

LONG DISTANCE WALKERS ASSOCIATION — Kent Group

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

NEWSLETTER



Michael Headley at Evershot on the Dorset 100

Number 100



August 2016

www.ldwa.org.uk/kent

Pictures from the Dorset 100



Jim, Len and Jill at Evershot



Ivan, Neil and Brian at Evershot



Sarah and David at Evershot



Brian and Joy at the Hardy Monument



Graham, Jean and Colin reach Milton Abbas



Graham, Jean and two others on the marshals' walk – Graham is getting news of a Dover Athletic match (sadly, Dover lost 1-0).

KENT SOCIAL WALKS AUGUST TO DECEMBER 2016

Sun Aug 7 White Cliffs Challenge Marshals Walk Group Walk - 32ml. For details contact Mike. C: Mike Pursey Telephone number in Strider

Sat Aug 13 South Downs Thirty Group Walk - c30ml. 08.00 Meet at Eastbourne, W end of promenade (B2103) by South Downs Way marker post. Park nr school on left. Map: Exp 123 (GR TV600972). A circular walk on the South Downs via the Seven Sisters, the Cuckmere valley, Firle Beacon and Willingdon Hill. Lunch stop at Alfriston (c22ml). Mike Pursey. Telephone number below.

Sun Aug 21 Cinque Ports 100 Social 4: Legs 7/8/9 Group Walk - c19ml. 09.00 Meet by Town Hall in Lydd High Street - park on local roads. Maps: Exp 125,138 (GR TR042209). Lydd to Hythe, then walk to main road (0.5ml) for bus back to Lydd (bus times at Hythe 16.20 or 17.20). Lunch stop at Dymchurch. Provisional (NOT final) route description for the event is available.

Thu Aug 25 Fish & Chip Walk (part of the White Cliffs Walking Festival) Group Walk - c10ml. 17.30 Meet at Walmer rlwy stn. Map: Exp 138 (GR TR363503). Walk to Dover via the White Cliffs, fish & chips in Dover and return by train or bus. C: Graham Smith. Telephone number below.

Sun Aug 28 White Cliffs Challenge Challenge Event - 32 or 15ml. in 11 or 7hr (all to finish by 19.30). From St Margaret's Hall, St Margaret's at Cliffe just outside Dover (GR TR358446). Outstanding clifftop route (part of White Cliffs Walking Festival). Maps: LR179, Exp 138, 150. Route descriptions will be available before the day of the event on the website.

Tue Aug 30 Three Pits Walk (part of White Cliffs Walking Festival) Group Walk - c18ml. 10.00 Meet at Northbourne Village Hall. (GR TR334523). Maps: Exp 138, 150. A walk visiting the former Kent mines of Betteshanger, Tilmanstone and Snowdown. Pub lunch stop. C: Graham Smith. Telephone number below.

Sun Sep 4 Questions from Kent - Where? Group Walk - 20ml. 9.10 Marden Station (08.12 from Victoria). (GR TQ743447). Where is Ware?. Country pub lunch stop. Joint with London. C: Peter Jull Telephone number below.

Sun Sep 11 Cinque Ports 100 Social 5: Legs 10/11 Group Walk - c15ml. 09.00 Meet by Hythe Sports Pavilion in South Road. (GR TR164343). Hythe to Dover Map: Exp 138. Parking on local road(s). Lunch stop at Capel. Return by bus (half-hourly). Provisional (not final) route description for the event is available on request for those attending these social walks.

Sun Sep 18 Cinque Ports 100 Social 6: Legs 12/13/14 Group Walk - c17ml. 09.00 Dover Priory rlwy stn. Park at stn (charge) or in road nearby. Maps: Exp 138,150 (GR TR314415). Dover to Sandwich. Return by train. Lunch stop at Deal. Provisional (not final) route description for the event is available on request for those attending these social walks.

Sun Oct 2 Cinque Ports 100 Social 7: Legs 15/16/17 Group Walk - c15ml. 09.15 Dover Priory rlwy stn (for 09.25 train to Sandwich, t.b.c.). Maps: Exp 138,150 (GR TR314415). Sandwich to Dover. Walk to Sandwich Guildhall, then walk event route to the FINISH and return to Priory stn. Pub lunch stop at c9ml.

Sun Oct 16 Questions from Kent - Who? Group Walk - 21.5ml. 09.20 Headcorn Station (8.12 from Victoria). (GR TQ837439). Who'd have thought of there? Pub lunch in Pluckley. Joint with London. C: Peter Jull.

Sat Oct 29 Tunbridge Wells Circular Gold Rush Group Walk - 28ml. 8.00 Meet on village green at southern end of Lower Green Road, Pembury. (GR TQ625407). A circular route anti-clockwise round Tunbridge Wells. Pub stop in Groombridge but bring food and drink. Torch advisable. C Michael Headley. Telephone number below.

Sun Nov 20 Alkham Alternatives Group Walk - 18ml. 09.00 Kearsney Abbey. (GR TR287438). Only 18 miles but 3400ft of ascent! Figure Of 8. Pub lunch is very close to start so half way drop out is easy. C: Peter Jull Telephone number below.

Sun Dec 4 Family dinner Preceded by seven-mile walk starting at 9.30am, led by Neal O'Rourke. See article below.

Sat Dec 10 Christmas Cruise around Calais Group Walk - c14ml. 07.20 By P&O Desk, Dover Eastern Docks for 8.25am sailing. (GR TR331417). A circular walk in the Nord Pas de Calais visiting Cap Blanc Nez, with time for some Christmas shopping in the Auchan hypermarket. Return 9pm local time (approx.) - 8pm British time. Ring P&O reservations 08716 646464. Ring Graham Smith.

Wed Dec 28 Post Christmas Sevenoaks Stroll Group Walk - c18ml, 09.00 Meet at Shipbourne church on A227. Park in road opp church (GR TQ592522). Pub lunch stop. C: Dave Sheldrake.

KENT GROUP COMMITTEE

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

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.

NEWS OF KENT CHALLENGE WALKS

SEVENOAKS CIRCULAR 2017

Our first challenge walk of the year has been provisionally set for Sunday March 19, its usual slot of the third Sunday in March. For the third year running, it will be based at West Heath School, just outside Sevenoaks, with the three distances – 30, 20 and 15 miles. The marshals' walk is likely to be on Sunday March 2. More details will appear in the December newsletter.

WEALD WALK 2016

Despite a slow start for entries, the Andredsweald – which was held on July 10 – still produced 108 pre-entries this year, and 11 on day. There were 54 completions of the 26-mile route, 11 for the 20-mile route and 21 for the 15-mile route. So a total of 86 people finished and nine retired. Also, for various reasons, we had something of a skeleton crew marshalling – and they all did a fantastic job in marshalling for so many late entries. The results are on the website. Next year it will be the Heart of the Weald, based at Wadhurst. A date has yet to be confirmed, and there will be more details in the next newsletter.

WHITE CLIFFS CHALLENGE 2016

Yes, it's almost upon us. It's on Sunday August 28, will be based at St Margaret's Village Hall, as usual it's part of the White Cliffs Walking Festival, there are two routes – 32 and 15 miles: and we need marshals. If you are willing to help and Graham Smith has not yet contacted you, then please contact him. His details are above. All offers of help will be gratefully received. The marshals walk will be on August 7 – see social walks programme above.

SUSSEX STRIDE – KSS TRIPLE CHALLENGE 2016

Next month the Kent Surrey Sussex Triple Challenge of 50-mile walks, taking place in successive years, means the return of the Sussex Stride over the weekend of September 24-25. As always, we are organising a checkpoint, which will be in our usual spot of East Dean. We are told there will be a slight change in the route this year. Our CP will be the dinner stop and will be at 28 miles. Anyone wishing to help out is asked to contact Graham Smith – details above. The marshals' walk is over the weekend of September 10-11.

NEW CHALLENGE WALKS FROM NEIGHBOURING GROUPS

Next year there will be two new challenge walks put on by neighbouring groups. London Group is putting on the 27-mile Capital Challenge, from Waterloo Bridge to Docklands, on April 1, and Sussex Group is putting on a 26-mile challenge walk, which will be based in Forest Row, and will be held on September 9 or 10.

FAMILY DINNER

For the third year in succession, our popular family dinner will be at Chart Hills Golf Club in Weeks Lane, Biddenden. The date is Sunday December 4 and the meal will, as usual, be preceded by a walk, again led by Neal O'Rourke. The walk will be of seven miles and will start at 9.30am. Lunch will be served at 1.30pm. Cost of the meal will be £12.95 for one course, £16.95 for two courses and £19.95 for three courses. Jan O'Rourke has again kindly made the booking arrangements. A booking form is included with this newsletter, so please fill it in and return it to Jan, with your cheque, made out to Kent LDWA, by November 19.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Next year's AGM will be on Sunday January 29, at a venue to be confirmed, as the committee have decided to move the meeting from Lenham community centre. So put the date in your diaries. Full details in the next newsletter.

SURVEY

Several members have completed the survey which appeared with the last newsletter, and quite a few more completed it online. The idea, as explained before, is just to get an idea of how people feel about the group and if they are happy to help out at events. Peter Jull has taken on the task of coordinating the responses, and it is planned to report these in the next newsletter. Many thanks to those members who took the trouble to fill it in.

CONSTITUTION

People may recall that a draft constitution, as required by the National Executive Committee, appeared with the December newsletter. The issue was aired at the AGM in January and has been discussed by the committee. Long-standing member Andrew Melling, who is a former solicitor, has been over the constitution thoroughly. It has now been approved and sent to the NEC. It is also on our website, so members are able to view it. Sincere thanks go to Andrew for his hard work on this issue.

EQUIPMENT

Sarah Turner has joined the committee as equipment officer – and she needs your help. Equipment officer is a very important post, one we are required to fill owing to the draft constitution. Sarah intends making a list of what equipment Kent Group has, but to do this, people need to let her know what they have got. So could any Kent members with any Kent equipment – be it clippers for checking in entrants on our challenge walks, checkpoint signs, kettles, mugs, anything – please let Sarah know as soon as possible. Please email her what you have got on saraheturner70@yahoo.co.uk

NORTH YORK MOORS 100

The 2017 Hundred will be based at Malton, and we have agreed to do a checkpoint at Wombledon Hall (17 miles). Coordinator, as usual, will be chairman Brian Buttifant. As North Yorkshire is a long way from Kent, we are anticipating that we will not have as many people manning our checkpoint as we did this year on the Dorset 100, so we have asked North Yorkshire Group to put us with another group. Also, as it's an early checkpoint, it's going to be very busy. More details in the next newsletter.



CINQUE PORTS 100

Plans for our Cinque Ports 100 are progressing well, although it has to be said there is a lot of work to be done. But, thanks in no small part to the help and support from national chairman Gail Elrick, we're getting there.

Route

The entire route is on our social walks programme, and this has proved a very useful exercise in terms of members getting familiar with the route, being able to identify any issues and making helpful suggestions. So far we have had three Cinque Ports 100 social walks, with the next one scheduled for August 21 (see social walks programme above). If you haven't yet done so, please come along to some of these walks and see the route for yourself.

Scenically, one of the best parts of the route – THE most scenic in route coordinator Mike Pursey's opinion – is Hastings Country Park.

Unfortunately a landslip at Ecclesbourne Glen, in the country park, has closed the path where the route had been intended to go. The problem was

reported to the park's rangers, who said it could not be guaranteed the path would be sufficiently restored in time for 2018. So Mike Pursey has therefore re-routed this section. It has been walked with Graham Smith and it is perfectly acceptable.

