

LONG DISTANCE WALKERS ASSOCIATION — Kent Group

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

NEWSLETTER



Judy Rickwood, Graham Smith and Stephanie le Men with their LDWA 10 Hundreds badges after they all completed the North Yorks Moors 100 – see story inside

Photo by Eric Rolfe

Number 103



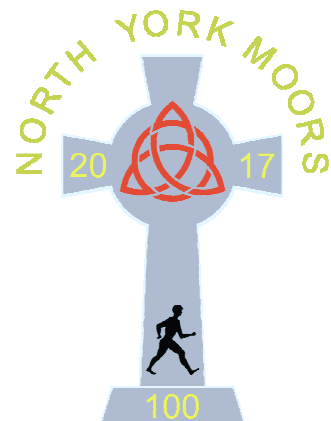
August 2017

www.ldwa.org.uk/kent

NORTH YORK MOORS 100

CHECKING IN - the photos at the top show Alan Stewart, partner Hilary Greenwood and Keith Warman; Jill Green and Jim Catchpole; and Stephanie le Men and Sarah Turner.

The other photos show the members of the Kent team hard at work at the Wombledon checkpoint.



SOCIAL WALKS PROGRAMME: AUGUST TO DECEMBER 2017

Sat Aug 5 Bluewater to Otford (linear)

23ml, meet 10am at Greenhithe station. Start GR TQ585748, Finish GR TQ532594. Follow Thames Path to and then Darent Valley. Lunch in Horton Kirby either packed Lunch or pub. Possible coffee break/ice cream in Dartford and afternoon break in N.T Centre. Finish Otford station. Joint with London. **C:** Neil Cook

Sun Aug 6 White Cliffs Challenge marshals' walk

32 or 18ml, meet 8.30am at St Margaret's Village Hall (GR TQ358446). For details contact Graham Smith

Thursday August 10 Dover-Canterbury along the North Downs Way (linear walk, getting train back to Dover). 19 miles, meet 9am at Dover Priory railway station (GR 314515), pay parking at station or free off road parking. Lunch stop at Bishopsbourne. Leader: Graham Smith

Sun Aug 13 Cream Tea Walk

21ml, meet 9am at Boughton Malherbe Church. Park in field opposite. (GR TQ882495). Hopefully pub stop. **C:** Neal O'Rourke

Thu Aug 24 Fish and Chip Walk

10.25ml, meet 5.15pm at Walmer railway station. (GR TR363503). Linear - Walk to Dover via the White Cliffs. Fish and chips in Dover and return (at your own expense) by train or bus. Part of the White Cliffs Walking Festival. **C:** Graham Smith

Sat Aug 26 White Cliffs Challenge

See Events Diary in Strider.

Sun Aug 27 Alkham Adventure

15ml, meet 9.30am in c.p. at Kearsney Abbey, near the café. (GR TR287438). Figure-of-eight, lunch stop at The Fox, Temple Ewell. Part of White Cliffs Walking Festival. Map Ex 138. **C:** Graham Smith

Mon Aug 28 The 4gotten Pits Walk

23ml, meet 9am by Lydden Bell. (GR TR260545). Not the Four Pits anytime challenge but a route linking the four collieries that never achieved commercial production. They are Stonehall at Lydden, Guilford at Coldred, Hammill near Eastry and Wingham. Pub lunch stop. **C:** Peter Jull:

Sun Sep 17 Kent Peaks - Sevenoaks

23ml, meet 9am at Brasted - junction of Church Rd. & High St. (A25). (GR TQ468550). A series of walks visiting the highest points in each of Kent's council areas. 3/8, partly in Surrey. Pub lunch. Joint with Surrey. **C:** Peter Jull

Sun Sep 24 Kent Peaks - Maidstone

21ml, meet 9.55am at Ferryfield Recreation Ground, Station Road, Aylesford. 8.25 from St. Pancras will be met at station. (GR TQ727586). A series of walks visiting the highest points in each of Kent's council areas. 4/8. Pub lunch. **C:** Peter Jull

Sun Oct 1 A Royal Stroll

21ml, meet 8.30am at Harrietsham railway station. (GR TQ866529). Exp 137 Pub stop Hollingbourne. **C:** Neal O'Rourke

Sun Oct 8 Kent Peaks - Tunbridge Wells

22.5ml, meet 9am at playing fields c.p. Kent & Sussex Crematorium, Bayham Road B2169. (GR TQ589374). A series of walks visiting the highest points in each of Kent's council areas. 5/8. Mostly in Sussex. Pub lunch. **C:** Peter Jull

Sun Oct 15 Kent Peaks - Dover and Shepway

19.5ml, meet 9am at Castle Hill dead end off roundabout at end of M20. (GR TR210377). A series of walks visiting the highest points in each of Kent's council areas. 6/8. Steep hill and two very steep hills (40% and 25%) in 1st 2 miles total 900ft. 2300ft ascent overall. Pub lunch. **C:** Peter Jull

Sun Oct 22 Kent Peaks - Ashford and Swale

19ml, meet 10am at Charing station. 8.36 from Victoria and 8.37 from St. Pancras will be met. (GR TQ950491). A series of walks visiting the highest points in each of Kent's council areas. 7/8. Pub lunch. **C:** Peter Jull

Sun Nov 5 Kent Peaks - Thanet

21ml, meet 9am at Bishopstone Lane parking area, Beltinge, Herne Bay. (GR TR210687). A series of walks visiting the highest points in each of Kent's council areas. 8/8. Pub lunch in Minster. **C:** Peter Jull

Sat Nov 18 Otford Circular

18.5ml, meet 9.30am at Otford station, outside main ticket hall (take 8:52 train from Victoria arrives Otford at 9:28). Plenty of parking at Otford Station c.p. (GR TQ532593). Ascending out of Otford and onto the North Downs Way, then north towards West Kingsdown, with views of London in the distance. Across the old golf course and down towards Shoreham. Options to stop for a pub lunch there or at the Lullingstone Visitor Centre. Loop round Lullingstone Country Park and back to Otford via Shoreham and the Darent Valley Path. **C:** Helen Franklin

Nov 26 Around The Planet Thanet

18 miles, meet at Sandwich station (GR 333577) 8.55am for 9.06am train to Margate (arriving 9.30am) and walking back, lunch stop at Ramsgate. Leader: Graham Smith

Sun Dec 3

Family Christmas Dinner at Chart Hills Golf Club in Weeks Lane, Biddenden, preceded by a seven mile walk led by Neal O'Rourke (see article below).

Sat Dec 9 Christmas Cruise around Calais

c14ml, meet at approx. 07.20am 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 for foot passenger day return. Don't forget your passport! Please ring Graham for confirmation of times. **C:** Graham Smith

Thu Dec 28 Post Christmas Sevenoaks Stroll

c18ml, meet 9am at at lay-by in road opposite Shipbourne church off A227. (GR TQ593522). Pub lunch stop. **C:** Dave Sheldrake

KENT GROUP COMMITTEE

Chairman/newsletter editor – Graham Smith,

Secretary – Stephanie le Men,

Treasurer/walks secretary – Peter Jull,

Membership secretary – Neil Higham,

Equipment – Sarah Turner,

Website - Michael Headley

Life president – Brian Buttifant,

Members

Phyl Butler, Joy Davies, Nick Dockree, Neal O'Rourke, 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



Left: Stephanie with her trophy for completing the Spine Fusion Race, and right, pictured during the event.

THE SPINE FUSION - WELL DONE TO OUR STEPHANIE

At the end of June our secretary, Stephanie le Men, completed the gruelling Spine Fusion Race, which involves walking or running the entire Pennine Way. Amazingly, Stephanie completed the 268-mile National Trail in just under six days (yes, six days) and was the only woman to finish it. Stephanie was one of 13 walkers/runners to complete the massive challenge from a starting field of 23. In this article for the Kent newsletter, she tells us how she triumphed on an event which she describes as 'Heaven and Hell.'

I walked the stunning North York Moors 100 at the end of May. I usually rest after this with little walking over the next few weeks.

However this time it was different. I had entered the Spine Fusion race, starting on June 23. This race consists of running (walking for me!) the Pennine Way in seven days. There are several main checkpoints with sleeping possibilities separated 32 to 62 miles from each other. Andy, with whom I walked the North Yorks Moors 100, had entered and he had contacted me last year to know if I wanted to do it too. I answered "I am not saying no yet ...", he answered "I take it as a yes!" and that was it.

So two weeks after the Hundred I did a 50 miles walk in the Peak District, then relaxed the following weekend with scrambling/walking in the Rhinogs. And then it was time to go to Edale for the race: I was really anxious since I had decided to walk checkpoint to checkpoint with Andy and that meant long distances every day without much sleep - and I need my sleep!

There were two distances - The Flare which is 108 miles and The Fusion which is 268 miles, and which we were doing. Only 23 contestants were starting The Fusion and only another lady (whom I never saw!)

The first day was 48 miles. When the start was given, Andy and I stayed behind since most contestants were runners. Off we went up Jacob's Ladder and on the Kinder plateau. Suddenly a runner started talking to me in French – Olivier was the only other French contestant. He had had a blood clot to the brain several years before, and then decided to have a healthier lifestyle. He took up running and triathlons. Before this race, he warned his kids that he was past the age of winning a race ... more about that later on!

Then came the climb to Black Hill. A lot of people hate it but I really like it so I overtook a lot of racers! The weather was better than the forecast (unfortunately that would not stay true for the rest of the race!) and we reached the CP in Hebden Bridge before dark.

The next day was a biggie: 62 miles from Hebden Bridge to Hardraw near Hawes. We had heard the forecast was for rain in the early morning so we had decided to leave at 7.30am. Unfortunately it was still raining and it actually got quite cold too because of the wind. However the weather brightened up after a few hours and it was quite balmy when we reached Malham. We had a stop at an intermediate checkpoint at Malham Tarn – it was quite chilly again when we left for Pen-y-ghent. We reached it at night time so no views! Then down to Horton, and then the never ending Cam High Road. We finally reached Hardraw, exhausted, in the early morning. What a long 62 miles! We each crashed into a tent. When we got up, Andy told me that one of his ankles was painful and swollen – he had broken it seriously in December. The medics advised him to stop the walk and he did so, and he was right since the rest of the route would be trying for any ankle!

I was quite disappointed and wanted to stop too, but Andy convinced me of walking the next leg, 32 miles to Middleton in Teesdale. I left a bit dispirited, went onto the Great Shunner Fell then on to Keld – very nice views and then to Tan Hill. I met Raj and Daniel, two other contestants who left just after I arrived. I enjoyed a welcome bowl of soup offered by the owner to the racers. The ground after Tan Hill was far better for the feet than on the stony footpaths to Keld, where they had suffered. But the scenery was really grim. I caught up with Raj and Daniel who were jogging and we kept passing each other for the rest of the day. We all disliked this part of the walk! After a very long stretch I reached the checkpoint. My left knee was hurting and I had almost decided to quit but went for a sleep first.

The next day Raj and Daniel asked me if I wanted to join them – they could run and walk and I could catch up like the previous day. A medic taped my knee, I felt better ... and off we went for a 40 miles day. It was raining for a change, the first six miles were quite flat along a roaring river – we passed High and Low Force. Then on to Cauldron Snout, in full flow, and then High Cup Nick. We still could appreciate it despite the rain, especially Raj who was in awe of the view down the glacial valley. We then reached the village of Dufton, where Raj convinced us to stop for a good meal at a pub. I was not keen at first since it would mean being on Cross Fell at night and I had heard this was hard navigating, but on the other hand it could give us some energy. Cross Fell lived up to its reputation. We could not see more than two meters in front, it was raining and windy and we were basically following the line on our GPS. We had heard there was a ‘monitoring stop’ in Greg’s Hut, just a few meters down from the summit. Well, we saw it in extremis since the visibility was so bad! It was heaven, thanks to the formidable John and Stacey who spoiled us. It was then that I thought: “Let’s continue this walk!” It was then mainly down, still in the clouds to the village of Garrigill and the CP.

