone before the start that the pace would not be as quick as it would have been a couple of months previously and that I would have to stop for the occasional leak (sorry – too much information!) We followed the usual route out of Lewes to Kingston, where we climbed onto those marvellous South Downs and strode along the ridge – where we soon met low cloud and some light rain – before dropping down near Rodmell to have our eleventh stop (very nearly to the minute) at Southease. Then it was across the Ouse to go up Itford Hill (Stephanie le Men and Rex Stickland showing off and going up the steep way) before keeping to the ridge to Firle Beacon. Unfortunately we were in low cloud the entire way, but I insisted we got to that ‘bloody Beacon’ (as Eve Richards called it) to touch the trig. point (well, some of us did) and then descending to our lunch stop – the Ram Inn at Firle. We met two members of Sussex Group on the way, and after exchanging pleasantries and a little bit of LDWA news, we went our separate ways.

After lunch we took the usual route to Glynde, crossing the busy A27, and then ascended Mount Caburn – a fine viewpoint, and without the low cloud which had kept us company on Firle Beacon – for the obligatory photos. Janet Field suggested going back to Lewes via an alternative route which she assured us would give nice views of Glyndebourne. We took the alternative, but the views were not as good as we had hoped, as we would have had to walk a bit further to get decent views of the famous opera house. But it was still a nice alternative walk back, which extended the walk by the best part of a mile (bringing the total mileage for the day to approximately 18.5) and which included a nice uncomplicated stretch to Lewes golf course. We finally got back to Lewes car park just after 4pm, with Cliff Hugget assuring us that our feet of ascent had been just in excess of 3,300 – so the next time I put this walk on, I may rename it the Three Peaks of Lewes.



THE JULIAN ALPS OF SLOVENIA

A PETER JULL EXPERIENCE

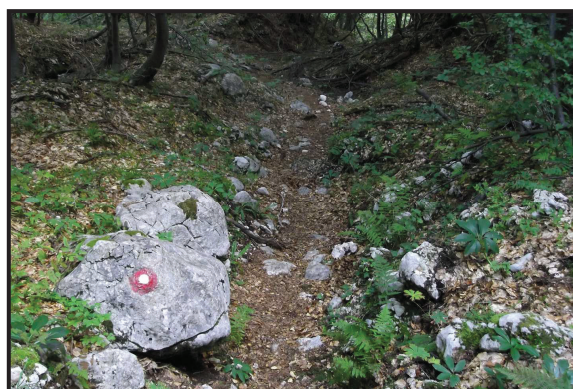
The Internet is a dangerous thing. Distracted by an innocuous looking list of someone's favourite cities I noticed Bled along with the usual Paris, New York etc. Unfamiliar with it I Googled to find it stood beside a picturesque lake with church on an island overlooked by a castle high on a rock and all surrounded by mountains. Nearby was a raging but accessible gorge; now we're walking. Where else to walk? Slovenia's national park is just to the west including Triglav, the highest mountain. Now I'm suckered in and plans for Fontainebleau and Compiègne will have to wait for another year. Guidebook and map Amazoned, four walking days and one for touring are soon planned.



Day 1

After a troubled journey and arriving a day late at my Ribcev Laz hotel the weather forecast indicated there might be clouds around Triglav so that climb was postponed in favour of the westernmost walk where the prospects of sunshine were more confident. A faultily set alarm meant a later than intended departure to find the drive round the mountains took much longer than planned with the Vrisic Pass involving 24 hairpin bends on the way up, topping out at 5285ft, and 26 more on the way down with cows and goats in the road. Parking turned out to be by the path to the source of the River Soce beside which the afternoon's intended return route was to be. A short diversion to see the river waterfaling out of a crack in the side of the mountain and it was already 3 hours after sunrise before setting off properly.

Initially it was an easy gravel track leading to the crossing of a wide dry riverbed. The path beyond was still straightforward enough, leading to a fork. A signpost pointed back across the riverbed, now narrower, and the path beyond soon became rougher and steeper. Then I needed to pause for a first breather; then there were metal hand/footholds fixed into larger rocks to help you up; then there was no real path at all, just a metal cable fixed to the rock side to cling onto while you found some sloping



purchase for your feet. Halfway across I dropped my map. A scary, extreme stretch just retrieved. The path resumed steeply and after some impressive views back the way I'd come, an easier woodland patch was soon reached. I lost the path markers among the trees where each and every way looked equally plausible but guessed right and emerged into a grassy glade complete with mountain hut come cow shed. Took advantage of its bench & table to rest a while then crossed the stream below and resumed the climb.