HQs

The event will be based at the Duke of York's Royal Military School, just outside Dover. We could not ask for a better location, as the venue has everything we want (and much else besides). We will be using the school's extensive dining hall and kitchen, plus the new sports hall and changing rooms. We may also be using the school's old gymnasium as a sleeping area. Members of the event organising group have had site visits, and there will be more of these.

Start

The event will start from Sussex Coast College at Hastings – another excellent venue. As this newsletter was being printed, the Lord Warden of the Cinque Ports, Admiral the Lord Boyce, had been approached to start the walk. We are waiting to get a response, so hopefully there will be something positive to report in the next newsletter. As previously reported, chairman Brian Buttifant will be leading the walkers for the first few hundred yards to Hastings seafront.

Checkpoints

Checkpoint coordinator Neal O'Rourke is in the process of getting all checkpoints manned. As previously reported, several of these will be in town halls or town council offices, which have been offered to us for free. The breakfast stop will be at Hythe Sports Pavilion.

Marshals' Walk

This will start from Sussex Coast College in Hastings, but we will be unable to use the Duke of York's Royal Military School for the finish. So instead this will be at the Burgoyne Heights community centre, a good venue which is actually right next door to the school. This does involve a small change in the route.

It cannot be stressed enough that the Cinque Ports 100 is a massive undertaking for Kent Group. The organising group is working well but we are going to need assistance from everyone – yes, everyone – in the group. Graham will be delighted to hear from anyone who can help out.

CONRAD POWER

Kent LDWA members will be sad to hear of the death of Conrad Power.

'Con', as he was known, died in May after a short battle with cancer. He lived in Hastings with his wife Claire. Con was an LDWA stalwart who joined our association in 1982. He completed 13 Hundreds, including those in Dartmoor, Exmoor, Lancashire, Durham, Snowdonia and the South Downs. The quickest time he took was 32 hours. He also completed lots of other challenge walks, including our White Cliffs Challenge.

He had offered his services to help on the Cinque Ports 100 in 2018, which will start from Hastings, attending one of our organising group's

meetings and helping to walk out the start of the route, from Sussex Coast College in the town.

Con's son Stephen, who lives in Hong Kong, hopes to walk the Cinque Ports 100 in his father's memory.

Con, whose father Paul was a Kent miner, was born and brought up in Deal, going to school in Deal and Dover. In 1967 he moved to Hastings, where he met and married Claire. The couple have two sons, two daughters and six grandchildren.

Another of Con's great loves was chess. He was director of the world-famous Hastings Chess Congress from 1983 to 2015, and has been awarded the British Chess Federation's President's Award for services to chess. He was also the first to receive the FIDE (Fédération Internationale des Échecs, which literally translates into World Chess Federation) International Chess Organiser title.

Con's funeral was held at St Mary Star-of-the-Sea Roman Catholic Church, in Hastings Old Town, on May 11.

A full obituary is in the current edition of Strider.

The photo above shows Con on a walking trip to Canada's Rocky Mountains.



DOVER WELCOMES WALKERS – OFFICIAL

Dover has become the second town in Kent to get Walkers Are Welcome status.

The honour was awarded by the national Walkers Are Welcome authority, and means Dover has joined neighbouring Deal, which gained the status in 2009. The village of Elham also has Walkers Are Welcome status.

There are now more than 100 Walkers Are Welcome towns and villages in Britain. They have all demonstrated that they are an attractive destination for walkers with good information on local walks; that they offer local people and visitors walking opportunities within the area; that they ensure that footpaths are maintained, improved and well signposted; that they contribute to local tourism plans and regeneration strategies; that they promote health benefits of walking; and that they encourage the use of public transport.

Businesses can demonstrate their support by displaying Walkers Are Welcome stickers.

The campaign to secure the status was spearheaded by a steering group led by former Dover Mayor Pam Brivio, who is also a member of the White Cliffs Ramblers, and ex-town councillor Pat Sherratt, a keen walker. The group also includes hotel and guest house people, and members of the White Cliffs Walking Festival organising group.

More than 1,200 signatures were collected on a petition to support the bid.

Cllr Brivio said: "This is really good news.

"I am very grateful to the various groups who helped. The evidence we got from around Dover to support did look very impressive. Dover is at the heart of walking"

This year the third White Cliffs Walking Festival, which has been supported by Dover Town Council with a £500 grant,

takes place from August 25-31 (see separate article below). Organised by the White Cliffs Ramblers, it will be launched on Dover seafront.

And, of course, in 2018 Dover will host our Cinque Ports 100, based at the Duke of York's Royal Military School.



SUMMER FRENCH CHALLENGE

Nine of us went on this year's annual Summer French Challenge on July 2. This annual event is a 23-mile walk in the Nord Pas de Calais region. The photo left shows Rex Stickland having his initiation for first timers on the walk - an obligatory picture taken at the bus shelter near the village of Escalles. The other photo shows most of the group on Mont de Couple (pronounced coup), near Wissant, always the highlight of the walk. This year we decided to do another top - Mont de Sombre, a decision which didn't meet with universal approval from the walkers, as the diversion involved a bit of mud - so we probably won't be doing that one next year. But a good time was, as usual, had by all. We don't yet have a date for next year's Summer French Challenge, but this will be in the next newsletter. And our winter French walk - the 14-mile Christmas Cruise Round Calais - will be on December 10. See social walks programme above.

WHITE CLIFFS WALKING FESTIVAL

This year's White Cliffs Walking Festival, which of course features our White Cliffs Challenge on August 28, takes place between August 25-31. This will be the third annual White Cliffs Walking Festival, which is organised by the White Cliffs Ramblers, the south Kent branch of the national Ramblers organisation, to which some Kent LDWA members belong.

The programme features a total of 39 walks, ranging from special interest or history/heritage walks of a couple of miles to our White Cliffs Challenge, a 32-mile trek on Sunday August 28.

Graham Smith, who is on the festival's organising group, has put on two festival walks - his annual 10-mile Fish and Chips Walk on the evening of Thursday August 25, going from Walmer to Dover; and his 18-mile Three Pits Walk on Tuesday August 30, taking in three of the coal mines in the Kent Coalfield (see social walks programme above).

Other festival walks are a four-mile walk taking in the history and wildlife of Dover's Western Heights: a nine-mile Dover Hills and Valleys Walk; an 8.5-mile section of the North Downs Way National Trail; an 11-mile Windmill Walk; a six-mile Bleriot Walk, learning about the French aviator who flew across the Channel in 1909; and a 12-mile Battle of Britain Walk, visiting the Cat and Custard Pot pub in Hawkinge which was frequented by some of 'The Few'.

The festival's walk programme is on a leaflet now being distributed to tourist information centres, pubs, council offices, shops and other outlets in the Deal-Dover area. The programme is also on the festival's dedicated website www.whitecliffswalkingfestival.org.uk

The festival will be launched at an opening ceremony on Dover seafront at 10am on Thursday August 25, followed by a choice of three walks. It will be opened by Averil Brice, Kent public rights of way manager and also White Cliffs Ramblers secretary. Also at the opening ceremony will be former Dover mayor Pam Brivio, who led the group which secured Walkers Are Welcome status for Dover; and Dover and Deal MP Charlie Elphicke.



KENT COAST PATH LAUNCHED ON THE WHITE CLIFFS

Kent's first section of the England Coast Path has been opened on the White Cliffs of Dover, with a new guide book produced to encourage people to use the route.

A continuous path around the coastline of England is currently being created and Kent was one of the first counties where work started on the project. Natural England, Kent County Council and Kent Ramblers have been devising routes for two sections of path – from Camber (just over the border in Sussex) to Folkestone and from Folkestone to Ramsgate.

Both sections were opened at a ceremony on the National Trust's White Cliffs Visitor Centre at Langdon Cliffs, near Dover, on July 19.

Kent Ramblers have produced an 80-page full-colour route guide that includes detailed maps, information about interesting sights on and near the path and background information about the geology, geography and history of the area.

The book can be ordered from the Kent Ramblers website (www.kentramblers.org.uk/books). The cover price is £7.50 but for a limited period it can be ordered online for just £6, including postage and packing. Kent Ramblers will throw in a free copy of its previous book Ten Favourite Walks in the Kent Countryside.

Work is currently in progress on further sections of the Kent Coast Path. Work on the section from Ramsgate to Whitstable is well under way and further sections onwards to Gravesend will follow.

>From Gravesend those walking the England Coast Path will take a ferry across the Thames estuary into Essex.

The entire England Coast Path is due for completion in 2020.

THE DORSET HUNDRED – WONDERFUL PERFORMANCE FROM KENT

KENT members put in an excellent performance on the Dorset 100, held over the bank holiday weekend of May 28-30.

On what was generally considered to be a pretty tough route, 13 of the 17 Kent members who started the event were able to finish.

It was great shame that Roger Dean, Dave Sheldrake, Alan Stewart and Sarah Turner had to retire. Roger, Alan and Dave have completed Hundreds before, so let's hope they enter next year's – and/or our own, the Cinque Ports 100, in 2018. The bravery award must go to Sarah, who gamely battled on from the Evershot checkpoint despite such excruciating pain from her blisters that her feet were bleeding, before wisely deciding to turn back.

Particular congratulations to Michael Headley and David Thornton, who both completed their first Hundreds. For Michael, who is 73 and had come close to finishing on two previous Hundreds, getting round was particularly satisfying.

Special congratulations also go to Judy Rickwood, who had undergone an operation a few weeks previously and got round with just under an hour to spare.

Don Newman completed his 31st Hundred, Keith Warman completed his 26th and Mike Pursey completed his 11th.

A total of 491 people started the event, with 144 retirements, so the proportion of Kent members getting round was very high.

Two Kent members, Graham Smith and Wendy Thurrell, completed the Dorset 100 marshals' walk, held over the weekend of April 30-May 2. Forty-three people started the marshals' walk, with 15 retiring, including Kent member Julie Welch.

On the event itself, 12 Kent members – organised as usual by chairman Brian Buttifant – manned our checkpoint at Evershot (number 7, just before the breakfast stop), and worked through the night to ensure it went as smoothly as possible. Particular thanks go to Len Wilson – at 82 a veteran of eight completed Hundreds, some in times of sub 30 hours – who turned out to work at his first Hundred for several years. And it goes without saying (but let's say it again anyway) that Joy Davies was as magnificent as usual in organising things in the kitchen.

Dorset 100 – Kent Group results

Andrew Boulden - 29.12.

Stephanie le Men - 32.48.

Neal and Jan O'Rourke - 34.49.

David Thornton - 35.49

Michael Headley - 39.57.

Jill Green and Jim Catchpole - 40.31.

Don Newman - 43.39.

Peter Jull - 46.03.

Judy Rickwood - 47.07.

Mike Pursey - 47.20.

Keith Warman - 47.24.

Alan Stewart - retired Lodders (82.9 miles).

David Sheldrake - retired Blackdown (64.4 miles).

Sarah Turner – retired Evershot (49.5 miles).

Roger Dean - retired Buckland Newton (38.8 miles).

Dorset 100 marshals' walk.

Wendy Thurrell - 29.58

Graham Smith - 41.18.

Marshals

Mike Attewell, Brian Buttifant, Joy Davies, Nick Dockree, Lee Harris, Neil Higham, Graham Smith, Wendy Thurrell, Ann and Ivan Waghorn, Julie Welch and Len Wilson.