When we left the next morning for another 40 miles hike, it was grey but not raining. However the forecast was not good! The first section was quite easy and then we reached the roller coaster of Hadrian’s Wall. I was a bit disappointed as I was expecting something more ‘grandiose’ and the rain and the wind caught up with us again. We had to cross a big forest to reach the next CP near Bellingham. It was never ending in the wind and rain, the ground was saturated with water. It was really energy sapping. Raj had jogged so was ahead but he had left some messages in the ground: “Go, Daniel, Go!!” What a character! He is the chairman of NASS (National Ankylosing Spondylitis Society). He himself suffers from the condition and he was showing you can manage an active life despite it by entering the Spine. Daniel and I were completely sodden when we came across a sign, ‘Spine Walkers, that way for a pit stop’. The owners of a farm had put a sofa, kettle and a lot of food in a small barn. It was another miracle! We could change into drier clothes and get warmer! There were only five miles to go to Bellingham but it felt like ten. We arrived early morning and crashed into a tent while some were leaving.

And then came the final section, 42 miles. I had heard I would be first lady since the other lady had dropped out – I had never seen her! After a lot of very good advice from the team on how to negotiate the Cheviots, I left with Daniel at 1pm. Raj had left three hours before with another runner. The first 15 miles were very hard, it was so windy! I might have been a bit dehydrated and I had cramp starting. I was not feeling well and we had not reached the hills yet! But we came to a checkpoint where we drank, ate and slept for 25 minutes. I felt rejuvenated and off we went again with Daniel. We climbed to the first Cheviot Hills. Graham has often told me how he loves the Cheviots. Well, I cannot say if I agree since I did not see anything! After following a very wet path we came to a monitoring point in a tiny hut. It was more like a proper checkpoint with a kettle and dry food! I thought we could spend a few hours there and continue in daylight but Daniel was keen to move on. So we moved to the second hut/monitoring point. It was raining heavily by then. I was fairly dry since I was wearing two waterproof jackets but not Daniel who was cold, so we did not stay long before he said ‘Vamos!’ After a short climb it was down to the finish at Kirk Yetholm. We were walking in streams which I quite enjoyed, and we still could not see anything! It looked like Kirk Yetholm was eluding us, but suddenly there it was, and the finish at the pub. Daniel took my hand and we ran to the wall and touched it as it was the tradition. We both were laughing – we were so glad to have done it! Raj had finished an hour earlier but he had got very cold. We had our photographs taken and I got a trophy as first lady. That was all very surreal to me! Olivier, the other French contestant, had finished first too with another runner from Holland. Basically all the runners in front of them, gave up, so he was as surprised as me!

I could not have done it without the kindness of the staff and the other walkers. The unseasonal weather had made it a demanding challenge and I think most people who finished it were walking/running with someone else.

Stacey drove Raj and I to Leeds on her way home which again was so kind. Raj did a broadcast 'One week after the Spine' on Facebook and it was fun to reminisce the event! Andy has registered for the Winter Spine Challenge – the shorter route to Hawes, and has asked me several times if I was sure I did not want to do it? He does not know it yet but I gave in. However it is full and I am on a waiting list so we'll see if I have a place!



Brian with his painting of Knole Park, and with Andrew Melling at his presentation evening

PRESENTATION EVENING FOR LIFE PRESIDENT BRIAN

There was a huge surprise for Brian Buttifant on June 5 when he turned up at the Rose & Crown, Wrotham, for what he thought was the post-100 meeting which he had organised.

The post-100 meeting was, in fact, a celebration evening for Brian to mark him being made Life President of Kent LDWA. Some 50 LDWA friends and colleagues had come from far and wide to wish Brian well, including national chairwoman Gail Elrick and husband John, Jill Green and Jim Catchpole and members of Surrey and Sussex groups. Also there was Brian's wife Brenda and daughter Fiona, who both knew what had been planned but had been sworn to secrecy.

Brian was presented with a painting of Knole Park – which is always used on route of the Sevenoaks Circular, for which Brian has been main organiser since the event started in 1974 – commissioned for him in honour of being made Life President. It was painted by Lesley Munro, wife of Kent member Dave Sheldrake, and presented by Andrew Melling, another of the group's longest serving members.

Andrew told the gathering: "I'm a north London lad, crossing south on getting married in August 1975. The Scouting network soon hooked me up with a local troop but what next? I entered the 2nd Sevenoaks Circular in March 1976. I expect Brian Buttifant entered as well but I know he entered the next year because I have the results sheet showing that he finished just 9 minutes ahead of me. I never got that close again.

"The group was small then. Our first meetings, including our first AGM, were comfortably accommodated in a back room at the Bull in Otford. We were informal. Peter Rickards ran the Sevenoaks Circular and Brian ran everything else. But we wanted a chairman and Ernie Bishop agreed to fill that role for three years.

"Three years later, we were on a group walk on a path meandering through a wood, as so many of our Kentish paths do. There must have been other members of the group with us but, in my memory, I see only Peter, Ernie, me and Brian. Peter suggested that Brian should be the next chairman but Ernie would have none of it. Brian, he said, was far too good a secretary for his talents to be wasted in the role of chairman. So that was it and the lot fell on me for the next three years, more or less by default.

"Brian continued to earn his description as a brilliantly effective secretary for many years, stepping down only in 1989. More recently, as most of you will know, Brian served us as chairman from 2002 until just last year. Many members have contributed to the group's 40 year success but it is largely to Brian that we owe the existence of the group as it is now.

"It is not just about walking. Brian and Brenda, and Peter and Ernie and their wives Moira and Celia, became such good friends of me and my wife as to help me celebrate first my 50th birthday and then my silver wedding."

Brian, who has been involved with the group since it was started in 1974, became chairman in 2002, taking over from Paul Hatcher. He was the group's first permanent secretary, and served in that role for 11 years. He takes a huge interest in Hundreds, having completed 15 of them, and each year organises the Kent Group checkpoint on the Hundred, as he did this year.

NEWS OF KENT CHALLENGE WALKS

Sevenoaks Circular

Next year's Sevenoaks Circular will be held on March 18, with the marshals' walk on March 4. The event will again be based at West Heath School, with routes of 30, 20 and 15 miles. More details in the next newsletter.

Weald walk

Our Heart of the Weald walk on July 2 was huge success (see the photos on the back and inside back pages of this newsletter). We had a total of 101 walkers taking part (65 doing the 26-mile route, four doing 21 miles, nine doing 20 miles, 21 doing 15 miles and two people doing 10 miles), with four retirements.

Walk organiser Neil Higham received the following message from Tara Williams the day after the event:

‘Just to say a big thank you to you and your team for giving us a great day out in the wilds of Kent. Your events are always very enjoyable as they are very organised but feel very relaxed. We were well fed and watered on the way round (with especially delicious home baked chocolate treats at CP4)* and a healthy meal when we were finished.

‘Your RD is very clear and well written and the route is beautiful. I am planning a re-run hopefully later this month.

‘Thanks again for a great day and I shall include the event report in my next Strider write-up.

‘I checked on the RD and the 26 mile route had 56 stile crossings...of varying degrees of stability!’

Next year our Weald challenge walk is due to be the Walk With The Smugglers, based at Goudhurst. More details in the next newsletter.

*The chocolate – which was quickly devoured by the walkers at checkpoint 4 – was provided by the wife of Tim Bedwell, who did the marshals’ walk and who was checkpointing for the first time.

White Cliffs Challenge

It’s almost here. This year’s WCC will be on Saturday August 26, again as part of the White Cliffs Walking Festival (see article below), and will again be based at St Margaret’s Village Hall.

The distances will be 32 miles and 18 miles. Both routes will be different to last year’s, the longer one including the lovely Warren at Folkestone and two visits to Dover’s Western Heights. There will be no indoor checkpoints. The marshals’ walk will be on August 6, starting from the St Margaret’s hall at 8.30am.

We need marshals. Anyone wishing to help should please contact Graham Smith (details above). And anyone wishing to take part in the marshals’ walk should also contact Graham.

KSS TRIPLE CHALLENGE – SURREY TOPS

This year’s leg of the KSS – 50-mile walks to be done in successive years - will be the Surrey Tops, which takes place on September 23-24, with the marshals’ walk on September 2-3.

As usual, we will be organising a checkpoint, and this is will be at Elstead (16 miles). If anyone would like to help man our checkpoint, could they please contact Graham Smith.

Last year’s leg of the KSS was the Sussex Stride, and next year it is due to be our White Cliffs Challenge. Despite our hosting the Cinque Ports 100, we are planning for the White Cliffs Challenge to still go ahead, as the event will be in August and will follow the same route it has before. But we are unable to use Deal and Betteshanger Rugby Club, as we did before, for the venue, as the club will be hosting a beer festival over that August bank holiday weekend. We are instead planning for it to be based at St Margaret’s Village Hall.

FAMILY CHRISTMAS LUNCH

For the fourth year in succession, our popular Family Christmas Lunch will be at Chart Hills Golf Club in Weeks Lane, Biddenden. The date is Sunday December 3 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 £23.00 for three courses.

Jan O’Rourke has again kindly agreed to make the booking arrangements. A booking form is included with this newsletter, so please fill it in and return it to Jan by November 18.



The photo shows the Atrium at Sussex Coast College, where the opening ceremony of the Cinque Ports 100 will be held, with walkers addressed by the Lord Warden of the Cinque Ports, Admiral the Lord Boyce

CINQUE PORTS 100

Well, we're starting to count down now to the Cinque Ports 100, and what follows is a quick resume of what the organising team have been doing over the last couple of months.

HQs

We have had a couple of very productive visits to the Duke of York's Royal Military School, where the event will be based on May 26-28 next year. The facilities there are first class, and the staff we have dealt with there have been very cooperative. Unfortunately work commitments meant that Sarah Turner has had to step down from the organising group, but she has been replaced by John Elrick, husband of national LDWA chairwoman Gail. John has had done the job of Hundred HQ coordinator before, so we are very lucky that he has come on board.

Neil Higham is Hastings HQ coordinator. Walkers will be transported by bus to Sussex Coast College at Hastings, where there will be registration and the opening ceremony, conducted by the Lord Warden of the Cinque Ports, Admiral the Lord Boyce. Our Life President, Brian Buttifant, will be leading the walkers for the first few hundred yards along Hastings seafront.

Route

This has now been finalised, apart from some minor tweaking. Mike Pursey has routed the walk away from the potholes in the road at Brookland and there has also been a re-routing near Sandwich, to avoid a dangerous crossing of the busy A256 road there. This means we are not using Eastry as a checkpoint, with the re-routing going to Northbourne – where there is an excellent village hall – instead. There is also some re-routing from Rye, as there some issues with using the four miles of path alongside the River Rother as originally planned. The route will now largely follow the very pleasant High Weald Landscape Trail from Rye. Route monitors have been appointed for the route, and any path issues – such as areas needing vegetation clearance – will be reported to Mike Pursey, who will in turn report them to Kent County Council. Graham Rusling, KCC's public rights of way and access manager, and Andrew Hutchinson, East Kent public rights of way manager, have assured us that work on Cinque Ports 100 paths will receive priority. Earlier this year some substantial work was carried out to make the path leading from the Royal Military Canal to Lympne, which is on the route, safer.