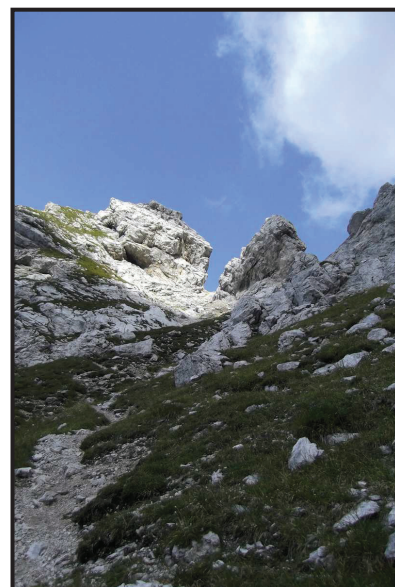


Eventually above the tree line, a saddle seemed almost within reach but the signs said go right and the map agreed. Perhaps I should have taken more note of the exclamation mark in red triangle. Lost the path signs again amid mixed scree and grass losing more time and energy to refind this time. In fact the path only really existed as the red markers painted on rocks, the going being no easier on than off. After a lengthy rising screey traverse another saddle was overhead. To get there was not long distance walking but

climbing up more metal bars fixed in the rocks. It had better be easier the other side as I don't fancy coming back down this way. It wasn't.

A precarious perch was achieved at 6540ft to assess the way down. A huge scree field spread out before me across which, from height, there was a visible path. To get down to it was a drop of perhaps 100ft with a partial gully sloping initially at 70-80%. Tried going backwards but couldn't see my footholds. Switched to a bottom shuffle but had to put my bumbag round my neck so I could lean back far enough. Just managed to keep control but sent showers of stones down before me. Halfway down there were grassy patches and I could switch to ginger (sorry NH) baby steps to reach the scree.

There now followed what was like walking down the steepest bits of Deal beach's shingle, no step coming to rest until a sufficient wave of yielding stones had built up, interspersed with rockier sections where even the largest boulder could not be relied upon to provide a stable step. This went on for some 2 hours before controlling my rate of decent could be relied upon with any confidence. Even then descending continued hard and uncomfortable.



Another mountain hut appeared, newer this time with solar panels and locked, but a bench outside and water sputtering from a nearby spout, Drank my fill and refilled and briefly rested. The path beyond was promisingly grassy zigzags but soon became steep and steppy again. By now the knee muscles on the weight bearing leg were burning and twitching causing doubtful control of the landing leg on each step down. Frequent recovery pauses were needed. It seems clear why this route is not popular and nobody else has been seen doing it.

Over four hours after leaving the top, civilisation in the valley bottom was regained in the shape of a cow with a bell and some people leaving a nearby building. After nearly 5 hours of demanding descending, back on a proper tarmac road I could still manage 3mph but time was running out. The whole day was supposed to be 21 miles

but GPS said I'd already done 14 and it was still some way to the turning point to join the river back to the car with only 3 hours of daylight left. Decided to divert into the nearest town to find transport back. The first person I speak to all day is an Austrian lady, dressed as a hiker but walking the short distance from car park to an Italian fort I've just rested at. I'm not in Italy; this is just not Italy anymore. The first building I came to was a hotel. I asked the receptionist if there was a taxi office nearby, she said no. Can you call one for me? We don't have taxis in Bovec. She did call one for me from I know not where. €35. Ouch, OK. When the kamikaze cabbie arrived 20 minutes later it *was* a long way back to where I'd parked. Drive back over those 50 hairpins.

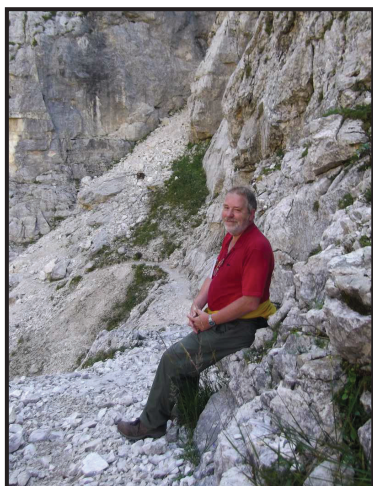
The discrepancy between the GPS measured distance and that expected from my planning was worrisome for the next day. With Ordnance Survey online maps you can plot a line along a path to give you the distance. The best I could find on the Slovenian equivalent was each footpath section was given a distance and total ascent. Perhaps I misunderstood the information, misconverted it, or just plain added up all the sections wrongly.