491 GO FOR A WALK IN DORSET – A PARTICIPANT’S PERSPECTIVE

By Peter Jull

Note for 2018 – people with luggage are a squeeze in a minibus. Belated note for 2016 – seeing people walking from the nearby Premier Inn I should have offered one a lift, qualified for school parking and avoided the park and ride minibus. Dropped off, directions were to leave bags outside and go in to register. Hello to Neal and Jan sitting by the door signed to registration. Following the directed corridor, realised my GPS was exposed in my rucksack’s outside net pocket. Trustingly carried on and on ’til the queue was found. Easily the least efficient of my

four registration experiences. Hastily retraced and retrieved GPS, relieved. Deposited breakfast bag and discarded unneeded envelope label and string. Mike H is spotted watching me watching the baggage team and taking tips for 2018. Wendy arrives ready for marshalling duties. Back in the hall Alan is here. Back with Neal and Jan, Keith is getting ready. Steph and Sarah turn up.

Sarah has her tally; she’s got the Monday off and is doing it. David Thornton is here, didn’t know he’d entered. Dave Sheldrake is reported seen, first time for years. Mike P gets here.

Wareham’s town crier rings the get outside call. Look up there’s a drone about: smile please. Make sure I’m on the start side of the crowd. The PA is easily audible for once but the presentees for long service helping are mostly out of hearing or shy. And off with the rush behind a wellied yokel, stuffed lamb on shoulder. Reduced to a shuffle as path encloses to 1½ walkers wide. Released onto the Relief Road side cycle path the race is on. Fall in with Judy who was ahead. Comment on how far in front the leaders are soon seen to be but the road noise challenges conversation. Try to temper pace with those baulking the path but a corner overtaking opening is too tempting and Judy is left behind. Coming off Bincombe Hill, stile congestion causes a short delay but it grows to 10 minutes-plus for the back of the field. On the next hill Mr Drone’s drone is not responding but some pictures were seen later so not a complete flop. A stills man paps me soon after and I’m already perspiring. I know my place and pace and overtakers are frequent. Jan hellos going down a field. How Neal slipped by unseen I do not know. Steph squelches by in the post ford mud after Broadmayne.

Checkpoint 1 Crossways, place 152. Tea loaf is ideal, quickly filling. Mike H arrives. David and Sarah turn up. Don is here somewhere unseen. Refill squash bottle and no one known is now to be seen, leave. Mike H soon comes up behind and David and Sarah soon after. Walk and talk for miles past TE Lawrence places. D and S slip ahead before Checkpoint 2 Briantspuddle, place 175. Mike slips out to complete leg 3, 18 minutes faster despite avowing prudence to avoid the lean. Damn, didn’t know The Martyrs in Tolpuddle was offering participants free drinks until well past. Jill and Jim have been pacing just ahead then somehow I’ve slipped past and Jill hails to express anticipation for my next newsletter epistle. Here you are Jill. Approaching Dewlish, marshals are enforcing the one way system, The next sounds like the farmer to who’s barn portaloos are directed, else the village hall. Place 206.

Those back in the field report being caught by a thundershower but I’m suffering from the heat. Wiltshire agree to a head drench to shouts of “Camera!” Looking up D and S are finishing a picnic on the roadside grass. Feeling much refreshed for the longest leg. In fact Milton Abbas, described as a manned clipper, was as good as a checkpoint. Sweeties and a rest. Wasn’t convinced of the value of the detour up to the church and back before arrival but it did ensure a Dorset icon was included in the route. Two lively ladies were directing the turn to the first DIY clipper. The advantages of what on receipt had seemed a flimsy tally became apparent to fingers that lose their squeezability with walking fatigue, it being more easily penetrable by the pins.

Converse with Sally, star of the Penniford video and make my own appearance. Didn’t even see John and his cameras. Down into Ansty CP4 and it’s still light for the kit check. I must be doing well. Place 197. Might even finish next leg before

complete darkness but fish out torches anyway.

Striding along the long grassy field atop Church Hill, pass my first walker on route since leg 1. The descent towards Buckland Newton matched that used by the Cerne Giant I did last year. Then, I slipped and fell in the top field. This time I made the top field, made the steep handrailed steps in the wood, then slipped and fell in the bottom field. Muddled not bloodied. I blame the grass now getting dewy. Whoever the ambulance at the checkpoint was for must have been worse off. Place 289, the later starters have been coming by.

Until now I had always been around so much company I had hardly referred to the RD but I was now more lonely and it was dark. Also I recognised Up Sydling as a name from the Giant and was expecting the route there to be the same. It soon wasn't and trying to make my memory fit wasn't helping. At Up Cerne I misread minor road junction as main road and seeing an A road on the edge of my GPS screen pressed on past the end of avenue of trees which were completely unidentifiable by torchlight. At the edge of Cerne Abbas nothing was fitting the RD. Stopped and consulted annotated paper maps and reread RD which revealed how far off route I was. Retracing or following road to Up Sydling looked equidistant and chose road. Measured later it was a bad choice and I didn't spot those arrows that on OS roads mean steep hill.

Back at Buckland Newton, debilitated by nausea, Roger Dean has called it a night. The road went on and on and boringly on. By the end of the leg I had done 10 miles instead of 7½ and that was only after the equally interminable stony track climb up to Wardon Hill with intermediate distances of suspect accuracy. 500yds from corner to barn was surely nearer 800. Place 337. A stack of straw bales was proffered as a place to snooze; a 3.45 alarm call booked. Woke just before, teeth chattering despite a jacket. Hurried out into the greying dawn and within a mile jacket was off as blood circulated again. Across the railway several gathered trying to make the RD match what could be seen in the gloom. SMGs are LMGs, turns unidentifiable. Rereading afterwards still didn't help and Keith says we were all wrong, including the many whose footprints preceded us. But the route away from the farm was GPS identified and Evershot reached for a warm Kent welcome, Neil outside touting for business. Soup and yoghurt. Maybe not normally but good for now. Place 371.

Learn of Sarah's demise with bloodied blisters, location later confirmed as roadside by the Corscombe Fox. Long gone by the time I pass by but now I'm regularly passing those in front. At baggage (Place 362) Mike P is bemoaning the soggy socks in his bag. Stored outside and showered on, the tarpaulin had proved inadequate. Change clothing where it's chaffing on a floor where the cleaning routine isn't coping. Three didn't make the 300yds to breakfast but there I find Dave Sheldrake contemplating the state of his back even after some chiropractice by the first aid team. Mike catches up and contemplates the state of his feet. Last year's chief organiser is demoted to waitress here. Dave braves the next leg and as soon as I've got a bottle refill I catch him for the steep climb of Gerrard's Hill. I'm climbing better but Dave catches on the level.

A body wagon is parked across the track and his point sends us wrong. Climbing an already muddled gate readily resolves. The mountain rescue team on Lewesden Hill decline the request that if we withdrew here, could we be helicoptered off. We both borrow their stools to find and take painkillers and then find and take the path down and onwards. The long road to Blackdown is questioned as to length by those who've grouped with us, 1.2 miles seeming to be and later measured as 1.5. The sleeping sickness is on me again and I'm tailing off the back before the checkpoint. Place 331.

Spend far too long dozily doping in a chair before pressing on. Dave gives in to his back pain and waits two hours for collection, the first retiree at CP9. Pilsden Pen is only 6ft lower than Lewesden but a much gentler climb. Like most, go straight through the fort's middle to the trig before realising the RD says use rim. Later a concrete track is flooded from side to side, no bypass. Tread trepidly in, testing the depth, all OK. Two steps to go it can only get shallower but big step lands on edge of hidden pothole, slips in, splashes, two soaking ankles. Reach Netherbury without further mishap. Place 336. Andrew Boulden has already finished when Dave is returned. As the afternoon wears on the temperature is rising and the atmosphere getting soporific. I'm feeling muzzy, I'm losing speed, Mike P is catching up. Spy a shady spot under a tree and lie down on the grass for a snooze. Miles away Steph is just finishing, nausea overcome. Wake about an hour later, the sun and temperature are dropping. Head clears after standing up so hurry on towards Powerstock. Quickly pass a group of Judy + 4, clear the path of cows and reach the "hut". Place 355. When Judy gets in she says I was really pushing out the Zzzs, they could hear me before they saw me, there was no way I could be mistaken for someone dead!

Move on quickly to make the most of my snooze boost. The climb up to Eggardon Hill is long but not troublesome. The turn back west towards Lodors and away from Weymouth, where Jan and Neal are finishing, is dispiriting. Uploaders, another Up name, another navigation challenge. When is a track not a track? End up in a ploughed field when there should be a stream on the left. Retrace and finding the path is much easier from the wrong direction. Hopes of reaching the checkpoint without torches is foiled as the long path in is under light stealing trees. Virgin 100er David Thornton is finishing, oblivious to the pleasures of a second night but not a big blister or two. Entering the village and Good Samaritan Shirly is there guiding people in and out. I'm still moving freely and make her almost trot. Mike P is leaving as I enter. Place 345.

Whiz past a couple of groups puzzling over the way out. Shirly appears again as I'm puzzling over TR SP BW when the sign says "public route". Just starting to think this can't be right when steeply up Shipston Hill finally reaches the post squeeze mentioned. Mike P +2 are wandering wondering where to go. Mike H is being helped to finish by new friend Nancy, slowed to little more than 1mph over the last leg by the lean which nearly stopped his 4th attempt but at last a finish. Back at Lodors the lean has however done for Alan.

Find a post with reflector from where the only sensible direction is up. Rereading later the RD is as clear as gorse by torchlight. A distant A35 disturbs the peace across the top and down. Still together my RD read, Mike's compass and our Dutch friend's GPS all give different directions across a field, all wrong. Soon realise we're off track; a short cut tried stops short; retrace reveals the missing stile. A few fields further finds a swamp across the route to LMG. What might be obvious in daylight, in torchlight needs 10 minutes of abortive sinking steps before trial and error finds the dry detour through the maze of squelches. More puzzled pauses and a recce-er guided group catches to confirm the way. Pushing the pace on roads, only one set of footsteps follows. In Litton Cheney it's the Dutchman. He says his GPS TRs on road. Without RD he can't distinguish from the parallel path. Call him back but he's still there to be picked up by Mike etc. Complexities conquered Long Bredy is reached 321st but Jill and Jim have already finished.

Leg 14 navigation is easier, long ridge top track and dawn is dawning to see the way round and down Portesham Hill. Beaten last year, Don finishes well ahead this time. Pick of just one on the long run in. Place 310. Four have quit here at 95 miles – must be gutting. Last big climb and along the ridge speed feels faster than the figures say. Wind is whipping over the top and the descent directing marshal looks battered but sort of content with his lot. Those at Corton Chapel for the final clip are comfortably sheltered and offering beer. Settle for sweets and pass several more along freshly silaged and easy going Friar Waddon Hill. Off the hill around 7.30, surely a sub 46 hour finish is assured. But the road section goes on and on and on and despite a turn pointer's compliment on pace it takes 4 minutes too long.

The welcome is the most subdued I've had to date with catering split from reception. Speak to Alan briefly before being carted off to a disappointing breakfast. It might be breakfast time but my sleep clock would have preferred something more substantial and palatable. Back in reception room Alan has gone but Dave Sheldrake has appeared, slept and rested. Finishers are pouring in. Judy looking well. Mike looking like Mike. Keith shepherding three 10 timers. Chairman Gail looking all in. The sweepers and last two arrive with 6 minutes to spare. The last hour has been the busiest hour for finishers. 29.3% didn't make it.