Checkpoints and Catering

Checkpoint coordinator Neal O'Rourke has now got all 16 checkpoints staffed, and offers of help are coming in – but we are still going to need more helpers. And catering managers Joy Davies and Jan O'Rourke are planning menus and liaising with transport manager Peter Jull over how to get the food and drink to the checkpoints.

Website

The event's website, www.ldwa.org.uk/2018Hundred is now live, and thanks to the skills of Michael Headley, very impressive it is too. The website, which is constantly being updated, includes a huge amount of information about the route as well as details of the qualifying events and the event's rules, which have been worked on by entries secretary Phyl Butler. Entries open on October 9 and we are confident that the Cinque Ports 100 will be fully subscribed. There has been much interest in the event from throughout the LDWA, due in no small part to the excellent flyer designed by Michael Headley to promote it. North Yorkshire Group kindly gave copies of the flyer to everyone who completed the NY Moors 100 in May. The flyers have proved so popular that we have had to get another 200 printed.

And Finally ...

Peter Jull has produced an excellent video of the Cinque Ports 100, which will shortly be on view on the Cinque Ports 100 website, and which is being used to promote the event. Please have a look at it when it can be viewed, as it is very impressive.



WHITE CLIFFS WALKING FESTIVAL

The fourth annual White Cliffs Walking Festival takes place between August 24-30, and includes our White Cliffs Challenge on August 26.

Organised by the White Cliffs Ramblers (to which some members of Kent LDWA belong), the seven day festival will feature 42 walks.

There will be three successive days of longer walks (i.e. of 15 miles or more) starting with the WCC. On Sunday, August 27, there will be an Alkham Adventure, a 15-mile figure-of-eight walk from Temple Ewell.

And on Monday August 28, Peter Jull will be leading his 23-mile 4gotten Pits Walk, visiting the sites of four Kent coal mines which never went into commercial production. This walk complements Graham Smith's 40-mile Four Pits Walk (an Anytime Challenge). See www.whitecliffswalkingfestival.org.uk A booklet, detailing all the walks in the programme, is now available. This is the fourth year of the festival, and the walks programme ranges from history/heritage or special interest walks of two or three miles to the 32-mile WCC.

The festival also includes two previews of the 2.5-mile Royal Marines Heritage Trail – being launched next April – on the evenings of August 26 and 27. The trail visits places in Deal and Walmer associated with the Royal Marines, who left Deal in 1996 after being associated with the area since 1665.

The festival booklet is being distributed throughout the Dover-Deal-Sandwich district at tourist information centres, council offices, pubs and other outlets.

Bev Cussans, chairwoman of the festival's organising group, said: "This year, we have 14 new walks: from interesting walks for the family such as Samphire Hoe Adventure and Channel Tales; to historical walks such as the Tour of Ramparts, Bastions and Batteries of Dover Castle and the Royal Marines Heritage Trail preview; as well as scenic walks such as Hills of the Saxon Shore Way and the Alkham Adventure."

The festival will be opened in a ceremony on Walmer Green on August 24 by Kate Ashbrook, vice president of The Ramblers and general secretary of national conservation campaign group the Open Spaces Society.

Full details of all festival walks are also on the festival's website www.whitecliffswalkingfestival.org.uk

GROUP REPS WEEKEND 2018

Medway Youth Hostel, in Gillingham, is to be the venue for the LDWA Local Groups Weekend in November next year. The group reps meeting is very important to the LDWA, as it allows group members to get together and discuss our organisation, with views and comments fed back to the National Executive Committee. Various Kent members, including Graham Smith, Phyl Butler and Nick Dockree, have attended the weekend in recent years. The format usually comprises a walk on the Saturday, with a meeting on the Sunday.

The date for the 2018 group reps weekend has not yet been finalised, but there will obviously be some Kent Group involvement, and we have offered to organise a couple of walks.

This year's group reps weekend will be on November 10-12, at Hawes in North Yorkshire. Any Kent members interested in going should contact national Local Groups Secretary Julie Cribb, whose details are in Strider.

FLYING THE FLAGS IN LONDON, ESSEX – AND KENT

A project to transport flags from Kew Gardens, in West London, to Southend-on-Sea, is coming to Kent.

The request came to the committee of London LDWA from Kinetika, an arts project based in Purfleet, not too far from Southend. London LDWA member Ali Pretty is creative director of Kinetika, which weaves walking into its arts projects. Kinetika's new project, Silk River, takes that approach into an international dimension, in celebration of the 70th anniversary of Indian independence.

Silk River links two great rivers, the Thames and the Hooghly, which flows through Kolkata in India. On each river, ten communities have told their story not in words but on silken flags, the silk having been woven expressly for the project by the skilled artisans of Murshidabad, a town on the Hooghly about 120 miles north of Kolkata. The Indian flags were designed and completed in a series of residencies last January, unfurled for the first time at the Murshidabad Heritage Festival – each 20 feet high, with images and patterns carefully crafted onto the silk.

The Hooghly flags were brought to England after the festival and now the Thames flags have been made too. Both sets will be walked from Kew to Southend over ten days in September, visiting the Thames communities whose stories they tell on the way.

Details of the walks, which are not long by LDWA standards, are below:

Friday September 15 Kew Gardens to Putney Bridge, five miles.

Saturday September 16 From Blackfriars Millennium Pier, through Tower Hamlets to Island Gardens DLR, six miles.

Sunday September 17 Island Gardens DLR, through Greenwich and Woolwich to King George V DLR, eight miles.

Monday September 18 King George V DLR, through Barking and Dagenham to Rainham, 13 miles.

Tuesday September 19 From Rainham to and around Purfleet, six miles.

Wednesday September 20 Through Dartford, five miles.

Thursday September 21 Dartford to Northfleet and through Gravesend, seven miles.

Friday September 22 Tilbury to East Tilbury, five miles.

Saturday September 23 East Tilbury to Leigh-on-Sea, 20 miles.

Sunday September 24 Leigh-on-Sea to Southend-on-Sea, five miles.

Most walks will start at about 9am, but for full details including start and finish points see the London pages of the LDWA website or www.silkriver.co.uk

It is advisable to check with the website first before going on any of the walks.

ELHAM VALLEY WAY

Walkers on the Elham Valley Way – a very pleasant 22.5-mile route going from Hythe to Canterbury, which Graham Smith put on for the Elham Walking Festival on June 17 – were presented with special certificates.

Elham has Walkers Are Welcome status, and the certificates were customised, with the LDWA and Walkers are Welcome logos, plus a map of the route, and produced by Elham Valley Walking Festival chairman Peter Corkill, who distributed them to walkers at the end.

A total of 23 people completed the walk, with the group being a mixture of LDWA regulars and new people, at least four of whom had never walked that sort of distance before, so there were a few Personal Bests achieved. Everyone completed the walk in what were very hot conditions. The group started from Hythe at 8.30am and reached Canterbury at 5.30pm, in time to get a beer at Wetherspoons before the bus back to Hythe.

One of the walkers, Lee Pickup (a female Lee), sent the following kind message to Peter afterwards: "I joined your Elham

Valley Walk last weekend.

"I live in Kingsdown near Deal and am a member of the White Cliffs group although I do not get much chance to walk with them.

"I did the walk with my sister in law, who comes from Orpington, this was the first time she walked with the Ramblers and the first time she had completed a long march.

"For me I loved the walk because for a couple of years I have been planning to walk the Elham Valley Way but couldn't find anyone to do it with (my husband and friends are not walkers) so it gave me a chance to see beautiful countryside, visiting villages I had never been to and share it with others.

"For my sister in law it was a revelation. She enjoyed the welcoming atmosphere, the company of the other walkers and the joys of exercising while walking through our fantastic countryside all organised for us for a small donation. Who could ask for more?

"I would like to thank the organisers for a fabulous day and look forward to walking with you all again.

"P.S Thank you for the certificates a nice touch especially for my sister in law who saw it as a challenge as she had never walked anything like that distance before."

Elham Walking Festival was started last year, when Graham was asked to put on the EVW as part of the event. Peter has asked him to put it on for a third time next year – so watch this space.

NEWS OF LAURIE LOWE

Jill Green has received the following note and photo (right) from Kent LDWA stalwart (and former newsletter editor) Laurie Lowe, who now lives in Ampthill, Bedfordshire. The photo was taken on a Walks for Health walk. Laurie is at the front, with wife Eileen in the group at the back. Laurie, as some Kent members may recall, had an amazing collection of bottles, as he belonged to a group which digs them up. Sadly, Laurie and Eileen were unable to come to the presentation evening for Brian Buttifant on June 5.

He writes: 'I am still a member of the LDWA. I think that the annual fee is worthwhile for Strider alone. I like to scan the photos for any familiar faces!

'My walking is now very limited – an occasional 6-7 miles with the local RA group is about my limit. I help to organise a local Walks for Health group. This is very well supported but distance is limited to about 3.5 miles.

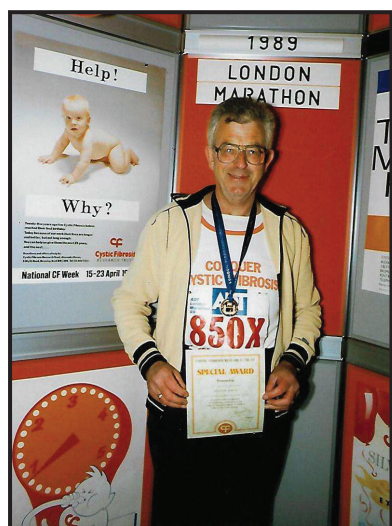
'Our bottle collection was auctioned by Gordon Litherland Auctions at Elsecar Antiques Centre, near Hoylands, South Yorks. I am not sure if it is still there but the centre is worth a visit.

'We would like to get to Kent for Brian's special do, but we are not sure if we can make it. Eileen's health is causing a few problems at the moment and it will depend on how she feels nearer the day.

'We are both 83 this year and have been together since we were at school!

'Good luck for your 25th 100 – take it steady and you will get through. Happy walking, including the 100.'

Thanks to Jill (who took Laurie's advice and completed her 25th Hundred!) for sharing this note and photo.



PETER CARTER

Members will be sad to hear of the death of Peter Carter, who was one of the strongest walkers in the group back in the 1980s.

Peter, who was 88 and died after a long illness, completed several 30-mile challenge walks, including the Sevenoaks Circular, and two 50-milers. He started a Hundred once and was walking with his wife, Margaret, another keen walker. Margaret started getting bad blister trouble so she retired. Being the gentleman he was, Peter decided to retire as well. Peter also enjoyed running, and completed five London Marathons.

Peter was involved with the White Cliffs Ramblers, becoming treasurer when the group was formed in 1989, carrying on the job for many years. In the early days of the White Cliffs Ramblers, the garden parties held at Peter and Margaret's home in Westgate, Thanet, following a walk, were well known for the excellent refreshments provided by Margaret.

Later Peter joined the White Cliffs Ramblers' stile repair team, work he continued until four years ago.

And in recent years he and Margaret helped checkpoint for Kent LDWA on our White

Cliffs Challenge, usually at Langdon Cliffs.

He was partly responsible for introducing Graham Smith and Mike Pursey (who are both founder members of the White

Cliffs Ramblers) to the LDWA, so he has a lot to answer for there!

Peter, who was born in Bermondsey in London and moved to Kent in 1963, worked for the Post Office for 33 years. He and Margaret, who had been married for 54 years, have three children, 11 grandchildren and three great-grandchildren.

A Requiem Mass for Peter was held at Our Lady and St Benedict's RC Church, Birchington.

Margaret has asked that any donations in Peter's memory are made to the Huntingdon's Disease Association (<https://www.hda.org.uk/>).

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Kent LDWA member Jim Briggs reports on the consultation on The England Coastal Path – Grain to Woolwich stretch – which he attended with his wife Sheila on June 21.