The last hour up and four hours down had been no fun and in retrospect the time would have been better spent doing the tourist option of following the Soce River Trail one way and getting the bus back instead of trying to create a circular route. I'd only seen a glimpse of the blue-green-turquoise water colour for which it is famed. When I stopped walking it had been 18 miles in 8½ hours with 4000ft of ascent and nearer 5000ft down.

Day 2

Factored in the extra driving time needed over that pass so alarm set for 4.30. 50 hairpins. I'd still missed an hour of walkable light before leaving the car at 7.15. There were another 3-4 dozen cars in the car parks already, many surrounded by hikers preparing to set off. Mostly local but a few Czech; no GB. From reading blogs this national park is popular with Czechs for some reason, it is Slovenia not Slovakia.

Again the route starts with an easy underfoot gravel track but the gradient is enough for me to need breathers. About an hour in a bridge is reached; refill with river water underneath. Beyond it's a path which seems to lead directly to the bottom of a near vertical mountain wall. But the park authorities have forged a direction disguising zigzag path, initially through woodland. All I can see is that each 1-3 steps is 1ft nearer the top. After a path bifurcation



where the signs point 5 hours to Triglav my route becomes airy on one side. Airy is a mountaineering term I've seen used to mean there's nothing much between you and a very long drop.

There are plenty of hikers about, I've passed some, more have passed me and others are on the way down. One couple and their dog catching me up stop to talk as I've plonked on a rock, primarily to let them past but the rest is not unwelcome. I must have looked really tired as they clearly thought I was a mad Englishman trying to make it to the top of the mountain in one day. I had intended to avoid Triglav over the weekend as some blogs said it was too crowded on the top. But it is a comfort boost to have others around. If I had had to blow my emergency whistle yesterday when there was no one to hear, would I have been making a sound?

Well above the tree line the Koca na Dolicu mountain hut comes into view. Wind turbine, solar panels, plenty of tables and seats outside, helipad, 65 beds and large refectory. I had been warned that buying water in these huts was expensive because it all has to be donkeyed or helicoptered in. €4.60 for a large can of beer and a bottle of water from the refrigerator seemed a bargain to me, not to have had to carry it up the mountain and not much more than you'd pay in a Kent pub.



Moving on I finally lose sight of the Zadnjica Valley where I started and get a first view of the top of Triglav. The path is now more varied, sometimes gravelly, sometimes over smooth rock, sometimes even downhill a bit. It has been clearly improved in places with small ravines causewayed for example. Put snow in my hair to keep cool. It's nice to have something not salty dripping down my face. At a final path split the sign says Triglav 2.5km 1 hour. My GPS says there's still 1200ft to climb and I've done 13



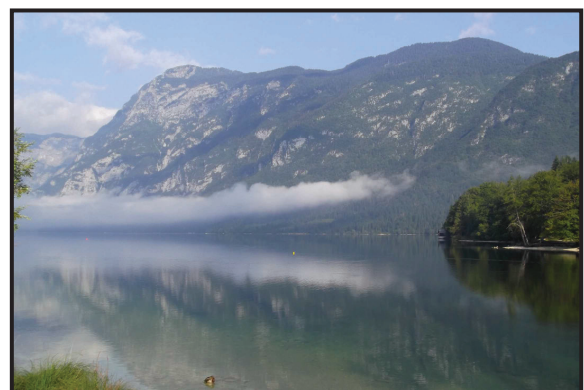
miles when it was expected to be only been 7 in total to the top. Try a little bit further but then the next section of path climbs up some steep scree. After yesterday any enthusiasm to reach the top departs and a final check of the map shows that the distance back to the hotel as intended is clearly unachievable. Prudence takes over and I turn back to the car while there is time to get there before dark.

That valley view is back again and going down the path, surfaces that seemed so secure on the way up feel less so

the way your weight lands on the way down. I'm glad to get past the airy bits, glad to get back below the tree line, glad to leave those zigzags behind, glad to be back on the track, glad to be off those endless limestone chippings. I'm not sure walking in the high mountains is for me. The views are spectacular but get stuck. With all that zigzagging it still looks the same only from a slightly different elevation. The only entertainment on the way down was a young couple I was pacing having a tiff. He'd made her walk too far and now she was too tired and putting him well and truly in the doghouse. In 11½ hours I'd walked 27 miles and climbed 5800ft (1.3 x Ben Nevis) having turned back at 8200ft (2.3 x Snowdon). 50 hairpins to replan the remaining days.