Left: Graham and Jean reach Tolpuddle.

Above: Graham, Jean, Colin and Hannah at the finish – they all looked “shell-shocked” according to Graham's wife Sarah.

THE DORSET 100 MARSHALS' WALK (OR HOW I CAME VERY CLOSE TO THE HARDY MEMORIAL WITHOUT SEEING IT): April 30-May 2 By Graham Smith

THIS was the fourth marshals' Hundred I had entered in five years. Like so many LDWA members who regularly enter the Hundred, I have gradually got hooked by the whole event. Yes, Hundreds are hard – there's certainly no such thing as an easy Hundred – but they are huge events, the LDWA's flagship events. I also like marshalling on Hundreds. My first Hundred marshals' walk was the Games 100 in 2012, when Kent Group was loosely involved. There's a certain atmosphere, which could be described as maybe more intimate, on marshals' Hundreds. Of course, with fewer people on the walk, there is a greater risk that you could end up walking long stretches by yourself.

As soon as I heard that Dorset Group had been asked to organise the Hundred in 2016, I contacted Dorset to say that Kent would be doing a checkpoint. As Hundreds go, Dorset isn't too far from Kent, so there's not as far to travel as there was last year in Lancashire, for example, or as we're going to have next year in North Yorkshire. So I contacted Dorset to say they could count Kent – and me personally – in.

I decided to raise money for PSA Kent on this year's Hundred. In the LDWA we don't usually get involved with charity walks, but – as I wrote in the last newsletter – in September I had an operation for prostate cancer. The operation was

successful and I've made a full recovery. I have to have regular check-ups with the surgeon at Kent and Canterbury Hospital who operated on me, Ben Eddy. Ben is a very pro-active guy who is involved with PSA Kent, which raises money to buy equipment to assist health professionals across the county deliver good prostate care. At one of my check-ups, Ben suggested me raising money for PSA Kent, with which he is involved, on the Hundred. After what he did for me, it was the least I could do in return. And in any case, I'm certainly not the only member of Kent LDWA to have suffered from prostate cancer.

I did have one small knock-on issue from the operation which affected my walking, which was nausea. Like many of us, I have sometimes had nausea on Hundreds, but it has never particularly bothered me. After the operation, I did not get nausea on social walks but I found it came on when getting near the end of challenge walks – where you are walking quicker, which I guess puts a bit more stress on your body. I had it near the end of the 26-mile Stansted Stagger in December, and near the end of the 26-mile South Shropshire Circular and the 30-mile Punchbowl Marathon, both in February. Luckily, I appeared to have been unaffected by it on the 35-mile Pewsey Downsaround in April, but it was quite bad at the end of the 52-mile (with 9,700 feet of ascent) Taith Torfaen the following week. In fact, I was feeling so bad at the end of that walk that I was on the verge of pulling out of the Dorset 100 marshals' walk.

I had a check-up with Ben Eddy a couple of days after the Taith Torfaen. I mentioned the problem to him and he prescribed me some Lansoprazole (which I had never heard of before). So when my wife Sarah delivered me to Upper & Broadway Memorial Hall, just outside Weymouth, on the morning of April 30, my first aid pack contained the packet of Lansoprazole as well as the usual assortment of plasters, wipes, bandages – and, of course, painkillers.

To be honest, I wasn't at all sure I would get round, but I was looking forward to the event. It was going to be only the fourth time I had walked in Dorset (one Dorset Giant and two Dorset Doodles – which are, of course, anything but!). So after my usual two cups of tea at the start and a few stirring words, we were off.

The first two legs (9.2 miles to Crossways, with 959 feet of ascent, and 9.3 miles from there to Tolpuddle, with 576 feet of ascent) were very pleasant – the walking was slightly undulating and certainly not too taxing. It felt so good that the big day was finally here and we were taking part in the event that we had waited and trained for. Also, the sun was shining and that's always good. We were being rewarded with some very nice views across to Portland Bill and Dorset's wonderful Jurassic Coast.

The Tolpuddle checkpoint was in a church, and in the village we passed the church where the Tolpuddle martyrs (who were arrested, convicted of swearing a secret oath as members of the Friendly Society of Agricultural Labourers - were deported) used to meet. So it felt good to be walking in the footsteps of social and industrial history.

The next leg (6.6 miles, 940m feet of ascent) was for me one of the best parts of the walk. After the first self clip of the walk, we marched down a road to enter the Iron Age fortress of Rawlsbury Camp. The lush green turf beneath our feet felt like walking on a green carpet, and we had some magnificent views. Before long we reached the next checkpoint of Milton Abbas, a delightful Dorset village where the main street has a long row of identical looking thatched houses. It was like something out of a picture postcard.

And it was here that I had the easiest kit check ever. It was carried out by Jill Green and Jim Catchpole, and followed the usual format (well, for the time being – the kit check format is likely to be very different from next year's Hundred) of picking numbered balls out of a bag, with the numbers corresponding to items of kit. I put my hand in and gave my ball to Jill, who said: "Route description please." As I was holding the route description in my other hand, the whole process took a few seconds.

The next leg (6.6 miles, 889 feet of ascent) was still pleasant and fairly undemanding, but it was now almost dark, and we had had a delightful Dorset sunset. More or less since the start, I had been walking with Jean Bowers, from Essex and Herts Group, with whom I have walked for at least part of the way on three of the four Hundred marshals' walks I have done. We seem to have a very similar walking speed.

But when we left Checkpoint 4, Ansty Village Hall, it was dark and getting cold, so out came the torches and on went our fleeces. The next leg (6.2 miles) involved 1,072 feet of ascent, but it was nothing steep. The route description was good, so we had no navigation difficulties. The next leg (7.5 miles and 1328 feet of ascent) took us to Wardon Hill, where the checkpoint was in a barn and where we were greeted by a cheery Keith Warman.

Then it was on through the night to Evershot (3.1 miles and 297 feet of ascent), one of the shortest and easiest stretches of the whole walk. But we were now well into the early hours of the morning, and I was beginning to get a bit of nausea. I didn't feel too good at the Evershot checkpoint and declined the offer of something to eat. When we started on the next leg (one of the longest of the walk, at 8.1 miles, 966 feet of ascent), I really wasn't feeling too good. I just plodded on slightly behind Jean, hardly even feeling like reading my route description, hoping the nausea would pass. I had taken a Lansoprazole capsule at the checkpoint, which I hoped would do the trick. Luckily it did, and I gradually started feeling back to normal. We enjoyed a Dorset sunrise equally as delightful as the sunset a few hours previously, and then it gradually got lighter and we were able to put our torches back in our rucksacks.

We reached the breakfast stop of Beaminster, where we stayed for the best part of an hour (I usually spend a good hour at the breakfast stop checkpoint), eating drinking, getting warm water on those parts of the body which need it, and changing

socks. Then it was off on leg 9 to Blackdown - 6.6 miles but 1315 feet of ascent, which included by far the most demanding climb of the walk, the 915 feet Lewesdon Hill. There was a trig point, fabulous views and another self clip at the summit, before a very nice descent which eventually led to the next checkpoint, at Blackdown.

With 63.4 miles done, we were now into the stage of a Hundred when you start counting down in 10s – 60s, 70s, 80s and 90s – and if I am honest, it all starts to get into a bit of a blur here. The next three legs – to Netherbury (7.5 miles, 795 feet of ascent), then Powerstock (4.6 miles, 762 feet of ascent), and Lodders (6.4 miles, 979 feet of ascent) – all seemed to merge into one. Jean and I were plod-plod-plodding along, occasionally catching up with Chris Chorley and Bobbie Sauerzapf before they overtook us again. I was also taking a Lansoprazole capsule at each checkpoint (I didn't actually realise - but I did later, when Sarah informed me - that I wasn't supposed to take them so often, but they did appear to ward off the nausea and I didn't want to run the risk of being sick when I appeared to be going well). On leg 12 we had another undoubted highlight of the walk when we went to and then ascended the 827ft Eggardon Hill. It was another tremendous viewpoint, with excellent walking underfoot.

But unfortunately the sun had now disappeared, and as we were approaching the checkpoint at Lodders, we could see clouds approaching away to our right. The Lodders CP was manned by Cornwall and Devon Group (as well as a typically cheerful Shirlee Gill – and after 81.9 miles, with pretty sore feet, it was really good to see a smiling face from Kent). When Jean and I emerged from the checkpoint, the weather had taken a distinct turn for the worse. We had low clouds, which remained with us until the end of the walk, and drizzle, which (more or less) did the same thing. The leg to Long Bredy (7.8 miles, 1342 feet of ascent) involved a stiff initial climb, but the low cloud prevented us from seeing much. Luckily Jean had a GPS, which was how we were able to navigate to the next checkpoint, at the village hall.

After this checkpoint we were into the second night, so our torches were on (as were our waterproofs, of course). The penultimate leg, to Portesham (4.5 miles, 624 feet of ascent), should have been one of the most enjoyable of the route, as it passes the Hardy Monument (that's the Hardy of Nelson – “Kiss me, Hardy” – fame, not the author) on what in good conditions are fine tracks. Sadly, with the low cloud and drizzle, we were walking in pretty bad conditions, with visibility down to a couple of yards. By now Hannah Brown and Colin Utting had caught up with us, and they stayed with us until the end of the walk. Using the route description and Jean's GPS, we were making slow progress and I must say it was no great fun walking in those conditions – but we knew we were getting near the end, and physically we were feeling OK.

We got to the last checkpoint at Portesham, where we were met by the always cheerful Tony Rowley and Susan Wilkinson, who made sure we were fed and watered properly before we set off on the last leg (6.4 miles, 768 feet of ascent). Visibility was still down to a couple of yards, and the four of us proceeded carefully with me going ahead with the route description and Jean, Colin and Heather all using their GPS devices as back-up. This seemed to work well until a couple of miles from the end, when we just could not find the path through the woods to Upwey, although we could clearly see the village lights. We went back and forth for a few minutes, and were getting pretty fed up – until, in a flash of inspiration, Colin found it. Relieved, we trooped through the woods to the road and followed the tarmac to the memorial hall we had left 40 hours previously.

The crowd who greeted us and clapped us in included Jill and Jim, Deirdre Flegg, Mike Childs and lots of other people from Dorset Group, and my wife Sarah – who said the four of us looked “shell-shocked.” Well, that's one way of describing us, after walking 100 miles. Jill kindly fetched a bowl of warm water, into which I put my sore feet after carefully peeling off my socks. My feet weren't actually too bad – they were much more battered and blistered on some other Hundreds, notably last year's Res Rose 100 marshals' walk and the Valleys 100 in 2014, when there was much rain and sodden ground on both events. After soaking my feet for a few minutes, I changed my clothes, said my thanks and goodbyes to the helpers and Sarah and I were off to the cottage, just outside Weymouth, which we had booked for the week.

The next morning I had a quick soak in the bath when we got back, at about 3am, then luxuriated in a long one when I got up the following morning. I was, of course, pretty stiff, and only left the cottage once that day, and that was to shuffle (you couldn't really describe it as walking) to the end of the driveway with our golden retriever, Mary (I was walking at the sort of pace she enjoys – I'm certainly in no state to walk our hyper-active border collie, Fen, after a Hundred). But the next day, I was more or less back to normal, and thoroughly enjoyed the rest of the holiday – during which I walked the last leg of the Hundred, with Fen. And how lovely it was to walk it in fine Dorset sunshine, with wonderful views. And before Sarah and I headed back to Kent, we visited the Hardy Monument, to see what I had missed on the penultimate leg – and what a fine spot that is, again with wonderful, clear views.