“Sheila and I went along to meet the young and enthusiastic team at Nature England who were running the consultation on the latest section of the Coastal Path.

They have not yet published their preference for this part of the route but are intending to use mostly existing rights of way along the river. They have a few areas, where they are not expecting access:

They will follow the Thames Path from Woolwich to Dartford. They are not expecting the Environment Agency to help with access across the flood barrier on the Darent and think it will be too costly to modify the A206 bridge. They are expecting it will be necessary to divert into Dartford and then head out again on the east side of the Darent on the Darent Valley Path.

1. There are few industrial wharfs at Greenhithe and Northfleet where they are not hopeful of gaining access.
2. They are expecting to be diverted inland around most of Grain, with an in and out section to the village itself. They doubt they will get cooperation around the Lee's Marsh firing range, old BP refinery site, LNG import terminal and container terminal. The last two are active sites.
3. They are expecting to open up new access to Broadness Salt Marsh at Swanscombe. They have reconnoitred the area and think the footpaths that are there can be cleaned up and the public granted access. Anyone interested in electricity pylons may know this is site of the tallest one in the UK. If the Paramount Studios Leisure Centre does proceed on this site, then river access is expected to be part of the planning consent.

4. They are hoping to reach agreement on this section of the Coastal Path this year.

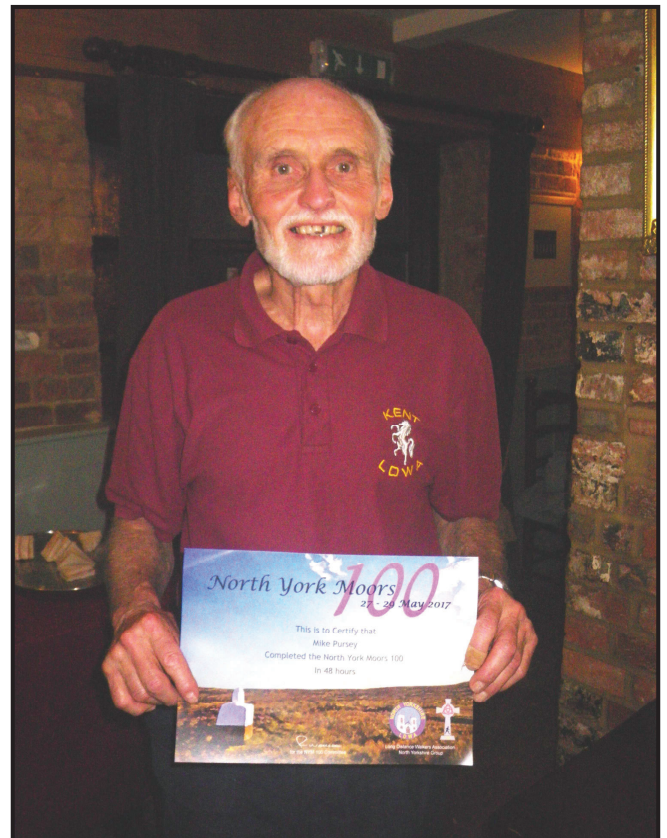
They also said that they were very interested in hearing the route of the Cinque Ports 100 and seeing what they could do to help. They are hoping you are using some of the Coastal Path!

If anyone has a view on this path, their details are below. They were very keen to hear from walkers. Contact: England Coast Path delivery team (South East), Natural England, Floor 9, International House, Dover Place, Ashford, Kent, TN23 1HU; email southeastcoastalaccess@naturalengland.org.uk; telephone 020 8026 8045; website: <http://tinyurl.com/ECP-Grain-to-Woolwich>

Meanwhile Natural England has begun to investigate how to improve coastal access along the 58km stretches of the Kent coast between Whitstable and Iwade and Iwade and Grain, and the 51km stretch around the Isle of Sheppey. The Iwade-Grain and Whitstable-Iwade sections of this new access are expected to be ready some time in 2018, with the Sheppey access due to be ready in 2019.

Officers from Kent County Council, Canterbury City Council, Medway Council and Swale District Council are providing Natural England with expert local advice and helping to make sure there is full consultation with local interests during the development of the route.

Plans for the Ramsgate – Whitstable section are not yet available for public use, as work to establish the route is currently taking place.



Left: Stephanie le Men gets in.

Right: Mike Pursey with his certificate saying he completed the North York Moors 100 in 48 hours!

NORTH YORK MOORS 100

There was a marvellous effort from Kent members on the North York Moors 100, held over the bank holiday weekend of May 27-29 in exceptionally hot conditions. Of the Kent members who entered, two completed the walk apart from three – Roger Dean, who succumbed to the problem he often gets of nausea; Peter Jull, who had back trouble which resulted in him getting the infamous ‘Lean’; and Peter Butler. Roger and Peter J both retired at checkpoint 8 at Sleights (54.3 miles) and Peter B retired at Hutton-le-Hole (25 miles).

Three members – Stephanie le Men, Judy Rickwood and Graham Smith – all completed their 10th Hundreds, and their names will now be inscribed on the model trig point donated to us by Jane Dicker in memory of her late partner, Keith, which bears the names of all Kent LDWA members who have completed 10 Hundreds.

Judy only started doing Hundreds again two years ago, having completed her seventh in 1998, but she has now done the last three in succession.

Sarah Turner bravely battled against severe blister problems to complete her first Hundred, which gave her particular satisfaction after having to retire last year due to blisters. Don Newman finished his 32rd, Keith Warman finished his 27th, and Mike Pursey got back in at 9.59am to complete his 12th. His certificate actually records his time as 48 hours (see photo above) – so it is something of a collector’s item!

Michael Headley completed the marshals' event to record his second Hundred, following his success last year. He said he found it easier (although there is, of course, no such thing as an easy Hundred) than he did last year. Towards the end of the event, the sweepers came out to find him, and he became known as 'the lad from Kent.'

With 492 starters and 151 retirements on the event, and 15 Kent completions and three retirements, Kent walkers put in a tremendously commendable effort.

Kent results:

Andrew Boulden 30hrs.29mins.

Jim Catchpole 41.56.

John Cook 47.08.

Jill Green 41.56.

Stephanie Le Men 32.16.

Andrew Moore 32.51.

Don Newman 47.47.

Neal O'Rourke 34.25.

Mike Pursey 47.59.

Judy Rickwood 46.04.

Graham Smith 41.56.

Alan Stewart 46.05.

Wendy Thurrell 29.13.

Sarah Turner 45.43.

Keith Warman 46.13.

Marshals' walk

Michael Headley 42.58.

KENT CHECKPOINT – WE COPEd WITH THE PRESSURE! By Brian Buttifant

The Kent checkpoint was at Wombledon Village Hall (CP3 – 18.7 miles), seven miles west of Pickering. This was fairly early in the route, unlike our usual checkpoints in previous years which were overnight and around 40-60 miles. We realised early on that we may need extra help as this checkpoint would be busier for a shorter period of time.

Unfortunately Len Wilson (who enjoyed checkpointing with us on last year's Hundred in Dorset) had to cry off with health problems, and Lee Harris had car problems before we left Kent. So four members from Northumbria and Cumbria groups provided welcome help.

The hall was smaller than in previous Hundreds and outside space was limited, but our team coped very well in the circumstances. Unfortunately, as our Kent members came through we only had time for a quick 'Hello' – and then it was heads down.

Grateful thanks to our team of Mike Attewell, Phyl Butler, Joy Davies, John Deller, Nick Dockree, Michael Headley (who successfully completed the marshals' 100 – see above), Neil Higham, Andrew Melling, Jan O'Rourke, Mary Shillito (a friend of Joy's) and Anne and Ivan Waghorn. When we had finished our duty, eight of us went to the local pub for a meal.

Michael and Neil went on to do spells on the finish desk at Malton School. Nick and I spent Sunday supporting our walkers who were enduring the very warm conditions. On Monday I awoke early to welcome our walkers at the school gates.

There were 12 people who completed their 10 Hundreds, three of which were our Judy Rickwood, Stephanie le Men and our chairman Graham Smith (see above). Congratulations to them. Also to Sarah Turner, who completed her first Hundred.

See photographs on inside front cover.



Left: Graham, looking slightly the worse for wear, approaches the Hawsker checkpoint (58.9 miles). Right: Graham (having had a shower and change of shirt!) with Sarah Turner after the breakfast stop.

MY 10th HUNDRED – (OFFICIALLY, THAT IS) By Graham Smith

Well, that was a scorcher. I must be honest and say that walking in the sort of extreme heat we had to endure on the North York Moors 100 are the walking conditions I like least. But I suppose you could say that any extreme weather – like the

continual rain we had on the Valleys 100 in 2014 – does make a Hundred more of a challenge, although any Hundred is challenging enough, whatever the weather and conditions. Having – or rather choosing – to walk 100 miles in one go puts you through all kinds of physical and mental stresses, which I guess is why there are usually quite a few retirements. Anyway, I had really been looking forward to this one, as I love the North York Moors, having been there on numerous occasions with walks that include the Lyke Wake Walk, the Cleveland Way and Wainwright's Coast to Coast, both of which go through large parts of the area. I drove up to Yorkshire on the Thursday before the event, staying in the excellent Yorkshire Wolds Way Caravan and Camping site at West Knapton, a few miles east of Malton, where I was charged the very reasonable rate of £10 a night for my one man tent.

On the Friday morning I drove to the coast and did a very enjoyable 7.5-mile walk which took me to and around Flamborough Head, and in the afternoon I lazed in my tent and had a good rest – something I normally do before a Hundred – before the daunting challenge of the next couple of days (and, of course, nights).

In the morning I got myself ready and drove to Malton, getting to the event HQ, Malton School, about 45 minutes before the start. As with most other entrants, I spent the time before 10am chatting, meeting and talking, having a couple of cups of tea, adjusting footwear and making sure I had everything I needed. Then, a few minutes before 10am, we were ushered outside to be given some warm words of encouragement and advice from members of the NY Moors 100 organising team. And I was very impressed with the friendly but firm warnings from Roger Wandless about the forthcoming kit check. The kit check is something we have to have and if anyone has not got the required kit and subsequently gets disqualified, then the only person to blame is him or herself (and I have made a mental note to ensure something similar is said at the start of next year's Cinque Ports 100).

Then, at 10am – we were off! The first few miles – in fact, the first few checkpoints, seemed to go past in a bit of a blur. As usual, I was walking and talking with other Kent members, people from other groups I hadn't seen since, well, the last challenge walk I was on, and people I hadn't met before. The sun was out and it was getting hotter, but at that stage it wasn't bothering me. I had a brief stop at the first checkpoint (Easthorpe – 4.5 miles) for a drink and for some minor sock adjustment, and then moved off, enjoying the nice Yorkshire countryside, and looking forward to walking on those North York Moors which we could see much further ahead.

I had a couple of sandwiches at checkpoint 2 (Hovingham – 10.2 miles). By now the sun was at its hottest, and it was great to meet a certain Dave Morgan who provided me with some cola which quenched my thirst. And it was fabulous to reach the next checkpoint (Wombledon – 18.7 miles), staffed by Kent Group, and to see and talk with a few very familiar people. I find it is always such a boost to get to the Kent checkpoint, however far it is on the walk. The village hall was pretty small so it was quite cramped there, and the Kent team were very busy, so I didn't stay long. At the next checkpoint (Hutton-le-Hole – 25 miles), we were almost on those moors I had been looking forward to so much, but before I could get any refreshment, there was the kit check. Yes, kit checks can be an inconvenience and they take a few minutes but they have to be done. This one, where we were asked for five different items of kit, was pretty thorough and I was quite impressed.