Day 3

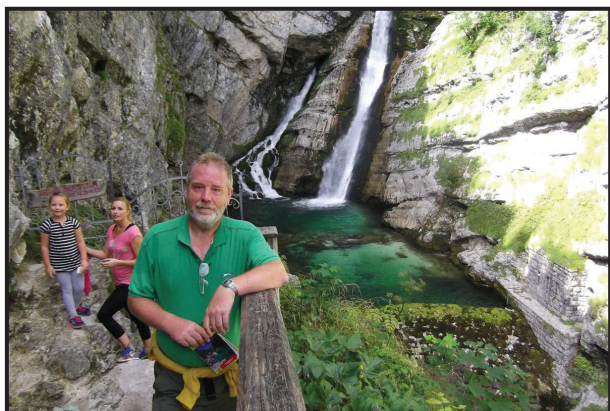
Using distances and timings from the Cicerone guidebook today will string 3 of its easier walks together. Sleep in. See the hotel for the first time in the daylight. Walk down to Lake Bohinj on which Ribcev Laz stands, it's really pretty here. Someone walks past with a Sainsbury's carrier bag; that spoils it.



Set off along the southern shore where the peace is being disturbed by loud music from the control point for a running event. Their direction arrows turn out to be an aid in finding the right route though. The woodland path climbing above the busy lakeside road could be in Kent, there's even some proper mud. Only pass a couple of others and there's a glimpse of the lake at just one point. So the woods have been going on for a bit too long when a cable car station is reached. In the winter there's skiing at the top and

it's running for anyone who wants to go up and admire the view. Car park is busy. Not for me today, I'm following the road to Slap Savica, a waterfall.

It goes on, enclosed by woods, for a couple of miles and more so I amuse myself noting where all the cars attracted to this tourist hotspot are coming from; Austria, Italy, Bosnia, Croatia, Germany, Netherlands, Belgium, Hungary. No GB. The highlight is finding 5c on the road.



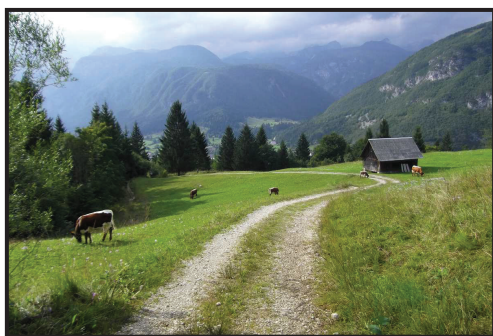
Towards the end the sound and then sight of a river is reached but by now the road is rising steeply. Cyclists are pushing. Car park is busy. River water is being diverted to a spout so drink and refill. An English voice heard here among Americans. €2.50 to enjoy the 542 steps from the kiosk up to the viewing platform. Here again the water is coming straight out of an underground lake through a crack in the mountainside. The green colour of the pool into which it falls is perhaps more spectacular than the falls themselves.

When I see the photo I persuaded a Japanese tourist to take of me it almost matches the shirt I am wearing. What there is to see is soon seen and its 542 steps back down.

Lunch with the tourists on Jota, a sauerkraut stew with Carniolan sausage. Very full, I follow the nearby sign which says 1 hour 20 back to the lake by a footpath of those limestone chippings again. For once I get there quicker to find wide open grass at the glasslike lake edge with picnic benches. Sun bathers. The path along the north side of the lake is more manicured than this morning; the crunch underfoot goes on. Being mostly beside the lake the views are more interesting. Busy.



At the far end more open grass but a gentle breeze is rippling the lake into laps on the beach. Swimmers. My hand test guesses slightly warmer than the Channel. A time check suggests I can complete part three, climbing Rudnica. So it's straight on into Stara Fuzina. Pretty. Smells farmy.



The track followed soon ascends steeply and I'm reduced to 50 steps - breather - 50 steps - breather. Another hiker going at tortoise pace storms past. Unexpectedly quickly reach an alpine pasture with cows and hut then realise there is more than one before the target in the book. Flies abandon the cows and buzz round sweaty ears all the way to the top. Even at my puffing pace the top pasture is reached in the time the book predicts and thoughts of cutting short the climb once the lake view is admired

are banished. Didn't look the right way at the right time and missed the view anyway.