So that's another Hundred done – my ninth, or tenth unofficially (I retired on the Cant Canolbath in 2017 but returned the following year to finish it off, so I reckon I've done 10 now, even though the powers-that-be on the LDWA National Committee don't agree!) My sincere thanks go to everyone I had the pleasure of walking with, particularly Jean Bowers, who was such a great, calming help, particularly when I had that bout of nausea and was absolutely useless to her as a walking companion. Also, sincere thanks to everyone who looked after us so well on the checkpoints, and of course to all at Dorset Group for organising such an enjoyable event. It was very nice route and the route description was excellent. Also, I was able to raise about £600 for PSA Kent from doing the Dorset 100, so thanks to everyone who sponsored me.

I've long gone past the stage when, at the end of a Hundred, I say “I'm not putting my body through that again”, and then

decided to enter the following year's event a couple of days later. For better or worse (and it's often the latter!) I get an awful lot out of the LDWA Hundred. It has become a very significant part of my calendar – so significant that two out of the last four holidays Sarah and I have had have coincided with a Hundred. In any case, Sarah and I have always loved North Yorkshire, and I'm so looking forward to revisiting those North York Moors ...

QUESTIONS FROM KENT – WHY (WHY NOT WYE?): March 13 by Peter Jull

What a difference a date makes; or was it location; or distance. A hard core 6 set off east (from whence 5 had come far) out of Hawkhurst before turning south to invade Sussex, sometimes on the Border Path and sometimes not, through Bodiam village rather than the castle grounds. Back in countryside with lots of lambs, stepping off a footbridge the leader's glasses caught a bramble and were pinged from hand to oblivion. No glint of sun on lens helped the group search identify the landing, or did it... Abandoning the invaluable £1 pair it was on across fields, up and down through Wealden woods before descending into Seddlescome for an early lunch. Three in the Queen's Head (expensive), three on the plentiful public benches.

The gaggle of geese that guard the green didn't appear until we were ready to take roads out of the village a bit further south. Eagle eyed Bob spotted from afar the road sign Whybrow Hill, the observational challenge of the day. A horrible hundred yards of A21 to cross the golf course devoid of directional guidance into Battle Great Wood where the turn to north and home was made. Two miles beside the grandiosely named trickle River Line with a stop at Whatlington (not a question for this day) for afternoonses. The morning blue skies now had passing light cloud and with northern exposure the wind was chilling so that previously discarded layers were redonned.

Distracted by afternoonses 2 a turning was missed and arriving at an unexpected path junction Tricky Dickie was berated by Nicola into revealing his surreptitious find so the leader could clearly see where to go. Soon back on track, Salehurst church was distant but soon behind us. Hawkhurst churches spotted, wrong one then right, on the far ridge, the final steady climb brought the total to 2750ft just ten minutes over the target time of 9 hours for 24 miles.

THE ELHAM VALLEY WAY: June 4 - by Graham Smith

A total of 27 walkers – a mixture of LDWA regulars and ramblers who wanted something more challenging – turned up at Hythe Library on a cloudy June morning for the Elham Valley Way.

The Elham Valley Way is a 22.5 mile, linear long distance path linking Hythe and Canterbury, going through one of the most picturesque parts of Kent. The EVW is managed by Kent County Council, which has produced a guide book for it, and it is very well waymarked. I had walked it before and was asked to lead the walk for the first Elham Walking Festival, organised by Chris Jelly and Peter Corkhill, who both live in the village and who were responsible for Elham becoming the first village in Kent to get Walkers Are Welcome status.

I have to say I was secretly relieved that of the LDWA regulars who turned up for the walk, none of them were Kent speedsters (and I'm naming no names here!) When leading joint LDWA/ramblers walks, I always find it's important not to go too quickly, as a pace that's too fast can really put non-LDWA people off our organisation. Similarly, you don't want to go too slowly, as that in turn would put off the LDWA people on the walk. So it's a balancing act, and I reckon that on this walk we got it about right. I had planned the whole day on being able to get the 6.15pm bus back to Hythe from Canterbury. I had an excellent back marker in Steve Brice, wife of Averil, who is Kent public rights of way manager, secretary of the White Cliffs Ramblers and who also came on the walk. Steve and Averil joined the LDWA last year (Averil has said she might have a go at a Hundred some time and I do hope she does, as she's a strong walker).

The route initially goes up through Hythe, crosses Sene Valley Golf Course and then goes under the M20 to the village of Newington. Shortly after that it joins the North Downs Way for a while and goes near Etchinghill, before climbing Tolsford Hill. Tolsford Hill is 600 feet high, and we had our first break here to enjoy its fine views.

When we set off, two things happened. Firstly, we met a party of about 40 White Cliffs Ramblers, who had just started a walk from Etchinghill. Fortunately, nobody chose to switch walks! Then, as we started to descend the hill, we took a wrong turning. I had walked the EVW before but I don't know the area very well, and we passed a finger post where the arrow was no longer visible, although a clear path went to the right. Liz Keeler (and it was good to see her on a walk again), who knows the area, assured me the track we were on was the correct one, and that that clear path was not the one we wanted. So I took Liz's advice, having that gut feeling that she was wrong – to find, as we got to the bottom of the hill, that she was, indeed, wrong. What she was convinced had been the Elham Valley Way was, in fact, the North Downs Way. Fortunately, as Liz knew the area, she took us on a pleasant alternative route to Lyminge, where we picked up the EVW again. Our diversion had been about half a mile.

We then followed a low level path to Elham, where we had our lunch stop. Because of the time, I said 50 minutes instead of the usual hour. After that, we followed nice paths which coincided with part of our White Cliffs Challenge route, involving a couple of climbs which took us through Covert Wood. After that we had quite a steep (but short) climb by the side of the wood, where we had our afternoon break.

Shortly after this Mike Scott, who lives in the area and knows the paths well, offered to take us on another diversion, through some pleasant woodland, to avoid a bit of tarmac. I told Mike he had talked himself into a job, and the detour was about

another half a mile. After picking up the EVW again, we went through Kingston and then Bishopsbourne – where it would have been tempting to have gone to the pub, particularly as the sun was out now and people were a bit thirsty as well as tired, having walked a good 17 miles. But with 27 people and a bus to catch, going to the pub was out of the question, as we would probably have been in there a good 30 minutes. I now had to up the pace slightly, as those hills climbs after lunch had slowed us down a bit and I wanted to make sure we got to Canterbury in time for that bus. From Bishopsbourne we took a very nice path which followed the Nail Bourne for a while, with stately Bourne House over to the left. We passed through Bridge – again, avoiding those oh-so-tempting pubs – to go under the A2 and reach Patricxbourne. I knew then that there was going to be no problem with us catching the bus back so the pace was slowed a little. We followed that joint Elham Valley Way/North Downs Way route to Canterbury, and it was a great sight when the cathedral came into view. We got there just after 5.30pm, and we had time for a quick beer before getting the bus. With our two detours, we had done about 23.5 miles. A number of people on the walk had not done that sort of distance before, so there were a few PBs (Personal Bests) achieved. There were probably a few blisters, but everyone seemed to enjoy it.

* The Elham Walking Festival took place over Saturday and Sunday June 4-5. A total of 207 people went on the walks. Peter Corkhill told me the Elham Valley Way had been the most popular walk, and I have agreed to lead it again next year.

EURAUDAX 2016 by Jill Green

On the weekend of June 18-19, 40 Euraudax walkers came to Kent. The leader for the two days was LDWA member Ruud Zwant from Bracknell. Ruud comes from Holland but he now lives here.

We all stayed in Folkestone. People were from Belgium and Holland, and Jim and I were the only ones from the UK. The first day we walked from Folkestone to Canterbury – 50k. The second day was 50k to Sandwich. At the end of the day we were to take the train back but it was a replacement bus. This didn't matter at all, as all people enjoyed being on the top deck. People collect Munros, Wainwrights, IVV stamps, National Trails. If you are a Euraudox walker you probably collect Eagles – there are Bronze, Silver and Gold ones. The group all walk together at 6k an hour, but due to muddy paths in Kent this was not quite possible. You take rest stops along the way.

Ruud has four Golden Eagles to his credit. I understand it is not permitted to be a leader until you have been awarded a Golden Eagle. The award system is as follows:-

Bronze: four – 25k, three – 50k; two – 75k; one – 100k.

Silver: four – 100k; one – 125k; one 150k.

Gold: five – 100k; one – 125k; one – 150 k.

So that totals 10 100k, two 125k, two 150k, and the four 25k, three 50k and two 75k.

I expect readers may have glazed over a bit by all this. I certainly did when I started back in 2004.

I really like walking together in a group. Most of the walks I've done have been in Belgium. I also like their beer!

Just to get one Golden Eagle would be rather nice. For that to happen, I need two more 100k and two 75ks.

This weekend we were so lucky with the weather, and I felt proud of Kent. Ruud did a London Euraudox two years ago. I wasn't able to go on that. I know it was great success. That's why so many people wanted to come this time.



COURSES FOR HORSES: May 15 by Peter Jull

A cosmopolitan dozen from London, Kent, Sussex & Surrey, Colombian, South African, Scottish, English even, set off to walk Courses for Horses. Recce had revealed too many of the paths in this part of Kent are

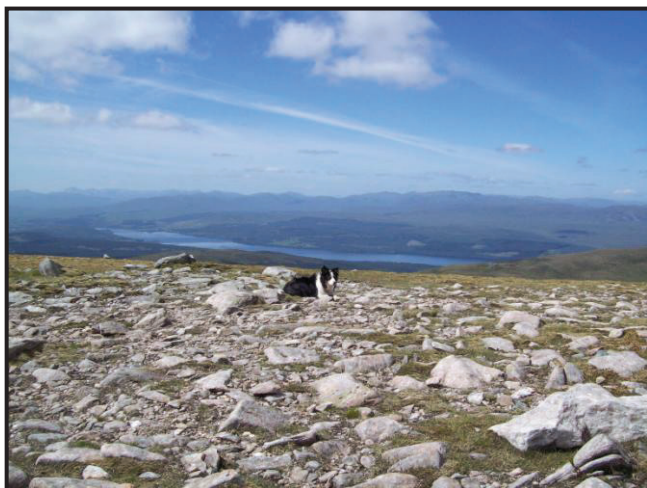
poorly maintained; stiles wobbly, broken, overgrown, just generally difficult; arable fields too rarely reinstated and then misaligned; waymarks missing, electric fences; so the route was now to be 24 miles to avoid the worst blockages.

With vegetation growing at full spurt the first nettles were soon stinging and

crops needing wading. Two Limousin bulls weren't scary but scurried off scared as we struggled across their huge hoof marked field now ankle challengingly drying. After elevenses silage on the stem was thigh high as a fresh path was trampled. Even a small rotavator rally had set up across the path at



one point for us to dodge. The Drum at Stanford, which is hosting 2018 100 committee meetings, hosted us for lunch where sitting outside was just too chilly though it was close to ideal for walking. Just after lunch the first horse course was reached, the recently retired Folkestone. Where thoroughbreds had thundered walkers now wandered. Farmers and others seem to conspire to discourage access the next course, Aldington point to point, but we made it to the jumps for photo posing. Still mostly on the level (less than 1200ft ascent all day) time was marching away as we marched on. Just before the end we'd missed the last race by 42 years with only the stable block left of Wye racecourse. Pushing on past overgrown hedging hurrying just caught the 7.20 heading for Victoria.