The next leg took us on to those rolling moors, and they were delightful – nice long stretches where we could get motoring, and good views. As we were now into the evening, it was getting cooler. By now I was walking with Jill Green, Jim Catchpole and Pat Seabrook, a lovely lady aged 77 who was going for her 20th Hundred. At the next checkpoint (Rosedale – 31.8 miles), we had a quick stop before moving on. By now it was getting dark, and the torches were out. There was a bit of a climb up to the Lion Inn at Blakey (where, I don't mind admitting, I was very tempted to do what a few other people on the walk had done, and go in for a pint of cold beer – but I decided that might not be a good idea, so I moved on). We were now moving across the moors in the dark, but it was easy going, and the event organisers had thoughtfully provided luminous flags to help us.

At the next checkpoint (Botton – 39.8 miles) Pat and I met Sarah Turner, who was going well. After Botton we had a couple of steepish, boggy climbs, which obviously slowed us up quite a bit. But we had been warned about them, and after those climbs there was more flagging to help guide us. I have to say that the next checkpoint (Glaisdale – 46.6 miles) was my favourite of the walk. It was manned by South Wales Group and the selection of food and drink was excellent. What's more, the personnel were dressed as daffodils, Welsh maids or – in the case of Dave Morgan – a coal miner, which added to the occasion. Unfortunately by now I was starting to get the nausea which sometimes afflicts me on very long walks, and I had difficulty eating anything. But I was drinking, which was the main thing.

The next section took us to Sleights (54.3 miles) and our group now comprised Pat, Sarah, Julian Pursey, Sally Adams and myself, and it was starting to get light. We were now off the moors but it was still easy going on good paths and minor roads. The next stretch took us to Hawsker (58.9 miles), manned by Essex & Herts Group. I've got a few friends in that group, and it was great to see them. Then it was a fairly rural section, with some really good views across to Whitby, and its clifftop abbey, before the breakfast stop at Fyling Hall School (61.9 miles). By now Pat had fallen behind and I was walking with Sarah, and we stopped for a good hour. Sarah was able to attend to her blisters and I had time for a quick shower, which was very refreshing. Here we met Peter Jull, and I thought he had been just behind me until he said he had had to retire at Sleights, owing to back problems, so that was a shame.

Suitably refreshed and fortified, Sarah and I set off and we were soon back on the moors, with a classic view behind us of Robin Hood's Bay. It was fine moorland walking before we went into the woods – which gave us very welcome relief from

the sun, which was now blasting down – and carried on to Littlebeck (68 miles). Sarah was having more trouble with her feet and I wanted to move on, so we parted company there. I must be honest and say that when I left her, I was not at all sure that she would finish the walk – but, battling against such pain from her blisters, she did it, and I was so pleased. She ended up walking with Pat, and I was so pleased for her as well.

After Littlebeck there was a road climb, at the top of which we met Tony Rowley in a car park. Tony had drinks and plenty of water and I got him to pour some of that water over me – it was fantastic, and for me the best bit of the entire walk! There was then more moorland walking to the delightful village of Goathland (74 miles), where the TV series *Heartbeat*, set in the 1960s, is based. By now I was a bit dehydrated and still getting a little nausea, and all I could eat was fruit. And I was now firmly into plod-plod-plod, checkpoint to checkpoint mode. The next section, which took us to Stape (80.7 miles) initially brought some more excellent moorland walking, before we left the North York Moors behind for some fairly long – but straightforward – stretches of forestry.

I was now walking with Jill and Jim again, and the next stretch, to Lockton (85.5 miles), meant a couple more climbs. But the gradients were not steep, and also by now it was evening, so it was not too hot. The next stretch, to Thornton-le-Dale (91.2 miles) involved some long, relatively uninteresting stretches, but by now I didn't really care, as I was beginning to think I was going to complete the walk. The checkpoint here was manned by The Irregulars and I had a cold beer – which proved another highlight of the walk for me. We were now well into the second night, and the next leg, to Howebridge Farm (97.5 miles) was as straightforward as the previous stretch. It was manned by personnel from Vervumyden Group, and – thanks to the PACER tracking system – I was able to catch up on the progress of Sarah and other people in Kent Group.

The last stretch, 4.5 miles back to Malton, was very easy, on good tracks and paths or minor roads and with hardly any climbing. Jill, Jim and myself had now been joined by David Firth. Shortly after we crossed the bridge over the A64, we were met by various people from the HQ who accompanied us to Malton School, where we had a quite touching round of applause. I have to say I felt absolutely fine, and it was great to meet our Michael Headley – who was working on the PACER system – who arranged for me to have my 10 Hundreds badge presented by Bryan Thorpe, from North York Moors 100 organising group. I had my cup of Yorkshire tea – which Caroline Wandless had promised me – and was able to eat an omelette brought to me by Katie Hunt.

It was certainly the hottest Hundred I have done, and I am very grateful to all the people with whom I walked and to all the helpers who offered such wonderful help and encouragement at the checkpoints along the route. I have to say that the annual Hundred certainly does show the LDWA at its best.

So, that's my 10th Hundred, I've got my 10 Hundreds badge and my name – along with those of Judy and Stephanie – is going on the model trig point kindly donated to us by Jane Dicker, in memory of her late partner Keith, bearing the names of all Kent members who have completed 10. But, as I always tell people who ask, I've done another one. I had to retire halfway round the Cant Canolbarth 100 in 2007 – but returned the following year to complete it. I did it in two bits, but I did do it, eventually. So that's 11 for me, albeit one of them unofficial!



Left: Peter on one of the first climbs. Right: Peter, with Wendy Thurrell, at the end.

NORTH YORK MOORS Y100 - A Peter Jull Viewpoint

Nearly 500 starters faced horribly hot and humid start conditions in Malton. Manoeuvred close to the gate during the speeches to be at the front at the “Go”, many Kent groupers shot past me in the first street, Steph, Neal, Roger, others unseen. Local residents are justifiably looking bemused. “Come again soon” said the sign at the council boundary – that's the plan – by Monday. Marshal pleadings to use the verge went ignored and cars were forced to slow. Into the woods and single file excused a slower pace in welcome shade. Wider later, Jill and Jim catch and chat. The promised Castle Howard views are viewed, we now being on the sunny side of the woods. The first stiff climb past the photographer and here's CP1. DIY head drench. Cut oranges for vitamin C, I'm getting more than enough vitamin D.

We're back on the shadier side until, approaching a crossing road, where a parade of vintage tractors trundles past. A swig stop and Sarah catches. Thunder claps. A blobby shower begins. So many stop to don waterproofs. What's the point when I'm deliberately tipping water over me anyway? Sarah and I walk on by. Underfoot goes from bone dry to slightly slippery in minutes. It doesn't last and it's soon back to bone dry. Sarah's slipped ahead before CP2 Hovingham. One-way system confounds head drench plans, can't get back for refill. Graham arrives before I go.

Couldn't match the RD to map in advance but on the ground the village exit is clear enough. The same in the next, Stonegrove, aided by the clearly trodden path of many in front and queue at stile. Self clip A where shady tree, breeze and sit height stone are too inviting. Graham passes by. Across the Rye and into Harome where a bench just has to be used for a head dribble, necessary liquid preservation for drinking. Distant rumblings finally develop into a degree of drizzle on the approach to friendly faces at Kent CP3 in Wombleton. Too busy and crowded. Nick the water boy is constantly back and forth. Feverish kitchen activity to maintain food supply. Sit on Ivan's dog; it was under the chair. Carbo wraps go down well. Queue for loo for nascent nappy rash averting underwear change.

RD in hand for the first time but there're still many others around so it's little referred to and the route straightforward. A potential shortcut is marshalled then CP4 Hutton le Hole readily reached. Stew in Yorkshire Pudding. Don't they know how to serve Yorkshire Pudding in Yorkshire? It went all soggy. Shortage of cutlery made inelegant eating inevitable.

26 miles in and the North York Moors 100 finally reaches the North York Moors proper. 5.5km from Self Clip B (the RD is a messy mish mash of miles, kilometres, metres and feet) is declared as boringly straight and samey by octogenarian Christine who catches me undulating along the moorside. Surprisingly GPS says we've yet to get within 100ft of the high point on CP100 at Capel le Ferne! At last off the moor, I pull ahead on the easier track into Rosedale CP5. Mike follows shortly, still trying to avoid hearing the FA Cup score.

Finally get higher than Capel around Thorgill. Torch out, I find the strap has loosened since last used. Can't see to adjust it without a torch to see the torch. Struggle to identify route through last farm until others are seen and fall in behind up climb towards Lion pub. Self Clip C is not clipping effectively and we settle for a dent. Pull ahead along road but others get closer after turn across moor. Just before first road crossing a path depression is spotted in the dark but step down is messed into a stumble. Only a ¾ fall forward, saved by hands on step up, but a back muscle screams at such a jarring. Assuring followers the pain is acceptable, continuing is no slower than rough underfoot normally makes me. Off the moor I've lost my place on RD and busk it into Botton; never did see any village centre signs. Don joins me minutes later but nowhere to snooze so back into the dark.

Climbing back onto the moors starts easy enough but becomes boggy. The route has been flagged but once the path has started there are no doubtful deviations and the flags are only confirmatory. No sooner is the top reached than the descent begins and soon steeply. Descend to wall, descend to wall, descend to wall, and I've lost track of which wall I'm at and deep steps down are aggravating my back. Christine catches again and having reconnoitred, leads the way off the moor.

Ungallantly I leave her behind on the road and start the next climb. Dutchman catches as I pause for breath and direction confirmation. He confidently follows what his GPS says but I remember him from last year when doing so got him lost. But there is only one path option including unavoidable deep bog. At the top this time the route stays up and follows road and track. With signs of sunrise beginning and a strong following wind I'm flying along and pass moving walkers for the first time since section 2. But – am I walking upright? A lean to the right is very slight but noticeable. Is it the injury or the start of the dreaded lean?

Glaisdale is readily reached, my hands as dirty from retying boggy shoelaces as Dave Morgan's coalminer's makeup. A snooze is overdue but dawn has arrived and decide to make the most of the early morning cool, relying on ProPlus. I'm trying for the first time to stay awake. It's not working and a roadside bench is too tempting. Jacket on, rucksack pillow and face covered. Passing walkers talk too loudly, sounds like Mike and Don; later learned it wasn't. A rising breeze chills extremities, impairing proper sleep. Call it quits before too much time is lost. That half an hour though feels me better, I'm walking properly straight and retaking some that passed me resting. The route is trending due east. The early low sun is eye annoying; perspiration is back; the lean is back after half an hour. Pace is consistent with others in sight but combination of injury and lean is causing back pain and the lean is worsening. Before reaching Sleights I reckon my time is up. With no prospect of finishing, why carry on? Hand in my tally.

Keith and Shirlie turn up and commiserate. Soon enough a Raynet type driver arrives and takes me away with 4 of the 27 others, including Roger, who only made it this far. Delivered to Fyling Hall breakfast, Jill and Jim are there enjoying porridge, Graham is regretting his choice. Sarah is reported on site medicating blisters. Sitting outside with nowhere to go the views across Robin Hood's Bay are glorious in the sun. Well within impatience time a minibus arrives and after a delay while retirees are located and tallies crosschecked, it's a circuitous 1 hour+ route, avoiding unsuitable moorland roads back to Malton.