To the top is less further on than first reading conveyed and the gradient rounds off into woods. At the very 3075ft top there is a metal box with visitor books to sign. I am number 13 for the day and there's a space to put LDWA. A first? Also at the top is a man with his dog and a unicycle. Yes a unicycle that he is about to ride down the mountain! There are other forms of madness than long distance walking.

Views admired all round then down by a different route. Bouncy pine needle litter underfoot doesn't hurt when I take a tumble. Near the bottom the patter of raindrops on the leaves begins. So far the weather has been sunny or at worst some light cloud. Emerging from the trees at the bottom the rain has



Day 4

Bled day was meant to be a walk connecting the tourist highlights that first caught my eye. Wake to pouring rain. Drive the long way there past squeeze-a-car-through villages that might inspire a walk another day, hoping it will stop. It doesn't. Drive round the lake hoping it will stop. It doesn't. Find a car park and wait for it to stop. It doesn't. Give in and head for the castle anticipating there will be something out of the rain to see. Having read every scrap of display information it's still raining and spoiling the view. Back to the car, back to the hotel and dry clothes. Back in Bled at least it's eased enough to be outside without getting your knickers wet but there are still showers to hide from and there's only time to be a tourist enduring a damp day. No walking of note to report.



Day 5

Early start as driving home has to be fitted in after lunch. It's still damp and I'm wearing waterproofs after parking in the pretty village of Ratece at the foot of Tremuja. A stony path leads steeply out of the village then joins an easier gravel track. Now in the Karavanke Alps the underlying geology makes any exposed rocks seem less harsh. After climbing a thousand feet the next thousand is tree root steps zigzagging through forest. The path goes in and out of a power line cut clearing which the guide books says gives increasingly expansive views as you climb. The fog/low cloud looks pretty much the same each time to me. Higher up the air is clearer and there are indeed views back to the cloud shrouded high Julian Alps.

After a couple of hours climbing the top is reached at 4900ft but the sense of achievement is diminished by finding some workmen who have just driven up the track and are moving stuff about at the ski season bars. Chair lifts come up from the Austrian side. I find the border stone where Slovenia, Austria and Italy meet and visit each several times. Whatever the Austrian valley holds, I see only the top of a bank of white cloud. On another occasion I would have walked down into Austria and back round through Italy perhaps but have only time to get back to the car and choose the easier track.

The eventful journey home will undoubtedly be a social walk lengthy topic of conversation.



COMEDY CORNER with Neal O'Rourke

IF you've ever worked for a boss who reacts before getting the facts and thinking things through, you will love this!

Arcelor-Mittal Steel, feeling it was time for a shake-up, hired a new CEO. The new boss was determined to rid the company of all slackers.

On a tour of the facilities, the CEO noticed a guy leaning against a wall. The room was full of workers and he wanted to let them know that he meant business. He asked the guy, "How much money do you make a week?"

A little surprised, the young man looked at him and said, "I make \$400 a week. Why?"

The CEO said, "Wait right here." He walked back to his office, came back in two minutes, and handed the guy \$1,600 in cash and said, "Here's four weeks' pay. Now GET OUT and don't come back."

Feeling pretty good about himself the CEO looked around the room and asked, "Does anyone want to tell me what that goof-ball did here?"

From across the room a voice said, "Pizza delivery guy from Domino's."

Where whitefella went wrong

A 90-year-old aboriginal elder sat in his humpy eyeing two government officials sent to interview him. One official said to him: "You have observed the white man for 90 years. You have seen his wars and his technological advances.

"You have seen his progress and the damage he has done."

The elder nodded in agreement.

The official continued: "Considering all these events, in your opinion, where did the whitefella go wrong?"

The elder stared at the two government officials for over a minute and then he calmly replied:

"When whitefella found the land, blackfellas were running it:

No taxes,

No debt,

Plenty kangaroo,

Plenty fish,

Women did all the work,

Medicine man free,

Aboriginal man spent all day hunting and fishing, all night having sex."

Then the elder leaned back and smiled: "Only whitefella bloody stupid enough to think he could improve a system like that."

Yorkshire Terminology

It is claimed by some that Yorkshire folk have the lowest stress rate because they do not understand the seriousness of most medical terminology. A few examples:

Medical term – artery.