PICTURES FROM SCOTLAND: clockwise, from top left - the view from the Killin camp site, with Sron a' Chlachain in the distance (Fen is waiting for Graham to throw something for her to fetch); Mike and a mucky Fen on the summit of Creag Mhor; Sheihallion – which members will remember from the Heart of Scotland 100 – from Creag Mhor; Fen on Meall Garbh, with Loch Rannoch below.

POSTCARD FROM SCOTLAND 2016 – TWO MEN AND A DOG IN THE HIGHLANDS by Graham Smith

Mike Pursey and I have been going to Scotland to walk Munros and OSHs (Other Scottish Hills) since 1990. This year's trip was, as usual, very good in terms of walking and scenery (which in my admittedly biased opinion is the finest in the world) but not so good in terms of weather. In fact it was one of the wettest trips to Scotland we have had in those 26 years – but we still managed to walk 11 Munros (mainly new ones but some we had done before) and one OSH (Other Scottish Hills). As has happened in the previous two years, we were accompanied by Fen, the border collie which really belongs to Sarah – but Fen loves Scotland as much as I do, which is why she comes on the Scottish trips.

The Scottish weather before the trip had been stunning – sunshine and blue skies, high temperatures and very little rain. So we were expecting that weather would continue – sadly, we were wrong. In fact, we had only one day of fine weather on the entire two week trip. Gone are the days when we would walk the Munros in all weathers. These days we tend to walk the Scottish hills when the weather is good, and when it's not so good, we do lower level walks. Spending a couple of hours slogging up a 3,000ft-plus hill in the pouring rain is not much fun, you're not going to see much, and navigation is going to be difficult.

As we have done in the last two years, we drove from Kent to Annan, a few miles over the border, staying at the town's fine camp site. We then drove to Loch Tay, where we would be based for the next eight days, the next day, and pitched our tents

in the equally fine camp site at Killin.

Sunday June 12

We had been hoping to do one or two Munros on our first day in Killin, but when we peered out of our tents in the morning, to find it overcast with fairly low cloud, and the weather forecast for patchy rain, we realised we were going to be disappointed. So we instead opted to walk up Sron a' Chlachain, a 1491ft hill (less than half Munro height) just above Killin. And a very nice hill it is too, the path initially going through a wood to reach open moorland, with a rocky summit. We had some light rain on the top but it was very pleasant walk - and we had got our hill walking trip under way with an OSH. In the evening we found a pub to watch the European football championship (England against Russia, with the locals giving a huge cheer when Russia got a late equaliser).

Monday June 13

We decided to drive to Glen Lyon (negotiating a good 10 miles of narrow mountain pass which was quite like a rally course) to have a look at the Munro Meall Buidhe (3058ft and pronounced myowl boo-ee). This is a relatively easy Munro (believe me, there are no easy Munros). The Munro guide, published by the Scottish Mountaineering Club, gives a straight up and down route, with a steady ascent which is not too steep. So we had a look, and reckoned we should do it despite the overcast conditions, and when we started, we found the going as straightforward as the book had said. There was some very light rain and we found ourselves in cloud before too long, but we just kept going, following a good path, to reach the summit. Coming back, it wasn't long before we were out of the cloud and had fine views across Glen Lyon. So that was our first Munro of the trip. And in the evening we found a pub to watch the football.

Tuesday June 14

We had planned to do four Munros – Carn Gorm (3376ft and pronounced karn gorm), Meall Garbh (3176ft and pronounced myowl garv), Carn Mairg (3415ft and pronounced karn mairg) and Creag Mhor (3218ft and pronounced craig moor). We had some initial sunshine but the forecast was for rain later. We drove along the spectacular 'rally course' again, this time turning right at the end to go to the starting point of Invervar (a few miles from Fortingall, where Kent Group of the LDWA had a checkpoint on the Heart of Scotland 100 in 2010). We followed a good, steady path on the approach to Carn Gorm. The weather was then starting to change, with clouds closing in, winds getting up and light showers. About halfway to the summit, Mike realised he had forgotten his windproof coat, and he was getting quite cold. By the time we reached the summit, the wind was getting fierce, the sun had disappeared and the showers were becoming squalls. It was getting a bit uncomfortable, so we decided to abandon the walk and find a route back to Invervar, and agreed to return later in the week to walk those other three Munros. We had done another Munro. And in the evening we found a pub to watch the football.

Wednesday June 15

This was the worst day of weather of the entire trip. It was raining when we got out of our tents and it continued to drizzle for the entire morning. So we mooched about Killin and in the afternoon we went a few miles down the 'rally course' to do a short, wet walk over boggy heather, returning to the car before we got too wet. In the evening we found a pub to watch the football.

Thursday June 16

Another drive along the 'rally course' to see if we could do Stuchd an Lochain (3150ft and pronounced stoochk an lochan), a Munro across the other side of Lochan Daimh to Meall Buidhe. It was a bit overcast, cloud was low and we knew we were likely to get some drizzle, but we figured that the path would be as uncomplicated as the one to Meall Buidhe. And so it proved, with Stuchd an Lochain proving to be the best hill we had walked up so far on this trip. The path contours the hillside before heading steeply up. It was nice and steady and the path was clear, so there was no trouble getting to the summit. It was cloudy and a bit cold on the top, so we didn't stay there long, taking the same route back, again getting wonderful views across Glen Lyon once we got below the cloud. It had been a really good walk, the best part for Fen when she splashed in the burn near where we parked the car. In the evening we found a pub to watch the football.

Friday June 17

Oh dear. After such a good day came a pretty dreadful one, when we got our worst soaking of the trip. We drove the few miles south to Loch Earn with the intention of walking two Munros – Ben Vorlich (3232ft and pronounced byn vorlich) and Stuc a' Chroin (3199ft and pronounced stook a kroin). We had walked Ben Vorlich before, in 2004, not doing the other Munro because of increasing rain when we got to the summit. Unfortunately the same thing happened this time, which was particularly annoying because the heavy and persistent rain we got had not been forecast. When we left Killin, we had even had sunshine (for only the second time that week). The first couple of miles were very nice, following a track past Ardvorlich House through a meadow and woodland before reaching the open hillside. Here the rain started, and it got progressively heavier as we neared the summit. By the time we reached the summit, it had become quite heavy, the temperature had dropped right down, there was a very strong wind and visibility was just about zero. We decided to press on to Stuc a' Chroin in the belief that we would find a clear path and that the going would be as easy as the Munro guide had indicated – big mistake. We floundered around in a circle getting nowhere before getting back to the summit of Ben Vorlich, so we abandoned the idea of going on and trudged back to the car. We passed a few walkers who had also decided to abandon the idea of doing both Munros. The rain continued and we were very wet and miserable by the time we got back to

the car. With hindsight (what a wonderful thing that is) we should not have entertained the idea of going on to the second Munro when summit conditions were so bad on the first one. But it was a lesson learned. We badly needed cheering up, which we did by finding a pub in the evening to watch the football.

Saturday June 18

By far the best day of the trip, and one of the best walks Mike and I have ever done in Scotland, when the weather lived up to the forecast of glorious sunshine all day. We had our last drive down the 'rally course' to Invervar, casting off point for the three Munros we didn't do on Tuesday - Creag Mhor, Carn Mairg and Meall Garbh. After an initial short, steep pull, we found a good path which took us steadily to the summit plateau of Creag Mhor. It was straightforward walking which was not too steep. The summit has two tops and a fabulous ridge, with wonderful views, particularly across to the neighbouring Munro of Schiehallion (3553ft and pronounced sheehallyan), which we had both done before, in 1991 (when we walked across Scotland on a route we planned ourselves) and 2010 (the day before the Heart of Scotland 100). We then had a short drop and a sharp (but short) climb to the summit of Carn Mairg, where we had lunch. Then we followed a tremendous wide ridge for almost two miles. We could see nothing but hills, lochs and lochans, the sun was shining – and it was Scottish walking at its very best. At the end of the broad ridge there is drop and then an easy climb to Meall Garbh, where (in my view) we were rewarded with the best views of the day along the length of Loch Rannoch. We then dropped down to follow the same route back to Invervar we had followed on Tuesday. And the day was capped by us listening to the last 15 minutes of radio commentary on the England-Wales game at the European football championships as we drove back along the 'rally course' (that game, of course, was a good as it got in that tournament for England – I'm so glad that Mike and I didn't have to watch the debacle against Iceland in a pub full of crowing Scots). When we got back to Killin, we went to a pub to watch more football (and to hear Scots claiming England's first goal was offside in the Wales game).

So that was our week in Killin. We hadn't walked as many hills as we would have liked, but we had still done six Munros and one OSH – a reasonable tally considering the weather. The next day we moved on to Braemar, where we had stayed three times before, and the Cairngorms – my second favourite area of Scotland, behind Torridon.

Monday June 20

On this day Mike and I walked different hills. Mike wanted to do Beinn Mheadhoin (3878ft and pronounced byn veean) which I had done in 2006. I preferred to go up Carn a' Mhaim (3402ft and pronounced kaarne a varne), which we had both done in 1996, instead. Carn a' Mhaim is a lovely hill but small by Cairngorm standards (four of the nine 'Super Munros' – Munros of more than 4,000ft – are in the Cairngorms). Carn a' Mhaim nestles underneath Ben Macdui (the second highest Munro, behind Ben Nevis) and many people do these two Munros together. It's a great hill with a fabulous ridge which I had loved when Mike and I first did it.

With the Cairngorms, you not only have very big hills, you also have long walkouts to the hills. The Cairngorms is a National Park, and these long walkouts are invariably on very good, well made-up tracks. So after driving to Lin of Dee and parking the car, Mike and I followed one of these good tracks for more than three miles until we went our separate ways, him heading north and me heading west. I followed a good path, crossing a burn via a footbridge, before a steady ascent to the summit ridge of Carn a' Mhaim. I had good views but not fantastic ones, as it was a bit cloudy. There were also some light showers starting to arrive, so I descended and made my way back to Lin of Dee the way we had come, getting back just after 4pm.

Mike's walk was much longer than mine and I knew I was going to arrive long before him, so I drove back to the camp site at Braemar to feed Fen and relax, later returning to Lin of Dee, where Mike arrived shortly after 7pm. He said he had done Beinn Mheadhoin "the hard way". He had gone astray a couple of times but he had done it, and he was pretty buoyant. We went back to Braemar, then found a pub to watch the football.