Michael is on the desk and reports 5 have already finished. Retire to car. Back in reception to see Wendy arrive, first from Kent home. Andrew next with the lean. Miss Steph's arrival, only see her cadging a lift to the station. Standing at the gate with Neil, Jan leaves her kitchen duties to escort Neal the last ¼ mile in. It's dark and nearly light again before Jill, Jim and Graham arrive together. Graham has his certificate confiscated so it can be re-presented in the hall with his 10 Hundreds badge. An approaching figure transforms into a buffed and pained looking Sarah. Judy and Alan arrive together and Judy is

dragged in front of the growing crowd for her 10 Hundreds badge presentation. Keith is not far behind. Sarah's in the medic's room both feet in the air, a nurse working on each foot. Kent are monopolising the first aid team. Keith, lying on the floor, has both feet in the air getting a free health check.

15 minutes to go and Don, Mike and 3 more are still out there. Raynet chatter about how far away the sweepers are. Don makes it. Last lady reunited with her rucksack by supporters for the last yards. View from gate down road is 350 yards. A marshalled Mike comes into view with 5 minutes to go. At the desk there is earnest conversation what to do about overdue 40 timer Martin Greaves. A hurried driveway and the clock shows 10 as Mike is through the door. Back at the gate a decision is relayed that event timing was suspended at the last checkpoint because sweepers couldn't leave on time, distracted by missing walker reports. So Mark, 8 minutes late, and then Martin, 18 minutes late, are given times 48 hours dead. Martin gets the second ever 40 badge to loud applause.

Take my 'compulsory' loaf of bread from the surplus pile. Retrieve Sarah from the hospital where she's been taken for further blister brutality. Packing up begins and Michael, Neil, Neal, Jan, myself and, when she finally gets out of the shower, Sarah, gather cars behind the school to divvy up the pile of signs and sheeting and 'stuff' marked 'For Kent' that Nick couldn't fit in. It's our turn next...



These two photos of the South Downs Loop were taken by Sarah Turner

SOUTH DOWNS LOOP: Good Friday (April 17) By Graham Smith

I guess that when I received a text from Peter Jull to say 'Are you sitting down? I'm coming on Friday', I should have realised we were going to have a good day for our annual Good Friday trip to the South Downs. In fact, with a record number of walkers – a total of 28, plus three dogs – it was a great day, arguably the most enjoyable of all the times we have put on that walk in what is well over 20 years since we started doing it.

Peter keeps professing to find the South Downs boring, but I reckon he likes them really (the words 'Methinks, he doth protest too much' comes to mind). Otherwise he wouldn't have got up at 6am on a Good Friday to go down there to walk 26 miles – would you, Pete? As I always say, the South Downs are the nearest we've got to proper hills in the South East – and on Good Friday, in clear conditions and spring sunshine, they were at their best.

I must confess I wasn't expecting anything like as many people we got. When I arrived at the start, at the end of Eastbourne seafront, I thought there might be a handful of people there – instead there were about 18, plus the dogs. So off we went at 9am on the dot, taking our usual route past Beachy Head to Birling Gap (which with its toilets serves as checkpoint one). Then it was over the Seven Sisters, where at the end we were rewarded with those magnificent views across the Cuckmere Valley, followed by our usual elevenses stop by the river (checkpoint two). Then we followed the river for a couple of miles before splitting into two groups a mile and a bit before Alfriston. I led 16 walkers on the 26-mile walk while Nicola Foad – leading for Joy Davies, who sadly couldn't make the trip this year – took the remaining 12, plus the dogs, round the 20-mile route.

We 26-milers went up onto the Downs again to cross a field and then turn right on a long track which brought us out onto the ridge, where we turned left for Firle Beacon – with more magnificent views – for lunch by the trig point (checkpoint three). Then we turned back and followed the South Downs Way into Alfriston. Much of this part of the walk is on that short, firm grass which makes it feel like you are walking on a green carpet. We got to Alfriston and our usual stop at the Market Inn (checkpoint four) and then took the familiar short stretch by the river before crossing fields to Milton Street and the long ascent onto the Downs again, past the Long Man of Wilmington. At the top we turned right for a short high level stretch before dropping down to take paths past fields – including one with a few alpacas in – to Jevington, and our usual stop at the Eight Bells (checkpoint five). Then we took the Wealdway route – which, by common consent, is preferable to the South Downs Way one, as it is less steep, is better underfoot and offers superior views – before turning right to eventually rejoin the SDW for the last few miles back to Eastbourne. We arrived just before 7pm. Nicola's group, which followed the South Downs Way to Alfriston, had their lunch stop there before taking the SDW back. They had been planning to stop at the Jevington tea room but found it closed, so they carried on, getting back to Eastbourne just before 4pm and using the café near

where we parked the cars.

Some of us 26-milers went to our usual post-Eastbourne walk watering hole Wetherspoons, for a cheap meal and a pint, before the drive home. It had been a memorable day doing a classic walk, and even our treasurer admitted (sort of) that he enjoyed it.



The Isle of Wight Coastal Path at Tennyson Down

ISLE OF WIGHT COASTAL PATH By Graham Smith

The Isle of Wight Coastal Path is just under 70 miles long (actually 69.2 according to Alan Castledine, with whom I walked it on April 22-23). Alan lives on the Isle of Wight, and had previously walked it an amazing 12 times, so this time it was his 13th (yes, 13th). It's a really good, well waymarked walk which has been pioneered by Jill Green, who lives on the island. Of course, normal people don't do it in one go, but few of us in the LDWA are normal, are we? All right, I'm speaking for myself! Jill and Jim Catchpole had invited me to come to the island for the walk, staying with them at their home in Sandown. They kindly offered to provide back-up for us both, meeting us at eight points en route. They had suggested I walk with Alan, as he had walked the route so often before and knew it so well. And I must say that walking with him was invaluable, as I'm not sure I would have completed the walk – almost seven hours of which we did in the dark – if I hadn't been with him. Alan is a really strong walker, and I do hope he takes up my suggestion of entering an LDWA Hundred some time. He is certainly capable of doing one.

We set off from Shanklin at 6.30am, and the first 9.4 miles involved a couple of climbs, with the last one to St Catherine's Point. Shortly after that we met Jim at checkpoint 1, Blackgang car park.

Then it was a long stretch along the clifftop path past Brightstone Bay to Freshwater (close to the scene of the 1970 Isle of Wight Festival, which I attended with a couple of schoolfriends when I was a long-haired 17-year-old – sorry to digress), after meeting Jim again at checkpoint 2, Chilton Chine. Then we took a lovely steady path up to the memorial on Tennyson Down, with fabulous extensive views across to Dorset. The close cropped grass felt like we were walking on a green carpet. This was, for me the highlight of the walk.

We then dropped down, with more magnificent views across the Solent, to Headon Warren. Here we had a very good views of the Isle of Wight's famous Needles, which I had been very keen to see. And here we met Jim again at checkpoint 3. We had now done 25.2 miles, the sun was out, and we were going well.

We then had a nice climb, on good paths, up Headon Hill, before dropping down to the coast at Colwell. We then had to divert inland for a short distance and then go back towards the coast, through pleasant woodland to emerge at Yarmouth. The

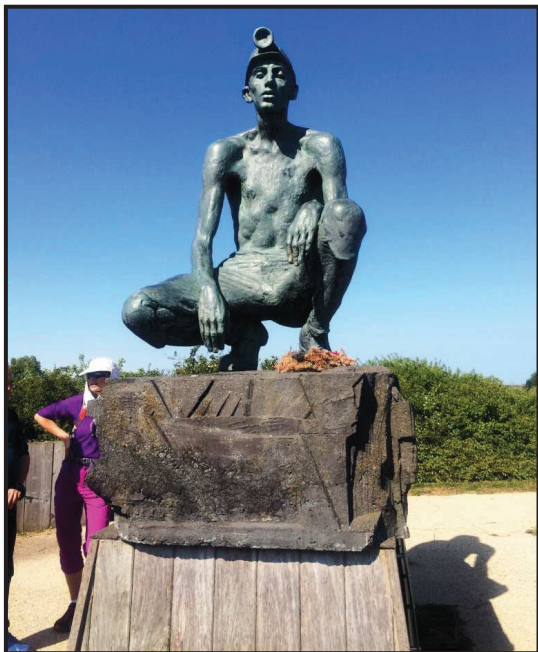
sun was now at its hottest and I took off my shirt and had a welcome splash (not a swim!) in the sea. Shortly afterwards we met Jim again at Bouldnor, checkpoint 4. We then followed the coast again before heading inland through woods, then took tracks and minor roads heading south around the Newtown River. We briefly followed the A3054 before taking more minor roads to Newtown, where we met Jill at checkpoint 5. We had done 39.2 miles – so we were more than halfway there. We then followed some minor roads and a rural path which took us back to the coast, and we were able to enjoy a very nice sunset over the Solent. Then, in the increasing darkness, we followed the coast to Gurnard and then Cowes. It was the first time I had been to Cowes and it's a hugely impressive place, with its harbour and marina. I had my evening meal of a bag of chips before we took the chain ferry for foot passengers (which cost £1) across the River Medina to East Cowes, where we met Jim at checkpoint 6.

After that came what, for me, was the least enjoyable stretch of the walk, as we followed the main road out of East Cowes before taking a minor road to Wootton and then a path past houses to Fishbourne. I don't usually mind road walking but I did find this a bit tedious. I am told plans are afoot to reroute the path to the coast, which is good. We carried on along to Ryde along a path close to the coast before reaching the coast again at the resort. Here we met Jim at a car park for checkpoint 7. We had done 55.7 miles.

With the lights of Gosport and Portsmouth twinkling across the Solent, we followed the coast out of Ryde to Seaview, and this was very pleasant. Unfortunately some mist had descended and we (or rather, Alan, as he was leading) had a little bit of trouble finding our way to the causeway which we crossed to reach Bembridge, where we met Jim at the last checkpoint, by the lifeboat station.

Visibility was getting worse in the thickening fog, but it was still a nice climb up to Culver Down. We then carefully picked our way down the cliffs to Sandown, and we followed the seafront all the way to Shanklin, arriving at 5.54am to a dawn chorus and a beaming Jill. We had done it in 22 hours 54 minutes.

It was a really good walk, and I am very grateful to Alan and Jill and Jim for their fantastic help. I wouldn't mind doing it again some time, so if any Kent members are interested in joining me, perhaps they could let me know.



These photos were taken on the Four Pits Walk by Helen Franklin.

THE FOUR PITS WALK: April 29 By Graham Smith

Saturday April 29 was actually the 10th anniversary – to the day – of the first walking of the Four Pits Walk, which links the former Kent coal mines of Chislet, Betteshanger, Tilmanstone and Snowdown. So it was a very appropriate time to do it. It is 40.5 miles long and is an Anytime Challenge, with certificates and badges available for people who complete it. Twelve

of us turned up at Fordwich at 8am, including nine people who had not done the walk before.

We took the usual route by the River Stour to the turn-off at Westbere, shortly after which we went up to the A28, passing through the former pit village of Hersden to the site of the Chislet pit, which closed in 1969. Sadly, there is hardly anything there to remind anyone of the pit, so it's fair to say that the walkers were a bit underwhelmed.

So we moved on, taking paths and tracks to Chislet (the village), Chitty and Grove Ferry, where we were just able to get across the railway line before a train came, for our first stop. We had done 7.8 miles.

We then moved on through Stodmarsh Nature Reserve before taking paths across to Wickhambreax and then a very good track to Wingham. We then followed fields to Goodnestone (which Rex Stickland insists is pronounced 'Gunstone') for our lunch stop, having done 16 miles. We then took minor roads and good paths to Eastry, where we had ice creams, and then we followed more minor roads and paths to cross a meadow to the A258, which we crossed to see the statue of the Waiting Miner outside Betteshanger Country Park, built on the site of Betteshanger, the last Kent coal mine to close, in 1989. We had done 22 miles, so we were more than halfway.