Bacteria – back door to cafeteria.

Barium – what doctors do when patients die.

Benign – what you be, after you be eight.

Caesarean section – a neighbourhood in Rome.

Cat scan – searching for Kitty.

Cauterize – made eye contact with her.

Colic – a sheep dog.
Coma – a punctuation mark.
Dilate – to live long.
Enema – not a friend.
Fester – quicker than someone else.
Fibula – a small lie.
Impotent – distinguished, well known.
Labour pain – getting hurt at work.
Medical staff – a doctor's cane.
Morbid – a higher offer.
Nitrates - rates of pay for working at night, normally more money than days.
Node – I knew it.
Outpatient – a person who has fainted.
Pelvis – second cousin of to Elvis.
Post operative – a letter carrier.
Recovery room – place to do upholstery.
Rectum – nearly killed him.
Secretion – hiding something.
Seizure – Roman emperor.
Tablet - a small table.
Terminal illness – getting sick at the airport.
Tumour – one plus one more.
Urine – opposite of you're out.
No need to thank me – I forward this as a community service.

THE LAST WORD – FROM THE EDITOR

WELL, here we are, nearing the end of 2015 – and what an important year it's been for Kent Group of the LDWA. Once again we have organised three highly successful challenge walks – the Sevenoaks Circular (with its new venue), the Walk With The Smugglers and our 52-mile White Cliffs Challenge (where we had a record number of entrants). All three events went off very well, and I have to say it was particularly pleasing to get such fabulous feedback from the walkers on the White Cliffs Challenge. A walk of 50-plus miles does take a lot of organising and it does involve some of us working around the clock – but we did it, and those taking part seemed to enjoy it. We also have a very good and interesting programme of social walks, and it is good that we are liaising with our neighbouring groups of Sussex, London and Surrey with some walks. Several members completed this year's Red Rose 100, and we again organised a very successful checkpoint on the event.

Then we have the Cinque Ports 100. It is now just over 12 months since we were awarded the 2018 Hundred, and as chairman of the organising group, I have to say I am pleased with the progress made so far. A lot of good work has been done on the event this year, and I must say particular thanks to Mike Pursey, who is painstakingly walking and working on the entire route, and to Neal O'Rourke, who has thrown himself into his role as checkpoint with typical enthusiasm and thoroughness, visiting just about every checkpoint on the walk to check them, making notes and taking photographs. I must also thank national chairwoman and former 100s coordinator Gail Elrick, who has been such a source of help and advice, always replying to my frequent emails quickly and attending our group meetings. And I am so pleased that Joy Davies – the 'magnificent Joy Davies' (as Neil Higham has dubbed her) who turned 80 this year – is on the group as catering manager. I'm sure all Kent Group members will agree, catering on

the event could not be in better hands, although our Joy is going to need a lot of help. Obviously, there is an awful lot of work still to do on the Cinque Ports 100, but we are well on the way to making it a Hundred to remember for the LDWA.

From a personal point of view, it has been quite demanding year. I work as editor of the East Kent Mercury, which celebrated its 150th anniversary this year. That's a massive milestone for a local newspaper and it involved a lot of extra work for me which did impact slightly on my LDWA work, as there are only so many hours in the day. But we do have an excellent committee, and our committee members rallied round to take some LDWA work from me which did ease the pressure on me. I am very grateful to them all, with particular thanks to Michael Headley.

In September I had an operation for prostate cancer. Prostate cancer is fairly common for blokes of my age but it was still a big operation. The operation seemed to go OK but my big problem was having to wear a catheter for nine days afterwards. It was painful and uncomfortable and meant I had to be completely inactive for those nine days, which I hated. I started going on short walks a few weeks after the operation, then at the start of November I led my 18-mile Lewes Loop (see report and photos above), I'm going to enter the 25-mile Stansted Stagger on December 28, and my big target is the Dorset 100 marshals' walk in May, for which I have already been accepted. So, as always, I'm looking forward to walking in the new year.

So sincere thanks to everyone who sent me good wishes after my operation, and thanks to everyone with whom I have walked and worked on LDWA matters this year. Particular thanks to our wonderful Bryan Clarke for printing our newsletter and in taking such care over the quality of the reproduction.

I wish everyone a fine Christmas – and lots of good walking in 2016. I look forward to seeing you all soon.

Graham Smith

Photos from the White Cliffs Challenge 2015
by Eric Rolfe