Tuesday June 21

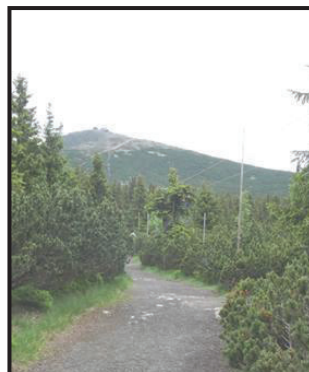
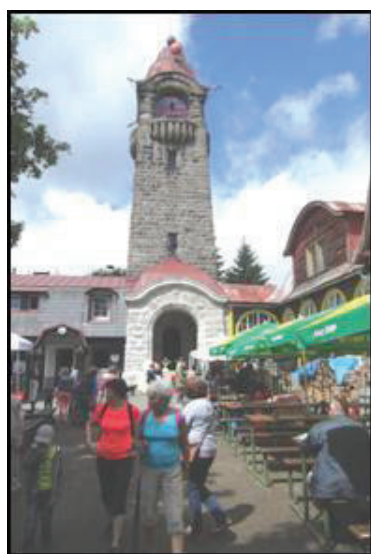
This was a day that proved that sometimes in life, the things that are not planned are the things that can give you the most pleasure. We drove the four miles to Glen Ey with the intention of going up Beinn Iutharn Mhor (3482ft and pronounced byn yooarn vore). We set off on what we thought was our route, walking a good four miles on a track which was steadily rising. By the time we came to a pass, we were a good 2,500ft up and we both felt we were not where we should have been, although it was certainly a very good track. We turned south-west and followed a good, steadily rising path, with fine views of the mountains all around us. It gradually occurred to us we were heading for Carn Bhac (3104ft and pronounced kaarn vachk), a Munro we had done when we walked across Scotland in 1991. We had taken the right-hand track from Glen Eye instead of the left-hand one. We were having an excellent walk but we felt that going on to Beinn Iutharn Mhor would be too far, as we had a long walk planned the next day. So we strode on to Carn Bhac and enjoyed fabulously extensive views on the summit, then descended and followed an excellent track back to Glen Ey. We had had a great day, and in the evening we found a pub to watch the football.

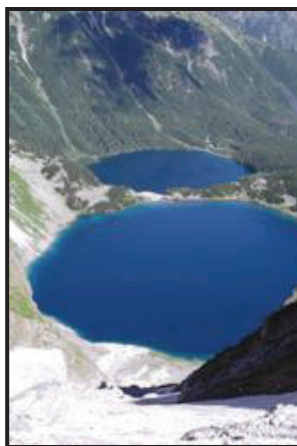
Wednesday June 22

This was one of the hardest walks we have ever had in Scotland, a 22-mile expedition that took us ten and a half hours and went over two Cairngorm Munros – Monadh Mor (3652ft and pronounced monagh moar) and Beinn Bhrotain (3796ft and pronounced byn vrotain). We set off from Lin of Dee at 9am and followed a long, typically Cairngorm track for a few miles.

The track later became a path, and as we turned west into Glen Geusachan, it gradually disappeared. Also it was raining, and we were faced with the prospect of finding our own laborious way over heather and bog to the lochan from where we were going to have to head south to Monadh Mor. The going was dreadful, and as we were already pretty high up, we decided to abandon the route we were on and instead head in a more or less direct line west up the mountain. It involved a bit of easy scrambling (which Fen enjoyed much more than we did) and was hard going, but not as laborious as the route we had abandoned. It was also pretty uncomfortable as the rain was becoming persistent and the wind was fierce. The summit was in cloud, so visibility was only a few yards. Eventually, with painstaking progress, we reached the summit ridge, and the clouds suddenly cleared so we could see the summit cairn. We followed the summit ridge to drop down to a col and then ascend Beinn Bhrotain via huge flat rocks. By then the persistent rain had become showers, so we were getting some views, albeit intermittently. We dropped off the summit and went over Carn Cloich-mhullinn, a sub top of Beinn Bhrotain. We descended a bit more to find a sheltered spot to have our lunch – at 4.45pm, just about the latest lunch I have ever had. But conditions were at least much clearer now, and we had a good descent to the track along Glen Dee we had left several hours earlier, getting back to Lin of Dee at 7.30pm. It had been an exhausting day – and we were too tired to go and find a pub to watch the football.

So that was the end of our Scottish hill walking for 2016. The next day we drove to Moffat in the Southern Uplands, where we stayed in the excellent camp site, and drove back to Kent the following day. We hadn't done as many Munros as we would have liked – but as Mike says, they're not going to go away!





TRIPPOINTS AND HIGH POINTS - A PETER JULL EXPEDITION

A tripoint is where the borders of three countries meet. I went to the Belgium-Germany-Netherlands one as a local novelty on a previous expedition. It was also the highest point in the Netherlands until they incorporated their Caribbean islands and it's

now a volcano on Saba. I have since been to the highest points in Belgium and Luxembourg but didn't quite make it to the top of Slovenia's highest mountain last year. I did climb up to the Austria-Italy-Slovenia tripoint though. Where's next nearest in driving distance from Calais to expand these nascent collections? Czech Republic, or Czechia as their tourism marketing department are trying to rebrand it.

Day 1

Looking out of the hotel window at dawn the forecast sunshine is of the cloudy variety. Drive a complicated country lane route to the ski resort of Spindleruv Mlyn from where a circular route up & down Snezka, Czechia's highest mountain is planned. On the way the sun began to cry and by arrival was really upset. Waited in the car and waited. Plan A of short way up long way down was changed to Plan B of long way up short way down hoping that skies would clear before the top was reached. Waited and waited; roads were streaming.

Gave up to do what should have been done on the drive out if the French had bothered to put enough passport checkers at Dover to cope with the England v Wales fans travelling that morning, without ferry missing delays. Welsh fans do not sing harmoniously on early morning ferries! And then the Belgians were bugging up the Antwerp ring road, 1½ hours to do 5 miles. And finally the Germans had closed the autobahn exit I needed, no diversions signed. So back to Hradek nad Nissou where a rare parking area had been Google Earth/Streetview spotted. Casual on street parking appears taboo, legality unclear.

Five minutes down the road it was waterproofs on raining again. The approach route was on nearly new tarmac paths, well twigged and leafed by the weather, past a recreational lake and then beside the Nissou river rushing rowdily. Signs say it was funded by our EU money. A footbridge talked about right over the river middle tripoint will have to be funded by someone else's EU money now. Crossing into Poland is a footbridge over a jumpable ditch, streaming muddily today. The Nissou (for history buffs the Neisse in German of the Oder-Neisse line to which the border of Poland was advanced after WW2) is very much wider. Flags of each 3 countries fly on their territories, the EU one is in the Czech corner. Departure on the Polish side is along a dirt track; on the German side workmen are strimming in the rain. The track leads to a road bridge into Germany to follow older tarmac paths atop a flood bank back to their side the tripoint. Beyond there's a brief cobbled climb into a village then suddenly back into Czechia. Past some derelict communist era industrial stuff, it's nice enough beside the river before footbridge crossing back over and through the old centre of Hradek. Only the tripoint justifies a visit. Almost 10 miles of almost flat, wet walking.

Back to the hotel for dry clothes. Back along that circuitous route to Spindleruv but halfway there the police have closed the road. PC gestures direction and says some names. I must have looked nonplussed. WPC comes over and makes the place names sound sexier but equally unrecognisable. But she makes me understand back to the last village, turn right and right again at the next place on route 14. TR at the first sign post in the village but if it's the road they meant it soon becomes suspension challenging, tyre testing broken tarmac, the bumpiest, narrowest, bendiest and steepest route devisable. But at the bottom there's a place nameplate looking like J???xy that she said and I'm soon passing the police car at the other end of the closed section.

In Spindleruv it's still raining but bearable. Got to do something until the police reopen the road, I'm not going back via that diversion. Plan C is short route up & short route down. From the car park it's a long way through the village. In the centre, stop for postcards & stamps and outside the post office step in an open drain. Grazes, bruises, broken rib – ouch. Beyond the village the road continues climbing, map shows shortcuts across the hairpins. At the first, too hot, waterproofs are stripped and the tarmac alternative taken. It's feeling too far for where the path should have diverged from the river when an

unexpected bridge hoves into view. Compass check = wrong direction. Map check = well past missed turning. Time check = daylight running short. Ribs are twingeing. It starts to pour again. Nearly 1000ft climbed in under 4 miles. Prudence turns me back to the car. Rather a washout of a day but first of 5 expedition targets achieved.

Day 2

I'm based in Jablonec nad Nisou to take part in Rozhledny Jablonecka organised by KCT. Not quite their LDWA equivalent as they also cover cycling and skiing. Of two events within easy reach of Snezka this June one was chosen over a September one further east to maximise daylight hours. It could be named Tour of Towers as the route visits a number of observation towers on the hills surrounding Jablonec. Registration at a youth centre turns out not to be in the building but a table in the back yard. Fee £1.20. Route description is one side of A4 covering all 5 distance options. I'd asked for email version in advance and Google translated into English the 60k part. I also had printed screen captured maps off Czech OS equivalent. Main man has broken but understandable English. As LDWA ambassador, hand over two copies of Strider. George from a village near Prague to do 36k helps out.

Walk & talk with George to edge of town where gradient steepens. It seems I'm pushing his pace and he encourages me on with have a nice day. He soon falls behind and the route is the yellow tourist path identified by painted marks on the trees. First turn identified OK and, still climbing, I pass an older walker. Approaching a road a yellow arrow indicates TR. Before long the road starts to descend and the only turning in direction needed is also downhill. Retrace and spot a missed yellow mark on the corner wall of someone's drive. Catch the older walker again wheezing up a steeper section. Smoking isn't helping. He gestures a short cut to the first tower and there it is, 1100ft of ascent.

By the time I've found a geocache George has arrived. We start the more gentle descent together, soon out of the woods & on grassy tracks. Encouraged to press on again it's down into a valley village where more detailed signs says where the red route now followed leads. Up the other side a mountain biker hellos and switches to English when I reply. The event is mixed walk & bike. The second tower turns out to be for telecoms which the route bypasses down into valley village and up. This time it's on tarmac road and red marks are sparse until a T-junction when not one is to be seen. Left feels right but round bend it's descending. Go back and try right but round bend it's going in the wrong direction. Spot a track into woods that seems the right way and up. It diminishes into footpath, which in turn diminishes into nothing. GPS says tower is east & south which is also up. Pushing through branches & undergrowth for half an hour at last I can hear voices and suddenly there's the tower. There's a whole market going on with stalls, bouncy castle, fire engine, stage with band preparing. George is tucking in to the food and drink on sale. Another 1100ft climbed.

Down is also tarmac (two runners come by wearing buffs – Sarah) then up is track & field edge to where a bench demands to be sat on. From here there's path left & right but no green marks or arrows now needed. In fact there are no trees to put them on. Litter bin by bench could be lower black receptacle as translated from RD but no mention of TL or TR. Compass bearing to next named destination is straight ahead. TR is marginally closer in direction and chosen. A village is eventually reached. Pointing at next tower on map, dog lady gestures a direction, gardening man sends me up a long hill to a place that sounds like where I thought I already was, a hiker coming up behind identifies how so, so far off route I've been and am.

Find a middle of nowhere bus stop with timetable showing one due in minutes if that symbol doesn't mean Mon-Fri only. Rest for 5 minutes but nothing comes. In fact the next village isn't too far nor the one after that but it's been 1½ hours of unattractive road walking with whizzy traffic before I'm back on route at arrow 0.5km to tower. Within yards a bike speeds out from the left but no signs seen so go straight on. 500m is feeling very long when a path with requisite blue marks joins from left. Ahead is starting down so turn back on marked path. Pass George coming the other way.