We then passed the former pit village of Betteshanger and then Northbourne, before taking more paths to cross the A256 at Tilmanstone, which gave its name to our next pit and which closed in 1986. Kent Salads has been built on the site of the pit, but some of the spoil tip remains on the site – this is quite extensive and is used as a BMX track by young locals. We had our next stop here, and it's fair to say that again the walkers were not too impressed, although by now we had done 28 miles.

Then it was on more good tracks and paths to Nonington, at 31 miles, where we had a nice and very welcome drink in the Royal Oak – and it's fair to say that this did impress the walkers. After that we took the road to pass the site of Snowdown colliery – where, sadly, the buildings remain the empty shells and blots on the landscape that they were when the pit closed in 1987. We passed the village of Snowdown and then Aylesham – the big village which served the pit – to view the Payday at the Colliery statue.

We then crossed fields to go to Adisham, and were treated to a quite beautiful sunset as we approached Bekesbourne using a fine path which offered panoramic views of the East Kent Countryside. Then it was another nice path and a road to our last stop, Littlebourne, at 38 miles.

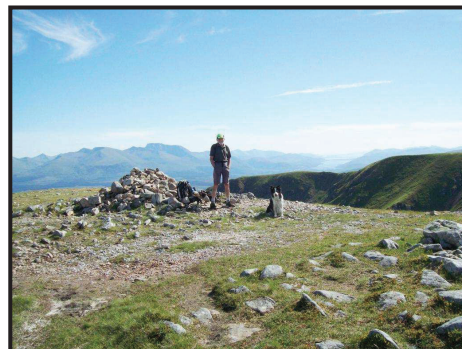
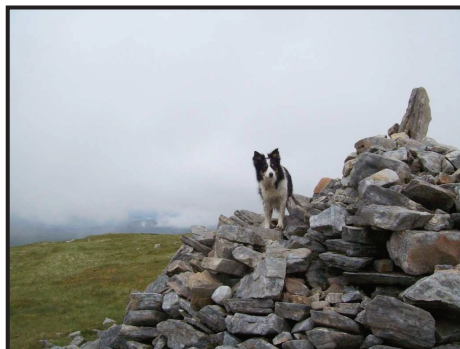
It was now just about dark so we all got out our torches for the last 2.5 miles, initially following the A257 and then turning off to take mainly woodland paths and then a minor road back to Fordwich. We arrived at 9.40pm, so we had taken 13 hours 40 minutes.

We had had a really good day and we had a very nice crowd of people. Particular congratulations must go to Jan Wirrmann and Alison Foley, both of whom had previously never walked more than 27 miles. So they smashed their previous Personal Bests and were absolute stars. And also thanks go to the inimitable Rex Stickland, whose jokes kept us laughing for just about the entire walk.

I was able to give certificates to everyone who completed the walk, but rather foolishly, I forgot to take enough badges. For those people who would like a souvenir badge, please contact me – details above – and I will get one to you.

The Four Pits Walk is an Anytime Challenge. If anyone fancies doing it, the route description, which has now been updated, is on the Kent LDWA website.

Clockwise, from top left: going up Sron a' Choire Ghairbh, with Ben Nevis and two other 'super Munros' (Munros of more than 4,000 feet) – Carn Mor Dearg and Aonach Mor – in the distance; Mike and Fen on the summit of Sron a' Choire Ghairbh; Mike and Fen on the summit of Meall na Teanga; and looking back at Loch Tay from a delightful track leading from Fortingall.



POSTCARD FROM SCOTLAND By Graham Smith

It's not such a long Postcard from Scotland this year, as I went for just over a week instead of the usual fortnight, and the wet and

windy weather meant I was only able to walk three Munros. Long gone are the days when Mike Pursey and I would go up

Munros in all weathers. Now we realise that going out on a big hill in the rain and wind means you're likely to get cold, wet and miserable for a large part of the day, and you're also running the risk of navigation difficulties, which could potentially be serious.

This year Mike and I went up to Scotland separately. The reasons were that Mike loves his rugby and wanted to get home to see the start of the British and Irish Lions games against the All Blacks on June 24, and I was committed to leading the Elham Valley Way for the Elham Walking Festival on June 17. So I drove up on Sunday June 18, with border collie Fen, getting over the border and stopping at Annan. I drove to Roy Bridge, which is about 10 miles north of Fort William, and met Mike in the excellent camp site there. Mike had been up for a few days and had had two wet walks (much to my surprise, as we had enjoyed a heatwave in the south of England). He had completed two Munros, Ben Challum (in the Loch Lyon area and 3363 feet) and Creag Mhor (also in the Loch Lyon area and 3435 feet), but had been forced to cut short the latter walk (he had also been planning to go up Beinn Heasgarnich, 3537 feet) because of the rain and low cloud which cut right down on visibility. So although he had walked up two more Munros, he certainly hadn't had decent weather.

But the following day the heatwave appeared to have arrived in Scotland (or so we thought) and we set out on a two Munro walk – Sron a' Choire Ghairbh (3074 feet and pronounced srawn a corrie ghirav) and Meall na Teanga (3012 feet and pronounced myowl na tyenga), which are very close to Loch Lochy. We followed a good forestry track which petered out to become a path by a burn. As this veered westwards and away from our first hill, we had to change direction to get back on the route. A ladder stile over a 6-7ft deer fence was going to be too much for Fen, so we got her through a little gap in an adjoining burn. We then had to laboriously plod through the heather for a good 30 minutes before we spotted a proper path on the other side of a burn. So we dropped down to take this, which led us to a zig-zag path which took us to the summit of Sron a' Choire Ghairbh. It was a clear day and we had marvellous extensive views. It never ceases to amaze me how you can spend hours and exert lots of energy getting to the top of a mountain, and when you do, you seem to forget the effort you have just put in as you look around you can see nothing but other peaks and lochs. The reward at the summit it makes it all so worthwhile – and that, simply, is why Mike and I have been going to Scotland since 1990. We had our lunch on the summit as we basked in the sunshine, and then we dropped down to the bhealach for a short, stiff climb to the summit of Meall na Teanga. This hill has a delightful little ridge on its summit, which offers more fabulous views. Because of the ridge, I preferred it to Sron a' Choire Ghairbh. We then had to climb another adjoining hill, Meall Coire Lochain (at 2976 feet very nearly Munro height) to follow what the Scottish Mountaineering Club's Munro guide described as 'easy grassy slopes' (but in practice were anything but easy, as there was no proper path) down to the track from which we returned to the day's starting point.

Unfortunately Mike then had the start of a bad cold, so he decided to head home the following day. I spent the day with Fen in the Fort William area, walking a couple of miles on the towpath of the Caledonian Canal (which is on the Great Glen Way – walking in Scotland doesn't come much flatter than that).

The next day Fen and I went up Gulvain (3238 feet and pronounced goolvan), which is near Loch Eil, just off the Mallaig road. This involved a pretty long walk-in but on a good track, before quite a stiff, unrelenting climb to the summit ridge. You reach a trig point but that's not the summit, as you have to go down a col and then there's some re-ascent to the cairn which marks the actual summit. The weather was starting to cloud over and it was getting windy, so I didn't linger on the top. Those clouds had enveloped the top of the hill by the time I reached the trig point, with visibility deteriorating by the minute. So I used the compass to navigate off the ridge to descend and eventually reach the outward path.

And that, sadly, was the last Munro I walked up on this trip. The next day there was rain and wind as I drove to Killin, where Mike had stayed when he walked up those two hills mentioned earlier, staying in the lovely camp site there. I was hoping to spend the next two days doing the same walks he had done, but sadly the rain and wind (which was becoming pretty fierce, with 70mph gusts on the Munro summits) remained in the Killin area the whole time. But I still got some walks in, the first day driving to Fortingall, where Kent Group had had a checkpoint on the 2010 Heart of Scotland Hundred, and followed a very nice track which led over the moors almost to Schiehallion, one of my favourite Scottish hills (a Munro, at 3553 feet and with a marvellous ridge), which I have climbed twice. This track from Fortingall made for a very enjoyable walk, offering fine views back to Loch Tay and, of course, to Schiehallion itself. And the following day Fen and I walked up Killin's hill, Sron a' Chlachain (at 1491ft less than half Munro height) just above the town. It's a nice hill which is actually fairly steep. It was a bit blustery on the top, so I didn't hang around too long. Ironically the wind dropped and the sun came out in the evening.

The next day I packed the tent and left the Highlands to drive to Moffat, about 30 miles from the English border and which has another excellent camp site which where I usually break the journey south when I drive back to Kent from Scotland. Moffat is a very nice town which has Walkers Are Welcome status. It also has a very nice Indian restaurant which I usually frequent. And the next day, after packing up a very wet tent in pouring rain (which was the worst rain of the trip), I drove home.

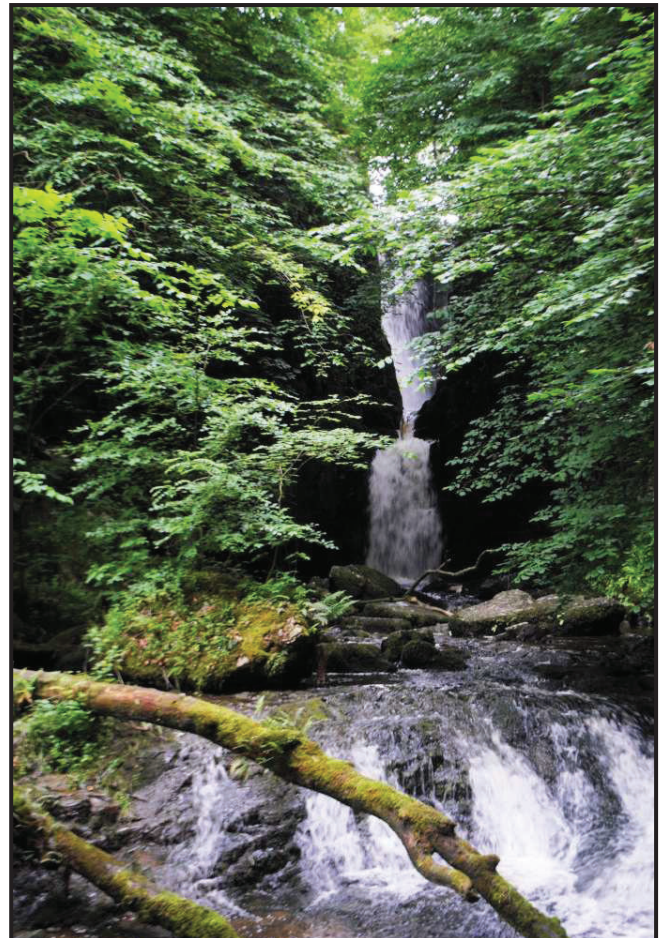
So that was Scotland 2017. It was a shame I didn't climb more Munros – but they will still be there next time. And Fen and I did enjoy some very nice walks, low level as well as high level.



Dianne Marsden came across these cheerful boot planters in Kirby Stephen while walking the Coast Coast long distance path.

Dianne says: “Apparently residents are asked to donate boots, which are then planted with flowers at a community workshop. The planted boots are distributed throughout the town, providing a marvellous summer display to welcome walkers. I like to think that the very clever person, who thought of this fun idea for marketing the town, was also aware that walkers develop a very special relationship with their boots.

“They become trusted old friends that see you through many journeys and adventures, which is maybe what the American transcendentalist philosopher Ralph Waldo Emerson was eloquently saying when he wrote ‘When you have worn out your shoes, the strength of the sole leather has passed into the fibre of your body. I measure your health by the number of shoes you have worn out. He is the richest man who pays the largest debt to his shoemaker.’ Whatever you choose to believe, you must agree that using boots as flower planters is a fitting way to say goodbye to old boots, and to express thanks for their faithful service.”