At the tower it's been 700ft more climbing. Man & 2 sons have pinned event poster and Kontrole sign to bench. Older son has some English. Beer on sale 35p – irresistible. Tower admission 70p. Despite 91 steps up its not 2 beers worth of view with trees still obscuring some directions but several distant showers seen. Views from the road away are more interesting but the afternoon heat and 75% humidity are beginning to drain. Climbing out of a railway valley village there are lightning clouds ahead. Rain right now would be welcome. It passes by but stirs up a breeze which is helpfully cooling without the disadvantage of being wet through. Near the next named tower, unseen from route, find a bar for water refill and biggest available Coke. Feeling better and moving freely but how much further to go? With all my additional wandering completing the route was going to take too long and I've still got mountains to climb. After the next tower the route gets further from town again so decide to cut out there after an ambley afternoon.

Then, following red again, there's suddenly no red marks at a track fork. Compass bearing decides. After a while track diminishes to nothing. A footpath fork seems clear but soon looks more like a wet weather only stream bed. After the morning's forest challenge, contemplate turning round but it's a long way down & back and the ridge has to be gotten over somehow. Carry on up and nearing the top the path looks more human created and then there's a good track crossing along the ridge. A fortuitously passing hiker points TR to the tower, which is not far. Deserted and under refurbishment, it's been 1500ft of ascent since the last tower.

Nearly miss the direction arrows, which are well above head height on a tree. Were others equally high and missed? It's tarmac down to the edge of town then pavements before picking a streamside path which surely leads into the lake from where I know where the finish is. It doesn't, so one last navigational challenge to be back at the start after 13 hours. I get a

pretty certificate filled in with my self-declared 50km, a metal badge, a cake (more of a bun with some unidentifiable brown stuff inside but nice enough) and a beer! Entry was only £1.20 remember. 156 walkers and bikers have taken part, all Czech bar 2 Poles, 1 Slovak & one from England – me. The route has the makings of a good LDWA type event with better route description and organisation but might be a bit tarmacy in places for some.

Day 3

Plan D to get to the top of Snezka. Drive to a different ski resort Pec Pod Snezka, Pod means under, for the shortest route up and down. Expecting there to be a clear & signed path it took two abortive attempts before finding a forest path with yellow marks going the wrong way but at least up. After some time it at last zigged in the right direction although the junction arrows didn't mention the mountain. The manufactured path of fairly flat rocks climbed and zagged steadily through gloomily overbearing tall pine trunks and when there was at last a view it was of mostly more trees. At last the gradient levelled off and trees opened out to reveal a farm, 6 cows & a tractor anyway, and two cafes not yet open at 9am. From there, a tarmac road to the cable car middle station and then a paved path, later gravel to the first sight of the mountain top. A bit of descending before the final, stepped climb. Riser heights were challenging. Busy at the top, pensioners in street clothes and toddlers off the cable car, more coming up from the Polish side which had been Plan A. A chapel, closed observation station and post office shop crowd the rounded summit. Under 3 hours for 2300ft of ascent in 4¾ miles. Steps down were rib jarring but just over half that time, back down the same way.

Driving to the next hotel, stopped at Tesco (they're big in Czechia) to use their loo and see if my Clubcard worked. It didn't. Staff are wearing jeans, beer 23p – shouldn't be allowed. Today should have been exotic rock formations in the next national park along the mountain ridge so the route on country roads had only been worked out through droopy eyes the night before. Muddling two places beginning with U caused a time consuming detour and late arrival at Jawarzynka. £13 a night for room with balcony mountain view, use of 25m swimming pool & gym.

Day 4

At dawn any mountains are hiding in the mist. Yesterday evening's entertainment was to have been a walk down to the Poland-Slovakia-Czech tripoint. Drive down instead to where our EU money has paid for a footbridge from Poland across to Slovakia. Except its not there anymore, only the BBQ pits, picnic shelters and obelisks. Scramble down the steep but grassy ravine to where there is a triangular stone marking the exact tripoint to walk round as the stream is dry. Drive on from the middle of nowhere in Poland through the middle of nowhere in Slovakia and back into Poland to Zakopane ready to climb their highest mountain Rysy.

Park at the hotel, walk through the touristy town centre and across a park to the bus station by which time it's starting to feel hot. Driver touting for big minibus business. Soon full, all so young, for the 14 mile drive round to the closest allowable point, £2. £1 to enter the park. Horse and carriages lined up for the lazy, along 5 miles of smoother than local public roads tarmac, gently then more steadily ascending; portaloos and water spouts spaced along the way. Busy with people to overtake. 1200ft elevation has been gained before reaching the café at lake Morskie Oko.

Round the lake is a manufactured stony path, uncomfortable underfoot when trying to hurry. At the far end there's a steep 600ft rocky climb up to the next lake Czarny Staw. The signposts here give directions in time. On the tarmac I was easily beating them, on the rocky sections struggling to meet them. The plan had been to walk directly back to town but I could now see that involved too much more climbing and up and down Rysy might not get back for the last, unknown, bus time. Plan B is earlier start tomorrow so, back down to the lower lake. I had the Cicerone schematic map with me but the path junction names don't match those on the signposts. There are lots of people with children coming down yellow so change mind from blue.

It turns into a zigzag path with a gradient that can be plodded out steadily. But it goes higher than the top lake, higher than yesterday's mountaintop and still each turn reveals no end in sight. Eventually it tops out at over 6800ft at a blustery blow you off your feet saddle. Oh no! Looking over the other side there are fixed chains leading down to snowfields. Others are ahead of me so steel myself and follow. Preceders tracks in the snow ameliorate that challenge and as the gradient lessens the path condition improves. Another lake below with mountain hut clarifies where its heading but first it goes all round the far side. A bushy tail scurries through the rocks then perches photogenically on one. A Marmot. When I finally get to the hut it's been double the time the saddle signpost said and well past 5pm. Ask the way to town but Cicerone blue which looks the shortest she says takes 8 hours. Green goes back to the bus and takes 2 hours, if they're still running. The time concern I abandoned Rysy for is back.

The route descends a rocky path steeply then follows a stony valley bottom track that's difficult to hurry along and is making my rib throb. A lady falls. I'm catching others ahead which is encouraging but it keeps having ups when all I want to do is go down. Reach the tarmac a couple of miles in and see more are entering the park, to stay at the huts I surmise, than leaving. Back where I started; relieved to see a bus. Only 7 have boarded after 20 minutes and the driver, I think, negotiates with the Poles a higher fee for going now. He takes £4 back in town. 20 miles in 9½ hours but nearly 5000ft of ascent.

I should have gone straight to bed but passing back through town am seduced by the evening buzz. I could have bought new walking shoes at 9.30pm (mine are starting to split after that chain work) but settle for sitting outside a bar, serenaded through open windows by Polish songs with violin and accordion, eating Polish dumplings and drinking beer. It's far too

pleasant to think about tomorrow.

Day 5

Leave at first light to drive to the bus stop car park. Back up those 5+ miles of tarmac, a more lonely walk this time. Back round the bottom lake. Back up the rocky climb to the top lake passing a deer family munching unconcernedly by the path and a bride and groom in full attire coming down! Into new territory round the top lake to where the Rysy climb really begins. The path is marked, but snowdrifts are pushing the route off the easier rocks onto loose dirt and stones. Gradient is more 2:3 climbing than walking. Confidence starts wavering between commitment and consternation about the descent without walking poles after yesterday. At 6200ft, seeing a lot more snow to conquer, consternation wins out. Three English girls are among the maybe 50 I pass climbing Rysy today. They're very nice but break my meet no British, holiday challenge.

I go back to being a tourist. Sitting by the lake blocking moraine waterfall is a dramatic, stunning, spectacular, magnificent, spot on a sun burning day to rest a while with no mountain climbing or bus catching to worry about, surrounded by the walls of Rysy and friends, looking out over the lower lake. Its 2½ hours back to the car then a night in Krakow before driving 900 miles home. 3½ out of 5 expedition aims met; the trade off between daylight hours against thunderstorm risk and left over snow may have been unhelpful.

COMEDY CORNER

A GP, now an old geezer, became very bored in retirement and decided to open a medical clinic. He put a sign up outside that said: "Dr. Geezer's clinic! Get your treatment for £500, if we can't cure you, get back £1,000." Doctor "Young," who was positive that this old geezer didn't know anything about medicine, thought this would be a great opportunity to get £1,000. So he went to Dr. Geezer's clinic.

Dr. Young: "Dr. Geezer, I have lost all taste in my mouth. Can you please help me?"

Dr. Geezer: "Nurse, please bring the medicine from box 22 and put 3 drops in Dr. Young's mouth."

Dr. Young: Aaagh! -- "This is petrol!"

Dr. Geezer: "Congratulations! You've got your taste back. That will be £500."

Dr. Young is annoyed and goes back after a couple of days thinking to recover his money.

Dr. Young: "I have lost my memory, I cannot remember anything."

Dr. Geezer: "Nurse, please bring the medicine from box 22 and put 3 drops in the patient's mouth."

Dr. Young: "Oh, no you don't, - that's petrol!"

Dr. Geezer: "Congratulations! You've got your memory back. That will be £500."

Dr. Young (after having lost £1000) leaves angrily but comes back after several more days.

Dr. Young: "My eyesight has become weak - I can hardly see anything"

Dr. Geezer: "Well, I don't have any medicine for that so here's your £1000 back." (giving him a £10 note).

Dr. Young: "But this is only £10!"

Dr. Geezer: "Congratulations! You got your vision back! That will be £500."

Moral of story - Just because you're "Young" doesn't mean that you can outsmart an "old Geezer"!

Don't try it on with old people!

We don't like being old in the first place, so it doesn't take much to upset us.

Borrow money from pessimists -- they don't expect it back.

99% of lawyers give the rest a bad name.

A clear conscience is usually the sign of a bad memory.

If you want the rainbow, you have got to put up with the rain.

The early bird may get the worm, but the second mouse gets the cheese.

I almost had a psychic girlfriend, but she left me before we met.

OK, so what's the speed of dark?

How do you tell when you're out of invisible ink?

When everything is coming your way, you're in the wrong lane.

Hard work pays off in the future; laziness pays off now.

I intend to live forever... So far, so good.

My mechanic told me, "I couldn't repair your brakes, so I made your horn louder."

Why do psychics have to ask you for your name.

If at first you don't succeed, destroy all evidence that you tried.

Experience is something you don't get until just after you need it.

The sooner you fall behind, the more time you'll have to catch up.

If at first you don't succeed, skydiving is not for you.

If your car could travel at the speed of light, would your headlights work?

Photos from the Post 100 Gathering 2016
by Bryan Clarke



Peter



Graham and Mike



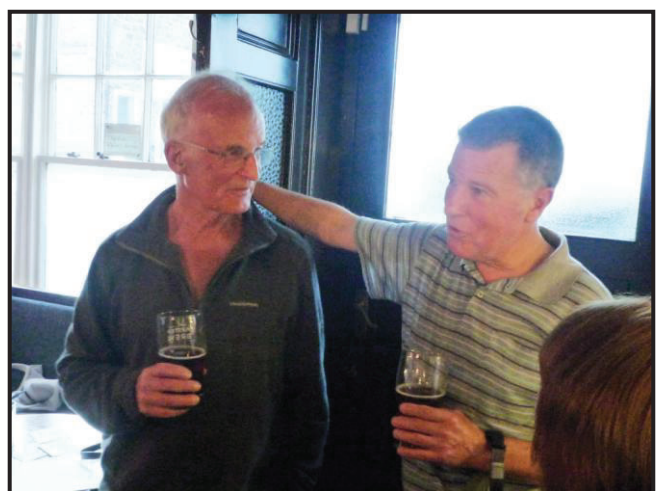
Keith and Neal (in background)



Judy



David



Michael and Keith