A SETTLE SOJOURN By Dianne Marsden

When an email arrived from Sussex LDWA asking for expressions of interest in a late June walking break in The Yorkshire Dales I jumped at the opportunity to participate. The Dales have long been one of my favourite haunts and hold many golden memories for me. A party of 11 from diverse parts of the country confirmed their interest. We were to be based in Settle, a characterful bustling historic market town at the gateway to Upper Ribblesdale and home to the famous Settle–Carlisle Railway. The town also provided us with an excellent base for first rate fell walking in a special landscape of immense beauty and character.

The week got off to a flying start with a perfect blue sky mid-summer day. We eagerly set off from Settle in brilliant sunshine, following the picture postcard pretty River Ribble along a path shaded by ancient broadleaved trees to Stainforth where we stopped to admire the splendour of Stainforth Force, looked for otters, tried to spot kingfishers, and took advantage of a perfect photo opportunity.

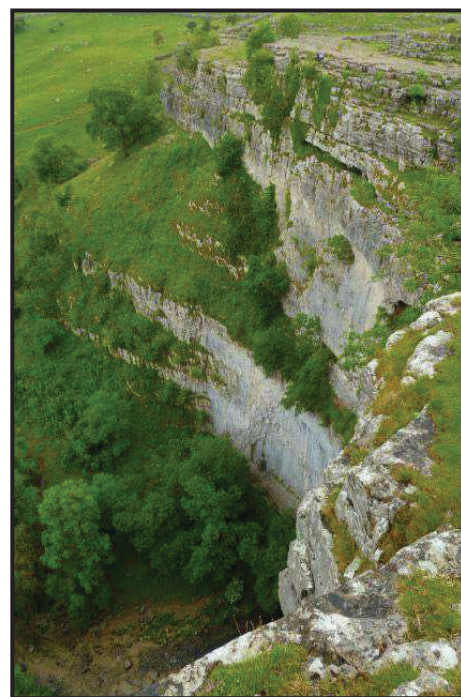
Our route then took us inland through a stunning landscape of drystone walls, and a patchwork of flower-rich hay meadows golden with buttercups, and dotted with purple orchids. Elaine's Tea Room at Feizor provided not only a welcome refreshment stop but also an entertaining Emmerdale Farm moment for customers. Just as we relaxed on the patio with pots of coffee, tea, plates of scones, and giant slabs of carrot cake, a renegade flock of escaped sheep raced past fanning out in different directions further down the lane. In hot pursuit were Elaine's catering team with aprons a-flapping, a couple of farm hands and a collie. The rebellious sheep, with some difficulty, were brought to heel, calm was restored, and the excitement over we continued our hike to Ingleborough summit, the second highest peak in the Dales at 2,372 feet.

Above the Dales the landscape changed to bare bright green hillsides dotted with grey 'erratics', boulders of gritstone transported from adjoining areas by glacial action and left behind on the limestone terrain around 12000 years ago when at the end of the last Ice Age the ice sheets receded. We also had our first sightings of limestone pavements. These magnificent plateaus of bare limestone have been weathered into a mosaic of deep fissures and are criss-crossed with 'clints' (blocks) and 'grykes' (crevices), which are actually very hazardous to walk on. A steady climb across the flank of Simon Fell, followed by a short scramble onto the top of Ingleborough, brought us to the site of one of the highest Iron Age hillforts in England, thought to have been a stronghold of the Brigantes tribe. From the top we had spectacular views of the mountains of The Lakes and of Morecambe Bay, its waters glinting in the sunshine. Closer by was Wharfedale, whilst northwards and far below our feet the iconic Ribblesdale viaduct beckoned in the middle distance.

We descended to Ribblesdale, keen to see at close quarters the viaduct that is a special point of interest on the celebrated Settle-to-Carlisle Railway. My research tells me that the viaduct runs a quarter of a mile across the valley of the River Ribble, that it has 24 arches and at its highest point stands 106 feet above the surrounding countryside. British Rail spent years trying to close it, but thankfully intelligence and modern marketing saved the line and one of the classic sights of Yorkshire. By then we were all keen to quench our thirst at The Station Inn, a splendid walkers' watering hole and overnight stop. Here the larger than life (in every respect) landlord dispensed humour, information and ale in equal measure; pints of Semer Water beer were pulled for those who could correctly pronounce the words, whilst the landlord and Trevor engaged in a *'head brewers we have known'* conversation.

Leaving behind a group of four who were unable to tear themselves away from the array of real ales, and the temptations of the humungous steak and kidney puddings, the majority of the group caught the early train back from Ribblesdale Station to Settle, speeding along one of Britain's best known rail lines through lovely countryside. All agreed it had been a marvellous day.

A much greyer day followed, the possibility of heavy rain was



forecast and it was decided to opt for a shorter trek of some 14 miles. The rain actually held off for most of the time, and we enjoyed a route that took us through archetypal limestone scenery, taking in the quintessential sites of Janet's Foss, Gordale Scar, Malham Cove and Attermire Scar. Janet's Foss is a small but delightful waterfall set in a shady dell and reputedly home of Jennet, 'Queen of the Fairies'; as you can imagine, that all caused a few wry comments from the chaps. A few yards further and Goredale Bridge yielded the welcome sight of a mobile foodstall from which an enterprising local lady dispenses hearty sandwiches and mugs of steaming nectar at prices far removed from those at watering holes in the south east. We sat and watched a pair of yellow wagtails brave the noisy onlookers, in turn carefully edging across the face of the stone bridge to feed their hungry brood.

The dramatic gorge of Goredale Scar was held in great awe by the 19th century British Romantic Poets, Artists and Travellers who all waxed lyrical at this monument of nature. We were certainly wowed by the place.

Malham Cove is a huge curving amphitheatre shaped cliff formation, formed by a waterfall carrying meltwater from glaciers at the end of the last Ice Age. At the top of the cliff is a deeply eroded limestone pavement which gives brilliant views down the dale to Malham and beyond.

We came across a group of people comforting someone who had fallen and been injured and was waiting to be airlifted to hospital; a timely reminder of the hazards of walking across limestone pavements. Leaving the Cove behind us, we turned



north along Watlowes, formerly the bed of the river that long ago vanished underground via a sink hole, a little way upstream at a spot rather unimaginatively named Water Sinks. At the head of the dry valley we climbed to Robin Hill Rigg and thence to Attermire Scar via the old Stockdale Road track.

Attermire Scar is a steep faced high limestone cliff with many rocky outcrops and caves, inside some of which have been found artefacts from prehistoric times. From here we dropped down back into Settle. Another brilliant day ! Heavy rain blew in the next day shortly after we left the station at Horton in Ribblesdale. We made the 371 yards from the station to the coffee shop where we enjoyed several cafetières of excellent coffee whilst revising our

schedule for the day. We had planned to ascend the smallest of the Yorkshire Three Peaks, Pen-y-ghent (2,277feet) but, after battling with the elements for an hour whilst noting that the mountain was shrouded in low cloud, we abandoned the climb at Hull Pot, the largest natural hole in England, which provided us with our wow factor for the day. By now it was raining the proverbial cats and dogs, and we decided to squelch our way back down to Horton and thence to Settle following an attractive riverside path.

At Stainforth we briefly endured the cold and rude unwelcoming treatment of the landlord at the self-proclaimed '*perfect place to stop after walking in the countryside*', renamed by us as *The Misery Arms*.

Overnight the Wet Weather Front moved South to Manchester, leaving us with overcast skies but no rain for our final group walk of the week. We headed towards The West Dales by rail to Kirby Stephen for a walk along the ridge on the eastern side of the Mallerstang valley. The landscape here was desolately awesome with hills covered in tough brown sedges and fluffy white cottongrass, made hauntingly beautiful with eerie burbling call of curlews, the sightings of barn owls and a leveret, all under a gradually brightening sky. The sedge tussocks and boggy land of the slopes made the climb up to the fell ridge at High Pike very hard work. But once on the top our efforts were well compensated for by the fabulous views. At length we descended to Garsdale Head, a lonely pass miles from anywhere, and headed for The Moorcock Inn (dubbed the Nymphomaniac's Plea by Bill Bryson) for scones, tea and, for some, glasses of amber nectar. The sun came out whilst we were waiting at the station for the train back to Settle and we were all amazed to see a red squirrel scampering along the station boundary fence. And so our Dales Diversion came to an end.

All agreed it had been a stellar week, far removed from post-electoral concerns and the whirligig of modern life. A HUGE thank you to David Weatherley for organising such a fabulous week and for all his hard work in planning and leading the walks. As always these events are as much about the people involved as they are about the activities. So a second great big thank you goes to Bruce, Sue, Tony, Trevor, Chris, Geoff, Martin, Patrick, Jude and Beverley for their easy going cheerful company. My only regrets: the week went too quickly - we missed National Meadow Day and the opportunities to learn how to use a scythe and build scarecrows; and that we were not in town to go potty in The Dales at the Settle Flowerpot Festival.

COMEDY CORNER with Neal O'Rourke

Tiger Woods and Stevie Wonder are in a bar . . .

Tiger turns to Stevie and says, "How's the singing career going?"

Stevie replies, "Not too bad. How's the golf?"

Woods replies, "Not too bad, I've had some problems with my swing, but I think I've got that fixed now."

Stevie: "I always find that when my swing goes wrong, I need to stop playing for a while and not think about it. Then, the next time I play, it seems to be all right."

Incredulous, Tiger says, "You play GOLF?"

Stevie: "Yes, I've been playing for years."

Tiger: "But - you're blind! How can you play golf if you can't see?"

Stevie: "Well, I get my caddy to stand in the middle of the fairway and call to me. I listen for the sound of his voice and play the ball towards him. Then, when I get to where the ball lands, the caddy moves to the green or farther down the fairway and again I play the ball towards his voice."

"But, how do you putt?" asks Tiger.

"Well", says Stevie, "I get my caddy to lean down in front of the hole and call to me with his head on the ground and I just play the ball towards his voice."

Tiger: "What's your handicap?"

Stevie: "Actually - I'm a scratch golfer."

Woods, incredulous, says to Stevie, "We've got to play a round some time."

Stevie: "Well, people don't take me seriously, so I only play for money, and never play for less than \$10,000 a hole. Is that a problem?"

Woods thinks about it and says, "I can afford that; OK, I'm game. \$10,000 a hole is fine with me. When would you like to play?"

Stevie: "Pick a night."

God said, "Adam, I want you to do something for Me."

Adam said, "Gladly, Lord, what do You want me to do?"

God said, "Go down into that valley."

Adam said, "What's a valley?"

God explained it to him.

Then God said, "Cross the river."

Adam said, "What's a river?"

God explained that to him, and then said, "Go over to the hill."

Adam said, "What is a hill?"

So, God explained to Adam what a hill was.

He told Adam, "On the other side of the hill you will find a cave."

Adam said, "What's a cave?"

After God explained, He said, "In the cave you will find a woman."

Adam said, "What's a woman?"

So God explained that to him, too.

Then, God said, "I want you to reproduce."

Adam said, "How do I do that?"

God first said (under His breath), "Geez . . ."

And then, just like everything else, God explained that to Adam, as well.

So, Adam goes down into the valley, across the river, and over the hill, into the cave, and finds the woman.

Then, in about five minutes, he was back.

God, His patience wearing thin, said angrily, "What is it now?"

And Adam said....

(YOU'RE GOING TO LOVE THIS!)

"What's a headache?"



These two excellent photos of Dover were taken by Sarah Turner from near Dover Castle

HEART OF THE WEALD

Scenes from our Heart of the Weald walk on July 2. Photos by
Melissa Butcher, Bryan Clarke,
Eric Rolfe and Graham Smith



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